

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Study Paper Critical Examination of the Massoretic Text

Emendations of the Sopherim

Once the canon of the first portion of Bible scriptures had been closed in the Post-Exilic period, the Scripture still had to be preserved and copied. The faithful execution of this duty was the job of the scribes (sopherim).

But the sopherim went a little beyond just copying the Scriptures. Since the Scriptures were read aloud regularly, the scribes introduced variants through the medium of Keri (to be read) and Kethiv (to be written). And as the language changed, translations were made. The scribes made Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew, called Targums.

The scribes are also responsible for the vowel points for vocalizing the Hebrew text -- these being added in the later half of the first millennium A. D. This is known as Mikra Sopherim (the reading prescribed by the scribes).

The scribes also removed phrases denoting "anthropomorphisms" and employed euphemisms for what they thought were indelicate expressions. These are called Tikkuncy Sopherim (the emendations of the scribes).

What follows is a list of a particular group of these scribal emendations. If you look in the margins of the standard Hebrew codices, you will notice small writing -- called the Massorah. A note in the Massorah against several passages in the manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible states: "This is one of the Eighteen Emendations of the Sopherim" -- or words to that effect.

This is a list of the eighteen emendations, together with nine others not included in the official lists. These changes obscure the real meaning of the passage -- because of the attempt on the scribe's part to either "dehumanize" or to protect God. The idea of anthropomorphism is that man created God in his (man's) own image, and ascribed to God human characteristics -- but that God really doesn't have eyes, nose, etc. The other changes (to protect God) constitute a watering down of scripture from its plain, tell-it-like-it-is statements.

<u>SCRIPTURE</u>	<u>ORIGINAL</u>	<u>CHANGED</u>
1. Gen. 18:22	Jehovah stood yet before Abraham	Abraham stood yet before the Lord
2. Num. 11:15	thy evil	my wretchedness
3. Num. 12:12	our flesh	the flesh
4. I Sam. 3:13	cursed God	made themselves vile
5. II Sam. 12:14	thou hast greatly blasphemed Jehovah	thou . . . to the enemy of the Lord to blaspheme
6. II Sam. 16:12	(behold) with His eye ¹	look on mine affliction
7. II Sam. 20:1	to your gods	to your tents
8. I Kings 12:16	your gods	your tents
9. II Chron. 10:16	your gods	your tents
10. I Kings 21:10	blaspheme (Hebrew is bless?)	blaspheme (should have marginal note of explanation)
11. I Kings 21:13	" "	" "
12. Job 1:5	" "	" "
13. Job 1:11	" "	" "
14. Job 2:5	" "	" "
15. Job 2:9	blaspheme (Hebrew is bless?)	blaspheme (should have marginal note of explanation)
16. Job 7:20	unto Thee	to myself
17. Job 32:3	condemned God	condemned Job

¹ Present Kethiv: "on mine iniquity;" Keri: "on mine eye"

<u>SCRIPTURE</u>	<u>ORIGINAL</u>	<u>CHANGED</u>
18. Psa. 10:3	the covetous man (or robber) blasphemeth, yea, abhorreth Jehovah	the wicked . . . blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth
19. Psa. 106:20	My glory	their glory
20. Ecc. 3:21	whether it go	that goeth
21. Jer. 2:11	My glory	their glory
22. Lam. 3:20	Thy soul (will mourn)	my soul (is humbled)
23. Ezek. 8:17	My nostrils	their nostrils
24. Hos. 4:7	My glory have they changed into shame	will I change their glory into shame
25. Hab. 1:12	Thou diest not	we shall not die
26. Zech. 2:8 (12)	Mine eye	His eye
27. Mal. 1:12, 13	me	it (him)
28. Mal. 3:9	ye have cursed (Me) with a curse	ye are cursed with a curse