

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06773-7 - An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures:

Volume 2 – Part 1: The Text of the Old Testament Considered

Thomas Hartwell Horne, Samuel Davidson and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles

Excerpt

[More information](#)

# INTRODUCTION

TO

## THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

---

### PART I.—CRITICISM.

~~~~~

#### CHAPTER I.

##### PRELIMINARY.

THE *criticism* of the Old Testament will be treated of in this work in the proper and more restricted sense of the term. It will relate to *text alone*, apart from the *interpretation* of that text. Sometimes this has been called the *lower criticism*, as distinguished from *exegetical* treatment which is termed the *higher*. Others have called it *textual criticism*, an appellation distinctive and appropriate. *Biblical criticism*, or *criticism* alone, is sufficient to characterise the process; and *interpretation* should never have been included in the appellation.

According to this definition, the object about which criticism is employed is the text of Scripture. It discusses all matters belonging to the form and history of that text, showing in what state it has been perpetuated, what changes it has undergone. Alterations which the text has suffered in the course of transmission from age to age are carefully discovered and noted. We need scarcely say, that the text of no ancient book transcribed and handed down through successive centuries, could be kept perfectly free from change without a miracle. It is impossible to guard against mistakes. The original genuine text cannot be preserved against every kind of deterioration, while it passes through the hands of fallible men. Now criticism endeavours, in the first place, to find out the nature and amount of all changes which the text has undergone from its origin till the present time; and having accomplished this, to remove them, and so restore the text to its original state. Here a wide field is opened up to the inquirer. He is carried back to remote ages, and thence downward through the stream of time to the present day. He judges of the words, sentences, paragraphs, and books as they lie before him, comparing various copies and employing various instruments for rectifying the text, that is, for discovering the true one. He cannot, indeed, flatter himself with the idea, that he can see every place in which

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06773-7 - An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures:  
Volume 2 – Part 1: The Text of the Old Testament Considered

Thomas Hartwell Horne, Samuel Davidson and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles

Excerpt

[More information](#)

some change has been made in the letters or words, or the exact nature of the alteration itself. Neither can he pretend to be able in all instances to remove the alteration and restore the primitive form. But he may hope to approach the desired result. And he is the more encouraged in relation to this end when he remembers that the text has not suffered *materially*. It is generally admitted that it has not been *extensively* tampered with or corrupted. Certainly it has not been maliciously meddled with. Hence the task of criticism is easier than it would have been otherwise.

Before proceeding to the proper criticism of the Old Testament text, it will be desirable, if not necessary, to examine the language or languages in which the books are written. These must be known by him who takes upon him the critical function. None can perform the task adequately or well, without an intimate acquaintance with the languages in which the Old Testament was composed.

---

## CHAP. II.

### LANGUAGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

ALL the books of the Old Testament are written in *Hebrew*, with the exception of some pieces in Daniel and Ezra, which are in the *Chaldee* language. These portions, forming an exception to the rest in respect to diction, are, Dan. ii. 4—vii. 28.; Ezra iv. 8—vi. 18., vii. 12—26. A verse in Jeremiah may be added to them (x. 11.).

The language was called Hebrew from the people that spoke it vernacularly in the time of their independence, the posterity of Abraham denominated *Hebrews*. Why they were so designated, it is not easy to ascertain. Critics at least are not agreed about the origin of the appellation. On comparing the usage of עִבְרִי, עִבְרִים, עִבְרִיִּים, we find that it must be regarded as the *ethnographic* appellation, being usually employed to distinguish the race from other peoples. It was applied to them partly by foreigners, and partly by themselves in their intercourse with others, or in contradistinction from them, as is manifest from the following passages, Gen. xxxix. 14., xli. 12.; Exod. i. 16.; 1 Sam. iv. 6. 9., xiii. 19., xxix. 3.; and Gen. xl. 15.; Exod. ii. 7., iii. 18., &c.

There are three ways in which the name *Hebrew* has been derived.

1. Some take it from the verb עָבַר, *to pass over*. According to this, the appellation was first given to Abraham by the Canaanites, because he had *crossed* the Euphrates. It is therefore equivalent to *passer over*, or to the Latin *transitor*. Such seems to have been the opinion of Origen and Jerome.

2. Others derive it from עֵבֶר, a preposition denoting *beyond*. It would thus mean, one who dwells *beyond* the Euphrates, on the other side from Mesopotamia; equivalent to the Latin *transfluvialis*. This is supposed to be favoured by the Septuagint rendering of the term where it first occurs in Gen. xiv. 13., applied to Abraham: viz.,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06773-7 - An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures:  
Volume 2 – Part 1: The Text of the Old Testament Considered

Thomas Hartwell Horne, Samuel Davidson and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Language of the Old Testament.*

3

ὁ περάτης, and Aquila's περατήης. But the version ὁ περάτης appears to us to favour the derivation from the *verb* rather than the preposition; that of Aquila agrees better with the *preposition*. It is clear that Diodorus of Tarsus inclined to the latter<sup>1</sup>, as well as Chrysostom.<sup>2</sup> It is adopted by the majority of scholars in modern times, among others by Gesenius, Hengstenberg, and Rödiger. But it has not been usual to keep the two hypotheses distinct; and therefore the names of such as have inclined to the one or the other, are usually given together.

3. A third opinion makes it a patronymic from *Eber*, one of the descendants of Shem (Gen. x. 24., xi. 14. 16, 17.). We believe, with Ewald, Hävernick, and Fürst in recent times, that this view is best supported. Indeed it appears to us the only one sanctioned in the book of Genesis itself, as Gesenius himself admits, referring to Gen. x. 21.; Numb. xxiv. 24.<sup>3</sup> He and others think, of course, that the explanation of the Hebrew genealogists inserted in the Pentateuch is erroneous in this instance; but we prefer to abide by it. It is useless to adduce against it that Eber is nowhere mentioned as the progenitor of the Israelites, for there may have been connected with him or his day, what sufficed to make him stand out prominently as one worthy to give his name to those descended from him. He was father of Peleg, in whose days the earth was divided, as recorded in Gen. x. 25. We rely on Gen. x. 21., where עִבְרִי occurs as a valid proof that עִבְרִי, the patronymic for *Hebrew*, was taken from *Eber*. The people were thus called *Hebrews* as *sons of Eber*, an appellation by which they were known among foreigners. But they themselves preferred another name, *Israel*, or *sons of Israel*, *Israelites*, a more honourable title, because involving a reference to illustrious descent. The latter was in fact the *theocratic*, as the former was the *ethnographic* name. *Israel* continued to be appropriated by them as a national name of honour, till, after Solomon's death, ten tribes revolted from the kingly house of David, and assumed the name *Israel* to themselves as distinct from *the kingdom of Judah*. The prophets, however, often applied it to *all* the people; and so it continued to be employed till the name *Jews* became general. But the old appellation *Hebrews* was again revived not long before the Christian era.

The people being thus called *Hebrews*, the name *Hebrew language* came very naturally to be applied to their mother tongue. But in the Old Testament it is never called the Hebrew language. It is termed poetically *the language of Canaan* (Isa. xix. 18.), after the country in which it was spoken. It is also called *the Jews' language* (2 Kings xviii. 26.; Isa. xxxvi. 11. 13.; Neh. xiii. 24.), after the kingdom of Judah; when the name *Jew* was extended to the whole people, subsequently to the deportation of the ten tribes. The name *Hebrew* is first applied to the language in the prologue of Jesus Sirach, ἑβραϊστί. In like manner, Josephus uses the expression

<sup>1</sup> Comp. Flaminii Nobil. ad loc. in Walton's Polyglott. vol. vi.<sup>2</sup> Homil. xxxv. in Genes.<sup>3</sup> Geschichte der Hebr. Sprache und Schrift, p. 11.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06773-7 - An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures:  
Volume 2 – Part 1: The Text of the Old Testament Considered

Thomas Hartwell Horne, Samuel Davidson and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles

Excerpt

[More information](#)

γλώττα τῶν ἑβραίων. But in the New Testament ἑβραϊστί (John v. 2., xix. 13. 17. 20.) and ἑβραῖς διάλεκτος (Acts xxii. 40., xxii. 2., xxvi. 14.) denote the language at that time vernacular in Palestine, in distinction from the Greek, viz., the *Aramæan*. In the Targums and among the Rabbins Hebrew is called קדשׁהוֹרֵי, *the holy tongue*, in contrast with the *Chaldee* or people's language, which was then designated *the profane tongue*.

The Hebrew dialect is only one branch of a large trunk-language in Western Asia, which was native not only in *Canaan*, including Phenicia and Palestine, but also in *Aram*, i.e. Syria, Mesopotamia, and Babylonia, as well as in Arabia. Nor was it indigenous in these only, wide as the space occupied by them is, but likewise in the countries from the Mediterranean Sea to the Tigris, and from the Armenian mountains to the south coast of Arabia. From this extended surface it also went forth and covered at an early period Ethiopia southward of Arabia, beside many islands and shores of the Mediterranean, especially the entire Carthaginian coast, through the instrumentality of Phenician colonies. This great trunk-language and the various peoples using it, are now usually called *Shemitic*, *Shemites*, a name which has supplanted the old one, *Oriental*, customary among the fathers and older theologians. It is true that *Shemitic* is not very exact; for the Elamites and Assyrians, who were descended from Shem, did not speak it; whereas, on the other hand, Canaan and Cush who did, were sprung from Ham. Hence Hupfeld proposes *fore-Asiatic* or *hither-Asiatic*.<sup>1</sup>

The other great family of languages which bordered the Shemitic on the east and north, has been called *Indo-Germanic*, *Japhetic*, *Arian*, to each of which Ewald has objected, proposing another not likely to be adopted, viz., *Mediterranean* or *inland*.<sup>2</sup> *Japhetic* is perhaps the best. The distinguishing character of the Shemitic family may be traced both in *grammatical* structure and *lexically*. The *grammatical* character consists mainly in the following peculiarities:—

1. In the consonant-system there is a greater variety of gutturals and of other primitive sounds which are partly incapable of being imitated, than in any other; whereas the vowel-system evolves itself from the same three primary sounds *a, i, u*, as the Japhetic family does.

2. In the *written* state there is a striking disproportion between the vowel-representation and the development of the language. The former fell behind the latter. The entire vowel-system, as outwardly noted, is expressed by special signs placed under the letters which were only used in the sacred writings, not in common life; whereas other languages invented distinct letters for vowels added subsequently to their development.

3. The roots uniformly consist of three letters or two syllables evolved out of the primitive monosyllable by the addition of a third letter which can be easily discovered in most cases. In the later dialects, the tendency was to go on to four letters, and even to five.

<sup>1</sup> Ausführliche Hebräische Grammatik, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ausführliches Lehrbuch der Hebräischen Sprache, p. 17.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06773-7 - An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures:  
Volume 2 – Part 1: The Text of the Old Testament Considered

Thomas Hartwell Horne, Samuel Davidson and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles

Excerpt

[More information](#)

This same progress towards more than three letters also appears in the Japhetic family, but with the difference that, in the Shemitic, the roots of one syllable remain along with and beside their enlargement, while in the Japhetic they have entirely disappeared.

4. Scarcely a compound word appears in verbs or nouns, except proper names.

5. In the flexion of verbs, there is a poverty in tense-formation which is limited to two forms. On the other hand there is greater richness in *verbals*, or forms intended to express the modifications of the simple verbal idea.

6. In the flexion of nouns, there are important deficiencies. (a) Two genders only, masculine and feminine, the neuter being supplied by the feminine. (b) There are no proper forms for *cases*; but either two words are syntactically put together for the genitive, or prepositions for the other cases. (c) In the pronoun, all oblique cases are indicated by appended forms. (d) There are no proper forms for the comparative and superlative, except in the Arabic.

7. In the syntax there is a deficiency and crudeness in the use of particles, and consequently in the structure of periods, which may be attributed not so much to the essence of the language itself as to the temperament of the people, which was more poetical than philosophical.<sup>1</sup>

Considerable difference is also observable between the Shemitic and Japhetic families in a *lexical* point of view, though there is apparently more in common between them here than there is *grammatically*. Not a few Shemitic stems and roots coincide in sound with the Japhetic. But here all that is similar may be much reduced in a variety of ways.

The predominant principle of the Shemitic is its peculiar law of *formation*. There the consonants constitute the solid body; the vowels, the animating soul, of words. The fundamental idea lies almost exclusively in the consonants, not, as in Indo-Germanic, in the junction of one or more consonants with a radical vowel. The former develops itself *phonetically*; the latter, *logically*. The former enlarges and enriches itself by increase of sounds, either in finer distinctions of the consonant sounds, or by doubling the radical consonants, or by annexing new consonants to the short monosyllabic stem, i. e. by increasing the *biliteral* roots so as to become *triliteral* or *quadriliteral*. The latter enlarges and develops itself by the logical law of *composition*. Roots consisting of primitive particles, or verbs in themselves independent, are joined together so as to make a new whole, and become *word-stems*.

This *phonetic* principle regulates so entirely the formation of words from stems, that verbs and nouns, with their numerous modifications, are chiefly made by means of vowel changes within the firm sounds or roots. When more than this is necessary, or when something is required which internal vocalisation in the root itself is insufficient to express, sounds or syllables are attached to the beginning or end called *prefixes* or *suffixes*. In the Indo-Germanic

<sup>1</sup> See Hupfeld's *Ausführliche Grammatik*, p. 3. *et seqq.*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06773-7 - An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures:  
Volume 2 – Part 1: The Text of the Old Testament Considered

Thomas Hartwell Horne, Samuel Davidson and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles

Excerpt

[More information](#)

family, words are formed almost exclusively by suffixes, and the radical vowel can only change within its own relative sounds according to the rules of euphony.

The Shemitic trunk-language is divided into three leading branches.

1. The *Aramæan*, the primitive dialect, preserved to us only in two late offshoots, an *Eastern* one, viz. the Babylonian or Chaldee; and a *Western*, i. e. the Syriac. The Zabian dialect, the Samaritan, mixed however with Hebrew, and the Palmyrene, belong to the *Aramæan*; but they are corrupted.

2. The *Canaanitish*, to which the Hebrew language of the Old Testament, the Phœnician and the Punic belong; whence also has descended the later Hebrew or Talmudic and Rabbinic dialect, mixed however with *Aramæan*.

3. The *Arabic*, of which the Ethiopic is a branch; and the language of the inscriptions at Sinai.

The first, or *Aramæan*, having been the language spoken in the mother-country of the human race, must be regarded as the oldest. It prevailed in the north and north-east, i. e. Mesopotamia, Babylon, and Syria. In its original form it exists no longer, but is known merely from memorials that originated after the decay of the Hebrew. But even from the late monuments of it extant, some have inferred that it is older than all Semitic dialects. Rough and flat in its consonants, poor and clumsy in its vowels, it is the least developed.

Of all the Shemitic family, the Hebrew language possesses the oldest literature; and because, in its very oldest memorials, it appears in a fully developed and cultivated state, its primitive form is removed from the light of history. The greater number of its roots had already accommodated themselves to the law of three letters, and the forms were so fixed as to suffer few alterations afterwards. In consequence of the much higher antiquity of Hebrew *literature*, it might be inferred that its *grammatical relation* to the other Shemitic dialects is more ancient in the same proportion. And some have actually drawn this conclusion, supposing that the language bears the stamp of a higher antiquity upon it, as indicated by the simplicity and purity of its forms. But this position is scarcely tenable. It is true that Hebrew has the impress of a very high antiquity in many respects. The antique and forcible simplicity of its poetry; the character of its *lexical* and *grammatical* formations, where significations and adaptations which are already *established* in the two cognate branches of the Shemitic stock may be seen in their rudiments; the number of pluriliterals, much smaller than in the other dialects; the simplicity and lucidness of many structural and flexion-forms; the stronger flexion-letters ם and ן, not yet polished off into the weaker ones ך and ם: the manifest purity of its consonant system; the uniform accentuation of the final syllable, if such can be established as an ancient law; these features look as though they would sustain the opinion of the high antiquity of the Hebrew language in comparison with the other Shemitic branches. But there are qualifying circumstances that lessen their force.



Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06773-7 - An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures:  
Volume 2 – Part 1: The Text of the Old Testament Considered

Thomas Hartwell Horne, Samuel Davidson and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Language of the Old Testament.*

7

Several of the peculiarities in question are shared by the Hebrew with the rest, and in some the latter even surpass it, as is the case in verbal-flexion, which is developed in the Arabic, and still more in the Ethiopic language, with greater purity. Besides, the Hebrew *vocalism* is by no means so simple as that of the Arabic; like that of the Aramæan, it is motley and degenerate. Even in the consonantism of the language, in other respects so purely maintained, the prevalence of the hissing sound, where the others have always blunt lingual sounds, brings the character of originality into suspicion; so that higher antiquity is on the side of the Arabic.<sup>1</sup> Hence the assertion of Keil<sup>2</sup>, that the Hebrew has lost its ancient character only in *individual formations* cannot be sustained, any more than his view that it bears, for the most part, internal marks of a higher antiquity than its Shemitic companions.

In examining its grammatical relation, if we look to richness and development of forms, the Arabic language is decidedly superior. Its consonant-system, with the outward representation of it; its word-building and flexion, but especially its syntax and stock of words, place Arabic immeasurably above the rest. In these and other respects, the Aramæan stands at the other extreme, being the poorest and the least developed; while the Hebrew occupies an intermediate position between the two, just as it does *geographically*.

The state of the Hebrew language prior to its earliest historical period has excited the curiosity of many, without leading to any important results. Here doctrinal prepossessions have unhappily affected *inquiries*. There is no doubt that when Abraham came into Canaan he found the language prevailing among the various tribes living there to be very like his own. In other words, *Hebrew*, the language of his posterity, was *substantially* identical with the Canaanitish, Phœnician, and Punic. This is deducible from the following phenomena.

1. Proper names relating to the Canaanites in the Bible, as well as those pertaining to the Phœnicians and ancient Carthaginians in the classical writers, are similar.

2. The remains of the Phœnician and Punic languages preserved partly in Phœnician monuments and partly in the classics, are in affinity to the Hebrew.

3. There is no hint of diversity of language in all the Bible accounts of the intercourse between the Israelites and Canaanites.<sup>3</sup> These considerations must not be pressed to the extent of proving the *sameness* of the Canaanitish, Punic, and Hebrew; they are solely available for the purpose of showing that the three are the same *in substance*, whatever peculiarities of a dialectical kind exist between them. Biblical proper names may have been somewhat Hebrewised in form when adopted by the Hebrews, just as Egyptian and Persian words were; and the remains of the Phœnician, while exhibiting great similarity to the Hebrew, may also have some affinities

<sup>1</sup> Hupfeld, p. 5. *et seqq.*

<sup>2</sup> Lehrbuch der Historisch Kritischen Einleitung, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Gesenius's Geschichte der Heb. S. u. s. w., p. 16. *et seqq.*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06773-7 - An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures:  
Volume 2 – Part 1: The Text of the Old Testament Considered

Thomas Hartwell Horne, Samuel Davidson and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles

Excerpt

[More information](#)

to the Aramæan, as indeed they appear to have. Still the Phœnician has a greater affinity to the Hebrew than any other Shemitic language, though we admit that in some respects it is distinguished from it.

A point has been discussed among various critics, whether Abraham brought with him into Canaan the very Hebrew language which appears in the earliest books of the Old Testament; or whether he adopted from the tribes living in that country their common tongue, which was afterwards developed by his successors under the peculiar influences they were subject to, so as to assume the condition it appears in, in the biblical books. We believe the latter view to be the correct one. The Canaanites occupied their territory before Abraham came into it; and we infer from Gen. xxxi. 47. that the relatives of Abraham who remained behind him in Mesopotamia, whence he had emigrated, spoke Aramæan. Hence this must have been the mother-tongue of Abraham himself. Besides, the language has no other word for *west* than *𐤍*; *sea*, showing that it was not carried with him by Abraham into Canaan, but proceeded from the Canaanites living to the east of the Mediterranean.<sup>1</sup> These tribes must have left the Aramæan mother-land in times considerably earlier than the progenitor of the Israelites; and the Canaanitish, in which the Hebrew is included, originated with them in its distinctive character as a branch of the great Shemitic family.

The considerations now adduced will help us to answer another question somewhat allied to the preceding one, but which it is scarcely necessary at the present day to do more than allude to. Indeed the very mention of it may seem superfluous. Was Hebrew the primitive language of mankind? In recent times, this question has been answered in the affirmative by Hävernick<sup>2</sup>, Scholz<sup>3</sup>, and Baumgarten<sup>4</sup>, though it ought in fairness to be stated that the former has introduced certain modifications into the view to make it plausible. It is wholly vain to attempt proving the identity of Hebrew with the primeval language of mankind by the biblical names in the early part of Genesis, which are formed according to Hebrew etymologies and so essentially connected with their origin; or by the vestiges of Hebrew words alleged to exist in all other languages.

The latest researches into the Shemitic dialects lead back to a common Shemitic trunk-language, whose roots were for the most part biliteral or monosyllabic. In like manner the basis of all the Indo-Germanic dialects is a common trunk-language with monosyllabic roots. By this feature of the two, the Shemitic and Indo-Germanic, the way is prepared for ascertaining and establishing a *radical* affinity between them. As far as we can judge from the

<sup>1</sup> Robinson affirms that this argument is fallacious, because for the same reason it might be shown that the Arabic was original in Egypt, the Egyptians using *El-Bahr* (the Mediterranean Sea) for the *north*. But the inference is invalid, because there are other words in Arabic for *north* besides *El-Bahr*; whereas the Hebrew has no other term for *west* save the one in question. See Bib. Researches in Palestine, vol. i. p. 542.

<sup>2</sup> Einleitung, vol. i. 1., p. 145. *et seqq.*

<sup>3</sup> Einleit. vol. i. § 9.

<sup>4</sup> Theologischer Commentar zum Pentateuch, vol. i. p. 155.



Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06773-7 - An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures:  
Volume 2 – Part 1: The Text of the Old Testament Considered

Thomas Hartwell Horne, Samuel Davidson and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Language of the Old Testament.*

9

historical languages which have proceeded from the two stocks, there is little doubt that there was so great a relationship between them as to justify the hypothesis of their original unity. In this unity there is a sure index of the identity of all languages at the beginning. Even the Egyptian has been shown by Lepsius, Meyer, Bunsen, and Benfey, to bear a radical affinity both to the Indo-Germanic and Shemitic, being a more ancient formation than either of them, perhaps the common germ of both; or the most ancient representative of the one primitive tongue. It is *primitive Hamism*.<sup>1</sup>

Instead of asking, therefore, whether Hebrew was the primitive language, we should rather inquire in the first instance, which of the dialects belonging to the primitive Shemitic trunk-language has adhered longest and truest to its original type, or retained most of its antique simplicity? A question this, easily asked, but difficult to answer. Here we are inclined to think that the Hebrew must give way to the Aramæan and Arabic. Both Ewald and Rödiger give the priority to the Arabic. But we prefer with Fürst to assign it to the Aramæan. The latter appears to us as the more original form of Shemitism. It is true that its structure has suffered considerably; but Rödiger probably goes too far in asserting that its simplicity is occasioned merely by derangement of structure and curtailment of forms.<sup>2</sup> In every case the development of the *structure* of the language must be carefully separated from the development of its *literature*, since both depend on causes and influences distinct from one another.

Although Hebrew is by no means so rich, full, and developed in its forms as the Arabic, it can hardly be considered in itself as a poor language. In the sphere of religious ideas, and in things generally affecting the life and spirit of the people, it showed an expansive capacity of expression. Words symbolising foreign things it was obliged to borrow from foreign languages, such as Egyptian, Persian, and Greek. It would be a mistake to suppose that the extant remains of old Hebrew literature have preserved the entire treasures of the ancient language. The latter must have been richer than they appear in the canonical literature of the Old Testament, which is but *a part* of the Hebrew national literature.

It is likely that there were dialects in the ancient Hebrew, though there are very few traces of them, because the Old Testament writers almost all belonged to a very limited locality. The Aramæan may have exerted an influence in the north on the popular language, as the prefixed *ש* in the book of Judges serves to show. Traces of northern dialect are contained in the song of Deborah (Judg. v.). In Nehemiah (xiii. 23, 24.) the dialect of Ashdod is censured as Philistian; and the Ephraimites pronounced *ש* like *שׁ* or *ד* (Judg. xii. 6.).<sup>3</sup> In addition to the fixed character of the East, there is a peculiarity of structure in the Hebrew language, with the other Shemitic dialects, which prevented it from being subject, in the lapse

<sup>1</sup> See Bunsen's able Essay on Ethnology, in the Report of the British Association for 1847, p. 254. *et seqq.*

<sup>2</sup> In Gesenius's Hebräische Grammatik, p. 7., 17th edition.

<sup>3</sup> Ewald's Lehrbuch, p. 20.

of time, to such striking changes as the Indo-Germanic family is liable to. Besides, the circumstances of the Hebrew nation were such as could not materially affect a language. The Mosaic institutions tended to shut them out from intercourse with other peoples; the twelve tribes lived together in civil and ecclesiastical unity under a peculiar constitution which resisted the current of popular life as it moves along with hurried pace overstepping the barriers of civilisation; they were never subjected for a long time together to the yoke of nations speaking a foreign tongue, and lived almost secluded from the rest of the world. Hence the people did not make much advancement in civilisation; and their language was little developed at the same time. Yet a certain progress in it may be discovered, even from the remains extant in the Old Testament. It has been thought by Hengstenberg<sup>1</sup> and Hävernick<sup>2</sup>, whom Keil follows as usual, that three periods in the history of the language may be traced clearly enough. These are the Mosaic age, that of David and Solomon, and that of the exile. This division rests on some observations made by Ewald, in which his acuteness and microscopic power of discovering distinctions alike appear. But the lines between the three specified periods are somewhat shadowy and indistinct. And not only are they obscure and inexact, but they also involve certain views as to the age of books which it is difficult to sustain. On this account we prefer to abide by the old and well-known division into the *golden* and *silver* ages of the language, a division none the worse in our eyes because Gesenius gave currency to it. Even here the lines cannot be sharply drawn. The former reaches to the Babylonian exile, when the latter commences. To the *golden* age belong the following historical books, viz., the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Ruth; the prophets Joel, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Obadiah; the last part of Zechariah (ix.—xiv.); among the poetical writings, the earlier Psalms, Proverbs, Canticles, Job. During this period, amid all the individualities of different writers and the differences of literary excellence, no great diversities of style are apparent. But the language of the poetical books and fragments is distinguishable from the prose of the historical ones, by an external rhythm consisting in a parallelism of members, not in an adjusted measurement of syllables. It is also observable in a peculiar *usus loquendi*, employing certain words, significations of words, forms, and constructions, not current in the ordinary idiom, but yet analogous to the usage in other dialects, especially the Aramæan. The most natural explanation of what has just been stated, lies in our assuming that these poetical peculiarities are part of the original Aramæan tongue, and therefore *archaisms*, to which the diction of poets in general leans. The older language of poetry is characterised by the usual qualities of energy, vividness, and boldness. But it is also marked by a certain hardness, clumsiness, and obscurity of expression which commonly characterise first attempts in literature. The language of the prophets during

<sup>1</sup> In Tholuck's *Litterarischer Anzeiger*, No. 44.

<sup>2</sup> *Einleit. i. l. p. 177. et seqq.*