

AN ACROSTIC POEM IN PRAISE OF JUDAS MACCABAEUS.

THAT portions of 1 Macc. exhibit the characteristics of Hebrew poetry is a fact which can hardly escape notice. For instance, Mattathias's last charge to his sons in ch. ii 49-68 must have taken a poetical form in the original Hebrew, i. e. it must have fallen into balanced couplets of a more or less rhythmical character. It may be compared with the praise of famous men in Ecclus. xlv 16-1 21. That this should be so is not surprising. Historical as the incident of the old hero's deathbed charge may well be, we can hardly suppose that any very definite record of his speech was handed down. The author of 1 Macc. puts into the mouth of Mattathias sentiments which seemed to him appropriate to the occasion, based very possibly upon a general report of his words; and he had precedents from past history for casting these into the form of poetry (cf. Jacob, Gen. xlix; Moses, Deut. xxxiii; David, 2 Sam. xxiii 1-7).

When we come to ch. iii, which begins the independent career of the chief hero, Judas, we find that in the opening description of his prowess (*vs.* 1-9) the writer rises to an epic strain; and here again we discern the main characteristics of Hebrew poetry, in a more carefully elaborated form. The poem was clearly designed to fall into couplets, exhibiting a parallelism which is not, as in the speech of Mattathias, synthetic merely, but very largely synonymous; and the rhythmical scheme of the couplets is 3+3 beats. Cf., for example, *vs.* 4, 5:

‘He was like a lion in his deeds,
And like a young lion roaring for prey.
And he pursued the lawless, and sought them out,
And the troublers of his people he consumed.’

Having read the passage and noted these facts, the thought flashed across my mind that possibly a poem in praise of Judas might have been constructed so as to give the acrostic יהודה המַכֵּה, *Yehūdāh ham-Makḵābāh*, ‘Judas the hammer’. Looking again at the text, the fact that this is so seemed to leap at once to the eye. The letters יהודה stood out clearly in the opening of the couplets contained in *vs.* 3-5. No one can help seeing יהוה יהוה or יהוה יהוה in κα

ἐπλάτυνεν δόξαν, וַיִּתְּרָן in καὶ συνεζώσατο, מָרָה in καὶ ὁμοιώθη, and הִרְבִּיךָ in καὶ ἐδίωξεν, while in *v.* 7 the מ of מַקְבָּה is obviously to be found in מַלְכֵי = βασιλείς. These Hebrew renderings are in every case the natural equivalents of the Greek. The only liberty which I was allowing myself was the assumption that the καί which links the clauses in every case, with the solitary exception of πολέμους συνεστήσατο in *v.* 3, was not so regularly present in the original form of the poem. Such an assumption is very reasonable. In prose-narrative it is natural to a Hebrew writer to link up the clauses in this way; but, if carried out in poetry to the same extent, the usage would amount to an inelegancy. The two clauses of a couplet may be linked by 'and', but the conjunction is only occasionally used to link a couplet to its predecessor. All, then, that we have to presuppose is that the author of 1 Macc., who probably was not himself the author of the poem, treated the poem as prose when he inserted it into his history, and so linked up all clauses with 'and' in the ordinary fashion of prose-narrative.

Not much ingenuity was needed to discover the rest of the acrostic, as will be seen through examination of the poem verse by verse.

vs. 1, 2 καὶ ἀνέστη Ἰούδας ὁ καλούμενος Μακκαβαῖος υἱὸς αὐτοῦ ἀντ' αὐτοῦ. καὶ ἐβοήθουν αὐτῷ πάντες οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ, καὶ πάντες ὅσοι ἐκολληθήσαν τῷ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐπολέμουν τὸν πόλεμον Ἰσραὴλ μετ' εὐφροσύνης, i. e. וַיִּקָּם יְהוּדָה הַנִּקְרָא מַקְבָּה בֶּן־הַתְּחִי וַיַּעֲזֹרֵלוּ כָל־אֶחָיו וְכָל־הַדְּבָקִים בְּאָבִיו וַיִּלְחֲמוּ מִלְחָמָת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשִׂמְחָה. This as it stands is plain prose, both in expression and in absence of rhythm. It owes its present form to the author of 1 Macc., who naturally felt the necessity of linking up the poem with his preceding narrative. Yet if, as we have already noticed, the couplets contained in *vs.* 3-5 offer the initial letters הוּדָה, we have to look in *vs.* 1, 2 for the opening couplet beginning with י. That the י is to be found in the name יְהוּדָה cannot be doubted. A poem in praise of Judas must naturally have opened with his name, and probably also with his title. On the other hand, since the poem is exclusively concerned with the hero, there was no occasion for stating that 'he rose up in the stead' of his father, nor that his brethren and the other adherents of his father helped him. These details may be regarded as due to the historian, who had mentioned the brothers and the adherents to the cause in the preceding narrative.

We have, then, as the opening stichos of the couplet, יְהוּדָה הַנִּקְרָא מַקְבָּה. A slight indication that this name and title have been incorporated whole from the poem is perhaps to be seen in the somewhat awkward position of υἱὸς αὐτοῦ. Had the writer been composing the whole sentence himself, and incorporating nothing, he would surely have arranged it וַיִּקָּם יְהוּדָה בֶּן־הַתְּחִי הַנִּקְרָא מַקְבָּה, or וַיִּקָּם יְהוּדָה בֶּן־

הנקרא מקבה תחתיו. The second stichos, referring, as we have remarked, to Judas exclusively, may have run **הוא נלחם מלחמת ישׂראל**. The inclusion of **בשמחה** gives one rhythmical stress too many, and we may thus regard this as due to the historian.

v. 3. καὶ ἐπλάτυνεν δόξαν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ,
καὶ ἐνεδύσατο θώρακα ὡς γίγας,
καὶ συνεζώσατο τὰ σκευὴ τὰ πολεμικὰ αὐτοῦ·
πολέμους συνεστήσατο,
σκεπάζων παρεμβολὴν ἐν ῥομφαίᾳ.

Here we clearly have the ה couplet in

הַרְחִיב כְּבוֹד לְעַמּוֹ
וַיִּלְבַּשׁ שָׂרְיוֹן כְּנֹבֵר

The poet may have written **הור הרחיב**; but the order of the Greek favours the placing of the verb first. *πλατύνειν*, in the great majority of its occurrences in LXX, represents **הרחיב**.

The rest of v. 3 is not a couplet, but a triplet, offering as its second stichos a line of two beats only, viz. *πολέμους συνεστήσατο* (אV, καὶ *συνεστήσατο πολέμους*), i. e. probably, **מלחמות (ויאמר) אסר**. (For אסר in this connexion cf. 1 Kgs. xx 14; 2 Chr. xiii 3; rendered in the first case by *συνάπτειν*, in the second, whole phrase, by *παρατάξασθαι*. For אסר rendered by *συνιστάναι* cf. Ps. cxvii (cxviii) 27, *συστήσασθε ἑορτήν* = **אסרו חג**.) This line, however, is both unrhythmical and spoils the couplet. Considering the fact that **ויהנר** and **ויאסר** may bear an identical sense, it is not unreasonable to suppose that we may here be dealing with a doublet. A variant of **כלי מלחמותו** may have been **כלי מלחמה**; this may have come from the margin into the text; and then, since two statements that he girded on his warlike harness were obviously superfluous, a simple emendation was **ויאסר (מלחמות) מלחמה**. Rejecting the clause as a gloss, we have as our 1 couplet:

וַיַּחְנֵר כְּלֵי מִלְחָמָתוֹ
וַיִּנּוּ מַחְנֵה בְּחָרָב

v. 4. καὶ ὁμοιώθη λέοντι ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ,
καὶ ὡς σκύμνος ἐρευγόμενος εἰς θήραν.

i. e. obviously,

דָּמָה לְאַרְיֵי בְּמַעֲשָׂיו
וּלְכַפִּיר שְׂאֵג לְטָרְף

ὁμοιοῦν = דמה קal, in the great preponderance of its occurrences. *σκύμνος* may represent either **כפיר** or **נור**. That it here stands for the former is clear from the fact that the comparison is, not with a mere cub, but with a full-grown young lion able to hunt his own prey. This is unmistakably the 7 couplet.

- υ. 5. καὶ ἐδίωξεν ἀνόμους ἐξερυνῶν,
καὶ τοὺς ταρασσοντας τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἐφλόγισεν.

This is naturally rendered,

הַדְּבִיק רְשָׁעִים וַיַּחֲפֹשֶׂם
וַיַּעֲרֵר עִמּוֹ בָּעֵר

The LXX equivalents of הדביק are various. The word never happens to be rendered elsewhere by διώκειν, though it is rendered by καταδιώκειν in 1 Chr. x 2. That הדביק is here represented by the Greek is at least as probable as that the original was רדד or הרליק. The equivalent of ἐφλόγισεν is probably בָּעֵר, since this means both 'burn' and also 'consume' or 'exterminate'. It was doubtless the latter sense which was intended by the original. Here, then, we have the ה couplet, and with it the name יהודה is complete.

- υ. 6. καὶ συνεστάλησαν οἱ ἄνομοι ἀπὸ τοῦ φόβου αὐτοῦ,
καὶ πάντες οἱ ἐργάται τῆς ἀνομίας συνεταράχθησαν,
καὶ εὐδοῶθη σωτηρία ἐν χειρὶ αὐτοῦ.

As we have already remarked, the מ of מקבה is to be found in βασιλεῖς = מְלָכִים in υ. 7. υ. 6, therefore, should begin with the ה of the Definite Article; and we have this in οἱ ἄνομοι = הַרְשָׁעִים. Since in this couplet we have a change of subject, it is in accordance with usage that the new subject should come before the verb. συστέλλειν = נִכְנַע in the two Biblical passages in which we know the Hebrew equivalent (Judg. viii 28; xi 33), and נִכְנַעוּ is very suitable in the present connexion. συνταράσσειν may well represent נִבְהַל. It renders the Pa'el of Arām. בָּהַל in Dan. iv 2, 16; v 6; vii 28. Our ה couplet then is

הַרְשָׁעִים נִכְנַעוּ מִיַּדְּאֲתָי
וְכָל-בָּעֵלֵי אֲזֵן נִבְהָלוּ

The final line καὶ εὐδοῶθη κτλ. is not parallel, but introduces a fresh idea. It clearly forms no part of the verse. We shall revert to it later.

- υ. 7. καὶ ἐπύκρναν βασιλεῖς πολλούς,
καὶ ἠψφρανεν τὸν Ἰακώβ ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ,
καὶ ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος τὸ μνημόσυνον αὐτοῦ εἰς εὐλογίαν.

The antithetically parallel מ couplet is

מְלָכִים רַבִּים הִרְיָו
וַיִּשְׁפַח יַעֲקֹב בְּמַעֲשָׂיו

The Passive of πικραίνειν = רִיַּו in Isa. xiv 9; Jer. xlii (xxxvii) 15; hence it is reasonable to suppose that the Active = הִרְיָו, which may mean either 'angered', as rendered by R.V., or 'perturbed, agitated'. καὶ ἕως κτλ. spoils the symmetry of the couplet, and cannot belong to it.

Now comes the chief (one might almost say, the only) difficulty. In *vs.* 8, 9 we have only enough material left for two full couplets, and we still have the three letters קכה for which to account. As we shall see, *v.* 8 gives us the כ in $\text{ἐν πόλεισιν} = \text{בְּעָרֵי}$, and the last clause of the same verse, which combines with the first clause of *v.* 9, gives the ה in $\text{ἀπέστρεψεν} = \text{שָׁבַח}$. What has become of the ק couplet?

There is nothing in the final clause of *v.* 7, καὶ ἕως κτλ. , which, as we have seen, is superfluous to couplet ב , which remotely suggests a Hebrew word beginning with ק ; nor can we bring in the superfluous clause of *v.* 6, καὶ εὐδοάθη κτλ. , to help us. We notice, however, that when we have combined the first clause of *v.* 9 with the last of *v.* 8 to form the final ה couplet, there still remains $\text{καὶ συνήγαγεν ἀπολλυμένους}$, which is superfluous in its present position. It is surely significant that the natural equivalent of συνήγαγεν is קָבַץ , which gives us the very letter which we want; and it is hardly, therefore, too bold to suppose that the clause has suffered accidental misplacement. $\text{καὶ ὠνομάσθη ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς}$ is clearly the climax of the whole poem, whereas $\text{συνήγαγεν ἀπολλυμένους}$ gives merely one of the details upon which that fame rested, and therefore might be expected to be mentioned earlier in the poem. $\text{συνήγαγεν ἀπολλυμένους}$ yields, however, only two stresses, מִקְבָּץ אֲבָרִים . The clause must, therefore, have lost something in transposition; and we may conjecture that it originally ran $\text{מִקְבָּץ אֲבָרִים קָבַץ עָפֹן}$. The parallel clause may be found either in the final superfluous clause of *v.* 6, or in that of *v.* 7. Perhaps the former suits the parallelism the better. Thus we obtain for the ק couplet,

$\text{קָבַץ אֲבָרֵי עָפֹן}$
 $\text{וְתַצְלַח יְשׁוּעָה בְּיָדוֹ}$

v. 8 a, b. $\text{καὶ διήλθεν ἐν πόλεισιν Ἰούδα,}$
 $\text{καὶ ἐξωλέθρευσεν ἀσεβεῖς ἐπ' αὐτῆς.}$

In place of ἐπ' αὐτῆς N V read ἐξ αὐτῆς , which is preferable. Our ב couplet then runs,

$\text{בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה הִתְחַלְּףָהּ}$
 $\text{וַיֵּאבֵד הַגִּנְפִים מִמֶּנָּה}$

$\text{διέρχασθαι} = \text{הִתְחַלְּףָהּ}$ is frequent. ἀσεβεῖς stands several times for the godless apostates, which is the proper term for the godless apostates.

vs. 8 c, 9 a. $\text{καὶ ἀπέστρεψεν ὄργην ἀπὸ Ἰσραήλ,}$
 $\text{καὶ ὠνομάσθη ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς.}$

The equivalent of ὠνομάσθη is somewhat dubious. Elsewhere in LXX ὀνομάζειν represents זכר , $\text{K}al$ and Hiph'il ; נקב , $\text{K}al$ and Niph'al ; קרא , $\text{K}al$ and Niph'al . Either נִקְבָּר or נִקְרָא would almost necessarily have been followed by שְׁמוֹ ; yet, had this stood in the original, it would

almost certainly have been represented by τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ. נָשָׁב, again, would hardly stand by itself. Possibly the Greek verb represents נִידַע in the sense, 'he made himself known', and this equivalent may be adopted in default of anything more certain. Thus the final ה couplet runs,

הָשִׁיב אֵף מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל
וַיִּדַע עַד־קֶצֶה הָאָרֶץ

Having completed the acrostic, we may now conclude with the poem in full :

יְהוּדָה הַנְּקָרָא מִקְבָּה
הוּא נִלְחָם מִלְחָמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל:

הַרְחִיב כְּבוֹד לְעַמּוֹ
וַיִּלְבֹּשׂ שָׂרִיז בְּגָבוֹר:

וַיַּחְזֵר כְּלֵי מִלְחָמָתוֹ
וַיִּגַּן מִחַנְתָּהּ בְּחָרֵב:

דָּמָה לְאָרִי בְּמַעֲשָׂיו
וְלִכְפִּיר שֶׁאֵין לְמִרְיָהּ:

הַדְּבִיק רְשָׁעִים וַיַּחֲפָשֵׂם
וְעָכְרִי עֲפֹז בְּעַר:

הַרְשָׁעִים נִכְנְעוּ מִיִּרְאָתוֹ
וְכָל־פְּעָלֵי אֱתוֹ נִבְהָלוּ:

מִלְכִּים רַבִּים הִרְגִּיו
וַיִּשְׁמַח יַעֲקֹב בְּמַעֲשָׂיו:

קָבַץ אֲבָדֵי עַמּוֹ
וַתִּצְלַח יְשׁוּעָה בְּיָדוֹ:

בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה הִתְחַלְּףוּ
וַיֵּאבֵד חַנְפִּים מִמֶּנֶה:

הָשִׁיב אֵף מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל
וַיִּדַע עַד־קֶצֶה הָאָרֶץ:

- י Judas, who was called 'the Hammer',
He fought the battle of Israel.
- י He extended glory for his people,
And donned a breastplate as a hero,
- י And girt on his warlike harness,
And protected the army with the sword.
- י He was like a lion in his deeds,
And like a young lion roaring for prey.
- י He pursued the wicked, and sought them out,
And the troublers of his people he consumed.
- י The wicked cringed for fear of him,
And all workers of lawlessness were dismayed.
- י Kings full many he perturbed,
And he made Jacob glad with his deeds.
- י He gathered the perishing of his people,
And salvation prospered in his hand.
- י Through the cities of Judah he went,
And destroyed the impious therefrom.
- י He turned away wrath from Israel,
And was renowned unto the end of the earth.