

NOTE 4. PSALM 40:7-9

In regard to the translation of this passage it is to be noted that **הַטָּאָה** (v. 7) must, from the context, be rendered 'sin-offering' and not (as in Sept.) 'sin;' that **בִּאתִי בַמִּגִּלַּת סֵפֶר** (vs. 8) does not mean, "I am come with [or, I bring] the roll of the book" (DeWette, Ewald, Hitzig, Delitzsch), but the **בְּמִ** is to be taken with the following **כְּתוּב**; and **עָלַי כְּתוּב** means "prescribed to me." The origin of the Sept. reading

¹⁰ On the doubtful **יִחַדְגָּר** Ps. 107:27, see the lexicons and commentaries; in any case the meaning is not 'dance.'

¹¹ Briggs regards vss. 27 f. as glosses.

σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι for **אֲזַנִּים כְּרִית לִי** (vs. 7) is not clear; but, whether the *σῶμα* be scribal error for *ὠτία* (which appears in some Sept. MSS, and in the other Greek versions), or the clause be a Sept. paraphrase, or have passed into the Sept. from the Epistle to the Hebrews 10:5 (as Grotius suggests), where it may be held to represent the free messianic interpretation of the writer (not a probable supposition)—whatever its origin—it does not help the interpretation of the psalm passage or call for a change of the Hebrew text. The exegetical difficulties relate to the expressions **בְּמַגֵּלַת, אִזְ אֲמַרְתִּי הִנֵּה בְּאֲתִי, אֲזַנִּים כְּרִית לִי, סֵפֶר כְּתוּב עָלַי**. Apart from the strange and improbable use of the stem **כָּרַח** in connection with ears (we might substitute **פָּתַח, פָּקַח, or גָּלַה**), and the **אֲזַנִּים לִי** instead of **אֲזַנִּי**, the clause separates the parallel lines of the verse and has no natural connection with the thought of the paragraph; the first difficulty may be avoided by transposing the words, placing them, for example, after “then I said” (so Olshausen), or substituting them for the first line of vs. 8 (Wellhausen, “mine ears hast thou opened by means of the book”). But these changes being made, the difficulty remains that in the Old Testament the opening or uncovering of the ears comes by a divine voice, not by a book; the psalmist lives in a literary period when guidance is received not by prophetic revelation, but by a written word. The allusion in **אִזְ אֲמַרְתִּי הִנֵּה בְּאֲתִי** also is obscure: the point of time of the **אִזְ** is not indicated, the **בְּאֲתִי** suggests an unexplained movement, and the **אֲמַרְתִּי** a preceding unrecorded address. It may be supposed, indeed, that the **שְׂאֵלַת** of vs. 7 involves an address; but this word is preceded by the negative **לֹא**—God has made no demands. The construction in vs. 9b is not clear: the natural sense is, “in the book (a duty) is prescribed to me”—a book cannot be prescribed, only a course of conduct (as in II Kings 22:13); and, further, the relation of the remark (concerning a duty prescribed) to the context is not clear. Much must be read into the text to get a satisfactory meaning from it. Various emendations have been proposed. Graetz in vs. 7 writes **לִי** instead of **לֹא**, **אִזְ שְׂמִינִים** for **אֲזַנִּים**, **כְּרִית** for **בְּרִית**, and renders, “if thou desiredst I would choose fat (beasts), if thou demandedst, then (vs. 8) I would say,” etc.; these changes, however, are too numerous and violent, and the resultant sense does not commend itself. Duhm takes **אִזְ אֲמַרְתִּי** to be a corrupt variant of **אֲזַנִּים כְּרִית**, and translates 7b and the rest of 8: “sin-offering thou hast not required—lo, I have read it (**בְּנוֹתִי**) in a roll of a book written for me,” and regards this as a gloss intended to furnish the authority for the seemingly radical statement of 7a; here also the changes of text-words are not probable (on the gloss see below). Briggs reads in 7b **אִזְ בְּרִית לִי**, and in 8a **אִזְ אֲמַרְתִּי לִי**, which he connects with the preceding line—changes that are phonetically easy, but still leave the course of the thought

vague. It seems clear that *7b* ("ears thou hast digged to me") cannot stand in its present place (even as parenthesis), since it separates the two lines of the couplet and destroys the rhythmic symmetry (so Olshausen, Wellhausen). Vs. 8 also is interruptive; Duhm's suggestion of a gloss may relieve the difficulty in part, but unity and clearness are secured only by the omission of *7b* and 8.¹² Vs. 8 is possibly the corrupt form of a marginal protest against *7a, c*: "sacrifice," the glossator may be supposed to say, "is nevertheless prescribed in the law."¹³ Vs. *7b* would still remain a problem; reversing Duhm's conjecture, it might be corrupt doublet of *8a*. In any case the thought of the passage is contained in vss. 7 and 9; the writer may have had in mind Jer. 7:21 ff., and similar ideas in the prophets; the glossator, on the other hand, would be appealing to the ritual law. This does not show that the original psalmist wrote before the time of Nehemiah, but only that he, like the sages, laid no stress on the sacrificial ritual.