

TEXTUAL CRITICISM EXERCISE: JONAH 1:9, 2:4-6

A Paper

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Jonah 1:9

External Evidence

The MT and the LXX present alternative readings of 1:9a. The MT reads **וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם עִבְרִי אֲנִי**, which is translated, “And he said to them I am a Hebrew.” The LXX reads **καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς δοῦλος κυρίου ἐγὼ εἰμι**, which is translated, “And he said to them I am a slave/servant of [the] Lord.” The LXX translators seem to have read **עִבְרִי**, which means “a Hebrew” as **עִבְר** which means “slave” (+ a possible 1cs suffix). This confusion would derive from reading the last letter, a *resh*, as a *dalet*, which of course creates a completely different word. It appears that the word **κυρίου** was then added to clarify the type of “slave” (“slave of [the] Lord”) in order to make sense of the sentence.

Internal Evidence

The beginning of v. 9 is an answer to the question being asked by the men on the boat in v. 8. The last three sentences of v. 8 are inquiries into where Jonah is from, the whereabouts of his country, and identity of his people. Contextually, it is most natural for v. 9 to begin with Jonah confessing to be a Hebrew as his answer to these questions.

Synthesis/Analysis

As previously noted it appears that the LXX mistook the word for “Hebrew” as the word for “slave”. In addition the context suggests that in 1:9a Jonah is answering the questions asked of him in 1:8b. Therefore it is safe to conclude that the correct reading is that of the MT, “I am a Hebrew”.

Jonah 2:4

External Evidence

There is no external evidence for any textual variations.

Internal Evidence

The editors of the BHS suggest that either **מְצוֹלָה** (“depths”) or **בְּלִבְבַּיִם** (“in the heart of the sea”) should be removed for clarity since it is seen as repetitive. This would cause the text to read either (a) “For you cast me into the deep” or (b) “For you cast me into the heart of the sea”.

Synthesis/Analysis

Since there is no textual evidence that suggest that there should be any change made, and since it is common in Hebrew to use poetic parallelisms such as this one, the text should retain the reading, “For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the sea”.

Jonah 2:5

External Evidence

The editors of the BHS note that in 5b it is proposed that **לֵב** should be replaced by **לֵבֹ** since in Theodotion’s Greek translation **πῶς** (how?) appears. To smooth it out it is suggest that a negating word, such as **לֹא**, be added.

Internal Evidence

The flow of thought in vv. 2-9 appears to present the great troubles of Jonah juxtaposed with his hope in YHWH (e.g. in v. 2: “I called out of my distress to the YHWH [negative], and He answered me [positive]). Therefore it would fit within the pattern for Jonah to complain about being expelled from God’s sight and cast into the sea only to then express confidence that he will someday be able to look upon the holy temple of YHWH once again. Theodotion’s translation suggests that Jonah is asking YHWH how it will be possible to do so if he is cast into the sea.

Synthesis/Analysis

The internal evidence here appears to outweigh Theodotion’s alternate translation. The vv. go back and forth between despair and confidence in YHWH. Theodotion’s translation appears to miss this pattern and therefore interrupts the thought of the passage.

Jonah 2:6

External Evidence

The MT ends v. 6 with **סוּף חֲבוּשׁ לְרִאשִׁי** which is translated, “the reeds have bound my head”. The LXX on the other hand ends with **ἔδυσ ἡ κεφαλὴ μου** which is translated, “my head sinks”. In addition it appears that the LXX may have connected this phrase with the next statement as it reads **εἰς σχισμὰς ὀρέων** which is translated, “into the parting mountain”. The MT attaches this phrase (**לְקַצְבֵי הָרִים**) to the next section of thought. The

difference here is between the MT presenting Jonah as saying his head is bound with reeds and the LXX presenting Jonah as saying his head sinks into the parting mountain.

Internal Evidence

The flow of thought can be maintained using both the MT and the LXX. The LXX presents a more difficult reading, but the idea that Jonah is sinking to the bottom of the sea is maintained. The MT seems to be smoothed out a bit with the addition of the seaweed being tangled around Jonah's head.

Synthesis/Analysis

It would appear that the LXX merely left out a portion of the Hebrew in translation. The statement about the seaweed was lost, so the LXX connected the Jonah's head with sinking into the "parting mountain" at the bottom of the sea. Since the statement about the seaweed appears to be an odd addition to the text if indeed it was not original it should be assumed that it was original and the LXX simply left it out.