

# EPISTLE OF JEREMY

## INTRODUCTION

PROBABLY most readers approach these relics of the past with a controlling opinion or prejudice in their minds, whether they are conscious of the fact or not. If, however, we wish to form a just appreciation of the significance of an ancient document, we must clear our minds of prepossessions and let it speak to us. We must be careful neither to overlook things which are there, nor to read into it things which are not there. It may have been mere chance which caused it to survive the wreck of much else that we could wish had been saved; but it is more likely that it was preserved because of some intrinsic merit, or because of something in it which specially appealed to the sympathies of its earliest readers.

### § 1. NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE WORK.

The so-called *Epistle of Jeremy* reads more like a sermon or hortatory address than a letter; a fact which may account for its characteristic repetitions. The author is very much in earnest, as becomes a preacher. The idolatry he denounces is no imaginary picture, but the reality of his own environment. And it is not the idolatry of Canaan, so strongly condemned by the prophets of Yahweh, nor that of Egypt, which Jeremiah might have denounced had he long survived his forced migration to that uncongenial region. It is the idolatry of Babylon. For 'Babylon', in the author's use, is evidently not a mask for some other land or city. Not only is he aware of a very peculiar custom there prevalent, which Herodotus has also noted (*v.* 43; cf. *Hdt.* i. 199); but many incidental allusions and individual touches agree with other known features of Babylonian religion. (See the notes on *vv.* 4, 11, 15, 30-32, 41, 43.) Had 'Babylon' meant Egypt, the degrading animal-worship, of which the author of *Wisdom* makes so much, would hardly have escaped the shafts of his eager though not very profound satire.

### § 2. PROBABLE DATE.

But what Babylon was it? Was it the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar the Great, whose magnificent temples were enriched with the plunder of nations and maintained by the tribute of a subject world? Was it Babylon in its imperial splendour, as Jechonias and the men of the First Captivity saw it—Babylon as it was when the susceptible heart of the poet-priest Ezekiel was so powerfully impressed by the carven and painted symbols of its immemorial faith? Not Babylon in its glory, but Babylon in its decay, as Herodotus saw it more than a century afterwards; or rather as Alexander saw it, crumbling slowly away, yet still, in its ruined majesty, preserving enough of its ancient splendour to induce the conqueror of the world to choose it for his future capital and seat of empire. When our author makes Jeremiah predict a sojourn of the Jews in Babylon for 'seven generations', he does it deliberately. He can hardly have been ignorant of the famous prophecy of the seventy years, or of the less-heeded estimate of three generations involved in the statement that the exiles were to serve Nebuchadnezzar and his son and his son's son (*Jer.* xxv. 12; xxvii. 7). He seems, in fact, to be giving us a clue to his own period. Seven generations, allowing forty years to the generation according to Old Testament reckoning, would cover 280 years. If we count from the exile of Jechonias (597 B.C.), this brings us to the year 317 B.C., or counting (as the author may have done) from 586 B.C., the year of the final Captivity, we arrive at 306 B.C., some thirty years after the arrival of Alexander in Babylon. It must not be forgotten that the Jews who returned to Palestine in consequence of the Edict of Cyrus were only a small part of the Jewish population of Babylonia. Great numbers of them were perfectly satisfied with their adopted country, and no more desired to return to Judaea than our own colonists in Australia or New Zealand desire to return to

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the narrower conditions of English life. What is more, they not only went beyond the advice of Jeremiah (xxix. 4-7) in the matter of regarding the land of their exile as their permanent home. Many of them assumed Babylonian names, implying at least an identification of the God of Israel with Bel-Merodach or Nebo; and there must always have been a strong temptation to assimilate themselves entirely to their neighbours in the customs and manners of life. Doubtless there was considerable leakage from the synagogue to the indigenous worships. Some might sincerely believe that the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the overthrow of their national independence were proof enough of the superiority of the Babylonian gods. Others would surrender themselves to the influence of more sordid considerations (cf. Jer. xlv. 17 f.). The zeal of loyal spirits would naturally be roused by this state of things; and pieces like the one before us might have been circulated among the weak believers and waverers as dissuaves from the folly of exchanging the religion of the prophets for any lower form of faith and life.

### § 3. ORIGINAL LANGUAGE.

If the author belongs to anything like so early a date, he probably wrote in Hebrew, not Greek. But this probability is greatly strengthened by a careful study of the phenomena of the Greek text. It is incredible that a piece so formless, so confused, so utterly destitute of the graces of style, as this 'Epistle' now is, should have been thought worthy of preservation in the Alexandrian Canon of Scripture, had such been its original condition. Our translators and their Revisers have done their best; but what a poor halting semblance of sense, not to say manifest nonsense, the result too often is! Harmony with context and logical connexion of thought are often untraceable. We are presented with a voluble but ill-connected succession of propositions, bearing little visible relation to each other beyond a general animus against idolatry. But almost every verse exhibits peculiarities which suggest translation, and that from a Hebrew original, as will be seen by reference to the notes on the text. It is, of course, often easier to see that the Greek is more or less suspicious than to divine the true reading of the lost Hebrew archetype. A suggestion may seem plausible, even probable, without being right. But a possible sense is better than nonsense and may be accepted provisionally, in preference to the assumption that we have before us nothing better than the crude effusion of an illiterate fanatic. Amid all such uncertainties one thing appears to be certain. It is that in this *Epistle of Jeremy* there are places where the strange phraseology of the Greek can only be accounted for by assuming that the writer of it supplied the wrong vowels to some Hebrew word which he was translating, or mistook some Hebrew consonant for another resembling it, or could only guess at the meaning of a corrupted text. His MS. may have been badly written or have become illegible in places through time and use. Perhaps also, like some of his modern commentators, he was not himself a too expert Hebraist, though capable enough of a certain careless and misleading fluency in Greek, which enabled him to conceal lack of knowledge under a surface of smoothly-expressed inaccuracies. It may suffice to examine a few of the more striking instances here, referring to the notes on the text for a more complete presentation of the evidence.

(1) *V. 12*: 'from rust and **moths**'. The true meaning; but the Greek has ἀπὸ ῥυτίδων καὶ βρομύδρων = 'from rust and foods'. In LXX ἀρώματα = 𐤁𐤓𐤁𐤀 (Gen. xli. 37 f.) or 𐤁𐤓𐤁𐤀 (Gen. vi. 21) *food*. The translator read the latter word here, instead of 𐤁𐤓𐤁𐤀 *from a devourer* (= moth or grub; cf. Mal. iii. 11; Isa. li. 8; Matt. vi. 19 σὺς καὶ βρομύς = 𐤁𐤓𐤁𐤀 𐤁𐤓𐤁𐤀 *moth and devourer*). The translator supplied the wrong vowel-points in reading his unpointed Hebrew text.

(2) *V. 20*: 'They are as one of the beams of the temple; and men say their hearts are eaten out,' &c. Here there is no apparent connexion of thought, and the Greek does not help us. But the words τὰς δὲ καρδίας αὐτῶν φασι εἶναι suggest a corruption of the common Hebrew phrase 'to say in one's heart' = *to think*. The original sense may thus have been: **And he (the idol) is like a beam** (i.e. a mere log) **inside the temple** (cf. 1 Kings vi. 15); **yet they think that he eats!** (i.e. consumes the offerings made to him). For eating, as a proof of being a 'living god', see Bel 6. Our translator pointed 𐤁𐤓𐤁𐤀 instead of 𐤁𐤓𐤁𐤀 (Num. xxii. 4).

(3) *V. 31*: Gk. ὁρμυνοῦντες, *drive chariots*. Not even a Jew of 100 B.C. would have accused the Babylonian priests of careering about in chariots inside their temples, and that with all the outward signs of mourning upon their bodies, rent clothes, shaven heads, &c. But read 'they weep' instead of 'they drive chariots', and the context is satisfied, and all becomes clear. It is merely a matter of writing יבכו, which was perhaps miswritten יבנו in the translator's MS., for יבנו *they ride*. Cf. v. 32, and the notes *in loc.* The reference is to services of mourning for the gods, especially Dumuzi = Tammuz (see *Cuneiform Texts*, vol. xv).



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(4) *V.* 35. 'They can neither give riches *nor money*' (χαλκόν): a false antithesis, and incongruous with the context (*v.* 34; cf. 1 Sam. ii. 7). What is obviously required is οὐτε πένιαν, 'nor poverty': Prov. xxx. 8. The translator may have mistaken a badly written ריש poverty for חש and then guessed that this was a remnant of נחש (= χαλκός). But if חלכה in Ps. x. 8, 10 really means ὁ πένις (LXX and Syr.), it may be that חלכות (= πένια) stood in the Heb. MS. of our *Epistle*, and the Greek translator, not being acquainted with the rare word, identified it with the like-sounding χαλκός; cf. the transliterations of Heb. words in LXX.

(5) *V.* 54. 'Neither can they judge . . . being unable: *for they are as crows between heaven and earth*.' The point of the comparison is obscure. Moreover, a verb seems wanting, as crows are not always in the air. Ἀδύνατοι ὄντες is perhaps a misrendering of כי דלו (cf. Job xxviii. 4 with *v.* 16, xxxi. 16), and ὡς περ αἱ (AQ<sup>ms</sup> recte) κορυφαί may be due to misreading כערבים for בעבים. We thus get the sense: *for they hang suspended—like the clouds—between heaven and earth*. The reference would be to plated wooden images hung against the walls of the temples.

(6) *V.* 59. 'Therefore it is better to be *a king that sheweth his manhood* . . . than such false gods.' Was such a feeble truism worth writing or worth preserving? Could it ever have proved edifying to any readers whatever? But let us look at the context. The other comparisons of the verse are a vessel, a door, a wooden pillar—all inanimate objects. Emend *Better is a stick* (Ezek. xxxix. 9) *in the hand of a mighty man* . . . *than the false gods*, and harmony and sense are restored to the whole verse. (Heb. טוב מִלֵּךְ מִרְאָה נְבוֹר instead of טוב מִלֵּךְ מִרְאָה נְבוֹר.)

(7) *V.* 68. 'The (wild) beasts are better than they: for they can get under a covert, and *help themselves*.' The object of getting under a covert is surely *to hide*; and it is almost self-evident that αὐτὰ ὠφελεῖσθαι represents Heb. לְהַעֲלֵם *to hide themselves*. The translator vocalized the word wrongly, reading לְהַעֲלִים *to profit them* (cf. Isa. xxx. 5) instead of לְהַעֲלִים *to hide*.

(8) *V.* 72. 'The *bright purple* that rotteth upon them.' The Greek has 'the purple and the marble that rotteth upon them'. As I pointed out long ago (*Var. Apocr.* in loc.), this is clearly a case of confusion between שֵׁשׁ byssus, *fine linen*, and its homophone שֵׁשׁ alabaster or marble (Cant. v. 15). 'Marble' does not 'rot', 'fine linen' does; and 'purple and fine linen' go together (Exod. xxvi. 1; Prov. xxxi. 22; Luke xvi. 19).

For a not inconsiderable amount of similar evidence the notes on the text may be consulted. Altogether it would seem difficult to avoid the conclusion that our *Epistle* is a free translation of a lost Hebrew original. In that case, the Greek version may very well be considerably later in date, and may even belong to the age of the Maccabees.

## THE EPISTLE OF JEREMY

1. A copy of an epistle, which Jeremy sent unto them which were to be led captives into Babylon by the king of the Babylonians, to certify them, as it was commanded him of God.
2. Because of the sins which ye have committed before God, ye shall be led away captives into
3. Babylon by Nabuchodonosor king of the Babylonians. So when ye be come unto Babylon, ye

1. copy of an epistle, which Jeremy sent. (Ἀντίγραφον ἐπιστολῆς ἧς ἀπέσταλκεν Ἰερემίας = אַנְטִיגְרַפֿוֹן עִפִּסְטוֹלָהּ יֵרֵמְיָהוּ; cf. Ezra iv. 11; v. 6.) It is nowhere stated in the body of the letter that Jeremiah wrote it. The statement might be only the guess of an editor or translator who remembered Jer. xxix and 2 Macc. ii. 2. Some such introductory formula, however, seems almost necessary to the understanding of what follows; and, upon the whole, the superscription is probably an integral part of the original composition. Cf. the last clause 'as it was commanded him of God' with v. 3 'I will bring you out' and v. 7 'mine angel'.

Why does not the author say 'Jeremiah the prophet', after the precedent of Jer. xxix. 1 and 2 Macc. ii. 1? He assumes that every reader will know who 'Jeremiah' was, although others besides the prophet bore the name (e.g. 2 Kings xxiv. 18 = Jer. li. 1). But doubtless in his day the others would not be thought of. The mention of the name would at once suggest the great prophet whose importance had come to overshadow that of all the other great figures of the past in the imagination of later generations.

them which were to be led: i.e. were about to be led, or were on the point of being led (τοῖς ἀχθούμενοις). There is no mention of such a letter being sent by Jeremiah to the captives deported by Nebuzaradan in 586 ('the remnant of the people'; Jer. xxxix. 9). The prophet was, however, so kindly treated by the Chaldeans that, had he wished to do so, he would probably have been permitted to communicate with his unfortunate countrymen. But the record is silent; and, besides, the whole character of the letter is quite unlike the sort of appeal which the dreadful circumstances of the time would have elicited from the tender heart and powerfully stirred sympathies of the prophet. No satire on idolatry, however brilliant, no series of gibes and jests at the gods of the conquerors, however ingeniously conceived and bitterly expressed, could seem other than strangely ill-timed to the poor captives, cowering in abject fear before their conquerors, in the very hour of what seemed to be the irretrievable ruin of their country and the triumph of the gods of Babylon.

The letter of Jer. xxix is expressly stated to have been sent to the exiles (of 597) when already established in Babylon (see vv. 1, 4, 7); not when they were on the point of leaving their own country, as our superscription affirms in regard to the captives to whom this 'Epistle of Jeremy' is supposed to be sent.

the king of the Babylonians. The same expression recurs in v. 2, and is, so far as it goes, an indication that the heading is due to the composer of the letter. The phrase of the canonical books is 'the king of Babylon' (Kings, Jer., Ezek., &c.), which the Syriac has in both places here also. See also Baruch i. 9 11 f. It would be somewhat strange if a Greek translator had rendered so easy and common a phrase as the Heb. מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל in this unnatural way. (Was the original phrase כְּנִיזָא בְּבִלְיָא? Cf. Ezra iv. 9 for 'the Babylonians'.)

to certify them. Rather, 'to report unto them.' This word ἀπαγγέλλω in LXX mostly represents Heb. הִגִּיד, 'announce, report, give a message'; e.g. Jer. xvi. 10 *et seq.*

2. Rather, 'It is on account of your sins which ye have sinned before God, that ye will be brought to Babylon as captives.' Cf. Jer. xxxix. 7; 2 Kings xxv. 7. The writer is not predicting, as the English of both A. V. and R. V. seems to imply. He is declaring the moral cause of the banishment which, as they well knew, awaited them. It is as though the people had asked the question supposed in Jer. xvi. 10.

Since it was, strictly speaking, Nebuzaradan who carried away the people after the fall of Jerusalem in 586, 2 Kings xxv. 11, while (according to 2 Kings xxiv. 10-16) Nebuchadnezzar himself carried away Jehoiachin and his fellow-captives, it would seem that our author really intends the earlier captivity of 597. The next verse, in fact, summarizes the message of the prophet to the exiles of the first captivity, Jer. xxix. 4-11.

3. Lit. 'ye shall be there many years and a long time unto seven generations; but after this I will bring you out thence with peace.' Cf. Jer. xxix. 10, 11. The datum 'unto seven generations' is quite inexplicable if the author was acquainted with the writings of Jeremiah and felt himself bound by their data in such a matter. It is difficult to imagine any Jew of literary pretensions ignorant of that prophet's limit of 'seventy years' for the Babylonian Captivity (Jer. xxv. 12; xxix. 10). It is, of course, possible that the author was thinking of another passage of Jeremiah, viz. xxvii. 7. There the prophet estimates the divinely appointed duration of Babylonian dominion at three generations. 'All the nations', he says, 'shall serve him' (i.e. 'Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon'), 'and his son, and his son's son, until the time of his own land come.' This might be regarded as limiting the duration of the Captivity also to three generations; and we might suppose that a Hebrew 2 (= 3) has been confused with 7 (= 7) in the original text of our Epistle. But see the Introduction.



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shall remain there many years, and for a long season, even for seven generations: and after 4 that I will bring you out peaceably from thence. But now shall ye see in Babylon gods of 5 silver, and of gold, and of wood, borne upon shoulders, which cause the nations to fear. Beware therefore that ye in no wise become like unto the strangers, neither let fear take hold upon you because of them, when ye see the multitude before them and behind them, worshipping them. 6. 7 But say ye in your hearts, O Lord, we must worship thee. For mine angel is with you, and 8 I myself do care for your souls. For their tongue is polished by the workman, and they

§ 2, for what appears to be a more probable solution of the difficulty. The Syriac cuts the knot, reading 'until seventy years; and after seventy years I will bring you forth from thence in peace'. 'With peace' (μετ' εἰρήνης = בשלום) occurs in LXX Gen. xxvi. 29; Exod. xviii. 23.

Since Jer. xxvii. 7 does not appear in the LXX (see Q<sup>ms</sup>), it would seem that our epistoler was not dependent on that source for his knowledge of Jeremiah's writings, but was acquainted with the Heb. text.

4. But now shall ye see. Νυνὶ δὲ ὁψέσθε = יעתה תראו, And now, ye will see: cf. Gen. xxxii. 11; Exod. xxxii. 34.

gods of silver, and of gold, and of wood. Vulgate: 'gods of gold, and of silver, and of stone, and of wood.' But cf. Ps. cxv. 4, cxxxv. 15; Jer. x. 4 for 'silver and gold'. For the addition (found also in Syr.), see Deut. iv. 28, xxix. 17; Dan. v. 4. Obviously, stone would be too heavy a material for gods which were to be 'borne upon shoulders'; i.e. carried in procession by the priests on their festivals, as depicted in the Assyrian sculptures. The 'gods of silver and of gold', moreover, were not of solid metal; but of wood overlaid with the precious ores. See Isa. xl. 19 f., xli. 6 f., xlv. 12-17, xlv. 6 f.; Jer. x. 3-5.

which cause the nations to fear. Lit. 'showing (or displaying) a fear to the nations' (δεικνύσας φόβον τοῖς ἔθνεσιν = מראים את־העמים כורא, 'making the nations behold an object of fear'). A 'fear' or 'dread' denotes a deity in Aramaic (ܩܪܝܐ, Syr. ܩܪܝܐ) as well as in Hebrew (מורא); Isa. viii. 12 f.; Ps. lxxvi. 12; פחד, Gen. xxxi. 42. The curious Greek phrase, which is usually explained by reference to Ps. lx. 5 ('Thou hast made thy people see hard things'), suggests the Hebrew original given above, with its characteristic paronomasia or play upon like-sounding words (*mar'im mōrā'*), which the translator failed to reproduce in Greek. So the LXX everywhere ignores this feature of Hebrew style.

5. Rather, 'Beware, then, lest ye also become wholly assimilated to the foreigners, and fear at them (i.e. the idols) seize you, when ye see a crowd before and behind them bowing down to them.' This again suggests a Hebrew original. ונשמרתם פן דמה תרמו גם אתם לבני נכר ויראה אתכם תאוו עליהם וני. Note especially the ἀφομοιωθέντες ἀφομοιωθέντες = דמה תרמו (the compound Greek verb seems peculiar to this Epistle in LXX: see Tromm), and ἐπ' αὐτοῖς = עליהם 'on account of them', as the source of the fear. For the phrase 'fear take (or seize) you', see Ps. xlviii. 7; Exod. xv. 15. 'Before and behind them': i.e. in the procession.

6. But say ye in your hearts. The Greek has 'your understanding' (τῇ διανοίᾳ), as in Gen. xvii. 17; xxvii. 41. Heb. בלבבכם 'in your heart' (sing.). The Greek of what follows (σοὶ δὲ ἐκπροσκαυνῶν, Δέσποτα) might represent Heb. לך להשתחוות ארני. The verse, however, may be an interpolation. It breaks the connexion between vv. 5, 7 (see note on v. 7), and is omitted by LXX<sup>a</sup>.

7. For mine angel is with you: recalls Exod. xxiii. 23, xxxii. 34; Gen. xxiv. 7, xlviii. 16; Exod. xxiii. 20; Num. xx. 16.

The next clause should run: 'And he (*emphatic*) careth for your lives.' The original verse may have been something of this kind:

כי מלאכי אתכם  
והוא דורש (ל)נפשכם:

Cf. Gen. xxvi. 24; Isa. xliii. 5; Ps. cxlii. 5; Jer. xxx. 14, 17. (For the plur. τὰς ψυχὰς = נפש sing., cf. Ps. xix. 8, xxxiii. 19 LXX.)

God is represented as speaking directly, as in v. 3. No doubt, the author felt that the whole message was a 'word of God', like all prophetic utterances. But the present verse may perhaps be a direct quotation from some poetical or prophetic piece. It does not seem likely that an author writing in Greek would have chosen to use the phrase ἐκζητῶν τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν in this special sense, unless he had had such a word as דרש (or בקש, Prov. xxix. 10) before him. 'To seek a man's soul or life' generally implies a murderous, not a benevolent motive. See Ps. xxxv. 4, xxxviii. 13, &c.; 2 Sam. iv. 8 (all בקש). For דרש = ἐκζητῶ, see also Gen. ix. 5. Perhaps the author intended this last use: 'And he requireth or will require (i.e. avenge) your lives.' (So Syr. 'The A. of the Lord—מלאך—is with you, and he will avenge your souls.') Further, why ἐκζητῶν, and not ἐκζητῇ (or ἐκζητῆται), if the author was not translating a Heb. participle?

8-16. Idols, though made of costly materials and richly adorned, are powerless to help or to hurt.

8. For their tongue is polished by the workman (*more lit.* a craftsman. τέκτων = חרש, Isa. xl. 18, 20; a carver or graver in wood, metal, or stone). Heb. perhaps: כי לשונם שנונה ביד חרש (*sharpened rather than polished*); a paronomasia. Cf. Ps. lxiv. 4, cxl. 4. κατεξυμμένη here only in LXX (Tromm). If 'polished' were what the author intended, this might represent Heb. מפורטה or מרוקה. It is implied that the images' mouths were open,

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9 themselves are overlaid with gold and with silver; yet are they but false, and cannot speak. And taking gold, as it were for a virgin that loveth to go gay, they make crowns for the heads of their gods: and sometimes also the priests convey from their gods gold and silver, and bestow it upon themselves; and will even give thereof to the common harlots: and they deck them as men with garments, even the gods of silver, and gods of gold, and of wood. Yet cannot these gods save themselves from rust and moths, though they be covered with purple raiment. They wipe their faces because of the dust of the temple, which is thick upon them. And he that cannot put to

as if to speak (*scil.* oracles). The connexion of thought with what precedes may be: 'Fear them not for &c. The verse is reminiscent of Ps. cxv. 4, 5a.

and they themselves: i.e. their bodies (Greek *αἰρά τε*: cf. *Iliad* i. 4). Heb. *וְעַצְמָם* or *וְעַצְמָם*. The whole clause may have been: *וְעַצְמָם נִחַם בָּהֶם וּבְכֶסֶף*.

yet are they but false. *ψαῖδες* = שקר, Jer. x. 14, xiii. 25, a deception or fraud, of an idol. Render: 'but they are a fraud.' Heb. *וְהֵם שִׁקְרָה*; after which the verse concludes with *וְלֹא יִכְלֹו לְרַבֵּר*.

9. Lit. 'And as for a virgin fond of adornment, taking gold they make crowns upon the heads of their gods.' *φιλόκοσμος* only here in LXX. Heb. *אֲנִשְׁתֵּי לְבַת־חַמָּה עֲרִיצוֹת עֲלֵיהֶן אֱלֹהִים*. Cf. Jer. ii. 32, iv. 30; Zech. vi. 11.

10. Lit. 'But there are also times when the priests, filching from their gods gold and silver, spend it on themselves.' Heb. perhaps *וַיִּהְיֶה הַיּוֹם וַיִּגְבוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים וַיִּשְׁפְּצוּהָם*; *ἡμέρας* = נגב, Job xxi. 18. *κατασπάλασσεν εἰς τι*, 'to spend upon a thing,' is a classical phrase. The verb renders Heb. *אָכַל* 'to eat, consume,' Jer. iii. 24 et al. Possibly *εἰς ταῦτα* (= להם) is due to the translator's having misread *לֶחֶם* 'bread' as *לָחֶם*. The Heb. will then have been: *וַיִּשְׁפְּצוּהָם וַיִּאָּכְלוּ* or *וַיִּאָּכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁפְּצוּהָם* 'and eat bread' (= feast: Gen. xliii. 25; Ps. xiv. 4; Jer. xli. 1; Luke xiv. 15). Otherwise, cf. 2 Kings xii. 12 and suppose an original like *וַיִּשְׁפְּצוּהָם וַיִּשְׂאֻהָם* 'and would spend it on themselves': so the Syriac (*ܡܫܬܩܝܢ*).

11. Render: 'while they will give part of them (i.e. the gold and silver ornaments) even to the harlots on the roof'; i.e. apparently, the roof of the temple, where perhaps they slept for coolness, as on an ordinary house-roof (cf. Joshua ii. 6). These would be hierodules or temple-harlots such as we know to have been connected with some of the Babylonian temples, e.g. that of Ishtar at Erech (*ἱεράριον* = קדש; cf. Gen. xxxviii. 21 f.; Deut. xxiii. 17). *στέγος*, roof (Syr. om.), was also used for a brothel in late Greek; and the variant *τέγος* (A Q) is Aquila's equivalent of קֶבֶד in Num. xxv. 8 'a vaulted tent', rendered by the Vulg. *lupanar*, and so used in Neo-Hebrew. Cf. Lat. *fovea*, 'vaulted cellar; brothel.' Was this the author's meaning here, and did he write *וַיִּתְּנוּהָם עַל הַקֶּבֶד* ('and they would give part of them even to the whores by the arched bower')? In view of the Babylonian custom the former interpretation seems preferable. Indeed, it seems possible, and even probable, that the original reference was to the supposed brides of Bel, who slept in the shrine on the top-stage of his great pyramidal temple (see Hdt. i. 181).

and they deck them as men with garments, *ἡμέρας* = וְהֵם שִׁקְרָה וְהֵם שִׁקְרָה וְהֵם שִׁקְרָה (cf. Ezek. xvi. 11; 2 Kings x. 22). This sentence resumes the thread of the narrative from 7. 9, 10, 11 a constituting a parenthesis.

12. Lit. 'But these are not saved from rust and fret, arrayed in purple apparel' = *וְאֵלֶּם נִשְׁמָרִים מִרֹּחַ וּמִפֶּשֶׁת* (cf. Num. x. 9; Ezek. xvi. 18, xxiv. 6; Esther viii. 15; Mal. iii. 11; Job xiii. 28; 1 Kings xxii. 10, for the vocabulary). The second clause probably belongs to this rather than to the following verse (Vulg., Arab.); since, if 'rust' refers to the tarnishing of metal, 'fret' (*βρώματα*) seems to indicate the ravages of moths or grubs in clothing. The genitive absolute is, therefore, incorrectly used by the translator. But, further, *βρώματα* in the LXX generally means food (Heb. *אָכַל* or *מִאֲכָל*). *ἑξήκοντα* gives twenty-two instances of *βρώματα* = אָכַל (e.g. Gen. xli. 35 f.) and ten of *βρώματα* = מִאֲכָל (Gen. vi. 21). It is evident that 'from rust and food' cannot be right. We probably have here another instance of error in translation from the Hebrew original. If *וּמִפֶּשֶׁת* stood in the unpunctuated text, the translator may be supposed to have pointed *וּמִפֶּשֶׁת* (= καὶ βρ.) instead of *וּמִפֶּשֶׁת* 'and from a devourer' (i.e. moth or grub; Mal. iii. 11; cf. Job xiii. 28; Amos iv. 9). LXX makes the same blunder in Isa. lv. 10, giving *εἰς βρώματα* for *לָאֵכָל* ('to the eater'). In Matt. vi. 19 also *εἰς καὶ βρώματα* may represent *וְעַשׂ מִפֶּשֶׁת* 'moth and devourer' (Isa. li. 8. Cf. also Assy. *ākila*, 'eater,' 'grub,' 'worm,' &c.).

13. They wipe their faces. *ἐκπύρρουν* is strange, if this be the meaning. We should have expected *ἐκπύρρουν*. The middle voice denotes 'to wipe away one's own tears', *Anth. Palat.* 5. 43. If the Heb. was *יִשְׁחֻ פְּנֵיהֶם* 'they wipe their faces', the translator might have pointed the verb as a passive, *יִשְׁחֻ*, understanding 'they are wiped as to their faces' = 'they have their faces wiped'; though the sense might rather be simply 'their faces are wiped'. (For the verb see Prov. xxx. 20; Isa. xxv. 8.)

the temple is *τῆς οἰκίας* = הַבַּיִת 'the house'. Cf. 1 Kings vi. But *בַּיִת* in the sense of temple or God's house (Assyr. *bīt illi*) is usually *oikos* in LXX, while *oikia* is an ordinary dwelling-house. Did the translator use the latter word purposely, to express contempt for the heathen temple?

14. Lit. 'And a seepare holdeth he, as a man judge of a place, who will not destroy him who offendeth



death one that offendeth against him holdeth a sceptre, as though he were judge of a country.  
 15 He hath also a dagger in his right hand, and an axe: but cannot deliver himself from war and  
 16, 17 robbers. Whereby they are known not to be gods: therefore fear them not. For like as a vessel  
 that a man useth is nothing worth when it is broken; even so it is with their gods: when they  
 18 be set up in the temples their eyes be full of dust through the feet of them that come in. And  
 as the courts are made sure on every side upon him that offendeth the king, as being committed  
 to suffer death; *even so* the priests make fast their temples with doors, with locks, and bars, lest  
 19 they be carried off by robbers. They light them candles, yea, more than for themselves, whereof

against him' = : לא יהרג את חוטא לו: (cf. Amos i. 5; Exod. ii. 14; Gen. xx. 9). *ἀνελαι* may also stand for *נָקָה* will smite (Gen. iv. 14); a suitable word in connexion with שָׁבַט (Isa. xi. 4). The Babylonian gods are represented on the sculptures and seal-engravings as holding sceptres, swords, axes, and other emblems of authority. Some of the Hittite deities at Boghaz Keui carry sceptres; and an axe is the common Egyptian symbol for a god.

15. Lit. 'But he holdeth a dagger in (A Q) the (A) right hand and an axe' = Heb. . . . וְנֶחֱסֵם חֶרֶב בְּיָמִינוֹ וְנֶחֱסֵם לִיָּתוֹן. LXX has ἐγχευόμενον for Heb. חֶרֶב 'sword' in Ezek. xxi. 3, 4, 5 and elsewhere. Syr. adds: 'in his left,' which may very well be right. Restore therefore: וְנֶחֱסֵם חֶרֶב בְּיָמִינוֹ וְנֶחֱסֵם לִיָּתוֹן. Lit. 'but himself from war and brigands he will not deliver'. The collocation 'war and brigands' is improbable; and it seems natural to suppose a confusion of πολέμιος and πωλεῖμος; such as we observe in Esther ix. 16, where we find ἀπὸ τῶν πολέμιων (but B πολέμιων) for מְאִיבֵיהֶם. Restoring πωλεῖμων (cf. A πωλεῖμων), here, we conjecture the following original text: וְנֶחֱסֵם חֶרֶב בְּיָמִינוֹ וְנֶחֱסֵם לִיָּתוֹן. Lit. 'but himself from enemies and spoilers he cannot deliver' (cf. Isa. xlv. 20; Obad. 5).

16. they are known. Gk. γινώσκονται εἰσιν, which, according to the ordinary use of the LXX, should mean 'they are kinsfolk' (Ruth ii. 1) or 'friends' (2 Sam. iii. 8). The translator probably had the Heb. מוֹדְעִים in his MS., and possibly confused the participle with the substantive. The verse, which is rhetorically repeated in almost the same words at vv. 23, 29, 65, 69, may be reconstructed in Hebrew somewhat thus: עַל-אֵלֶּה מוֹדְעִים לֹא-אֱלֹהִים (הֵם) עֲלֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֵתָם. Cf. Isa. xxxi. 3, lvii. 6; Jer. x. 5, v. 7.

17-23. The senseless idols are patient of all indignities.

17. A reminiscence of Jer. xxii. 28, Hos. viii. 8, as regards the language of the first half of the verse. But *σκεῦος ἀνθρώπου* is suspicious, as it hardly means 'a vessel that a man useth'; and if it did, the description would be quite superfluous. It looks as if *earthenware* (Jer. xxxii. 14: כְּלִי חֶרֶשׁ) had been misread by confusion of letters (*w* or *sh* is sometimes mistaken for *y* or *m*), or perhaps rather *ἀνὴρ*. Cf. also the Syr., which gives 'a potter's vessel'. Lit. the Greek says: 'For just as a vessel of a man, if broken, becometh useless, such are their gods.' The Heb. may have been: כִּי כְּכֵל חֶרֶשׁ נִפְחַן אֵין חֶפְזָן בּוֹ כֵּן הֵיוּ אֱלֹהֵיהֶם. 'For like an earthen vessel broken, useless, so are their gods.' A broken vessel is a proverb of worthlessness, Jer. xxii. 28. (The full stop is rightly placed here; what follows is a new thought.) The next statement may be rendered: 'When they have been established in their houses, their eyes are (become) full of dust from the feet,' &c. But it seems probable that, in the Hebrew, the clause מַעֲנִים בְּבָתֵּיהֶם 'set up in the houses' (= temples), or whatever the phrase was which the Greek represents by καθιδρυμένοι (? *μισδῆς* נִפְחִים) αὐτῶν ἐν τοῖς οἴκοις, was connected with the preceding words. The sense will then have been: 'So are their gods, set up in their temples.' Then followed in the Hebrew, as a new sentence: עֵינֵיהֶם מְלֵא עָפָר מְרִנֵּי הַבָּאִים: 'their eyes are filled with dust,' &c. LXX<sup>A</sup> gives κήποις for οἴκοις; an interesting variant, which recalls Isa. lvi. 3. Cf. also v. 21 and the note there.

18. the courts are made sure on every side. Gk. περιπεφραγμέναι εἰσιν αἱ αἰαλαί, 'the courts (of the palace) are fenced in all round'; cf. Job i. 10 (שָׁרַף = περιφράσσω; Hos. ii. 6 (8) = φράσσω, 'hedge in'). αἰαλή generally = חֲצֵר 'court'; but 'the courts are fortified' does not give a good sense, and αἰαλή sometimes represents Heb. שַׁעַר 'gate' (Ps. cxvii. 2; Esther ii. 19). Perhaps the Heb. was נִסְגְּרוּ הַשַּׁעֲרִים 'the gates are shut'. αἰαλαί can hardly be the courts of a prison, as in Jer. xxxii. 2, xxxiii. 1 (Gifford); for that would require the addition of τῆς φυλακῆς.

as being committed to suffer death. Lit. 'as having been led off for death' (execution). This is not very intelligible; and A prefixes the conjunction ἢ or, which improves the sense, and may be right. ἀπαγόμενος in LXX renders Heb. אֲסִיר 'prisoner' (Gen. xxxix. 22; cf. xl. 3 אֲסִיר = ἀπῆστο, xlii. 16 הָאֲסִיר = ἀπάχθητε; Isa. xiv. 17 τοὺς ἐν ἀπαγωγῇ = אֲסִירִים). Either this (אֲסִיר לָמוֹת) might have been the phrase here, or we may suppose an original לָמוֹת מִבָּל 'one led to death' (Isa. liii. 7; Jer. xi. 19). The rest of the verse is easy. The whole may have run in the Hebrew pretty much as follows: וּבְעֵשֶׂר בְּעֵר אִישׁ חוֹטָא לְמֶלֶךְ נִסְגְּרוּ הַשַּׁעֲרִים וּבְעֵשֶׂר בְּעֵר אִישׁ חוֹטָא לְמֶלֶךְ נִסְגְּרוּ הַשַּׁעֲרִים וּבְעֵשֶׂר בְּעֵר אִישׁ חוֹטָא לְמֶלֶךְ נִסְגְּרוּ הַשַּׁעֲרִים וּבְעֵשֶׂר בְּעֵר אִישׁ חוֹטָא לְמֶלֶךְ נִסְגְּרוּ הַשַּׁעֲרִים. 'And just as around an offender against a king the gates are shut, or around one bound for execution (or a man led to execution); so do the priests strengthen their (the idols') houses with doors, and locks, and bars, lest by the hand of spoilers they should be despoiled'. (Syr. 'And like a man who is condemned by the king, their arms are stretched out—like the condemned (pl.) to death. Their houses their priests strengthen,' &c. This points to a different Greek exemplar.)

19. They light them candles. Rather: 'Lamps they burn'; Gk. λύχνους καίουσιν, which probably represents Heb. יַעֲרִכוּ נֵרוֹת 'lamps they arrange'; see Lev. xxiv. 4.

# EPISTLE OF JEREMY 20-25

20 they cannot see one. They are as one of the beams of the temple; and men say their hearts  
 21 are eaten out, when things creeping out of the earth devour both them and their raiment: they  
 22 feel it not when their faces are blacked through the smoke that cometh out of the temple: upon  
 23 their bodies and heads alight bats, swallows, and birds; and in like manner the cats also. Whereby  
 24 ye may know that they are no gods: therefore fear them not. Notwithstanding the gold wherewith  
 they are beset to make them beautiful, except one wipe off the rust, they will not shine: for not even  
 25 when they were molten did they feel it. Things wherein there is no breath are bought at any cost.

yea, more than for themselves. A's reading  $\pi\lambda\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha\varsigma \alpha\beta\epsilon\upsilon\alpha\varsigma$  = להם רבים 'many for them', is preferable. The rest of the verse might have been: אשר לא יוכלו לראות נפלאות מן 'of which they cannot see even one'.

20. They are as one of the beams of the temple; and men say their hearts are eaten out, &c. Evidently there is something wrong here. The connexion of thought, if any exist, between the first and second members of the verse is hopelessly obscure. The Greek does not help us. 'He is, indeed, as a beam of those out of the house; but their hearts they say are licked up': surely a false contrast. It is likely that the words  $\tau\acute{\alpha}\varsigma \delta\epsilon \kappa\alpha\rho\delta\iota\alpha\varsigma \alpha\upsilon\tau\omega\upsilon \phi\alpha\sigma\acute{\iota}\nu$  conceal the common Hebrew phrase 'to say in one's heart' = to think, and that the sense of the original was: 'And he (i.e. the idol) is like a beam of the temple, yet they think that he eats.' See Bel 6 ff. for eating as a proof of being a 'living god'.  $\lambda\epsilon\lambda\acute{\iota}\chi\epsilon\alpha\iota$  = לקק 'to lap' or 'lick up', 1 Kings xxii. 38, and the syn. לחך, *ibid.* xviii. 38; Num. xxii. 4 (of eating). The Hebrew may have been: והיה כקורה הבית וכלבם יאמרו ילחך *And he is like a beam of the house (or) read: כקורה מבית = כקורה ביהמ' וכלבם יאמרו ילחך*  $\lambda\epsilon \tau\eta\varsigma \omicron\iota\kappa\iota\alpha\varsigma$ ; 'And they say in their heart, "He licketh up!"' (The translator pointed לקק, as he renders by a passive infin.) The verse continues, if we translate literally: 'Of the reptiles from the earth eating up both themselves and their dress they are not aware.' This may have sprung from Heb. רמש הארצה אוכל אותם. 'The creeping things of the ground (Gen. i. 25) eat them and their robes (1 Kings xxii. 30), and they know not.' (Syr. 'They are like beams, &c.; and their heart is foolish and goeth astray; and they are destroyed by the reptiles of the earth, and are eaten—they and their garments.')  
 21. Lit. 'They are) blackened as to their face from the smoke out of the house'. The Hebrew may have been: חשכו פניהם מעשן הבית 'Their faces are black from the smoke of the house'. Cf. Lam. iv. 8. In that case,  $\mu\epsilon\mu\epsilon\lambda\acute{\alpha}\nu\omega\sigma\tau\alpha\iota$  (Q<sup>2</sup>)  $\tau\acute{\alpha} \pi\rho\acute{o}\sigma\omega\pi\alpha$  (Q<sup>2</sup>) would represent the Hebrew more correctly than the reading of B. But A's  $\tau\omicron\upsilon \lambda\epsilon \tau\eta\varsigma \gamma\eta\varsigma \kappa\alpha\iota\omega\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\alpha\iota$  is more likely to be original than B's  $\tau\omicron\upsilon \lambda\epsilon \tau\eta\varsigma \omicron\iota\kappa\iota\alpha\varsigma$  (ditto gr. from v. 20). It points, moreover, to the Heb. העלה מקדארמה (בעשן) 'through the smoke) which goeth up from the ground' (cf. v. 54 note). The Greek translator seems to have vocalized העלה as העלה =  $\kappa\alpha\iota\omega\upsilon$ , to light a lamp (Ex. xxvii. 20; Lev. xxiv. 2).

22. swallows, and birds (Gk. *the birds*) is a curious collocation. We should expect the name of some other species to be added to that of the swallow. The Syriac, accordingly, has *ravens*, which may be right, as the dominant idea would seem to be that of unclean birds (Lev. xi. 14, 15, 19). But 'bats and swallows and [all] the birds' is also possible; especially if 'the cats' be correct in the next clause. The mention of the (domestic?) cat is unique in LXX. The word ( $\alpha\iota \lambda\omicron\upsilon\pi\omicron\iota$ ) might conceivably represent שונרים (= Aram. שונרין, Arab. سنانير) or חתולים (see Talmud Bab. Hor. 13a). The Targum renders אים by this last word in Isa. xiii. 22, xxxiv. 14. Was the word here אית 'kites' or 'hawks', which the translator misread אים and rendered 'cats'? Then the Heb. of the verse may have been: ועל ראשם יושבו העטלפים והסוסים והערכבים וגם האית: (The Syriac has: 'And on their heads sit bats and swallows and ravens together, and also weasels.' For *ravens*, cf. v. 54.)

23.  $\gamma\acute{\iota}\gamma\iota\sigma\theta\epsilon$  = תדעו = 'ye may know'. מאלה הדעו כי לא יראו אתה עליהם אלתוראו מהם: unless one have wiped off the rust, they will not make to shine; for not even when they were being cast, were they aware (of it). There is no obvious relation between the two statements of this verse, the connecting  $\gamma\alpha\rho$  notwithstanding. But it is at least evident (pace R.V.) that  $\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}\lambda\beta\alpha$  is used transitively in the former of them, as in Diose. l. 111 and Aristae. i. 25. The Heb. might be יאירו (Job xli. 24) or יניחו (Ps. xviii. 29). In the second, 'they were molten' or rather cast ( $\epsilon\chi\alpha\upsilon\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$  = המציק) can hardly be right: for the verse has in view, as the first member shows, idols overlaid or plated with the precious metal, not images of solid gold. The sense required, and indicated, by the context is: 'for they do not know when (or that) they are dirty (or tarnished)'. Possibly the translator mispointed חללו 'were brought forth, produced', the real word being חללו *vere defiled* (cf. Ezek. xxviii. 7 'defile thy brightness': Isa. xxx. 22),  $\delta \pi\epsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\alpha\iota$ , 'which they have round them, which they wear'; cf. Acts xxviii. 20; also  $\tau\acute{\alpha} \pi\alpha\rho\alpha\sigma\iota\mu\epsilon\upsilon\alpha \chi\upsilon\upsilon\tau\iota\alpha$ , plates of gold laid on an ivory statue, Thuc. ii. 13. Heb. לא ימחה (נחפו לתפארת) אם לא ימחה חללו: איש את החלוא לא יאירו (יניחו) כי לא ידעו כי (מתחללים המה) חללו.

25. at any cost. Gk.  $\lambda\epsilon \pi\acute{\omega}\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma \mu\eta\tau\iota$  = מבטל מחיר; a misreading of ב' בבטל. The Heb. may have been: בכל מחיר לקוחים הם אשר אין רוח בהם: cf. Jer. x. 14; 2 Chr. i. 16. Better: 'At all cost they are acquired, in whom is no breath.'



# EPISTLE OF JEREMY 26-32

26 Having no feet, they are borne upon shoulders, whereby they declare unto men that they be  
 27 nothing worth. They also that serve them are ashamed: for if they fall to the ground at  
 any time, they cannot rise up again of themselves: neither, if one set them aright, can they  
 move of themselves: neither, if they be set awry, can they make themselves straight: but the  
 28 offerings are set before them, as if they were dead men. And the things that are sacrificed  
 unto them, their priests sell and spend; and in like manner their wives also lay up part thereof  
 29 in salt; but unto the poor and to the impotent will they give nothing thereof. The menstuous  
 woman and the woman in childbed touch their sacrifices: knowing therefore by these things that  
 30 they are no gods, fear them not. For how can they be called gods? because women set meat  
 31 before the gods of silver, gold, and wood. And in their temples the priests sit on seats, having  
 32 their clothes rent, and their heads and beards shaven, and nothing upon their heads. They roar

26. Rather being footless... exposing their own shame to mankind. Cf. Isa. xlv. 7, xlix. 22, for the first reproach: for the second, Jer. xiii. 26, Nah. iii. 5. Indecent figures of gods were perhaps commoner in Egypt than in Babylonia, where they usually appear draped. See the procession in my *Light from the East*, p. 173. But nude and phallic figures occur on the seals. Heb. באין רגלים על-כתף ינשאן מראים את-האדם קלונם.

27. Lit. And even they who attend on them are ashamed = ובשו נסיעבדיהם. The participle θεραπεύων = עָבַר in Isa. liv. 17 also (LXX θεραπεύων = עָבַר sacpe). Perhaps the translator pointed עֲבָרִיהֶם (Zech. ii. 13). The next sentence is lit. 'On account of the rising by help of them, lest (= if?) ever he have fallen upon the ground'. Instead of 'by help of them' (δὲ αὐτῶν), i. e. of the attendants, LXX<sup>A</sup> gives 'by themselves' (δὲ αὐτῶν), i. e. unassisted. δὲ αὐτοῦ would have been better after πέσῃ, sing. Further, the negative must be supplied: 'On account of their not rising by themselves, if ever he have fallen,' &c. Heb. perhaps: על קומו בידם אם על ארצה 'because of his rising by their hand if he have fallen to earth'. Cf. 1 Sam. v. 3, xxviii. 20. The Chinese say 'A fallen Buddha rise!' (Pi Fou-tu k'i), of a hopeless case (Giles, *Dict.* 3600). The verse continues: 'nor, if one have set him upright, will (= 'can'—a Hebraism) he move of himself, nor if he be bowed, will he stand erect; but as before corpses the gifts are set before them.' The Heb. might have been: ואם איש יזיכהו במקומו לא ימיש לבדו ואם יכרע לא יעמד כי במותם לחם שם להם: 'And if a man set him up in his place, he will not move alone; and if he bow, he will not stand up; but as (before) the dead bread is set before them'. Cf. Isa. xlv. 1, 7; and for the offerings to the dead, Ps. cvi. 28, Eccles. xxx. 18 f., Tobit iv. 17. τὰ δῶρα = לחם, Lev. xxi. 6, 8; and παρῃσθῆναι = שָׁם, Gen. xliii. 32 al. The change from plur. to sing. exemplified in this verse is a common characteristic of Hebrew style (see Driver, *Samuel*, p. lxix).

28. Lit. 'But their sacrifices their priests sell and use up; but in like manner the women (A their wives) also, salting part of them, neither to a beggar nor to a pauper give any share'. In Hebrew ונחיתים ויכרו: כהניהם ובערי (Isa. iii. 14) וכן גם הנשים (נשיהם) מולחות (A = שיהם) מהם עני ואביון לא תאכלנה: (cf. *μετίδωκα*: Job xxxi. 17). Instead of ובערי 'and greedily consume', perhaps וכלי 'and use up' (cf. Deut. xxxii. 23; Gen. xxi. 15); and instead of מולחות 'salting', perhaps חונטות 'spicing' or 'pickling' (cf. Gen. i. 2, 3, 26). (The Syriac 'their priests eat them and their wives gorge themselves with them' may indicate a more original text: יאכלו *edunt* pr. יכלו *consumunt*; מולחות *vorant* pr. מולחות *condunt*.)

29. See Lev. xii. 4, 7, xx. 18. ἀποκαθήμενη (a woman) *sitting apart* during menstruation' = דרו; λεχώ (for which Q's λεχώ is more correct), 'a woman in childbed,' or 'one who has just given birth' = יולדת. Heb. therefore: בנבוכיהם הדרה והיולדת נועות; an argument which would appeal to none but orthodox Jews. (For the construction γρόντες οὐκ ατλ., cf. Isa. xxvi. 11: γρόντες δὲ ἀσχευθήσονται = יהיו ויבשו. Here perhaps: 'יהיו ויבשו' cf. Q's γρώστε.) (γρόντες is rare in LXX. It occurs otherwise only a few times in the idiom γρόντες γρώσασθε = יָרַע תרעו, Jer. xxvi. 15 et sim.)

30. Another objection from a purely Jewish point of view. There were no priestesses or female attendants of Jahweh. πῶθεν γὰρ is perhaps equivalent to כי איך, 'For how?' B κληθείσαν and A κληθήσονται might either of them represent a Heb. impf. See v. 27 for παρῃσθῆσιν θεῶς, 'they set (food) before gods.' The Heb. verse might be: כי איך יקראו אלהים כי נשים ישנות לאלהי כסף וזהב ועץ.

31. sit on seats. So Syr.; but it is very doubtful whether δέφρω, 'drive a chariot' (Eurip. *Androm.* 108), can bear this meaning, although δέφρος may be a chair or throne (כסא; Deut. xvii. 18; 1 Sam. i. 9). Q cuts the knot by substituting καθίζουσιν, 'they sit.' The sense is perhaps not unsuitable, if the word could bear it; but the whole context shows that the author is thinking of the mourning for dead gods, which was a well-known feature of Babylonian religion. We may, therefore, suppose that the original text had יכבו they weep, which the Greek translator misread ירכבו they ride (see the Introduction, § 3). For the other phrases of the verse, cf. Lev. x. 5, 1 Sam. iv. 12, 2 Sam. xv. 32, Jer. xli. 5, Lev. xiii. 45; whence we may infer an original text: ובנחיתים הבהנים יכבו קרוצי בקנתם ומנחלי ראש וזקן וראשם פרוע: 'Akalyptoi (here only) should probably be ακυκαλυπτοι, as Q<sup>ss</sup> = פרוע 'unbound' (by unwinding the turban); a thing forbidden to priests, Lev. xxi. 10.

32. Lit. 'But they roar, shouting before their gods, as persons at a dead man's wake'. Τὸ περιδείκνυσθαι, 'a funeral-feast,' perhaps renders מרואם (Jer. xvi. 5; cf. Amos vi. 7) = targumic מרואח, 'the funeral-

## EPISTLE OF JEREMY 33-41

33 and cry before their gods, as men do at the feast when one is dead. The priests also take off  
34 garments from them, and clothe their wives and children withal. Whether it be evil that one  
doeth unto them, or good, they are not able to recompense it: they can neither set up a king,  
35 nor put him down. In like manner, they can neither give riches nor money: though a man make  
36 a vow unto them, and keep it not, they will never exact it. They can save no man from death,  
37 neither deliver the weak from the mighty. They cannot restore a blind man to his sight, nor  
38 deliver any that is in distress. They can show no mercy to the widow, nor do good to the  
39 fatherless. They are like the stones that be *hewn* out of the mountain, *these gods* of wood, and  
that are overlaid with gold and with silver: they that minister unto them shall be confounded.  
40 How should a man then think or say that they are gods, when even the Chaldeans themselves  
41 dishonour them? Who if they shall see one dumb that cannot speak, they bring him, and intreat

feast', eaten soon after the burial of the corpse. Cf. Jer. xvi. 7: 'And they shall not break bread unto the mourner, to comfort him for the dead' (so Giesebrecht). The Heb. of the verse may have been: וְעָקְרוּ לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶם כְּמִתּוּחַ מֵת (Ps. xxxviii. 9 רָמַטָּה). These rites of mourning for the gods recall the 'women weeping for Tammuz' of Ezek. viii. 14 and the Babylonian festivals of mourning for the same deity (Dumuzi).

33. Lit. 'From their dress taking away (a part), the priests will clothe their wives and children'. In Heb. מִבְּגֵדֵיהֶם יִקְחוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַלְבִּישׁוּ אֶת נְשֵׁיהֶם וְטַפֵּם.

34-39. Unlike *Jahweh*, they do nothing. Carlyle's cry to Froude, 'He (God) never does anything!' may be remembered. The prophets of Israel thought otherwise. They thought He did everything.

34. Lit. 'Neither if they have suffered evil by any one, nor if good, will they be able to repay'. Cf. Deut. xxxii. 35. Jer. xvi. 18. Prov. xxv. 22, and many other places. Heb. perhaps: אִם רָע וְאִם טוֹב קִבְּלוּ אִם רָע אִישׁ לֹא יוֹכִלוּ לְשַׁלֵּם 'If evil or good they have received from a man, they cannot repay'. See Jer. xlii. 6; Job ii. 10.

put him down: lit. 'remove him'. The Heb. of the second sentence might have been: לֹא לְהִקֵּים טָלָךְ. יוֹכִלוּ וְלֹא לְהִסִּיר. With this and the next two verses cf. 1 Sam. ii. 6-8.

35. money: Gk. χαλκός = copper, a copper coin, and then collectively, money. The original phrase may have been עֶשֶׂר וְנִכְסִים 'wealth and riches', which is rendered πλοῦτος καὶ χρηματα, 'wealth and money,' 2 Chron. i. 12. Probably, however, χαλκός = נחשׁ, as usual, and this Heb. term is a disguise or corruption of some word meaning poverty, e.g. רֵישׁ (cf. Prov. xxx. 8). This gives a better parallel to what precedes (ὠρατός). Heb. עֶשֶׂר וְרֵישׁ לֹא יוֹכִלוּ לַחֵת. The next sentence is based on Deut. xxiii. 22, and must have run pretty much as follows: אִם יָרָה אִישׁ לָהֶם נָרָה וְלֹא יִשְׁלַם לֹא יִרְשָׁו.

36. Heb. מִטּוֹת אֲדָם לֹא יַעֲלֶה | וְדָל מִיַּד חֹק לֹא יִחְלָצֶנּוּ. ἥττω = דָּל; Job xx. 10. Perhaps rather חֲלָשׁ חֲלָשׁ; cf. Joel iv. 10.

37. Lit. 'A blind man into seeing (= τίς) they will not bring round' (περιτρέψουσιν, R. A's παραστῆσαι = set beside or near is less suitable). The Greek is rather peculiar and suggests translation. Perhaps εἰς ὄψαν should have been εἰς ὁπώρα; and ἵσχυι may have been instead ἵσχυι (= ἀνιστῆσαι). Hence we get: אִם עֵוֶר לִרְאוֹת לֹא יִשְׁכִּי 'A blind man into one seeing they restore not' (cf. Lev. xiii. 16, Isa. xxix. 17). There follows: אֲדָם בְּצָר לוֹ לֹא יַעֲלֶה 'A man in straits (Isa. xxv. 4) they will not deliver'.

38. Cf. Isa. ix. 16, Ex. i. 20, for the language. The verse falls back easily into Hebrew: אֲלֵמָה לֹא יִרְחֹשׁ | וְלִיתִים לֹא יִיטִיבוּ.

39. these gods of wood. The italicized words probably represent the Heb. correctly. Cf. Isa. xxi. 9, where LXX renders אֱלֹהֵי by τὰ χειροποίητα αὐτῶν, and Isa. xxxi. 7, where אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל is rendered τὰ χειροποίητα αὐτῶν τὰ ἀργύρεα καὶ τὰ χαλκουργα τὰ χρυσῶν. The Heb. of the clause may have been: לִבְנֵי הָהָר דְּמוּיִם אֱלֹהֵי הָעֵץ וְאֱלֹהֵי הַחֹבֶה וְאֱלֹהֵי הַבֶּסֶף 'To the stones of the mountain are like the gods of wood and the gods of gold and silver'. The second clause is simply: וְעַבְדֵיהֶם יִשְׁוּ 'and their servants shall be ashamed'. See note on v. 27 a. The priests are intended.

40. Lit. 'How then is it to be thought or proclaimed that they are gods?'. Cf. the classical use of εἰμίζω, 'to believe in or acknowledge as a god'; e.g. in the indictment of Socrates: εἰς ἣ πόλις εἰμίζετο θεὸς οὐ εἰμίζων, 'not believing in the gods in which the state believes.' Heb. perhaps: וְכִי הֵם אֱלֹהִים: 'And how should we believe and how proclaim that they are gods?'

41. they bring him, and intreat him to call upon Bel. Or, 'having brought Bel, they expect him to speak.' But the man would be taken before the god. And ἀῖμα in LXX is 'to beg, pray, request' (Dan. i. 8, (לא יתנו בנדתם) Ps. cxi. 7). The Heb. פָּוְנִיָּה = 'to speak', as in Ps. cxi. 7. וְאִם רָאוּ אֶלֶם אִשֶּׁר לֹא יוֹכֵל לְדַבֵּר וְהִבִּיאוּ וְיִבְקֶשׁוּ אִשֶּׁר יִהְיֶה לְאֹזֶר כִּי הוּא יוֹדֵעַ: 'And also they, the Chaldeans, dishonour them' (Deut. xxvii. 16): 'for if they have seen a dumb man who cannot talk, they will bring him in (to the temple) and beg of Bel that he may speak, thinking that he (Bel) is aware.' (Syr. 'They bring him before the gate': perhaps אֲבָלָה gate was



# EPISTLE OF JEREMY 42-45

42 him to call upon Bel, as though he were able to understand. Yet they cannot perceive this  
 43 themselves, and forsake them: for they have no understanding. The women also with cords  
 about them sit in the ways, burning bran for incense: but if any of them, drawn by some that  
 passeth by, lie with him, she reproacheth her fellow, that she was not thought as worthy as herself,  
 44 nor her cord broken. Whatsoever is done among them is false: how should a man then think  
 45 or say that they are gods? They are fashioned by carpenters and goldsmiths: they can be nothing

somehow confused with בל אל unto Bel. Cf. Jer. 1. 26 where Syr. renders מאכסיה by *her gates*, reading or guessing אבליה.)

42. Yet; rather, *And*. The idolaters themselves cannot see all this (A: τοῦτο νοήσαντες), and abandon them (the idols); for they are devoid of sense (Jer. x. 8). Hebrew: ולא יוכלו להבין (זאת) ולעוב אותם כי דעת אין להם.

43. This verse describes a well-known custom of Babylonian religion, which, according to Herodotus (i. 199), was observed in honour of the goddess Mylitta (Μύλιττα). 'Mylitta,' he says, 'is the name the Assyrians give to Aphrodite.' Aphrodite is, of course, Ishtar, the goddess of love and procreation; and 'Mylitta' is simply a contracted or corrupted form of the epithet *mu'alliltu*, 'she who causes to bring forth' (i.e. Edeithya or Lucina), or 'she who brings forth' (intensive) all living, the Great Mother, as the Deep (Tiamat) is called mu-al-li-da-at gim-ri-shu-un, 'the Mother of them all,' in *Creation-Tab.* i. See also Ishtar's lament over mankind when drowned by the Deluge (Flood Legend, *NE*, xi. 119 ff.), where she seems to claim them as her offspring. Heb. בדרכים חשבנה מקטרות נפש (עור חטים) (Jo. i. 8) וכאשר אחת מהן תפישק ביר איש עובר וישיכנה עמו (cf. Gen. xix. 35) חבלה נחקה: חבלה נחקה: 'And the women, girt with ropes, sit in the ways offering groats (or chaff); and whenever one of them is dragged off by a passer-by, she reproaches her companion, because she has not been valued even as herself, and her rope has not been broken'. 'Bran' (τὰ πύρρα) perhaps means *crushed or pounded grain*, since the ancients did not separate the skin from grain, as is done in modern milling.

The account of Herodotus is as follows: 'But quite the most disgraceful of the customs which the Babylonians have is the following. Every native woman is bound to sit in the temple of Aphrodite and, once in her life, have carnal intercourse with a foreigner. Many, moreover, not condescending to mix with the others, as being proud of riches, drive in a closed carriage-and-pair and stop at the temple, with a great following of attendants. But the majority proceed in this way. In Aphrodite's precinct sit, with a fillet of cord round their heads, many women (for some are coming, others going); while rope-drawn passages keep every direction of ways through the women, by which the foreigners pass through and make their choice. And when a woman seats herself there, she does not go home before one of the foreigners has thrown money into her lap and dealt with her outside the temple. But when he throws it, he has to say this much: "I invoke over thee the goddess Mylitta!" (The Assyrians call Aphrodite "Mylitta".) The money may be ever so little in amount, for she may not refuse it, for it is not lawful for her (to do so); for this money becomes sacred: but she follows the first that throws, rejecting no man. But after the intercourse, she makes expiatory offerings to the goddess, and goes home. And after this, thou wilt not give her so much when thou receivest her in marriage.

'All, then, who are possessed of beauty and stature soon go home; but all of them who are plain wait a long time, unable to fulfil the law. Some even wait three or four years' time. A similar custom prevails in some places in Cyprus.'

Our verse seems to describe something similar but not identical. There is no mention here of the Sanctuary (ἱερόν) of Aphrodite. The women 'sit in the ways' or streets, instead of repairing thither: cf. Gen. xxxviii. 14 ff., Prov. vii. 8, 12. Herodotus does not mention the offering of 'bran'; and it is not clear whether the 'cords' (σχοῖα) of our verse are to be identified with his 'fillet of cord' (στεφανὸν θώμυγος) or his 'rope-drawn passages' (σχοινιστενείας διέξοδοι), or with neither. The expression ἐφελκυσθεῖσα, 'dragged after him,' seems to imply a cord round the woman's waist, a sort of Venus's girdle, which is then symbolically broken.

44. **Whatsoever is done among them is false.** This agrees with A's reading παρ' αὐτοῖς, and seems to refer to the Chaldeans or their priests. Q's ἐν αὐτοῖς = בהם, which would more naturally mean 'upon them', i.e. the idols (cf. Num. xxxiii. 4, Dan. ix. 12), in the sense of punishment. Heb. perhaps: כל הנעשות להם שקר: 'All the things that are done unto (or for) them are a fraud'; or כל אשר יעשה להם שקר: 'Everything which is wont to be done for them is a fraud' (so Syr.). πάντα τὰ γινόμενα = כל אשר עשה = 1 Kings xxii. 54. Perhaps, therefore, הוא, (שוא) שקר = כל אשר עשו להם שקר (שוא) הוא: 'All that they do in their honour is a fraud (folly)'. (Both ψευδῆ adj. and ψεύδω subst. appear for שקר in LXX.)

For the rest of the verse see v. 40. The ὥς (= ὥστε: so A Q) seems superfluous as well as difficult. Ὡς θεοὶ αὐτοὶ ἐπαρχοῦν would be more intelligible. Cf. Soph. *Oed. Tyr.* 780: καλῶ με πλάστως ὥς εἶην πατρί.

45-52. *Idols are merely works of art* ('the work of men's hands', Ps. cxv. 4).

45. Heb. perhaps: מעשה ידי חורש וצורף המה: 'handiwork of carpenter and smelter are they': cf. Jer. x. 9,





55 for they are as crows between heaven and earth. For even when fire falleth upon the house of gods of wood, or overlaid with gold or with silver, their priests will flee away, and escape, but 56 they themselves shall be burnt asunder like beams. Moreover they cannot withstand any king 57 or enemies: how should a man then allow or think that they be gods? Neither are those gods of wood, and overlaid with silver or with gold, able to escape either from thieves or robbers. 58 Whose gold, and silver, and garments wherewith they are clothed, they that are strong will take 59 from them, and go away withal: neither shall they be able to help themselves. Therefore it is better to be a king that showeth his manhood, or else a vessel in a house profitable for that whereof the owner shall have need, than such false gods; or even a door in a house, to keep the things safe that be therein, than such false gods; or a pillar of wood in a palace, than such 60 false gods. For sun, and moon, and stars, being bright and sent to do their offices, are obedient.

between the heaven and the earth.' The point of the comparison, however, is still obscure, for 'crows' (or ravens: see Jer. iii. 2 *בְּעֶרְבֵי כְּמִי* = *ἐν τῇ κορώνῃ ἐρημονομένη*, LXX reading or misreading 'בְּעֶרְבֵי כְּמִי' do not give the impression of powerlessness, especially when flying in mid-air. Moreover, a verb seems wanting, as crows are not always in the air. Now in Job v. 16, xxxi. 16, *ἀδύνατος* represents Heb. *דָּל*, *weak, helpless*. It seems possible, therefore, that the Hebrew text here had *כִּי יִדְּלוּ* (for they hang suspended: cf. Job xxviii. 4), which the Greek translator ignorantly rendered *ἀδύνατοι ὄντες*. The reference would be to images hanging on a wall (cf. v. 21 note): Heb. *כִּי דָלוּ כְּעֶרְבִים בֵּין הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבֵין הָאָרֶץ*. We may further suggest that *כְּעֶרְבִים* ('like the clouds') has been mistaken for *כְּעֶרְבִים* ('like the ravens'). The Syriac has: 'And not like the ravens between heaven and earth do they fly in the air' (*פִּרְחִין בְּאָרֶץ*).

55. Hebrew possibly: *יִנְסוּ וְנִמְלְטוּ וְהֵם כְּקָרוֹת* (cf. Gen. xv. 10: *διέλεν αὐτὰ μέτρα*).

56. Heb. may have been: *כִּי אֱלֹהִים* (cf. v. 40) (Deut. xxviii. 7) וְהָיָה לָהֶם לְקָחָה וּלְהֵאמִין.

57. *Διασώσω* (B) is evidently wrong. The syllable *σω* has been accidentally omitted. Q presents the right reading *διασώσω* [so Syr.]: cf. v. 55. The Heb. was probably something like the following: *לֹא מִנְּגִבִים וְלֹא מִשּׁוֹרְדִים יִקָּלְטוּ אֱלֹהֵי עֵץ וּכֶסֶף וְזָהָב*: 'Neither from thieves nor from robbers' (Obad. 5) 'can gods of wood and silver and gold escape'.

58. Lit. 'From whom the strong will (= may) strip off the gold and silver; and the raiment that lies about them they will (may) go off with.' Heb. *אֲשֶׁר הַנְּבוֹרִים יִשְׁטֹמוּ אֹת כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב וְאֹת הַבְּגָדִים אֲשֶׁר עֲלֵיהֶם יִקָּחוּ*. In the third member of the verse, A's *οἱ δὲ, but they*, seems better than B's *οἱ τε* = *and not*. Heb. *וְהֵם לִנְפֹשָׁם לֹא יִשְׁעִי* (Joshua x. 6), 'and they (the idols) will not save themselves.'

59. What writer, thinking in Greek, would have expressed himself in this fashion? Lit. the words run more like this: 'So that it is better to be a king exhibiting his own courage, or a vessel in a house useful for what the possessor shall use it for, than the false gods.' The fitness of the first comparison is far from being self-evident. It goes without saying, that a king giving proof of life and vigour in the face of attack is superior to a 'god' who can do nothing to defend his own person. But why a 'king' and not rather a 'man', i. e. any one whatever? Possibly because god and king are synonymous terms in Oriental use (cf. 1 Sam. xii. 12: Ps. v. 2, xx. 9, xxiv. 7, lxviii. 24; Isa. vi. 5, viii. 21, xli. 21); and a 'king' who fights for crown and kingdom (he was perhaps thinking of the struggles of some contemporary sovereign) is certainly 'better' than a *roi fainéant*. Heb. *עַל כֵּן טוֹב (לְהוֹיָה) מֶלֶךְ מֵרָאָה אֶת נְבוֹרָתוֹ וְכֹלִי בְּבֵית מוֹעֵל לְאִשֶּׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתוֹ קָנְחוֹ (מֵאֱלֹהֵי שָׁקֶר)*. It seems questionable whether the Hebrew had 'It is better to be a king', as the Greek has it (cf. Prov. xxi. 9), or 'Better is a king', &c. (cf. Prov. xix. 1, Eccles. iv. 13), of which A Q's *κρείσσων* (B *κρείσσαν*) looks like a reminiscence. The nominatives in what follows (*ἡ καὶ θύρα ἐν οἰκίᾳ . . . καὶ ξύλινος στύλος*) may point in the latter direction. They at least show that the author of the Greek forgot the construction with which he started, and support the view that he was translating from a language destitute of Case-inflexions, viz. Hebrew. The LXX rendering of the Canonical Books often exhibits the same error. [I leave this note as originally written, in order to show how little can be made of the text as it stands; but see Introd. § 3 (6) for a conjectural emendation of the first clause of the verse.] The Heb. of the rest of the verse might be: *וְהֵם דָּלוּ בְּבֵית שׁוֹמֵרֵת אֹת אִשֶּׁר בּוֹ (מֵאֱלֹהֵי שָׁקֶר) וְעֵטוֹר עֵץ בְּהִכָּל מֵאֱלֹהֵי שָׁקֶר*. The triple *ἡ οἱ ψευδῆς θεοί* is hardly original. The first two occurrences look like artless insertions intended to make the meaning clearer. (Cf. Wisd. v. 9-13.) I have therefore enclosed them in brackets. The Syriac omits all, perhaps correctly.

60. Unlike the things just mentioned, and those enumerated in xxv. 60-63, the false gods are useful for no purpose whatever.

כִּי שָׁמַשׁ וְיָרֵחַ וּכּוֹכְבִּים מְאֻרִּים  
וְשִׁלּוּחִים עַל חֲפִין וְשִׁמְעִים:  
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# EPISTLE OF JEREMY 61-68

61 Likewise also the lightning when it glittereth is fair to see; and after the same manner the wind  
62 also bloweth in every country. And when God commandeth the clouds to go over the whole  
63 world, they do as they are bidden. And the fire sent from above to consume mountains and woods  
doeth as it is commanded: but these are to be likened unto them neither in show nor power.  
64 Wherefore a man should neither think nor say that they are gods, seeing they are able neither  
65 to judge causes, nor to do good unto men. Knowing therefore that they are no gods, fear them  
66, 67 not. For they can neither curse nor bless kings: neither can they show signs in the heavens  
68 among the nations, nor shine as the sun, nor give light as the moon. The beasts are better than

'For sun and moon and stars do shine;  
'They are sent on a business and obey.'

For *χαίος* = חַיִּים, see Eccles. iii. 1. Symm. and ib. 17 Aq. For the sense of חַיִּים, cf. Isa. liii. 10, lviii. 13. *Εἴματος* = יֵשׁוּעַ. Prov. xxv. 12. It is evident that the Greek closely follows, while partially misunderstanding, the Hebrew.

61. Likewise also the lightning when it glittereth is fair to see. The association of beauty to lightning is quite contrary to Biblical conceptions, which rather associate awe and terror with this phenomenon: Ex. xix. 16; Ps. xviii. 14, lxxvii. 18; Rev. iv. 5. *Εἶδατος* might be 'well-seen' = conspicuous. But it is probable that we have here another instance of error in translation; the author of the Greek version having connected נורא *terrible* with נראה *seen*. The Heb. may have been: וְאֵף בָּרֶק בְּהֵאֲרֹתוֹ נורא 'And also lightning when it appeareth is awful'; or וְכֵן גַּם בָּרֶק בְּהֵאֲרֹתוֹ נורא 'And so also lightning when it shineth is terrible'. In either case there is a paronomasia on the two like-sounding words, such as is characteristic of Hebrew style. (In Zeph. ii. 11 נורא is rendered by LXX *ἐπιφανήσεται*, and in 2 Sam. vii. 23 נוראות = *ἐπιφάνειαι*, while נורא is rendered by *ἐπιφανής* six or seven times. In these cases there is a similar confusion of the above Heb. roots.) The rest of the verse might be: וְכֵן גַּם רוּחַ בְּכָל אֶרֶץ נושבת: 'And so also wind bloweth in every land'. For τὸ δ' αὐτὸ καὶ... see Phil. ii. 18 (Gifford).

62. Lit. 'And to clouds whenever it is commanded by God to go over all the inhabited (world), they accomplish what was commanded'. The Hebrew may have been simply: יַעֲבִידוּ בְּצִוְהֶם אֱלֹהִים לַעֲבֹד עַל הַבָּל יָבִילוּ: Isa. xiii. 11, xiv. 17 תִּבְלֶה = *ἡ αἰκονμένη ὄλη*; but ib. xiv. 26 *ἐπὶ τῇ αἰκονμένη ὄλη* = 'on the desolate land'. The translator possibly connected the *ע* of בְּצִוְהֶם with אֱלֹהִים, supposing the verb to be passive. Cf., however, Isa. v. 6: וְעַל הָעֵבִים אֲצִוֶּה = καὶ ταῖς νεφέλαις ἐτελοῦμαι. See Ezek. xxxix. 14 for *ἐπιτορμῆσθαι* = לעבור. The paronomasia with עבדים was probably intentional.

63. the fire: i.e. lightning, which is 'the fire of God'. Instead of 'to consume' (*ἐξαρᾶσθαι*, 'to spend' or 'destroy utterly'), Q gives *ἐξηρανώσθαι*, 'to desolate utterly'. The latter might be an attempt to render Heb. להחרב or להשם (=*to lay waste*), but the Heb. may have been simply לבער *to consume* (cf. Syr.). Q's addition καὶ βουνοῖς, and hills (so also Syr.), may be original: cf. Isa. lv. 12. Δρυμοῖς may represent a sing. יער, as in Isa. x. 18, though plur. יערות (Ezra ii. 25) or יערות is perhaps more probable. The Heb. of the verse might be: וְהָאֵשׁ שְׁלֹחַתָּהּ מִשְׁעַל לִבְעֵר הָרִים (ועצמות) ויערות תעשה בן. והם (cf. Ezek. xxxi. 18, Dan. i. 13, 15 מראה = *ἰδέαι*). (Syr. 'They are not like one of these things'; cf. A Q: *ἐν αὐτῶν* or *τοῦτων*.)

64. Heb. על בן לא יאמן ולא יאמר הם אלהים כי לא יוכלו לשפוט משפט ולהטיב לאדם. The last word was probably intended to be vocalized לְאָדָם = τοῖς ἀνθρώποις. For הטיב ל see Joshua xxiv. 20. (Syr. adds: *non do evil after do good*.)

65. See vv. 23, 29, *supra*.

66. curse... kings. See Eccles. x. 20. Cf. also Num. xxii. 6. Heb. כי סלטים לא יתלל ולא יברכו: 'For kings they will (= can) not curse nor bless.'

67. in the heavens among the nations. It is probable that this is an instance of a 'conflate reading'. The Heb. of the first clause may well have been: וְאִתּוֹת בְּשָׁמַיִם לֹא יִתְּנוּ 'and signs in the heavens they cannot set'. Cf. Joel ii. 3 (Heb.), Neh. ix. 10. (Syr. corrects: 'and signs in heaven to the nations they show not'. Cf. Matt. xvi. 1.) The fluctuation of the Greek codl. between *ὡς ἀρχή* (B) and *ὡς ἡ ἀρχή* (A Q: recte) again suggests a Heb. original; for the unpointed בִּרְחַב might, of course, be read either way (בִּרְחַב or בִּרְחַב). The Heb. of the latter half of the verse may have been: וְלֹא כִשְׁמֵשׁ יִנְחוּ וְלֹא יֵאֲרִיזוּ בִּירֵחַ: 'and as the sun will not cool and the moon will not freeze'.

68. The beasts are better than they = החיות טובה מהם. For החיות, see Gen. vii. 21, viii. 1. (Perhaps חית השדה, Jer. xii. 9. Syr. *beasts of the wilderness*.) There seems to be something wrong about the reason. Literally the Greek says: 'which are able by escaping into a covert to profit themselves.' *ἀνὰ* or *ἐκ τὰ ἀφελῆσαι* is a strange expression for *ἀφελῆσθαι*. Now, the verb *ἀφελᾶν* in LXX usually renders Heb. העליל 'to profit', as in Isa. xxx. 5; and it is likely that the translator mistook להעלם 'to hide' for 'to profit them'. It is merely a question of vowel-points (להעלם instead of להעלם Niph. Inf.). Obviously, the motive for 'fleeing into a covert' would be to *hide*, rather than to 'help' or 'profit' oneself.



# EPISTLE OF JEREMY 69-72

69 they: for they can get under a covert, and help themselves. In no wise then is it manifest unto  
 70 us that they are gods: therefore fear them not. For as a scarecrow in a garden of cucumbers  
 that keepeth nothing, so are their gods of wood, and overlaid with gold and with silver. Likewise  
 71 also their gods of wood, and overlaid with gold and with silver, are like to a white thorn in  
 an orchard, that every bird sitteth upon; as also to a dead body, that is cast forth into the dark.  
 72 And ye shall know them to be no gods by the bright purple that rotteth upon them: and they

69. Heb. perhaps: 'אין דבר במה נודע לנו כי הם א' 'There is nothing whereby it is known to us that they are gods'. Cf. Gen. xv. 8.

70. a scarecrow. Strictly speaking, *προβασκανίων* is an amulet or safeguard against witchcraft, such as, according to Plutarch, workmen hung up before their shops. Cf. *βάσκανος* = *רע עין*. Prov. xxiii. 6. Since *βάσκανος* is to 'slander, disparage, envy, grudge', is it not just possible that the translator misunderstood Isaiah's מלוכה (Isa. i. 8), connecting it with לון 'to murmur' (perhaps rather 'be evil, hostile'; cf. Assy. *lamduu*, *limnu*, be evil, evil, hostile) rather than with לון 'to lodge?' The Syriac actually renders ערולא דמקטא as in Isa. i. 8. But the context rather suggests a post or pillar (perhaps a terminal figure, like Priapus), set up to scare birds and other pilferers, cf. Hor. *Sat.* I. viii. 1-7; and the original phrase may have been modelled on Jeremiah's *במקטא* (ב) *בהמור* 'like a post (scarecrow) in a garden of gourds' (Jer. x. 5), which is said of idols as being speechless blocks. Heb. of verse: *כי כאשר חקר במקטא אין נוטר דבר בן אלהיהם עין וזהב וכסף*; 'For as a post in a cucumber-plot protecteth nothing, so their gods (of) wood and gold and silver' (protect nothing). Their 'terrors are empty terrors, like those of the palm-trunk, rough-hewn into human shape, and set up among the melons to frighten the birds away' (see my exposition of Jer. x. in *Prophecies of Jer.*, pp. 227-9, *Expositor's Bible*).

71. white thorn, the Greek *ῥάμνος*, a kind of prickly shrub, also called *παλιούρος*; *Rhamnus paliurus*, of which Theophrastus mentions two kinds, a white and a black, as we have our 'whitethorn' and 'blackthorn' in the hedgerows. *ῥάμνος* is the equivalent of *אמר* 'bramble', 'buckthorn', in Judges ix. 14, 15, Ps. lvi. 10, where it is mentioned as the inferior of all the trees (Judges l.c.), and as used for fuel (Ps. l.c.). Here, the idols are as contemptible as this common hedge-growth, upon which any bird might settle and foul it (cf. v. 22). Tristram enumerates sixteen species of Rhamnaceae in Palestine (*Enc. Bib.* s.v. 'Thorns'). It is not evident why the *Rhamnus* should be 'in a garden' (*ῥῆ ἐν κήπῳ ῥάμνω*), as it was not a garden plant. Probably a hedge of thorns round the garden (not 'orchard') is intended. Or the idea may be that of a wild growth in a neglected garden.

a dead body... cast forth into the dark is a comparison by which the writer intends to signify the extreme of contempt. Cf. Amos viii. 3; Jer. xiv. 16, xxii. 19; Isa. xxxiv. 3; Baruch ii. 25; 1 Macc. xi. 4. For a corpse to be left unburied was the height of indignity. 'Into the dark' may be a vivid touch, suggesting in one word (*בחסך*) an entire picture. We see the helpless body, perhaps of an infant, thrown out furtively under cover of night into the darkness of the deserted street, to become a prey to pariah dogs. (For the construction *ἐπιρριμμένῳ ἐν σκότει*, instead of *ἐς σκότος*, cf. 2 Kings ix. 25, 26, xiii. 21.) But it seems more likely that *בחסך* is a corruption or alteration of *בחוץ* 'into the street' (Jer. xiv. 16). The original text of the verse may have been something like the following: *וכן גם לאתר בן אשר כל צפור יושב עליו וגם למת (לפני) משלף*. (The concluding words may be due to inadvertent repetition from the preceding verse.) Or perhaps... *וגם כאשר נמשלו אלהיהם... וגם במת*.

72. Lit. 'And from the purple and the marble that rotteth upon them it shall (= *may*; Hebraism) be known that they are not gods'. The Greek word *μαρμαίρεος* means any stone or rock which *sparkles* (*μαρμαίρει*) in the light; and then specially *marble* (= Lat. *marmor*). The margin and R.V. are both wrong in supposing that the term is here used as an epithet of *πορφύρεα*, with the sense of 'brightness' or 'bright', which the word never bears. As I pointed out long ago in the *Variorum Apocrypha*, the Greek translator has here confused the Hebrew *שש* 'linen' (Exod. xxv. 4; = Greek *βύσσος*) with its homophone *שש* 'marble' (Cant. v. 15; *שש* = *στυλῶν μαρμαίρεος*). Byssus is coupled with purple in Exod. xxvi. 1, and elsewhere; see especially Prov. xxxi. 22 (*καὶ δὲ βύσσου καὶ πορφύρας ἐν αὐτῇ ἐνδύματα*). The robes of the idols might 'rot' upon them, but 'marble' hardly. The Syriac at least shows a sense of the fitness of things, with its 'purple and silk stuffs'. Heb. *והם הארמנות והשש הרקוב עליהם יודע כי אינם אלהים*. For *רקב* = *σίνεσμαι*, cf. Job xix. 20, where LXX has *ἐνσίνεσαν* = *רבקה* (obviously reading *רקב*). The variations *ἐπ' αὐτούς* (B), *ἐπ' αὐτῶν* (A), *ἐπ' αὐτοῖς* (Q), might all be attempts to represent Heb. *עליהם* 'upon them'. 'And they themselves' (*αὐτά τε*); in contrast with their apparel. Heb. perhaps simply *והם* 'and they'; or *וגופם* 'and their body'; or *וגרמם* (Aramaism). Cf. v. 8.

shall be consumed; rather *devoured* (*βρωθήσονται* = *יאכלו* or *יאכל*; cf. Isa. li. 8). The idea might be *devoured by fire*; but then *באש* seems necessary, as in Ezek. xxiii. 25, Neh. ii. 3 al. The word may have been passed over accidentally; but it seems more likely that the Greek translator misread 'shall perish' (*Isa. i. 28*) as *יאכלו* 'shall be eaten up'. This gives us as Heb. for the rest of the verse: *והם אחר יכלו והיו: הרפה בארץ: [v. 20 may possibly give the clue to the sense: 'Things creeping out of the earth devour both them and their raiment.' But I prefer the preceding suggestion.] After plur. βρωθήσονται, with subject αὐτά,*

# EPISTLE OF JEREMY 73

73 themselves afterward shall be consumed, and shall be a reproach in the country. Better therefore is the just man that hath none idols: for he shall be far from reproach.

the following clause καὶ ἔσται ὀνειδος ought to mean 'And it shall be a reproach' = והיתה תרפה; but Q's ἴσονται is preferable.

73. An apparently lame conclusion. Idols will evidently become a reproach to their worshippers; therefore one who has nothing to do with idols will be far from reproach; a *non sequitur*, unless idolatry be the sole ground of reproach. Further, there is no obvious reference for the comparative *κρείων*. Better than whom? A vague ἢ αὐτοῖς, *than they*, meaning 'the Chaldeans' (v. 40), may have fallen out; cf. αἱ θεοὶ αὐτῶν, 'their gods' in vv. 70 sq. Or the omitted phrase may have been ἢ οἱ θεράποντες αὐτῶν, 'than they that serve them,' v. 27. See the repeated ἢ οἱ ψευδεῖς θεοί, v. 58 (Eng. 59). The Hebrew of the verse may thus have been: עַל כֵּן טוֹב אִישׁ צַדִּיק וְעֹשֶׂה צְדָקָה מִכֹּהֵן (מַעֲבִידֵם) כִּי הוּא יִהְיֶה רָחוֹק מִתְּרַפָּה; 'Therefore better is a righteous man who hath no idols than they (than their worshippers); for he (A: αὐτός) will be far from reproach'. The phrase ἀνθρώπος δίκαιος = 'a non-idolater', in the sense of the writer; cf. the use of ἀνομοί, ἀσεβεῖς, υἱοὶ παράνομοι, ἀμαρτωλοί, for the heathen and renegade Jews in 1 Macc. *passim*. And it would perhaps give a more coherent sense if the statement of the verse were: 'Better is a "righteous" man (= a non-idolater) than one that hath idols: for (unlike the latter) he will be far from reproach' (which the latter must share with his discredited gods) = Heb. טוֹב אִישׁ צַדִּיק מֵאֱלֹהִים לֹא אֱלֹהִים. The translator may have confused אֱלֹהִים with לוֹא (לֹא), *not*, and omitted to notice the particle of comparison. (Possibly his Heb. MS. was worn at the end.) The Syriac ends thus: 'Well is it, then, for the righteous man who is far from reproach, and is looking for the Lord God!' (that is, the Parousia). 'Finished is the Epistle of Jeremiah the Prophet. His Prayers be with us!'