ABBRévIATIONS IN THE MASSORETIC TEXT.

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The use of abbreviations in the Massoretic text, as in Rabbinic writings, has long been suspected and many isolated remarks have been made on the subject; but no attempt seems yet to have been made to classify them and establish the limits within which they may be postulated in the interpretation of the Old Testament.

I.

Abbreviations are an obvious method of enabling a text to be written in a space which is too small for it (e.g. in the legend on a seal, a coin or a weight) and of lightening the burden of copying long works in which, for example, recurring words or phrases may be written in a shortened form easily understood by the reader. They seem to have been a fairly early invention, since they apparently have been found on inscriptions of the 8th century B.C. In the East, they occur in Aramaic endorsements on Assyrian contracts of the 8th-7th centuries and Babylonian contracts of the 5th century, an Aramaean weight of the 6th century, and also in the Aramaic letters from the Persian chancery dated c.411-408 B.C. and found in Egypt. In the West, possibly only one occurs in the pre-Exilic Israelite period, but they are not infrequent in the Jewish Aramaic documents of the 5th century from Egypt; one or two appear also in a few Phoenician (Punic) inscriptions of uncertain date, and others are found on Sabaean inscriptions and Himyaritic coins of equally uncertain date. The use of the initial cuneiform sign for a word as a kind of shorthand in late texts of the Neo-Babylonian or Seleucid periods may also be counted as a method of abbreviation.

In the earliest period abbreviations are restricted almost exclusively to weights and measures and a very few common nouns, mostly commercial terms.


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These are indicated mostly by the initial of the words denoting them; these are

(i) FOR WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

(דַרְבּ) a dry measure, 1 (Aramaic word unknown) half an 'rdb, (זֲח) a dry measure;
(שְקָל) 'shekel' and (מִדָּה) 'tenth of a shekel';
(חָא) a weight of uncertain value;
(שִׁנֹמָה) a Persian weight equivalent to 10 Babylonian shekels;
(הָע) (Aramaic word unknown) a linear measure;
(שָׁקְל) 'shekel'.

(ii) FOR FRACTIONS

(הָל) 'half' and (קָב) 'quarter'.

(iii) FOR COMMODITIES

(סֵל) 'silver' and (כֹּר) 'barley'.

The only other abbreviation of a common noun is ב for יב 'house' (Cowley, Aramaic Papyri no. 81, lines 106, 113-4).

A solitary Israelite weight from Tell ed-Duweir has ב for (י)ב 'half-shekel' engraved on it.5

Consequently שֶׁ-נֶּפֶפָּס may be confidently corrected, on the assumption of an original שֶׁ-נֶּפֶפָּס, to שֶׁ-נֶּפֶפָּס 'an unjust bath measure', as the parallel שֶׁ-נֶּפֶפָּס suggests (Mic. vi, 10; Duhm).

Two endorsements of Assyrian contracts on cuneiform tablets have the final letter of the proper name omitted; these are שֶׁ-נֶּפֶפָּס for סֶ-נֶּפֶפָּס and שֶׁ-נֶּפֶפָּס for 'Arbel-šarrat, where the cuneiform text confirms the true forms of the names.6 These abbreviations are due to the scantiness of the available space.

Two Punic inscriptions of uncertain date have ב, standing apparently for ב 'my lord(s)' or ב 'our lord(s)', before the names of certain officers of state; and weights of the same period inscribed with ב, of which the import is uncertain, come from Carthage.8

3. Driver in JRAS 59 (1937) 84-86.
4. Driver, Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B. C., 97.
4a. Döring, Römische Schriften etc., 209-70.
5. Torrey, in JAOS. 24 (1903) 206-208; Döring in PEQ 74 (1922) 89-91; Reifenberg ibid. 74 (1942) 111, and 75 (1943) 100-104.
7. C. I. S., i, 16, 113, 4; 260/170, 1.
8. RES. 1, 107-110/124 (see Harris, Grammar of the Phoenician Language, 136, 142).
John Hyrcanus I (135–106 B.C.) seems to have introduced abbreviations on his coins, which have once for נדיב ‘the high (priest)’ and once ביב for ‘community’ and often יד for ‘the Jews’; Alexander Jannaeus (105–78 B.C.) too has ביב for ‘community’, and John Hyrcanus II (69 B.C. and 63–57 B.C.) has perhaps ביב for ‘the king’ (v. infr.) and certainly ביב for ‘the priest’.9

On coins of the First Revolt (A.D. 66–70) ‘year two’ and ‘year three’ are sometimes written out, while ב ‘one’ and sometimes ב ‘four’ are used alone for respectively ‘year one’ and ‘year four’; but the commonest form is ב ב ב ב ב for ‘year two, three, four, five’, where ב stands for ב ב ‘year’. The coins of the Second Revolt (A.D. 132–135) have ‘year one’ written out but ב ב ב ב ב for ‘year two’; they also have ב ב ב ב ב for ב ב ב ב ב ‘liberation’, ב ב ב ב ב for ב ב ב ב ב ‘Simeon, Simon’ and once ב ב ב ב ב for ב ב ב ב ב ‘Israel’.10

Abbreviations, therefore, were a device which may well have been known to Jews from possibly the 8th and certainly the 5th century B.C., when Jewish scribes used them in Egypt in official documents written in the Aramaic language; they might then be expected a priori in the pre-Seputagintal Hebrew text of the Old Testament. Their use greatly increased during and immediately after the Second Commonwealth on coins; and a few are found in the Scrolls from Qumran. In the earliest period they were limited, with very rare exceptions, to weights and measures and other terms employed in business, on deeds and contracts and such-like documents; but it was soon extended on coins to proper names and political terms, which were often abbreviated as a consequence of the exigencies of the available space. Otherwise only a very few common nouns such as ב ב ‘house’ and ב ב ‘year’ were normally abridged.

II

The simplest type of abbreviation, to which Lagarde has drawn attention11, in the Massoretic text is the omission of terminations12, such as the sing. fem. -ו or -א and the plur. masc. -(ו)י and -ו and fem. -ו, which can be readily

11. In Anmerkungen zur griechischen Übersetzung der Proverben (1863), A.
12. A mark of abbreviation is hereafter put after abbreviated forms for the assistance of the reader without prejudging the case for or against their use in the archaic Hebrew text.
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supplied by the reader, as in for שֶׁבֶר for שֶׁבֶר (Is. ii, 2; Oort); שֶׁבֶר for שֶׁבֶר (Gen. xlix, 15; Sam.); שֶׁבֶר for שֶׁבֶר (Ps. viii, 10; Gressmann w. Jerome);

for שָׁמָּה for שָׁמָּה (Ps. xi, 6; Lowth w. Symm.);

for שָׁמָּה for שָׁמָּה (Is. xvi, 4; Graetz w. Targ.);

for כָּלְיוֹרֶד for כָּלְיוֹרֶד (Zeph. i, 9; Graetz w. Symm., Pesh., Targ.);

for רֵצִים = רֵצִים (Is. xxxviii, 12; Lowth w. Symm., Vulg., Targ.);

for לֵז for לא for לא (Is. li, 4; Lowth w. Pesh., Heb. MSS.);

for כָּמָּה for כָּמָּה (Ps. xlv, 9; Olshausen; see also Sir. xxxix, 15);

for יִדּוֹן for יִדּוֹן (I Sam. xxviii, 9; Thenius w. LXX, Pesh., Vulg.);

for אַלְמָנִי for אַלְמָנִי (I Sam. xx, 38, Q);

for פַּה for פַּה or פי for פי (Ps. cii, 24; Driver);

for יִד for יִד or יִד for יִד (Ezek. xiii, 18; Smend w. Pesh., Targ., Heb. MSS.);

for חַטָּב for חַטָּב (Lam. iii, 38; Budde w. Vulg., Pesh., Heb. MSS.);

misread as גֶּשֶׁם (Lev. vi, 10; Ginsburg w. LXX, Vulg., Heb. MSS.)

Some such instances occur several times, e.g.

for כְּרֵד for כְּרֵד (Is. iii, 10; Graetz w. Targ.; Ps. lxv, 11; Graetz w. Theod., Targ., Eth.);

for כָּמָּה for כָּמָּה (Ps. cxi, 4; Lowth w. Pesh., Heb. MSS.; Ps. cxliv, 2; Mudge w. Aq., Jerome, Pesh., Targ.).

Further, parallel passages may show different abbreviations of the same word, e.g. כְּרֵד and כְּרֵד for כְּרֵד (LXX and Targ. at II Sam. xxii, 44 and LXX at Ps. xviii, 44); such divergence corroborates the abbreviations.

Sometimes an ancient translator has failed to recognize an abbreviated form, as in רִנְק הָאָרֶן misread as רִנְקְרֵדְרָה instead of רִנְק הָאָרֶן (LXX at Jud. v, 10; Burney), which is valuable as showing that such forms were not normally indicated by marks of abbreviation in the archetypes used by the LXX.

Not infrequently, alternative explanations of such apparent grammatical irregularities are possible: so for example כָּרֵד may be an adjective in כָּרֵד (Ct. viii, 2; Bickell w. LXX, Heb. MSS.) ought perhaps to be read (as also the construct pointing of the noun seems
intended to suggest); and the masc._notice in דְּדוּתָן תַּחְתָּן may be explained as due to failure to read an abridged פְּלֵחַ פְּלֵחַ correctly or to a lapse of congruence due to the distance of the predicative term from the noun which it qualifies (I Kings xix, 11; Burney). This last explanation may also account for the lapse of congruence in_above all (and similar expressions), where however יִדָּוֵר = מְדֻרָה מְדֻרָה may originally have been intended (Prov. iii, 18; Graetz w. Pesh., Targ.). So too the normally fem._notice 'court' may be treated as a masc. noun in accordance with its form in מִתְקַשְּרִים; but this is perhaps rather a misreading of מִתְקַשְּרִים מִלְּמוֹנִים (Ezek. xl, 19, 32, xlii, 5; cp. xlv, 19, xlvii, 1). Or again the suggestion that פִּקְרִים is a misreading of an original פִּקְרִים (Exod. xv, 11; Haupt. w. LXX; cp. parallel מִלְּמוֹנִים) is not necessarily correct: for qodesh may here be a 'broken' or 'inner' plural form used with collective force.

At the same time the theory that such forms as דְּדוּתָן = דְּדוּתָן have an apocopated -i instead of -im as the plur. termination is improbable since it does not also explain דְּדוּתָן = דְּדוּתָן, and analogous forms are very rare in the West-Semitic dialects; they are therefore best explained as due to scribal abbreviation, if they are not regarded as mere errors of transmission.

The recognition of the fact that terminations may have been omitted gets rid not only of various supposed anomalies in the M.T., but also of some solecisms which have been imported into the transcriptions of the Scrolls. They show that the supposed plur. masc. constr. form in יָדוּתָן תַּחְתָּן is nothing but a misreading of an original יָדוּתָן תַּחְתָּן or יָדוּתָן תַּחְתָּן (DSD iii, 24; iv, 23; cp. DST iii, 18; DSW fragm. i, 4) and that the strange יָדוּתָן תַּחְתָּן stands for יָדוּתָן תַּחְתָּן (DSD x, 2). Like the Septuagint, modern scholars have been misled by the absence of marks of abbreviation.

Care, however, must be taken not unduly to assume abbreviations; for example יָדוּתָן is not an error for יָדוּתָן תַּחְתָּן 'door' (Ps. cxli, 3; Perles), for the

14. The Heb. פְּלֵחַ and the Fr. mode and other words may sometimes similarly take their gender from their form, regardless of their grammatical gender.
15. Like Arab. fa’lu (Wright, Arabic Grammar, I, 200).
19. Driver in JTS, N. S. 4 (1953), 307. The plur. absolute form is always יָדוּתָן which confirms
Phoen. יד確認s it. So too יג = נוּן (Graetz), since it can be read יג (Is. xlv, 1; Hitzig); and יג is not to be treated as יג = מַעַל (Perles w. Midr. R.), since it is confirmed by the LXX and the cognate Arabic noun (Eccl. xii, 12).

III

Confirmation of the theory of abbreviations may be found in the misunderstanding which the ancient translators or copyists now and then show of them, as in

יִתְנָה misread as םיִתְנָה instead of יִתְנָה (Ruth ii, 21; Houbigant with LXX MSS, Eth. Nyss.);

יֵתְסָר misread as יֵתְסָר instead of יֵתְסָר (Prov. iii, 15; Bickell w. LXX, Vulg., 1 Heb. MS);

יָתְרֶנ misread as יָתְרֶנ instead of יָתְרֶנ (Ezek. xxiv, 4; Kraetzschmar w. LXX, Pesh.);

The absence of the pronominal suffixes where they may be naturally expected often suggests that they have been omitted by way of abbreviation, as in

יָתְרֶנ misread as יָתְרֶנ instead of יָתְרֶנ (Prov. xi, 6; Lagarde w. Vss.);

יָתְרֶנ misread as יָתְרֶנ instead of יָתְרֶנ (II Sam. xvii, 11; Ginsburg w. LXX, Vulg., Pesh.);

יָתְרֶנ misread as יָתְרֶנ instead of יָתְרֶנ (Ps. iii, 3; Wellhausen w. LXX, Vulg.);

יָתְרֶנ misread as יָתְרֶנ instead of יָתְרֶנ (Jb. xvii, 6; Siegfried w. LXX, Pesh., Vulg.).

The same error may be made in the case of verbs; so יָתְרֶנ has been read יָתְרֶנ instead of יָתְרֶנ (Ps. ix, 2; Houbigant w. LXX, Vulg.).

Not infrequently the wrong suffix has been supplied, as in

יָתְרֶנ read as יָתְרֶנ instead of יָתְרֶנ (Ps. cxxv, 12; Graetz w. LXX, Jerome, Pesh.);

יָתְרֶנ read as יָתְרֶנ instead of יָתְרֶנ (do.).

Similar abbreviated forms of verbs may be found, as in

this suggestion. The only exception is יָתְרֶנ, which may be an error for יָתְרֶנ (DST xiii, 8); but יָתְרֶנ 'spirits' occurs in Mishnaic Hebrew.

20. Or יָתְרֶנ with one Heb. MS. (Kennisott).
misread as יָעַה instead of יָעַה (Num. xi, 31; Driver);  יָשַר as יָשֲר instead of יָשָׁר (Jer. xlviii, 45; Duhm w. Heb. MSS., cp. Num. xxi, 28).

In the first of these passages the paseq after the verb indicates a copyist’s doubt, and in the second the parallel reading establishes the true text, so that יָשַר ought not to be treated here as a masculine noun.

The same practice will explain the numerous cases of the omission of the plur. -u from perfect and imperfect as well as imperative forms 21, except when the verb precedes the subject.

It will also explain a number of unwanted or incorrect apocopated forms of the defective verbs 22 which appear when a jussive sense or preterite sense is inadmissible, as in

בָּמַשׁ misread רַב יִבְנֵי for רַבָּנֵי (Mic. iii, 10; Graetz w. LXX, Pesh., Targ.);

יָשָׁר misread יָשַר for יָשָׁר (Jb. xxiii, 9);

יָשַר misread יָשַר for יָשַר (Jb. xxiii, 11);

לְכַלֵּי misread לְכַלֵּי for לְכַלֵּי (Jb. xxxi, 21; Bickell w. Vulg.);

יָשַר misread יָשַר for יָשַר (Mic. vi, 10; Wellhausen).

So יָשַר לְשׁוֹן 'an unfanned fire' (Jb. xx, 26; LXX b יָשֶׁר אֲחָאתוֹ; cp. Num. xxi, 30) may be read also as יָשַר לְשׁוֹן יָשָׁר 'a fire with none to quench it' (LXX; cp. Sir. li, 4 23); both make equally good sense.

In the same way יָשַר has been misread יָשָׁר (an otherwise unknown name) instead of יָשָׁר (II Kings xviii, 2; Ginsburg; cp. II Chr. xxix, 1).

The suggestion has also been made that verbs with final ק may once have been written in abridged form without it, e.g. יָשַר for יָשָׁר (Mic. i, 15) and יָשָׁר for יָשָׁר (Jer. xxxii, 35); in these cases the Kethiv is often corrected by Qere or in other manuscripts. Some of the examples cited, however, are demonstrably wrong, e.g. יָשַר for יָשָׁר (Ps. cxli, 5; Perles); for the verb here intended is not יָשָׁר 'to repel' but an otherwise unknown Hebr. יָשָׁר = Arab. nawá 'grew fat'. 24

21. The corresponding plur. fem. -y with Syriac verbs is silent and therefore often not written (Nöldeke, Syriac Grammar, § 159).
23. See note 12.
That the divine names must once have been abbreviated by the copyists has long been recognized and can easily be proved from the ancient Versions.

The commonest abbreviation for the tetragrammaton seems to have been a single yodh, as in

ךָ for ^ יִשְׂרָאֵל (Ps. cxxxii, 2; Schulz);
ךָ for ^ יִשָּׂרָאֵל (LXX at Jer. vi, 11)\textsuperscript{25};
ךָ for ^ יָּמָה (LXX at Ezek. xxxviii, 20);
ךָ for ^ יָּמָה (LXX at Jon. i, 9)\textsuperscript{25}.

Inversely נִשְׂרָאֵל written ^ is sometimes (mis)taken for the suffix of the sing. 1st. person as in

ךָ נִשְׂרָאֵל written ^ נִשָּׂרָאֵל and misread כָּן (LXX at Jud. xix, 18);
ךָ נִשְׂרָאֵל written ^ נַשְׂרָאֵל or ^ נַשָּׂרָאֵל and misread כַּן (LXX at Jer. xxv, 37).

Occasionally perhaps נִשְׂרָאֵל may have been used for נִשְׂרָאֵל, as when נִשְׂרָאֵל הָיָה יִשָּׂרָאֵל is translated βασιλεύσει κύριος (LXX\textsuperscript{A}), which represents an original נִשְׂרָאֵל (Zeph. iii, 15: Marti w. LXX\textsuperscript{A})\textsuperscript{26}.

The mistakes of the LXX, as in their impossible reading of נִשְׂרָאֵל as נַשְׂרָאֵל יִשָּׂרָאֵל (Is. ii, 11), are especially instructive; for they could not have made them if the translators had not been familiar with the use of abbreviations in the manuscripts on which they were working.

The admission of the use of מ for נִשְׂרָאֵל may enable a missing subject to be restored, as in מְנַחֶם מְנַחֶם for which מְנַחֶם מְנַחֶם may be read (Exod. viii, 23; Ginsburg w. LXX), and מְנַחֶם מְנַחֶם for which מְנַחֶם מְנַחֶם may be read (I Sam. ii, 32; Kennicott; cp. Num. x, 32); or a mistake to be corrected, as in מְנַחֶם מְנַחֶם מְנַחֶם where מְנַחֶם מְנַחֶם must be read (Ps. xxxi, 7; Kennicott w. Vss. and Heb. MSS.).

Clearly, too, the tetragrammaton must occasionally have been represented by מ for מְנַחֶם מְנַחֶם rightly read as מְנַחֶם מְנַחֶם (Perles at Ps. lxviii, 20; cp. lxxvii, 2);

ךָ מְנַחֶם מְנַחֶם read as מְנַחֶם מְנַחֶם (LXX at Esth. vi. 1).

Once again the recognition of this device enables a corrupt passage to be corrected, as in מְנַחֶם מְנַחֶם מְנַחֶם which is a misreading of

... hence read נָהַתְתָּם (Lam. iii, 51; Perles), as both the rhythmical structure of the verse and the sense show.

The origin of this נָהַתְתָּם is disputed, whether it derives from the use of נָהַתְתָּם as a substitute for the 'name' of God (Luzzatto27), which is very improbable, or is the initial radical of the root (Perles) or its last letter, which is often used in Arabic abbreviations (Delitzsch).

The exact abbreviation to which the LXX's rendering of נָהַתְתָּם (Prov. xxiv, 7; Perles) is due is not clear.

In the same way נָהַתְתָּם לְקָרֵב may have been written k, as possibly in מַעֲשֵׂהֲנָהַתְתָּם (Job xxii, 30), which seems to be required by the sense, where the error may have been helped by a sign of abbreviation.28 So כּ seems to be used occasionally in the Scrolls for סָדָּה (DSD zn.i).

The omission of the initial letter of a word is a curious form of abbreviation which occurs only in לְקָרֵב for לְקָרֵב 'thousand' in the Jewish-Aramaic documents from Egypt29; it was perhaps due to the fact that כּ might stand for כּ 'four, forty' (although ciphers were normally employed for numbers in these texts). Such an abbreviation would in any case be intelligible only with a very few common words. Elsewhere כּ לַקָרְבָּה for כּ לַקָרְבָּה, misread כּ לַקָרְבָּה as a כּ תְּקָרְבָּה to avoid blasphemy30 (I Sam. iii, 13, LXX), may represent the same device. It has been detected also in לְקָרְבָּה כּ לַקָרְבָּה, where כּ has been thought to be a misreading of כּ לַקָרְבָּה (Is. iii, 9); here too it may have been adopted for a like reason, to avoid a charge of ingratitude to God (Perles; cp. Deut. xxiii, 6). In the same way לָקָרְבָּה, תָּקָרְבָּה or לָקָרְבָּה (Jer. xxxiii, 24), as suggested by the two ancient Vss. which imply לָקָרְבָּה syl. before God (Theod., Pesh.).

That the names of God were then abbreviated is proved by the prohibition in the Scrolls of swearing in the name of base לָקָרְבָּה, 'by 'el[ohim] or by 'ad[onay]' (CDC xv, 1).

30a. Cp. supra ch. I.
Proper names of persons and places, especially those which occur often, seem to have been commonly abbreviated, as in
\[\text{אָנָּא read as הָגָרָּאָה (M.T.) or חָגָרָּאָה (Gen. xlvii, 3; Ginsburg w. LXX, Sam.)}\]
\[\text{אָנָּא read as הָגָרָּא (M.T.) or חָגָרָּא (II Sam. iii, 27; Ginsburg w. LXX);}\]
\[\text{נָּא = חָגָרָּא misread חָגָרָּאָה (Jer. xxxii, 26; Volz w. LXX; cp. xxviii, 1);}\]
\[\text{אֶ = חָגָרָּא misread חָגָרָּאָה (Ezek. xxxvii, 19; Cornill w. LXX);}\]
\[\text{אֶּלֶּה misread אֶּלֶּהָ (Jer. xxxiii, 7; xxxvi, 2; Volz w. LXX);}\]
\[\text{אֶלֹּית read as אֶלֹּית or אֶלֹּיתֶּה (Ezek. xl, 8; Ginsburg w. LXX, Heb. MSS);}\]
\[\text{אֵלָּא read as אֵלָּא (II Sam. i, 12; LXX)30b;}\]
\[\text{אֵלָּא misread אֵלָּאָה for אֵלָּא (Jer xxxv, 12; Cornill w. LXX);}\]
\[\text{אֵלָּא read אֵלָּאָה in M. T. but read אֵלָּא by the LXX (Am. iii, 9);}\]
\[\text{יִּתְנֶּרֶד read אֵלָּאָה (LXX, cp. verse 6), misread אֵלָּא (Jer. xxxiv, 1; Cornill);}\]
\[\text{יִּתְנֶּּרֶד read אֵלָּאָה (Ct. ii, 17, Perles; cp. vii, 5);}\]
\[\text{יִּתְנֶּּרֶד read אֵלָּאָה (I Kings ix, 18; Eichhorn; cp. II Chr. viii, 3–4).31}\]

That proper names may be thus abbreviated accounts also for the frequent confusion between 'Israel' and 'Jacob' in the M.T. and the versions. For example, the LXX have \(\text{λανθᾶ̇σ} \) for הָנָּא in eleven places and \(\text{Ἰακὸνλ} \) for בָּנָי in six places32; and they have \(\text{λανθᾶ̇σ} \) once for הָנָּא for the same reason (Deut. xxxii, 15). Does this account for some of the confusion between "Israel" and "Judah" (e.g. II Chron. xxi, 19, 27).

Certain common nouns, too, seem to have been very often abbreviated, notably בַּי 'house', בְּ 'son' and בְּ 'daughter'33 as in
\[\text{בַּי read as בַּיֶּה but translated בַּי (I Kings xvii, 15, LXX);}\]
\[\text{בַּי read as בַּיֶּה but translated בַּי (Ezek. xii, 23, LXX)33a;}\]

32. Hatch & Redpath, Concordance to the Septuagint, Supplement, 74, 88.
33. Cp. Schwally in ZAW 10 (1900) 171. The LXX have 'house' for 'sons' in some 11 places and 'sons' for 'house' in some 15 places (Hatch & Redpath, Concordance, 973–982, 1384–1404).
read as נב יָדוֹחַ but translated בְּיָדוֹחַ (Hos. i, 7, LXX);
שִׁירֵי אֲשֶׁר יִבְּשֵׂא but translated שְׁירֵי אֲשֶׁר (Ezek. xliii, 7; xliv, 9, 15, LXX);
אַבָּרִים read as בְּיָדוֹחַ in M.T., but as בְּיָדוֹחַ in Heb. MSS.
(II Kings x, 6);
יאואָה read as יִבְּשֵׂא, but translated יִבְּשֵׂא (II Sam. xii, 8; Pesh.).
These abbreviations suggest that several names of places and peoples,
which have unusual forms, perhaps owe them to a failure on the part of the
scribes to recognize the practice, e.g.
בְּיָדוֹחַ for בְּיָדוֹחַ (Josh. xxi, 27; Gesenius);
גָּדְרֵי for גָּדְרֵי (cp. Pesh.’s Bar-dgar).
This explanation has been conjectured for a number of personal names of
this type (ובְּיָדוֹחַ, בְּיָדוֹחַ, etc., and so on), and it is perhaps confirmed by
a certain number of Thamudean names of the same form.35 In the same way
the strange בְּיָדוֹחַ and בְּיָדוֹחַ have been plausibly explained as representing
respectively בְּיָדוֹחַ and בְּיָדוֹחַ (Gen. xiv, 2; Tuch).
Other common nouns which may be similarly abbreviated are בְּיָדוֹחַ ‘man’,
בְּיָדוֹחַ ‘lord’ and בְּיָדוֹחַ ‘king’, בְּיָדוֹחַ ‘place’, בְּיָדוֹחַ ‘day’ and בְּיָדוֹחַ ‘time’, and the
names of the months as in
בְּיָדוֹחַ or בְּיָדוֹחַ – (I Sam. xviii, 32; Wellhausen w. LXX);
בְּיָדוֹחַ misread בְּיָדוֹחַ (Jer. vii, 4; Rudolph; cp. vii, 3)35a;
בְּיָדוֹחַ misread בְּיָדוֹחַ (Eccl. iii, 17; Houbigant);
בְּיָדוֹחַ misread בְּיָדוֹחַ (Deut. xxxii, 35; Perles w. LXX, Sam.,
Targ. O.);
בְּיָדוֹחַ read alternatively as בְּיָדוֹחַ (Jer. xxxix, 5 =
II Kings xxv, 5; Jer, lli, 8).36

VII
So too pronouns and particles, for example בְּיָדוֹחַ ‘that’ and בְּיָדוֹחַ ‘this’,

34. Knudtzon, Amarna-Tafeln, 170, 37.
ABBREVIATIONS IN THE MASSORETIC TEXT

'm 'who?' and רָאָשׁ 'who', which', וְאָנָה and וְאָנָה 'where?', וּאָמ 'if', וּל 'would that' and וּלָּמ 'not' must often have been abbreviated, as in חֹזֵק וּלָּמ כַּפַּרְנֵי יִרְדֵּנְךָ (Jer. xxix, 23 Q; Michaelis w. Kethiv);

מִשְׁרָא (sīc) (Num. xxiii, 10; Ginsburg w. LXX, SamMS);

מִשְׁרָא (Jer. v, 16; Rudolph; cp. Pesh.);

מִשְׁרָא (Eccl. ii, 15; Zapletal);

מִשְׁרָא (Jer. xliv, 4; gloss; Driver);

מִשְׁרָא (II Kings ii, 14; Graetz);

מִשְׁרָא (Ezek. xlv, 19; Cornill w. LXX, Pesh., Targ.);

מִשְׁרָא (Ps. lxxxix, 8; Graetz w. Srohcx.);

מִשְׁרָא (Ps. lxix, 5; Driver);

מִשְׁרָא (Jer. x, 19; Driver);

מִשְׁרָא (II Kings vi, 27; Perles);

מִשְׁרָא (Ezek. xxxvi, 7; Thackery w. LXX, Pesh.);

מִשְׁרָא (Eccl. ii, 3; Galling);

מִשְׁרָא כֵּן read as כֵּן (LXX, Vulg.) or כֵּן (M.T. w. Pesh., Targ.) (II Kings xiii, 19; Klostermann).

Occasionally the last letter of a word is not found in the M.T. as in (otherwise unknown) for אֶל (II Kings viii, 2; Ginsburg with II Chr. xxix, 1)39;

מִשְׁרָא (II Sam. v, 25; Thenius w. LXX and I Chr. xiv, 16);

מִשְׁרָא for (I Kings xxi, 23; Castalio w. Vulg., Pesh., Targ., Heb. MSS., and II Kings ix, 36);

מִשְׁרָא for (Ps. cvii, 3; Clericus w. Targ.);

מִשְׁרָא for (Is. liii, 8; Houbigant w. LXX);

37. The negative 'or' is written without 'and united with the following word often in the Ugaritic and occasionally in Old-Aramaic texts.
39. See also Josephus, Ant. IX, xiii, 1, § 260.
40. See also in LXX (ποτέιξαμα), implying that the abbreviated form appeared in their archetype but had been filled out in those on which the other Versions were based.
The LXX postulate abbreviations even when they are demonstrably wrong. So they interpret רַשׁ הָאָדָם מַרְבּוּתָם (Ezek. xviii, 10), which is a conflation of מְשַׁפְּרָה and מֶשֶׁר הָאָדָם (sic) והָאָדָם 'and he turns aside from (going after) these (precepts)', as רַשׁ הָאָדָם (for) = רַשׁ הָאָדָם 'in the way of his father he has not walked' (Bewer), which cannot be fitted into the sentence; their error is due to having mistaken עָשָׂה 'turned aside' for 'did', which has thrown the whole sentence out of gear. Then רַשׁ הָאָדָם is a marginal note indicating that רַשׁ הָאָדָם must be corrected to עָשָׂה when the sense will be 'and he turned aside from following these'.

Abbreviations indicating glosses seem here and there to have made their way into the M. T., as in שֹׁמְרֵן אֲמוּרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שֵׁרֵץ חֲרוֹן שִׁמְרֵת, where הִׁשְׁמַרְתִּי שֵׁרֵץ שֵׁיִּישְׂרָאֵל הָיָה a gloss explaining that שֵׁיִּישְׂרָאֵל in the text means a weapon 'made for a lightning glance' (Ezek. xxii, 20; Reifmann). In the same way must be taken for הִׁשְׁמַרְתִּי שֵׁיִּישְׂרָאֵל הָיָה being intended to supply an object for the verb from the immediately preceding כְּבֵר לִשְׁמַר נַעֲרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּבֵר הָיָה (II Sam, 2, 18, Perles and Driver; cp. Deut. xxii, 44). So too רַשׁ הָאָדָם רַשׁ הָאָדָם for רַשׁ הָאָדָם רַשׁ הָאָדָם, where the superfluous רַשׁ is an abbreviated gloss intended to indicate רַשׁ.

41. So II Kings viii, 11 cannot be translated et wartete (Perles, Analecten, 30).
42. Cp. Lev. iv, 2 (?); Ru. ii, 19; I Sam. xiv, 32 (?); I Kings xx, 40; I Chr. iv, 10; Jb. xxiii, 9 (Eitan, Contributions to Biblical Lexicography, 56-57, and Driver in Studies . . . presented to T.H. Robinson, 54-55).
as the subject as named in the previous verse (I Sam. ix, 12; Perles and Wellhausen w. LXX).

Once an early grammatical note has crept into the text; for ןַנְּרִּיחַ means לְמַן, being a gloss indicating that the verb is written plene with its radical nun and is not, as usually elsewhere, contracted (Ps. lxi, 8; Perles).

X

Scaliger\textsuperscript{43} long ago hinted that the numerous mistakes in numbers in the M.T. may often be due to the use of abbreviations.

The earliest method of abbreviating numbers in the O.T. seems to have been by using the initial letter of the word for that required. This is amply illustrated by the confusing use of ש for `two', שלוש for `three', ש for `six', שבע for `seven', and for the twenties formed from the last four\textsuperscript{43}, as in שמשלוש שבע for שמשלוש שבע (II Sam. xxiv, 13; Ewald w. LXX and I Chr. xxi, 12);

ש שmisread as ש (II Sam. xxiii, 13; Vss., Q. and Heb. MSS.\textsuperscript{44}; ש שmisread as ש (II Kings xx, 15; LXX); ש = ש = `hundred (shekels)' misread as ש (I Kings x, 17; Kittel w. II Chr. ix, 16).

The omission of sing. fem. and plur. masc. terminations will have been a contributory cause of the not infrequent confusion between units and tens\textsuperscript{46}, as in ש = ש = רֶפֶה = רֶפֶה (II Sam. xv, 7; Cappell w. LXX\textsuperscript{Luc}, Pesh.);

ש שmisread as ש = ש (Gen. vii, 11; LXX)\textsuperscript{46a};

ש שmisread as ש = ש (I Sam. xiii, 5; Keil w. LXX\textsuperscript{Luc}, Pesh.);

ש ש = ש = ש = ש misread as ש (Q. הָנָּבָּה) (II Sam. xxiii, 18; Graetz w. Heb. MSS., Pesh. and Arab.)

Once this principle is admitted, the correction of פְּרוֹזִים 'thy shoots' into

\textsuperscript{43a} Cp. B.J. VII, x, 4, § 436, where `343 years' is an error for `243'.
\textsuperscript{44} The correction is confirmed by the total number.
\textsuperscript{45} The construction of ו or ו, as the case may be, has been adapted to that required by the number. The error is certainly not due to writing the final 5 of the preceding ו or ו twice and writing it as the symbol for 30, as Thenius supposes (Wellhausen).
\textsuperscript{46} Wellhausen, \textit{Bücher Samuelis}, 20.
\textsuperscript{46a} Cp. II Kings xviii, 13 (Montgomery).
thy two cheeks' is admissible and greatly improves the sense (Ct. iv, 12; Perles).

Obviously a system which could have such results could not last, and another based on the order of the letters in the alphabet came into use; the letters from נ to פ were used serially for one to nine, from ט to ז for ten to ninety, and from פ to י for one hundred to four hundred. The earliest examples of this method, which was that used long afterwards in dating the coins of the First Revolt, as already said, is in two or three examples of gematria which have been discovered in the M.T.

Thus the sum of the numerical values of the letters in the name of Eliezer, the steward of Abraham's household, is the basis of the number of men in his trained bands; for נ = 1 plus ב = 30 plus ה = 10 plus י = 70 plus נ = 200 yields 318, which is the number of Abraham's men (Gen. xiv, 14). In the same way, the incorrect 390 days (M.T., Aq., Symm., Theod.), for which Ezekiel is bidden to lie on his side, seems to have been substituted for the apparently original 190 days (LXX) to fit the numerical value of the letters in נ(ף)נו = נ(א) י 'days of siege', which is נ = 10 plus י = 40 plus נ = 10 plus י = 40 plus י = 90 plus י = 200, namely 390 (Ezek. iv, 5, 8). The first of these figures is pre-Septuagintal, the other seems to have been introduced between the LXX and the late Greek translators.

That gematria can be pushed so far back raises the question whether it may not have been preceded by some other system of the same sort, but not so elaborate. For example, the choice of the number of the children who had mocked Elisha and were torn by the two she-bears who arrived in response to his curse may be based on the numerical value of the letters; for their number was 'forty and two', which can be extracted from ב ל ו 'bear' read as ל = א י ד (אַיְרִיב read as אַיְרִיבְתָּם 'forty' plus ב = יָנָה 'two', while the odd 'two' was further taken for the number of the she-bears themselves (II Kings ii, 24).

Occasionally the LXX have followed the system of initial letters where the M.T. reflects that of the numerical value of the letters, as in נ ה which interpreted by the LXX as רַחְפִּים and read in the M.T. as רַחְפִּים, because י is the eighth letter of the alphabet while י as the initial letter of שֵׁמוֹ 'five'.

47. Nestle, Expository Times 17 (1906), 44-45.
may be read also as an abbreviation for that word (Jer. xxxvi, 9). This use of both systems is further illustrated by מְתַנְתֹּ נֶפֶשׁ interpreted by the LXX as ἥψιμα and in the M.T. as מַטָּה שֵׁשָּׁה because שׁ is the ninth letter of the alphabet and בְּ is the name of the tenth month of the year (Jer. lii, 4). In both cases the divergent readings reflect the same archetype.

When therefore both בְּ and שְׁמָה עַל are translated ‘forty’ by the LXX, the error may be ascribed to their having confused an archaic ב used as the initial letter for שְׁבִיט or שְׁמָה עַל with an equally archaic untailed פ whose numerical value is ‘forty’ (I Kings vi, 1–2).

What then was Saul’s age when he came to the throne as בֹּז בֵּי, as said in the M.T.; for he certainly was not only ‘a year old’ (I Sam. xiii, 1)? The LXX read שֵׁשֶׁת בַּעַשְׁוֹן ‘a son of 30 years’, suggesting that שׁ = שֵׁשֶׁת has fallen out by haplography (Scaliger); but this makes him too young, since he is unlikely to have had a grandson when only 32 years old (II Sam. iv, 4). Alternatively, the phrase may be read שֵׁשֶׁת בַּעַשְׁוֹן ‘a son of 50 years’, which would make him about 70 when he died fighting at Gilboa (Driver); or it might be read שֵׁשֶׁת שְׁבִיט בָּא = שֵׁשֶׁת בַּעַשְׁוֹן ‘a son of 55 years’ (Caspary), which postulates a doubtful construction in so early a book and perhaps makes him too old for an Oriental warrior when he died. The same verse goes on to say that he reigned שְׁבִיט בָּא ‘two years’; not only is the expression ungrammatical but the figure also is equally impossible. The best solution is to suppose that the original text read שֵׁשֶׁת בָּא = שֵׁשֶׁת שְׁבִיט בָּא ‘20 years’ and that this was misread as or corrupted into שֵׁשֶׁת בָּא = שֵׁשֶׁת שְׁבִיט בָּא (where the number of שֵׁשֶׁת is adapted to the idiom), agreeing tolerably well with Saul’s age as suggested above (Keil); for the arguments here adduced have shown that it is incorrect to say that ‘there is no ground for supposing (as is sometimes done) that in ancient times numerals were represented in Hebrew MSS by the letters of the alphabet’. Further, no evidence has been found to support the contention that ‘the ancient Hebrews, it is reasonable to suppose, would have adopted a system similar to that in use amongst their neighbours’ and have employed ciphers

50. Cp. Driver, Semitic Writing, 193 (fig. 97, col. 2–6).
53. Cp. II Sam. ii, 10; II Kings xxii, 19; II Chr. xxxii, 21 for this expression.
like those found on Phoenician and Aramaic, Nabataean and Palmyrene inscriptions\textsuperscript{54}, although the Jews in Egypt used them in non-literary documents in the 5th century B.C. The scribes may have used them in Biblical texts; but the only practice that can be proved for such texts is the two alphabetic systems.

XI

Whole phrases can be shown to have been written in abbreviation. So, for example, an original נֵּ֣בַעַ֑בְּרָא has been read as נֵּ֣בַעַ֑בְּרָא (LXX, M.T.) and also as נֵּ֣בַעַ֑בְּרָא (Vulg., Pesh., Targ.); the abbreviation was possible because it could be easily understood from the context (Esth. ix, 25). Or again the meaningless אַ֤פִּיָּהּ in הָאָ֣בִּיל מֵאָ֣בִּים (where it is followed by paseq indicating a doubt about the text) is an incorrect filling in of an original אַ֤פִּיָּהּ = אַ֤פִּיָּהּ (which I enjoin upon thee’, as the LXX translate it; the verse may now be rendered ‘do this that I enjoin upon thee, my son, and save thyself: when thou fallest into another’s power, go, exert thyself and pester thy friends’, which restores the rhythmical balance of the clauses.\textsuperscript{56} The abbreviation here is possible because the expression is a near-quotation (Prov. vi, 3; cp. Zeph. iii, 7).

Elsewhere abbreviation may be conjectured even where no ancient Vs. corroborates it. For example, the mysterious אַ֤פִּיָּהּ in אֵ֣בְּרָא אַלְּאָ֣בִּיל מֵאָ֣בִּים is an incorrect restitution of an original אַ֤פִּיָּהּ אֵ֣בְּרָא אַלְּאָ֣בִּיל מֵאָ֣בִּים wrongly imported from below, where it is in place; it had presumably been accidentally omitted in copying the archetype and was added in abridged form in the margin, whence it was subsequently and erroneously transferred to its present place in the M.T. The verse may now be translated

‘my son, if sinners entice thee

if they speak <unto thee, saying>\textsuperscript{57}:

come with us; let us lie in wait for blood,

set an ambush\textsuperscript{58} for one who is innocent to no purpose’;

\textsuperscript{54} S. R. Driver, Books of Samuel (1913), 97; cp. Burney, Books of Kings, 61.
\textsuperscript{55} So BH\textsuperscript{3}; other edd. (l) אַ֤פִּיָּהּ [אַ֤פִּיָּהּ: אַ֤פִּיָּהּ]
\textsuperscript{56} G. R. Driver in Biblica 32 (1951), 196-197.
\textsuperscript{57} Beer with LXX; cp. Jer. xxvii, 9, 14 (גֵּֽבֶּר יָֽמִּים כֻּלִּֽיָּהּ) and Is, xxxv, 4 (גֵּֽבֶּר rendered by נָגָֽשִׁים).
\textsuperscript{58} Namely יָֽמִּים (Sa'adyah).
whereby the rhythmical balance of the clauses is restored (Prov. i, 10-11). 59

Or again, the rhythmically inadequate נָסְפָּהּ (֜כַּנִּיה יִכְרֹרֶת) has been ingeniously taken as having originally been נִכְרֹרֶת [x] נָסְפָּהּ (֜כַּנִּיה יִכְרֹרֶת) נֶעֳרְשָׁה (אֲשֶׁר הָעַזְּזָה) וּנְנַחֲמֶה נָבָעָה 'and the spirit of the Lord, (a spirit of) wisdom and understanding shall rest (upon him)', incorrectly filled out to make the present M.T. (Is. xi, 3; Perles).

Occasionally an abbreviation underlying an ancient translation is demonstrably wrong, but is not for that reason of no interest. For example, the M.T.'s דַּתְאִי (אֲשֶׁר הָעַזְּזָה) makes good sense when it is translated 'how shall I treat thee as a son?'; but the LXX's אֱלֹהֵי נָבָעָה (אֲשֶׁר הָעַזְּזָה) makes no sense, since the Lord is the speaker (Jer. iii, 19; Duhm). The interest of the LXX's misinterpretation is that it proves their familiarity with abbreviations, since they would not have had recourse to them if they had not commonly found them in their archetypes; further, it suggests that... אֶת נִכְרֹרֶת must have been a well-known formula of affirmation (though not found elsewhere), since it is not otherwise likely to have been abbreviated.

XII

That an unwanted י, a paseq, or a magqef sometimes represent a lost mark of abbreviation has been suggested (Perles), as in גֵל written גֶּל and read as גֵל instead of יִגְּלָה (Ps. iii, 8; LXX);

נא written נָא and read as נָא instead of נָא in שָׁם יִהְיֶה (I Sam. xxii, 28 = Ps. xviii, 28);

ים read as יָם instead of יָם in יָם יִמְּשֶׁר (Is. xxvi, 12; LXX, Pesh.).

Not all of these examples are entirely convincing. In the first the text makes perfectly good sense as it stands, since יִגְּלָה 'cheek' balances יִשְׁמָה 'teeth', and the LXX's reading, though in itself plausible (cp. Ps. xxxv, 19; lxix, 5), may rest on a faulty archetype; further, the preposition before יִמְּשֶׁר is against Hebrew usage. In the second נָא may have been written פֹּא (cp. Ps. vi, 4), so that an original נָא = נָא is not a necessary postulate. In the third the magqef is found only in some (Van der Hought) but not in other (Kittel) editions; and elsewhere the verb used in this idiom is not יִמְּשֶׁר but יַשְׁמַע (Is. iii, 11), which however is not a serious objection to the proposed emendation.

The theory, however, can here hardly bear the weight put upon it. 60

XIII

This study will have served a useful purpose if it has proved that abbreviation must have played a considerable part already in the pre-Septuagintal text of the O.T., although not nearly to the same extent as it does in medieval manuscripts. The recognition of this device, which may be ascribed to the influence of Greek copyists, may be an important key for unlocking some of the secrets of an obscure or apparently corrupt text; but it must be used with caution, or it may open the door to a flood of wild conjecture.

It may be expected mainly in the case of terminations and suffixes which can be easily supplied from the context, well-known pronouns and particles, a few nouns in daily use (e.g. שמות, שמות, שמות, נצよく, ברך, מַלך, אָדָם, שָׁם), the names of the months, proper names which recur frequently, and especially the names of God, standardized expressions and quotations; it will also be found in catchwords connecting marginal notes with the text. Even so, it may be used only if the resulting text conforms to Hebrew usage and makes sense; this is by no means so in all the instances in which it has been invoked.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Other abbreviations for common nouns seem to be הָר for ‘south’ (Ps. cvii, 3; Clericus — cf. Engl. S. for south) and ה for רָאשׁ or רָאשׁ (II Sam. xix, 25), which surely must be read רָאשׁ (Josephus, Ant. VII. xi. 3, § 267). Either word may precede (cp. Dt. xxviii, 35; II Sam. xiv, 25; Lev. xiii, 12); but here Mephibosheth’s purpose is to show respect to and so to win the favour of the king, which he would hardly obtain if he left his whole head unshorn and only trimmed his moustache.

Yet other abbreviations for nouns are ר - ראש, as when רֵאשׁ is mistranslated אֲרֵי by the LXX (Am. vii, 7), and ש - שֶׁש as שֶׁש, as when the M. T. ‘s head is given as שֶׁש שֶׁש in one MS. (de Rossi) and is so rendered by the LXX, Vulg., and Pesh. (Qoh. ii, 3).

60. S. p. xxx.
Once perhaps א - הַלְּלָה has been wrongly taken for הַלְּל by a late copyist (Zech. vii, 7; Graetz w. LXX and Pesh.). Further, is הַל an error for אֶל in 'unto the Lord from East and West, unto the Lord from the wilderness is there uplifting (of voices)' (Ps lxx, 7)?

Another example is ש misread שִׁיטָן instead שָׁן (Gen. ii, 2; Samar.—Heb., LXX, Pesh.).

Lastly, the LXX translate the mysterious שָׁן (Num. xxiii, 3) doubly: as εὐθεῖαν (cp. Arab. safā 'was swift') and as ἐπεξωτήσαν τὸν θεόν, i. e. 'בְּשָׁן - רָבְתָּי שָׁן לַלְלָה (von Gall; cp. Josh. ix, 14).