

CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS ON MY HEBREW  
NEW TESTAMENT.

IV.

I INSIST upon the use of the article, on account of the abundant materials which this chapter supplies for information in syntax and style.

1. One of the chief faults of the Hebrew New Testament of the London Society is the frequency of הַתִּבְּל (the terrestrial world) with the article. In biblical Hebrew this substantive never has the article. It is an ancient word, belonging to a stage of language in which the article, abbreviated from an ancient demonstrative pronoun, was not yet coined, and therefore beloved by the higher style, which delights in archaisms.<sup>1</sup> Salkinson has, Acts xvii. 13, correctly לְשֵׁפֶט־בּוֹ תִּבְּל, where the London translation אֶת־הַתִּבְּל. I have avoided this fault at the very beginning of my work of translation.

2. A very bad fault of the London translation is לְאֱלֹהִים and בְּאֱלֹהִים, where the only true God is meant (*e.g.* Acts xx. 25 and John iv. 15, 16). The word, thus vocalized, signifies the gods of the heathen: Psalm lxxxvi. 8, "Among the gods (בְּאֱלֹהִים) there is none like unto Thee"; and Exodus xxii. 19 (20), "He that sacrifices to the gods" (לְאֱלֹהִים). On the contrary, the Hebrew equivalent of τῶ Θεῶ is everywhere לְאֱלֹהִים, and of ἐν τῶ Θεῶ בְּאֱלֹהִים. Fuerst's Concordance places Jonah iii. 5 and Psalm cviii. 14 (13) under בְּאֱלֹהִים; but that is a pitiful, misleading error.

3. In both translations, Salkinson's as well as my own, τὸ στυῆδρον of the New Testament has been rendered by הַסְּנֵהֲדָרִין; but the lawfulness of the determination by the article is questionable. The ancient Jewish idiom was wont

<sup>1</sup> Similar is תְּהוֹם, which in biblical Hebrew never has the ה of article, but assumes it (prepared by Jes. lxiii. 13, Ps. cvi. 9) in the postbiblical Hebrew.

to say סנהדרין without article, just as the English sometimes say "Parliament," and not "the Parliament." There will scarcely be found any passage deviating from this usage of language. We meet often with the distinction of סנהדרין גדולה (the great council) and סנהדרין קטנה (the little council), as for instance in the beginning of the treatise *Sanhedrin*, and with sentences as סנהדרין היתה כחצי גרן "the council was like the semicircle of a barnfloor" (*Sanhedrin* 36<sup>b</sup>) and סנהדרין באין בצד המזבח, "the members of the council entered on the side of the altar" (*Mechilta*, end of the section *Jithro*). Sometimes it is written סנהדרין, without *Nun*, either in consequence of nonchalant pronunciation or by abbreviation of writing (*Sanhedrin* 3<sup>b</sup> and elsewhere; *Midrash Levit.* c. 19 end). In the Palestinian Targumim even a shorter form without interior aspiration occurs, which J. Levy erroneously punctuates סַנְדְרִי, instead of סַנְדְרִי (plur. סַנְדְרִיָּתַא). The word in all these forms is without article, like a proper name, as determinate in itself, and there is no reason for adding the article in the Hebrew New Testament, except, as it seems, in the translation of ὄλον (πᾶν) τὸ συνέδριον, though even there כל סנהדרין (for כל הסנהדרין) would be inoffensive and more consequent. The plural τὰ συνέδρια is to be found in the New Testament only twice. The Hebrew plural is סַנְדְרִיָּתַא (at the beginning of the Mishna *Sanhedrin*) or סַנְדְרִיָּאוֹת (*Jalkut Levit.* § 619, *Midrash Cant.* iii. 7); likewise as the singular without article, which also in those two passages (Matt. x. 17, Mark xiii. 9) is omitted, because councils in general are intended.

4. The Hebrew word for synagogue is כְּנֶסֶת (with the Zere of the first syllable (comp. the Aramaic כְּנֶשְׁתָּא with Chirek in the first); mostly where not the congregation *per se*, but with relation to the edifice, is aimed at, בֵּית (house) is put before. One says for a synagogue בית כנסת, and for the synagogue בית הכנסת. But which is the correct expression in the plural? The plural συναγωγαί, mostly with the

article *ai συναγωγαί*, occurs twenty-four times in the New Testament. The first passage is Matthew iv. 23, "teaching in *their* synagogues," where Salkinson has *יילמד שם בבתי הכנסת*. He omits (likewise as *ib.* ix. 35, x. 17, Mark i. 39, Luke iv. 15) the genitive *αὐτῶν* (of the Jews or of his countrymen), and his *בתי הכנסת* is by no means idiomatically Jewish. A plurality of synagogues is, as far as I know, throughout in Talmud and Midrash expressed either by *כְּנִסְיֹות* (Aram. *כְּנִישְׁתָּא*, e.g. *jer Schekalim*, c. 5, *כְּנִישְׁתָּא דְלִידָא*, the synagogues of Lydda) or (and that is the common use) by the double plural *בְּתֵי כְּנִסְיֹות*. Therefore I have in those five passages translated *בבתי כנסיותיהם*. More idiomatical would be *בכנסיותיהם*, without *בבתי*, just as *ἀρχισυναγωγοί* were called *ראשי כנסיות*, or even more idiomatical *בתי כנסיות שלָהֶם*, as in *Aboth* iii. 14, *בתי כנסיות של עמי הארץ*, that is, meeting houses of common people. Salkinson has throughout avoided the plural *כנסיות* as too rabbinical, as if the singular *כנסת* were not also post-biblical Hebrew; his *בתי הכנסת* is invented by himself and unknown in the Jewish literature. But also *בתי הכנסיות* (with article like *בתי הבמות*, 2 Kings xxiii. 19) is, according to my knowledge of the literature of Talmud and Midrash, without support and precedent. In the singular one says in case of exigency not less correctly *בית הכנסת* as *בית כנסת*, while the plural *בתי כנסיות* refuses the article even where it is required logically; e.g. *בתי כנסיות שבבל*, the synagogues in Babylon (*Megilla* 28<sup>b</sup>); *מכריזין בבתי כנסיות*, proclaiming in the synagogues (*Baba mezia* 28<sup>b</sup>). Hence it is commendable to render *ai συναγωγαί* of the New Testament always by *בתי כנסיות* as determinate in itself. Usage is a tyrant and has its unalterable caprices.

5. In another case the article is not to be rejected. In three passages of the Revelation (i. 8, xxi. 6, xxii. 13) our Lord says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." The Received Version reads the names of the two

letters without article, whereas the Revised Version substitutes, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," according to the Greek original. Quite in the same manner differ the two Hebrew New Testaments: Salkinson has **אנכי אלף ותר**, and I myself with articles, **אני האלף והתר**. Without doubt Salkinson has designedly struck out the article, which he found in my version. And indeed the usage of grammar and grammatical exegesis deals with the names of letters as proper names, which do not require external determination. But the language of Talmud and Midrash supplies the names of letters with the article wherever the matter requires or recommends it, not only where the letters are personified in a Haggadic manner, *e.g.* **האלף קורא תנר לפני** **הק"בה**, "the Aleph raised quarrel before the Holy One" (because of the beginning of the Torah with a Beth and not with an Aleph): *Gen. rabba*, chap. i., fol. 4<sup>a</sup>, but also where personification does not take place; *e.g.* **נחלק היוד** **לשרה**, "the Jod (sign for ten) was divided in halves, one He (sign for five) was given to Abraham, one to Sarah": *Num. rabba* chap. xviii. And even the grammarians do not hesitate to prefix the article, *e.g.* **האלף שבא נח נעלם**, the Aleph where it is quiescent (Abenezra, *Zachoth* 12<sup>a</sup>); and likewise the old commentators, as *e.g.* the author of the commentary *Lekach tob* to Genesis vi. 9, who remarks, that **התהלך** must be written with three points (Segol) under **הלמד**. Hence it follows that Salkinson's scruple about my translation **אני האלף והתנ** falls to the ground. The names of the two letters are there emblems of definite ideas, and resist the omission of the article.

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