

An interesting feature in the printed Hebrew Bibles is that corrections of recognized errors are made in the margin or footnote, while the uncorrected words are retained in the text. The refusal to change the text, even where obvious errors are recognized, is due to the extreme reverence felt for it and acts as a safeguard against tampering with it.

(a) An excellent illustration of this is afforded by the impossible word אָנְנִי (in Jeremiah xlii 6) which obviously cannot be read. We may imagine that what happened was somewhat as follows. The Personal Pronoun 'we' is אָנְנוּ in Classical Hebrew, but there is a shorter form אָנִי which does not occur in the Bible. The scribe of the text in Jeremiah began writing the word אָנְנוּ but, after having written the first two letters, left it in its shorter (unclassical) form אָנִי. Since the manuscript was written without vowel-signs (pp. 6-7) the scribe wrote אָנִי instead of אָנְנוּ. When, later, the vowel-signs were introduced, a scheme was devised for attracting the attention of the reader to the error and its correction, without altering the text. The consonants of the erroneous word (here אָנִי, i.e. אָנִי) were retained but were given the vowels of the corrected form (here אָנְנוּ, namely אָנְנוּ), thereby producing an impossible form (here אָנְנִי). The reader is thus forced to halt at the impossible word and to refer to the margin or footnote where the correction is given.

The uncorrected word in the text is the Kethibh (כְּתִיב, 'it is written'). The corrected reading in the margin or footnote is the Qere (קֶרֶ, 'to be read'). In the example quoted above the Kethibh is אָנִי and the Qere is אָנְנוּ.

NOTE: In the unpointed scrolls read in the Synagogues, the Kethibh (i.e. the uncorrected form) is similarly retained in the text, but no Qere (corrected form) is given in the margin or footnote. The reader is expected to be familiar with the text and to know when a word is to be corrected, i.e. to read the Qere instead of the (written) Kethibh.

(b) A word which has an offensive or indelicate meaning,

^a See p. 4, footnote a.

though written in the text (Kethibh) is often replaced in reading (Qere, footnote) by another word—usually a euphemistic one.

(c) Another type of deliberate change in reading due, in this case, to reverence, is the Divine name יהוה or יהוה (Yah^aweh or Yahweh). The Divine name was considered too sacred to be pronounced; so the consonants of this word were written in the text (Kethibh), but the word read (Qere) was יהוה (meaning 'Lord'). The consonants of the (Kethibh) יהוה were given the vowels of the (Qere) יהוה namely ה ו ה , producing the impossible form יהוה^a (Y^ehōwā).^b Since, however, the Divine name occurs so often in the Bible, the printed editions do not put the reading required (Qere) in the margin or footnote; the reader is expected to substitute the Qere for Kethibh, without having his attention drawn to it every time it occurs. For this reason it has been called *Qere Perpetuum*, i.e. permanent Qere.^c

Another example of *Qere Perpetuum* is the fem. sing. Personal Pronoun היא (hī', 'she'), which so frequently appears in the Pentateuch in the impossible form הוה. This is due to confusion with the masc. sing. הוא (hu', 'he').^d The consonants of the uncorrected form הוה (Kethibh) were given the vowel of the correction (Qere) היא, namely the vowel Hireq (.) and the impossible form הוה was produced. Once again, the required reading (Qere) is not given marginally or in a footnote, because of the frequency with which this word occurs in the Bible.

16. THE ARTICLE

There is no word for the *indefinite* article in Hebrew; 'a' or 'an' is not expressed, e.g. מלך 'king' or 'a king', עין 'eye' or 'an eye'. The context implies that the word is indefinite.

(a) The *definite* article 'the' is said to have been originally ה

^a The composite shewa which was under the guttural א in the word אדני becomes a simple shewa under the ה of the Kethibh יהוה.

^b The English Jehovah.

^c In the Qumrān (Dead Sea) scroll of Isaiah, the Qere of the Divine name is usually written above the Kethibh, thus יהוה^{אדני}. This device of substitution is early, belonging to a period before vowel-points were introduced.

^d Before the main vowel-sounds were represented by the vowel-letters, both הוה and היא were written הוה.