

THE AMERICAN JOURNAL  
OF  
SEMITIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

(CONTINUING "HEBRAICA")

VOLUME XVI

OCTOBER, 1899

NUMBER 1

סֵלָה.

BY EMILIE GRACE BRIGGS,  
New York, N. Y.

There have been many attempts in recent years to discover the clue to the meaning and use of סֵלָה. The presence of this word in the Old Testament, and the fact that a knowledge of its meaning would cast light upon more than one of the critical problems of the Psalter, give to every such attempt a peculiar interest and value. A fresh study is here undertaken of the facts concerning סֵלָה, the ancient traditions as to its meaning, and the modern conjectures as to its use.

I. THE FACTS CONCERNING SELAH.

Selah is used 1) in the Old Testament, 2) in the Psalms of Solomon, 3) in the Jewish Liturgy.

1. *The Old Testament.*—Selah is found 74 times in the Old Testament; namely, 71 times in the Psalter and thrice in the Prayer of Habakkuk.

The Septuagint varies from the Massoretic text in its use of this word. סֵלָה is there represented by *διάψαλμα*, excepting in Ps. 9:17, where סֵלָה הַגְּבוּרָה = *φδῆ διαψάλματος*. But *διάψαλμα* appears in verses and even in psalms where סֵלָה is lacking. Again it is omitted in verses where the Hebrew text leads one to expect it. However, as *διάψαλμα* is never entirely wanting in a psalm which in the Hebrew contains סֵלָה, the list of Selah psalms is longer for the LXX than for the Massoretic text. In

the Greek Psalter Selah appears 75 times in 43 psalms. In Habakkuk there is no variation to be noticed.

Dr. B. Jacob (*ZATW.*, 1896, pp. 131-6) examines the versions for their use of Selah. He claims that the various manuscripts collected in *Holmes-Parsons*, Tom. III, yield a number of new examples, namely, Pss. 2:4, 5; 6:4; 7:9, 13; 21:6; 30:4; 31:22; 37:4; 68:4a, 14, 15, 32; 70:3, 5; 84:8; 88:13; 107:30; 119:19 (*διαπαυρός*?). Some of these he regards as cases of dittography; *i. e.*, Pss. 2:5; 68:15, 32; 84:8. Others he retains as representing an original Selah, which has fallen out of the Hebrew text. He gives also from the *Psalterium Vetus* the following additional Selahs: Pss. 2:6; 19:5a (*semper*?); 68:4, 14, 17, 26; 115:3. Of these 2:6; 19:5, and 115:3 are marked as doubtful cases. 2:6 may be a case of dittography; 19:5 may not stand for Selah; 115:3 is questionable, if only because Ps. 115 is one of the Hallel's, and Selah is conspicuously absent from the Hallel's and from the fourth book of the Psalter. Thus Dr. Jacob adds some twenty Selahs to those preserved in the Massoretic text, concluding: "dass für diese δ. kein anderer Grund erfindlich ist, als wirkliche Ueberlieferung aus reicherem H [= *Mass.*] durch einen treueren Archetypus als selbst B [= *Vaticanus*] ist" (*loc. cit.*, p. 135).

The use of Selah in the Psalter is shown by the following table. The list of examples from the LXX is complete according to the concordance of Hatch and Redpath, which has been followed without reference to variations in the MSS. Examples of omission, transposition, and addition on the part of the LXX may be easily found by a comparison of the Massoretic with the LXX column. In the columns headed H.-P. and Ps. Vet., only those citations are presented which add to the list of Selahs in the Hebrew text. A question mark has been placed after all examples discredited by Dr. Jacob. In citing from the LXX it has been necessary to follow the Hebrew numbering for the psalms in order to a comparison between the texts.

A glance at the table is sufficient to show that the Selah psalms are widely separated as to date of composition. As they belong to different periods in the history of the formation of the Psalter, they do not by their date help us to discover the period to which Selah belongs. But a study of the titles of the Selah psalms has proved fruitful. Professor Briggs in a recent article has made an "inductive study of Selah in connection with the

USE OF SELAH IN THE PSALTER

ACCORDING TO THE MASS. AND LXX, WITH ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES FROM  
HEXAPLA AND PSALTERIUM VETUS.

TABLE OF COMPARISON.

	MASS.	LXX.	H.-P.	PS. VET.
Psalm 2		2	4, 5(?)	6(?)
" 3	3, 5, 9	3, 5		
" 4	3, 5	3, 5		
" 6			4	
" 7	6	6	9a, 13a	
" 9	17, 21	17, 21		
" 19				5a(?)
" 20	4	4		
" 21	3	3	6	
" 24	6, 10	6		
" 30			4	
" 31			22	
" 32	4, 5, 7	4, 5, 7		
" 34		11		
" 37			4	
" 39	6, 12	6, 12		
" 44	9	9		
" 46	4, 8, 12	4, 8		
" 47	5	5		
" 48	9	9		
" 49	14, 16	14, 16		
" 50	6	6, 15		
" 52	5, 7	5, 7		
" 54	5	5		
" 55	8, 20	8, 20		
" 57	4, 7	3, 4, 7		
" 59	6, 14	6, 14		
" 60	6	6		
" 61	5b	5a		
" 62	5, 9	5, 9		
" 66	4, 7, 15	4, 7, 15		
" 67	2, 5	2, 5		
" 68	8, 20, 33	4a, 8, 14, 20, 33	15(?), 32(?)	17, 26
" 70			3, 5	
" 75	4	4		
" 76	4, 10	4, 10		
" 77	4, 10, 16	4, 10, 16		
" 80		8		
" 81	8	8		
" 82	2	2		
" 83	9	9		
" 84	5, 9	5, 9	8(?)	
" 85	3	3		
" 87	3, 6	3, 6		
" 88	8, 11	8	13	
" 89	5, 38, 46, 49	5, 38, 46, 49		
" 94		15(?)		
" 107			30(?)	
" 115				3(?)
" 119			19(?)	
" 140	4, 6, 9	4, 6, 9		
" 143	6	6		

titles of the Psalms," which leads to the conclusion "that there is a close connection between  $\eta\lambda\sigma$  and the Psalters of Asaph and the Korahites, but not with the Psalter of David, which precedes them, or the Psalters of the Elohist and the Director, which follow them." For this and other reasons the use of Selah is placed "subsequent to the collection of the Davidic Psalter and previous to the editing of the Director's Psalter, in the times of the chronicler, in the late Persian period or beginning of the Greek period."<sup>1</sup>

Professor Briggs distinguishes between an early and a late use of Selah in the Psalter, attributing to the latter the additional examples furnished by the versions, the LXX included. Among these Selahs the only examples regarded by him as ancient are those in Pss. 50, 68, and 80; Pss. 50 and 68 belonging to a group of Selah psalms in the Hebrew Psalter, and Ps. 80 showing certain of the characteristics of a Selah psalm.

Selah appears elsewhere in the Old Testament only in Hab. 3:3, 9, 13. The LXX here agrees with the Massoretic text; but in the Hexapla (86b) a fourth  $\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha\psi\alpha\lambda\mu\alpha$  stands at the close of vs. 14, while  $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma \tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$  takes the place of  $\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha\psi\alpha\lambda\mu\alpha$  in vs. 13.

Dr. Graetz, in the introduction to his commentary on the Psalms, compares Hab., chap. 3, with Jon. 2:3-10 and 1 Sam. 1:1-10, and suggests that these are remnants of lost psalms. The liturgical character of this chapter is generally recognized by scholars, and the tendency is to attribute to it a date much later than the time of the prophet whose name it bears. The subscription  $\eta\lambda\sigma$  shows that it was included in the Director's Psalter.

2. *The Psalms of Solomon.*—Selah, as represented by  $\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha\psi\alpha\lambda\mu\alpha$ , occurs in two of the Psalms of Solomon; namely, in Pss. 17:31; 18:10. In the introduction to the edition of Ryle and James (Cambridge, 1891) it is maintained that "Pompey's capture of Jerusalem is the historical event to which Pss. 1, 2, 8, 17 refer;" that "judging from the detailed character of the allusions, the historical psalms must have been composed not very long after the events which they describe;" that "there is nothing in the style or contents of the other psalms to separate them in respect of date of composition from those which are definitely historical in coloring;" and finally that "in assigning the years B. C. 70 and B. C. 40 as the extreme limits of date within which our psalms were

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. XVIII, Part I.

written, we keep securely within the bounds of probability.' (For the whole argument see pp. xxxvii-xliv.)

It is also stated, as the result of the inquiries made concerning the origin of the book, that it is a product of "pharisaic Judaism of Jerusalem in the middle of the last century B. C." (p. lix). It is argued, for this and other reasons, that these psalms are Greek translations of a Hebrew original. The arguments are strong, especially the one based upon the language (cf. pp. lxxvii-lxxxvii). They leave little room for doubt as to the accuracy of the statement. The view is shared with the majority of modern scholars, such as Geiger, Wellhausen, Schürer.

A comparison of these psalms with the Jewish literature of the period, more especially with Baruch, leads to the conclusion "that the Psalms of Solomon had been turned into Greek some considerable time before A. D. 70," and that they are probably "anterior in date to the whole New Testament literature" (*loc. cit.*, p. lxxvii).

3. *The Jewish Liturgy.*—There is nothing surprising in the appearance of Selah in the Jewish Prayer Book, so long as it is confined to quotations from the Hebrew Psalter. The Selah psalms, which are quoted entire, are the following: 3, 4, 20, 24, 32, 46, 48, 67, 68, 81-84. In every case the use of סלה corresponds exactly with that of the Massoretic text, as indeed we should expect. But סלה occurs also frequently (and I think uniformly) in brief quotations of one or more verses, where it occurs in the psalm from which the quotation is made. This is true even when the verse quoted stands in the midst of a composite prayer, such as that appointed for the Habdalah service, which reads as follows:

Behold God is my salvation; I will trust and will not be afraid: for Jah the Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord; thy blessing be upon thy people. (*Selah.*) The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. (*Selah.*) The Jews had light and joy and gladness and honor. So be it with us, etc.

It is evident that, whether or not the compilers of the Jewish Liturgy understood (or thought that they understood) the meaning of סלה, they regarded it as a component of the sacred text, and therefore never to be omitted.

But in addition to these examples there are some eight or nine other instances of the use of סְלָה, which are not so easily explained.

It occurs in the שְׁמוֹנֵה עֲשָׂרָה (Benedictions 3 and 18). Of this ancient Jewish prayer Dr. Zunz (in *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden*, 1892) writes as follows :

Derselben Autorität [den Männern der grossen Synagoge] gehört angeblich die Abfassung und Einführung der schon in der Mischna beschriebenen Gebete *Schemah* und *Thefilla*. (סְפִלָּה "das Gebet," auch unter dem Namen שְׁמוֹנֵה עֲשָׂרָה "achtzehn" bekannt.) Was zunächst die letztere betrifft, so hat sie Wendungen, die der Zeit des grossen Vereins unmöglich zugehören können, und bei etwas genauerer Betrachtung sollte man dieselbe als die Arbeit 5 bis 6 verschiedener Epochen anerkennen. Als der älteste Bestandtheil erscheint mir das, die 3 ersten und die 3 letzten Segensprüche umfassende, Stück. Seiner gedenkt die Mischna mit eigenen, die einzelnen Sprüche bezeichnenden, Benennungen, und einige Ausdrücke (מְקִיָּים, סְלָה) darin erinnern an das Buch Esther und die ältesten Glossatoren der Psalmen . . . . Nichts verräth eine tiefere Jugend, vielmehr konnte die Ankunft des Erlösers auch während der Zeit des zweiten Tempels, zumal unter der Herrschaft der Syrer, erlebet werden. . . . Die Sprache passt für die Zeit des Hohenpriesters Simeon. Endlich ist die uralte Einrichtung, wonach jenes Stück allen Tagen des Jahres bestimmt ist, während die übrigen Theile der Thefilla von den Sabbat- und Festtagen ausgeschlossen bleiben, ein ziemlich deutliches Merkmal höheren Alters. (*Loc. cit.*, pp. 379, 380.)

Compare with this Dr. Schürer's testimony as to the age of this portion of the Jewish Liturgy :

Aus dem Inhalt dieses Gebetes erhellt, dass es seine endgültige Form erst nach der Zerstörung Jerusalems, also nach dem J. 70 n. Chr., erhalten hat. Denn es setzt in seiner 14. und 17. Beracha die Zerstörung der Stadt und das Aufhören des Opferdienstes voraus. Andererseits wird es schon in der Mischna unter dem Namen שְׁמוֹנֵה עֲשָׂרָה citirt (Berachoth IV:3; Taanith II:2), und es wird erwähnt, dass bereits R. Gamaliel II, R. Josua, R. Akiba und R. Elieser, also lauter Autoritäten aus dem Anfang des zweiten Jahrhunderts, darüber verhandelten, ob man die sämtlichen 18 Danksagungen oder nur einen Auszug daraus täglich zu beten habe (Berachoth IV:3), sowie darüber, in welcher Weise die Zusätze während der Regenzeit und am Sabbath einzuschalten und in welcher Form es am Neujahrstage zu beten sei. (Berachoth V:2; Rosch haschana IV:5; Taanith I:1, 2.) Demnach muss es seine jetzige Gestalt im Wesentlichen um d. J. 70–100 n. Chr. erhalten haben, und es ist mit Sicherheit anzunehmen, dass die Grundlage des Gebetes noch erheblich älter ist. Bestätigt wird dieser Resultat durch die bestimmte

talmudische Nachricht, dass Simon der Baumwollhändler zu Jabne zur Zeit R. Gamaliel's II die 18 Danksagungen nach ihrer Reihenfolge geordnet habe, und dass Samuel der Kleine auf R. Gamaliel's Aufforderung noch das Gebet gegen die Abtrünnigen (מִיָּנִים) eingeschaltet habe, weshalb es eben nicht 18, sondern 19 Abschnitte seien. (Berachoth 28b.) (Schürer's *Geschichte des Jüdischen Volkes*, Vol. II, p. 386.)

Two Selahs appear in the prayers preceding the *Shema* in the morning service. The first stands in the prayer beginning אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה יְהוָה; the second in the one beginning אֲהַבְתָּנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ.<sup>2</sup> The first of these prayers in its earliest form dates back probably to Mishna times at least, as it is mentioned in the Mishna, although not quoted there. Selah in all likelihood belongs to the oldest portion of this prayer (so Seligman-Baer in historical notes on the Jewish Liturgy). Both prayers are quoted by title in the *Shulchan-Arukh* (II. Lieferung, pp. 267, 221), the reference to the Talmud being *Tractat Birkot*, 11b. They belong without doubt to the oldest portion of the Liturgy. It is quite possible that they date back to the beginning of our era, or even earlier, although this cannot be affirmed.

There is a version of the second of these prayers in which occurs an interpolation of some length. It bears traces of a date considerably later than that of the passage in which it stands, and is entirely omitted from the authorized version of the prayer. It is too long to quote in full, but at its close stands the following: כִּי אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲבִינוּ. וְרַחֲמֶיךָ וְחַסְדֶּיךָ הַרְבִּים אֵל יִצְבּוּנוּ נְצַח סֵלָה וְעַד: נְצַח סֵלָה וְעַד:

In the Talmud (Treatise *Erubhin*, folio 54a) there is a statement, attributed to the school of Eliezer ben Jacob, who belonged to the fourth generation of the Tanaim (138–64)—a statement therefore dating from the second century A. D.—to the effect that in every place in the Scriptures where the words נְצַח, סֵלָה, or עַד occur, they have the meaning of endless continuity—*forever and ever*.

The juxtaposition of these words in the passage under consideration is suspicious. It can be explained as authentic only on the supposition that the Jewish tradition is correct in ascribing to סֵלָה the meaning *forever*—a meaning which, as will presently appear, there is good reason to question. In the meantime this must be counted out as a suspected passage.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Authorised Daily Prayer Book of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Empire*, 2d edition. London, 1891.

At the close of the prayer assigned to the sabbath preceding the new moon Selah appears, following the *amen*.<sup>3</sup> This prayer is quoted in the Talmud,<sup>4</sup> where, however, Selah is lacking. This fact, together with its present position after the *amen*, leads one to regard it with suspicion.

A still more doubtful use of this term may be found in a prayer omitted from the *Authorised Prayer Book*, but appearing in the prayer-book entitled *The Praises of Israel* (p. 99). A glance at it is sufficient to disclose its untrustworthiness. The prayer is plainly cabalistic, and of late origin. Here again Selah appears after the *amen*.

The Talmud<sup>5</sup> refers to a blessing, appointed to be said by persons released from prison, recovering from serious illness, etc. The blessing itself is not quoted; but in the Liturgy there appears a blessing, which from its language may well be ancient, appointed for use on just such occasions as those enumerated in the Talmud. At its close stands a Selah. This blessing appears in the *Praises of Israel*, p. 163. We cannot affirm that this is the blessing referred to in the Talmud; still the conjecture is a reasonable one. If it be true, we have here an example of Selah in an ancient benediction which goes back at least to the Gaonim, and may go back much farther. This benediction is omitted from the *Authorised Prayer Book*—a noteworthy fact, although the prayer is not thereby discredited.

As the result of our inquiry, we have found in the Hebrew Liturgy, outside of the rejected portion of the morning benediction before the Shema and the late cabalistic prayer, the following uses of Selah:

a) Five examples dating in all probability from the first centuries of our era, possibly from the time of the second temple. These are the three Selahs in the *שמחה עשרה* and the two in the morning benedictions preceding the *שמע*.

b) Two examples which must be regarded as somewhat doubtful both as to age and authenticity; namely, in the benediction referred to as possibly that mentioned in the Talmud, and in the prayer for the sabbath preceding the new moon, which is quoted in the Talmud, but without Selah.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *The Authorised Daily Prayer Book*, p. 154.

<sup>4</sup> *Berachoth*, 16b.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 54b.



## II. THE TRADITIONS CONCERNING SELAH.

Two traditions as to the interpretation of Selah have been preserved to us in the various versions of the Psalter. The one is that of Talmud, Targum, Aquila, Quinta, and Sexta, and has been followed by Jerome. The other is that of LXX, Symmachus, Theodotion, Psalter. Vetus, and, in part, of Peshitto and Hexapla.

1. The Targum follows the Massoretic text exactly in its use of סלה, giving in place of it לעלמיו, לעלמא, or a synonym.<sup>6</sup> Aquila, representing the prevailing opinion in Jewish circles at the time of the elder expounders of the law,<sup>7</sup> translates סלה by *ἀεί*; Quinta and Sexta by *διαπαντός, εἰς τέλος*, and the like; Jerome by *semper, iugiter*. Professor Baethgen remarks: "Augenscheinlich war dies von Aq. bis auf Hier. die traditionelle Erklärung."<sup>8</sup>

Jewish tradition seems to give to the word the meaning of *forever*. A passage from the Talmud has already been referred to, which makes סלה synonymous with נצח, ער. It is in accordance with this tradition that Selah has been translated at times by *forever* in the *Authorised Jewish Prayer Book*; for instance, in the "Eighteen Benedictions," in the prayers before the שמיע, and sometimes even in quotations from the Psalter—apparently in every passage which can bear the addition of the word *forever*.

Against this interpretation of Selah it may be urged:

- a) that it has no etymological support;
- b) that in many cases the meaning *forever* would yield no sense (for examples see Pss. 9:17; 66:15; 68:8; 77:4; 81:8; 83:9; 84:9; 87:6, etc.; Hab. 3:3, 13, etc.);
- c) that to connect Selah with the words which precede, in the case of the Psalms, would be to interfere with the poetic measure, and to destroy at times the parallelism of thought (see Pss. 3:3, 5; 46:4, 8; 77:4; 81:8; 88:8, 11, etc.);
- d) that it conflicts with the reading of the LXX. Now, the natural inference from the presence of additional Selahs in the LXX and Hexapla is that the meaning of the term was not unknown to the Greek translators. Moreover, there is a presumption in favor of the LXX as the older reading;
- e) that in the *Codex Sin.* Selah is written in red characters and stands in a line by itself.

<sup>6</sup> See Jacob, *loc. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>7</sup> According to Graetz, *loc. cit.*, p. 93.

<sup>8</sup> *Handkommentar z. Alt. Test.*, II, 2; 2<sup>e</sup> Aufl., p. xii; also Siegfried in *ZATW.*, IV, p. 58.

2. The other traditional interpretation of  $\text{לָשׁוֹן}$  is that of the LXX (followed by Symmachus, Theodotion, etc.), which renders the word uniformly *διάψαλμα*, in Ps. 9:17 ( $\text{φῶδῆ}$ ) *διαψάλματος*. The trustworthiness of this tradition has been doubted, chiefly on the ground that *διάψαλμα* is a word of doubtful meaning, which itself requires explanation.

Baethgen<sup>9</sup> quotes a passage from de Lagarde,<sup>10</sup> attributed to Hippolytus, which reads: *ῥυθμοῦ τινὸς ἢ μέλους μεταβολὴν γεγρονέναι κατὰ τοὺς τόπους ἢ καὶ τρόπου διδασκαλίας εἰς ἕτερον τρόπον ἢ διανοίας ἢ δυνάμεως λόγου ἐνάλλαγμα*.

The explanation given by Origen, XII, 1071, is as follows: *κατὰ δὲ τὰ παρ' ἡμῖν ἀντίγραφα καὶ κατὰ Σύμμαχον ἔοικε μουσικοῦ τινος μέλους ἢ ῥυθμοῦ τροπῆς γενομένης ἢ τοῦ διαψάλματος παρακείσθαι παρασημείωσις· πολλάκις δὲ καὶ διανοίας ἐναλλαγὴ γίνεται ἐν τοῖς διαψάλμασιν ἥδη δὲ καὶ προσώπου μεταβολή*.

Augustine's comment is:

Interpositum diapsalma vetat istam [locutionem] cum superiore coniungi, sive enim hebraeum verbum sit (sicut quidam volunt) quo significatur Fiat, sive graecum, quo significatur intervallum psallendi, ut psalma sit quod psallitur, diapsalma vero interpositum in psallendo silentium, ut quemadmodum sympsalma dicitur vocum copulatio in cantando, ita diapsalma disiunctio earum, ubi quaedam requies disiunctae continuationis ostenditur—sive ergo illud, sive hoc, sive aliud aliquid sit, certe illud probabile est, non recte continuari et coniungi sensum, ubi diapsalma interponitur.<sup>11</sup>

Dr. Jacob<sup>12</sup> gives his view of the testimony of the church fathers on the meaning of *διάψαλμα* as follows:

Die Kirchenväter hatten keine Tradition darüber, was  $\text{לָשׁוֹן}$  bedeutet, noch warum es gerade mit *διάψαλμα* übersetzt wird. "ו" selbst wird bald vergessen. Was  $\delta$ . im griechischen Psalter bedeutet, wissen sie ebenso wenig. Alle Erklärungen sind geraten, und die Weisheit eines Jahrtausends über dieses Wort lässt sich knapp genug zusammenfassen: *διάψαλμα* ist ein *δια* im *ψάλλειν*. Den Revers: es ist ein *ψάλλειν δια* (zwischen-durch) zeigen die neueren Erklärungen als "Zwischenspiel" u. ä.

In spite of this uncertainty as to the meaning of diapsalma, there is reason to think that the reading of the LXX approximates the true meaning of *Selah*. This conclusion is of importance,

<sup>9</sup> *Loc. cit.*, pp. xii, xiii.

<sup>10</sup> *Novae Psalterii Graeci Editionis Specimen*, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> de Lagarde, *Specimen*, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> *ZATW.*, 1896, p. 181.

even though the meaning of *διάψαλμα*, like that of Selah, should remain in doubt; for if *διάψαλμα* fairly represents סלה, then סלה is a liturgical note. The arguments in favor of this conclusion are the following:

1. The ancient Greek version known as the Septuagint was probably not completed before the close of the first century B. C. The Pentateuch, the Prophets, and some of the "Writings" were translated into Greek in all likelihood by the middle of the second century B. C. As the Psalter seems to have been the first of the *Kethib* to receive a place in the canon, it was probably one of the first to be translated. In any case there is no doubt that the Greek Psalter was in existence in the last century B. C.<sup>13</sup> The period during which Selah was in use must extend to a time later than the date of the "Psalms of Solomon" and of the earlier portions of the Jewish Prayer Book. The Psalms of Solomon are assigned to the middle of the first century B. C., in the commentary of Ryle and James, and such of the Jewish prayers as preserve an unquestionable example of Selah stand in the oldest portions of the liturgy and date back, in all probability, to the first century A. D., if not earlier. Selah was, therefore, certainly in use at the time of the formation of the Greek Psalter. But if this be true, then it is hard to conceive that a term in actual use could have been quite unknown to the Greek translators, or that their rendering is not approximately correct.

2. An additional argument may be drawn from the fact that the LXX preserves Selahs that are lacking in the Massoretic text. Jacob, as we have seen, accepts them as authentic on the ground that there is no other way of accounting for them than to suppose that they come from the Hebrew text represented by the LXX. However, it is quite conceivable that there was an independent use of Selah among the Hellenistic Jews. This is the view taken by Professor Briggs in the article mentioned,<sup>14</sup> and it is favored by the late examples preserved in the Psalms of Solomon and the Jewish Liturgy, as well as in the later versions of the Psalter.

But whatever opinion may be held as to the origin of the additional Selahs in the LXX, it is evident that the version which preserves the most Selahs is likely to have preserved with

<sup>13</sup> See C. A. Briggs, *Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture*, pp. 188-90.

<sup>14</sup> See note 1.

them a correct tradition as to their use; and therefore these additional Selahs afford presumptive evidence in support of the rendering of the LXX.

Dr. Muss-Arnolt gives it as his opinion that "the meaning of selah seems to have been well known to the Greek translators;" and he adds: "Professor Geo. F. Moore, of Andover, Mass., also believes that the Greek translators were acquainted with the significance of selah, and that their translation was not a blundering guess."<sup>15</sup>

### III. THE THEORIES CONCERNING SELAH.

Modern conjectures as to the meaning and use of Selah are for the most part in the line of the Greek tradition. It will be convenient to classify them as follows: 1) Selah is an abbreviation; 2) Selah indicates strophical division; 3) Selah is a liturgical note.

1. *Selah an abbreviation.*—It has been suggested that Selah is an abbreviation, such as those preserved in the talmudic literature, in which each letter stands for some word of which it is the initial, and the word thus formed represents a complete phrase. Among the phrases which סְלֵה has been supposed to stand for are the following:

a) סִימָן לְשִׁנוֹת הַקּוֹל = *signum mutandae voces.*

b) סֵב לְמַעַל הַיָּסָד = *da capo.*

But these are only two of the many possible combinations. Who shall tell us which of them all is the true one? It may be said that if Selah is such an abbreviation, it is the only example in the Scriptures.

Bachmann<sup>16</sup> suggests that the ה in סְלֵה is due to a scribal error, and that we should read for סְלֵה the imperative of סָלַח. This, according to his conjecture, represented the phrase לְעֵינֵינוּ סָלַח, which became a liturgical formula (such as *Kύριε ἐλέησον*), and of which סְלֵה is all that remains to us. The theory is purely speculative, and a hasty glance through the Psalter is sufficient to convince one that Selah frequently stands where a petition for *forgiveness in behalf of enemies*<sup>17</sup> would be entirely out of place (*cf.* Pss. 59:6, 14; 62:5; 140:4, 6, 9; 9:17; 7:6; 50:15, etc.).

<sup>15</sup> *Johns Hopkins University Circulars*, May, 1890, p. 76.

<sup>16</sup> In his *Altest. Untersuchungen*, Berlin, 1894, pp. 41 sq.

<sup>17</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 46.

TABLE OF SELAH PSALMS (COMPLETE).<sup>18</sup>

		WITH למנוצח.						
		מזמור	משכיל	מכתם	שִׁיר	NONE		
Asaph.....	{	75†			75†	81 (LXX ψαλμός)		
		76†			76†			
		77						
		80						
David.....	{	4	20	62	52	57	68†	61 70
		6	21	68†	54	59		
		9	31	140	55	60		
		19	39					
Korah.....	{	47	88†	44		46		
		49	(Heman)	88†		88†		
		84						
		85						
Orphan.....	{	66†				66†		
		67† (LXX τῷ Δαυίδ)				67†		
		WITHOUT למנוצח.						
		מזמור	משכיל	מכתם	שִׁיר	NONE	שִׁירִים	
Asaph.....	{	50			83†			
		82						
		83†						
David.....	{	3	32		30†	34	7 <sup>19</sup>	
		24				37		
		30† <sup>19</sup>						
		143						
Korah.....	{	48†			48†			
		87†			87†			
Ethan.....	{		89					
Orphan.....	{					2	115	
						94 <sup>20</sup>	119	
						107		

<sup>18</sup> The mark † indicates that the psalm has more than one descriptive term in its title. The change in type distinguishes the Selah psalms of the Hebrew Psalter from those taken from the Versions.

<sup>19</sup> LXX εἰς τὸ τέλος.

<sup>20</sup> LXX ψαλμός τῷ Δαυίδ.

2. *Selah a strophical division.*—Selah has been interpreted as marking strophical division, especially in doubtful places.<sup>21</sup> In favor of this theory is the fact that Selah frequently stands at the close of a psalm strophe. Against it is the use of Selah in the Hebrew prayers and in Pss. 20:4; 55:8; 67:2; 68:8, 33; 85:3; Hab. 3:3, etc. Dalman<sup>22</sup> suggests that סֵלָה = σελίς = *spatium inter lineas*. He claims the support of the LXX for this conjecture.

3. *Selah a liturgical note.*—The majority of modern scholars regard Selah as a liturgical note. Under this head may be grouped the various speculations as to its meaning and use. These are: (a) that Selah is a musical note; (b) that it is a summons to prayer; (c) that it indicates a stop, or break—the end of a section.

The probability that *διάψαλμα* is a liturgical note, and the uncertainty as to its exact meaning, make it possible to quote the LXX reading in support of each of these several interpretations.

If Selah is a liturgical note, the psalms containing it may be expected to show other signs of liturgical use. A rapid look through the Selah psalms is enough to convince one of their fitness for public worship. Many of them were incorporated in the Jewish Liturgy. Many contain references to Zion, the temple, sacrificial worship, a worshiping assembly, and the like. Few are without marks of fitness for liturgical use. The titles of the most of these psalms assign them to one or other of the three early psalters, *i. e.*, those of David, Asaph, and the Korahites. The exceptions are Pss. 2, 66, 67, 89, 94, 107, 115, 119. Of these psalms, 89 is ascribed to Ethan in the Massoretic text; 67 and 94 to David in the LXX; 66 is entitled a שִׁיר מִזְמוֹרֵי; 119 is not accepted by Dr. Jacob as a Selah psalm, while 107 and 115 are regarded by him with suspicion. This leaves Ps. 2 as the only example of an accredited Selah psalm with no liturgical mark in the title. In the Hebrew Psalter every Selah psalm bears such a mark.<sup>23</sup>

a) *Selah a musical note.*—It has been maintained that סֵלָה is from a substantive סָל (סֵלֶל), and that it refers to the music, having the meaning *loud, forte*.<sup>24</sup> However, such a term would

<sup>21</sup> So Dr. Julius Ley, *Rhythmus d. Hebr. Poesie*, 1875, pp. 63 sq.

<sup>22</sup> *Theol. Literaturzeitung*, 1893, No. 21.

<sup>23</sup> For an inductive study of these psalms see Professor Briggs' article in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. XVIII, Part I.

<sup>24</sup> So Ewald, *Dichter d. Alt. Bundes*, I, p. 232; Delitzsch, *Psalmen*, p. 83; cf. also Böttcher, *Auführliches Lehrbuch d. Hebr. Sprache*, I, 2, § 837: 66.

be quite inappropriate in Pss. 4:4; 32:4; 77:4, 10; 85:3; 88:8; 89:46, 49; 143:6, and similar passages, in so far as it has reference either to a musical accompaniment or to a musical interlude; moreover, it leaves the Selahs in the Jewish Prayer Book unaccounted for.

Again, the word has been interpreted as a sign for the instruments to strike up, or come into prominence, *i. e.*, for a *musical interlude*.<sup>25</sup> This is also the common interpretation of *διάψαλμα*, *Zwischenspiel*, and the LXX is supposed to afford strong support to this theory. The support, however, depends on the correctness of the interpretation for *διάψαλμα*, which is a matter of dispute. The passages which are the most difficult of explanation on this theory are Pss. 20:4; 21:3; 52:3, 5; 55:8; 67:2; 68:8, 33; 85:3, and others, wherein the train of thought would be broken by an interlude or a pause of any kind. This objection will hold good also against the derivation of Selah from סלה = שלה *to be silent*, which makes it a sign for a pause in the singing. On this etymology Muss-Arnolt makes the following criticism: "שלה does not mean 'to be silent,' but 'to be quiet.' . . . ס never interchanges with ש, except in doubtful words; Ps. 9:17 would now mean: music! pause!"<sup>26</sup>

The most recent contribution to this class of theories is that of J. K. Zenner.<sup>27</sup> It is severely criticised by Beer.<sup>28</sup> Zenner's proposal is that סלה and *διάψαλμα* both mean "Zwiegesang"—*duo*; and that the use of the word in the Psalter shows that the psalms were sung by more than one choir, and also indicates where the choirs were to alternate.

P. Cassel<sup>29</sup> proposes the theory that the musical notes, which appear in the Psalter and have been found so difficult to explain, are for the most part translations or transliterations of technical Greek terms, not understood and therefore wrongly pointed by the Massorites. His interpretation of Selah is as follows:

Es bedeutet ψάλλε als Anweisung, dass das Spiel wieder einfällt. Dass ס statt ψ steht, kann nicht auffallen. Im Attischen vertritt ψ vielfach ein einfaches σ, wie ψιττακός und σιττακός; ס vertritt ebenso in

<sup>25</sup> See the lexicon of Siegfried and Stade; Riehm's *Handwörterbuch d. bibl. Altertums*, Vol. II; Schultz, *Kurzgefasster Kommentar*, A, 6<sup>te</sup> Abt., p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>27</sup> *Chorgesänge im Buche der Psalmen*. Freiburg i. B.: Herder, 1896.

<sup>28</sup> *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* for March 6, 1897 (Vol. XVIII, No. 9).

<sup>29</sup> *Kritisches Sendschreiben über die Prohebibel*, 1885, pp. 92, 93.

hebräischen Worten sowohl ξ (סִיף = ξίφος) als ψ. Auch im Mittelalter kommt neben Psalterion, Salterion vor, französisch saltier oder sautiers.<sup>30</sup>

Baethgen, however, discredits this proposal on the ground of the retention of the *p* sound in פִּסְתִּיחִיךָ = ψαλτήριον Dan. 3:5.<sup>31</sup>

The appearance of הַגִּיּוֹן before סִלְהָ in Ps. 9:17 has been used as an argument in favor of the view that Selah refers to the musical accompaniment. There is no fixed tradition as to the meaning of הַגִּיּוֹן. The meanings assigned to it in the new edition of the Robinson-Gesenius Hebrew Lexicon<sup>32</sup> are: (1) "resounding music," (2) "meditation, musing." It is clear that the sense of הַגִּיּוֹן in this particular passage will be determined by the meaning attributed to סִלְהָ, and not *vice versa*. Dr. Muss-Arnolt, for example, in accordance with his theory concerning Selah, prefers the second meaning and interprets הַגִּיּוֹן סִלְהָ as "addressed to the congregation: here is a call for meditation and prayer!" However, the rendering of the LXX φῶδῆ διαψάλματος certainly favors the view that Selah here had some connection with the musical rendering.

Some of the objections against this class of theories would be met if, instead of attempting to limit the application of Selah to instruments or voices, or to the manner of singing or playing, one were to regard Selah as simply indicating some change in the musical rendering.

The early Christian tradition, as we have seen, gives support to the view that Selah is a musical note. So also does the presence of musical terms in the titles and text of many of the Selah psalms. In his article on Selah<sup>33</sup> Professor Briggs shows the strength of this argument, reaching the conclusion that "there is a very close connection between the use of סִלְהָ and the use of musical terms in the Director's Psalter," and that "this makes it probable that סִלְהָ was a term used with reference to the musical rendering of the Psalms."

It is noteworthy in this connection that διάψαλμα in Hab. 3:3 is replaced by μεταβολή διαψάλματος in Cod. 86a, although the ordinary reading is given by Cod. 86b, Complutensis and Variants.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *Kritisches Sendschreiben über die Probebibel*, 1835, p. 96.

<sup>31</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. xiii.

<sup>32</sup> Edited by Drs. Brown, Driver, and Briggs.

<sup>33</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>34</sup> Compare for the text Klostermann's *Analecta z. Septuaginta, Hexapla und Patristik*. Leipzig, 1895.



b) *Selah a call to prayer.*—In the *Johns Hopkins University Circular* for May, 1890, p. 76, Dr. Muss-Arnolt writes as follows: “I believe that the original meaning of *selah* is *prayer*. (1) As to the etymology, I consider it a Piel form; *selah* stands for *sallah* as *ehad* for *ahhad* (so also Haupt after Kimchi); it is derived from the stem סלה, occurring frequently in Assyrian; e. g., *usalli* ‘I prayed,’ *sullû* = *hassitum*, ‘prayer,’ V Rawl., 26, 52, *ab* (written *su(!)-ul-lu-u*); *sula* (written *su(!)la-a*), ‘beseeching,’ *Z. Assyr.*, IV, 11; *silûtu*, ‘a prayer-mantle,’ V Rawl., 14 and 28, etc. (2) The meaning ‘prayer’ is suitable in all cases, especially so in the later Jewish liturgy (pointed out to me by Dr. B. Szold and Dr. Jastrow, Sr.); it signified prayer—loud or silent—interwoven between the chanting of the psalms. This also gives a good meaning to *διάψαλμα* = (a prayer) between the psalm.”

The question as to the derivation of סלה will be considered later. In the meantime a careful examination of the uses of *Selah* shows that the meaning thus attributed to it, while suitable in many cases, is not satisfactory in all. It is not suitable, for instance, in psalms in which *Selah* occurs every few verses, such as Pss. 3, 32, 46, 52, 66, 67, 77, 84, 87, etc.; or in such passages as Pss. 20:4; 21:3; 52:5; 55:8; 57:4; 67:2; 68:8; 82:2; 85:3, etc., where *Selah* stands between lines connected through parallelism or progress in the thought.

c) *Selah marking the close of a section in psalm or prayer.*—In *ZATW.*, 1896, pp. 137 sq., Jacob presents information as to the liturgical customs of the second temple. He begins his investigation with the seven psalms appointed for the morning *Tamid*; that is, with Pss. 24, 48, 82, 94, 81, 93, 92 (one for each day in the week). Of this list Pss. 24, 48, 81, 82, and (according to the LXX) 94 have *Selah*. It is related in the *Mishna* (*Tamid*, iv, 4) that the last act of the morning *Tamid* was the libation, during which it was customary for the Levites to sing a שיר. Whenever they came to the close of a section, the priests sounded on the trumpets and the people prostrated themselves (השתחוהו). Jacob regards *Selah* as the sign for the close of a section. In the *Mishna* (*Succa*, v, 3) it is stated that twenty-one blasts of the trumpet are to be heard in the temple daily, and that nine of these occur at the morning *Tamid*, three being given at a time. The first of this threefold succession of blasts preceded the Levites’

song. The second probably served as the signal for prostration at the close of a section; that is, according to Jacob, where *Selah* stands in the psalm. None of the five *Tamid* psalms with *Selah* contains it more than once. Jacob suggests, therefore, that the third series of blasts served as signal to the musical conductor that the pause was over and that the singing might begin again. He explains the absence of *Selah* in Pss. 92, 93 and (in the Hebrew) 94 by referring to the fact that *Selah* does not appear at all in the fourth book of the Psalter, to which these psalms belong.

Another series of psalms used in the temple worship was that appointed for the Feast of Tabernacles; namely, Pss. 29; 50:16 *sq.*; 94:16 *sq.*; 94:8 *sq.*; 81:7 *sq.*; 82:5b *sq.*; 65 (according to b. *Succa*, 53a). Of these psalms the following have *Selah*: Ps. 50:6 (and vs. 15 according to LXX); 81:8; 82:2; 94:15 (according to LXX); while Pss. 29 and 65 are without it. But even in the psalms where it occurs its position does not, for the most part, correspond with the beginning of the strophe or section appointed for use. Jacob attributes this fact to erroneous tradition, and corrects as follows: 81:9 *sq.* for 81:7 *sq.*; 82:3 *sq.* for 82:5b *sq.*; and possibly 50:7 *sq.* for 50:16 *sq.*<sup>35</sup> He thinks that Pss. 29 and 65 were sung from beginning to end without break, and therefore required no *Selah*.

Jacob reaches the conclusion that "Sela bedeutet einen Absatz im Tempelgesang der Leviten," and again that "לֶחֶד bedeutet einen Absatz, sei es im Tempelgesange, sei es für den Tempelgesang. Alle Psalmen mit ׳ד weisen sich dadurch als Gesänge der Tempelliturgie aus."<sup>36</sup> He strengthens his argument by showing that other of the *Selah* psalms are mentioned in the Talmud as used in the temple ritual, and by calling attention to the liturgical character of the psalms themselves, with special reference to their titles and to the priestly benedictions with which some of them conclude (see Pss. 3, 21, 31, 48, 66, 68).

Jacob explains the absence of *Selah* from the Hallel as follows: "Das Hallel ist ohne Unterbrechung von 113–118 als ein einziger Hymnus zur Begleitung des Schlachtens und Blutsprengens vorgetragen worden, und darum treffen wir in ihm kein ׳ד, welches eben sonst Anzeige einer Unterbrechung ist."<sup>37</sup> Of the

<sup>35</sup> For his argument see *ZATW.*, 1896, pp. 143, 144.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 144, 170.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 168, 169.

Pilgrim Songs he writes: "Wie sie auch gesungen sein mögen, mit oder ohne Absätze, so hat 'ס kein Platz in ihnen. Denn wurden sie in Absätzen gesungen, so bilden eben die Psalmen selbst die Absätze."<sup>38</sup> Jacob makes no attempt at an etymological explanation, nor does he seek the support of the versions. He considers it impossible to discover the exact meaning of סלה (and apparently also of *διάψαλμα*). He contents himself with presenting a theory as to its use.<sup>39</sup>

It is evident from this account of the temple ritual that not only whole psalms, but parts of psalms, were sung according to appointment. But if this was true of the temple service, why not also of the service in the synagogues? Jacob's limitation of such a use for Selah to the *temple liturgy* raises many difficulties in the way of the acceptance of his theory.

Without attempting to meet these difficulties or to discuss the merits of this conjecture, let us confine ourselves to the question whether Selah may not serve simply to mark off a section in psalm or prayer. In the first place it may be taken for granted that wherever Selah can be interpreted as indicating a musical interlude, a pause in the singing, a place for the trumpets to sound, for prostration or for prayer—in all such passages it can serve as the sign for *breaking off*; that is, it can mark off a section in the psalm. Indeed, it must be at least this in order to serve any of the above-named purposes. To give Selah this significance is not to deny the possibility of any of those uses. Thus Jacob regards Selah as indicating in the Tamid "die Pause im Levitengesang, in welcher auf einen dreifachen Trompetenstos der beiden Priester das anwesende Volk sich zur Anbetung niederwarf;" and again in the ritual for the Feast of Tabernacles as marking "den Absatz, bei welchem ein selbständiger Gesang in der Tempelliturgie begann."<sup>40</sup> In short, this theory makes Selah serve the simple purpose of indicating the sections into which a psalm may be divided, when the exigencies of liturgical service render such a division desirable.

This explanation meets one of the chief difficulties raised against the preceding theories; *i. e.*, the presence of Selah between verses which are closely connected in thought. It is quite conceivable that the sections of Pss. 20, 21, 67, 68, 85, etc., and of Hab., chap. 3, as marked by Selah, may have been used separately;

<sup>38</sup> ZATW., 1896, p. 169.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 171-3, 181.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 144.

although it is difficult to explain *Selah* as indicating an *intermission* (whether for music, prayer, or meditation) which would be an interruption as well. This use would also explain the repetition of *Selah* in short psalms.

TABLE SHOWING THE POSITION OF SELAH IN THE PSALTER.

AT CLOSE OF SECTION				AT END OF PSALM	WITH CITATIONS	UNEXPLAINED
2:2, 6	34:11	61:5b	82:2	3:9	44:9	2:4, 5
3:3, 5	37:4	62:5, 9	83:9	9:21	55:8	7:13a
4:3, 5	39:6, 12	66:4, 7, 15	84:5, 8, 9	24:10	57:7	20:4
6:4	46:4, 8	67:5	87:3, 6	46:12	60:6	49:14
7:6, 9a	47:5	68:17, 20,	88:8, 13		67:2	57:3, 4a
9:17	48:9	26, 32	89:38, 46, 49		68:8, 33	61:5a
19:5a	49:16	70:5	94:15		89:5	68:4a,
21:3, 6	50:6, 15	75:4	107:30			14, 15
24:6	52:5, 7	76:4, 10	115:3			70:3
30:4	54:5	77:4, 10, 16	119:19			85:3
31:22	55:20a	80:8	140:4, 6, 9			88:11
32:4, 5, 7	59:6, 14	81:8	143:6			

There are seventy-six cases in which *Selah* appears between sections in the psalms. In almost every case the division is clearly marked. In every case *Selah* may well serve the purpose which this theory attributes to it.

The position of *Selah* at the close of Pss. 3, 9, 24, 46 seems at first sight difficult to reconcile with this interpretation. It should be noticed that *Selah* is lacking in the LXX at the end of three of these psalms (3, 24, 46), while in the fourth it no longer stands at the end, as Pss. 9 and 10 form one psalm in the Greek text. However, there is no difficulty in explaining these examples, supposing them to be genuine. *Selah* could be used at the close of a psalm, in accordance with this theory, whenever psalms were grouped together in the ritual, or whenever the final section or verse of a psalm was placed in combination with other passages. Pss. 3, 24, 46 are used repeatedly, in part or as complete psalms, in such combinations, in the Hebrew Prayer Book. It is reasonable to suppose that these psalms were early used in combination with other psalms by the Hebrews in their public worship; since they have been so used to our knowledge for many centuries.

It is not surprising to find *Selah* used with citations. In Ps. 44:9 it stands just before a citation from Ps. 60:12; in Ps. 55:8 it follows one from Jer. 9:1. Pss. 57:8-12 and 60:7-14 reappear in Ps. 108. *Selah* stands in 57:7 and 60:6, in each case just

between the duplicate section and the rest of the psalm. The citation from Numb. 6:24, 25 at the beginning of Ps. 67 is followed by Selah. It appears also in Ps. 89:5 after the passage taken from 2 Sam. 7:16, and in Ps. 68:33 before the citation from Deut. 33:26. The position of Selah in Ps. 68:8 is not so easy to explain. Vss. 8 *sq.* bear a striking resemblance to Judg. 5:4<sup>sq.</sup> But Selah here stands neither before nor after, but in the midst of, a citation. It seems to be out of place. The use of Selah in this psalm is so very questionable that it seems reasonable to suppose that this particular Selah once stood at the close of the preceding verse, just before the citation. Certainly no theory has yet been proposed which would explain it in its present position.

There remain fourteen examples to be explained. The Selahs in Ps. 2:4, 5 are probably due to dittography. Jacob, comparing with them the Selah in vs. 6, considers that there are probably two examples of dittography in this psalm. The Selah in vs. 6 has been retained in the table, as it stands at the close of a strophe; but there is no difficulty in explaining either of the remaining Selahs, as the verses which precede them may readily be used by themselves. The same thing is true of 70:3 (although here one is tempted to transpose the Selah to vs. 4), and of 85:3 (although here again the Selah seems to belong rather to the close of the following verse). In Ps. 7:13a it is possible that the Selah is in place. True, there is a break between vs. 15 and the preceding verses, so that at first thought one is tempted to transpose the Selah to the close of vs. 14. But vs. 13a would form a more suitable ending to a psalm than vs. 14. If any such change has taken place, it is more probable that the Selah stood originally at the close of vs. 12. The Selah in 88:11 of the Massoretic text is very likely an error for the one given in vs. 13 by the LXX. In Ps. 20:4 the Selah is easily accounted for, even though there is no break in the thought; as it is quite conceivable that vss. 1-4 may have been used at times independently of the rest of the psalm. The Selah in Ps. 49:14 probably belongs at the close of vs. 13, that is, at the close of a strophe; just as the other Selah in this psalm stands at the end of the next strophe (vs. 16). Ps. 57:3, 4a is probably a case of dittography. The LXX supports the Selah in vs. 3, the Hebrew and one MS. of the Greek text the Selah in vs. 4a. The former is, on the whole, the

better position for Selah, but neither is untenable. Ps. 61:5a of the LXX = 61:5b of the Massorah. In 68:4a the Selah is not impossible to explain, although it would seem more suitably placed at the close of the verse. In vss. 14, 15 we have probably another example of dittography.<sup>41</sup> The usage in this psalm is remarkable. The Hebrew text places Selah in vss. 8, 20, 33; the Septuagint in vss. 4a, 8, 14, 20, 33; Holmes-Parsons in vss. 4a, 14, 15, 32, 33; and the Psalterium Vetus in vss. 4, 14, 17, 26—nine Selahs in one psalm, and several of them difficult to explain on any of the theories. One is tempted to regard these as examples of transposition or dittography.

Thus there are but few uses of Selah which cause any difficulty, and only one of these (Ps. 49:14) is in the Hebrew text. There is no accredited example in the Psalter which cannot be explained in a reasonable way according to the theory that Selah divides the psalm into sections for liturgical use.

In Hab. 3:3a, 9a Selah seems at first sight to be out of place, but examination shows that we have here examples of the use of Selah with citations. Vs. 3a should be compared with Deut. 33:2; vss. 9b sq. with Ps. 77:17–21. In connection with the use of Selah in vs. 9a Dr. Driver's statement may be quoted: "Ps. 77:16–19 agrees so closely with Hab. 3:10–15 that one of the two must be dependent upon the other."<sup>42</sup> Compare with this Dr. Cheyne's comment on Ps. 77:17–20: "These verses are on a different model from that of the rest of the psalm, being tristichs. They do not cohere well either with vss. 14–16 or with vs. 21. They are lyric, not reflective, in tone and style, and have the appearance of having been taken from some other poem."<sup>43</sup> This portion of Ps. 77 is separated from the rest of the psalm by Selah. It is not surprising, therefore, that Selah should appear in Hab. 3:9. In the LXX vs. 9a concludes with λέγει κύριος, and is thus distinctly separated from the following passage.

According to the text of Cod. 86b, as given in Klostermann's *Analecta zur Septuaginta, Hexapla und Patristik* (Leipzig, 1895), διάψαλμα stands at the close of vs. 14, εἰς τέλος taking its place in vs. 13 both in this text and in the Complutensis. Neither example raises any difficulty, and the question as to the genuineness of the reading may be left undecided. The usage in Habakkuk, as it seems, is favorable to this interpretation of Selah.

<sup>41</sup> So Dr. Jacob. <sup>42</sup> *Literature of Old Testament*, p. 818. <sup>43</sup> *The Book of Psalms*, p. 216.

We must now consider the use of Selah outside of the Scriptures. There are two examples in the Psalms of Solomon, namely, in Pss. 17 and 18, the most important in the collection. Both are Messianic, Ps. 17 setting forth a lofty conception of the Messiah. Ps. 18 appears in two fragments. Vss. 1–10 are not logically connected with vss. 11–14. The change of subject is so complete that it is suggested in the commentary of Ryle and James that the second fragment properly forms a new psalm. The remark is made that

Against this idea it may be urged that a *διάψαλμα* is inserted by all MSS. save *one* (M), and that that one's evidence is invalidated by the fact that it omits all titles and subscriptions. We at once admit the practical absence of external support, for we lay little stress on the evidence of M.<sup>44</sup>

But, according to the theory we are now considering, *διάψαλμα* itself suggests such a division as these editors, for other reasons, are inclined to make. One of the two examples in the Psalter of Solomon strongly favors the proposed interpretation for Selah.

On *διάψαλμα* in Ps. 17:31 the following comment is made :

Omitted by the Moscow MS. Very likely it is not genuine, any more than the other one in Ps. 18:10, where we believe that a longer pause ought to be expressed. It may have been put in in both places by the man who wrote the titles of our psalms, in order to assimilate them more closely in outward form to the Davidic collection. Against this is the fact that only two are to be found in the whole book. If genuine, they point to a liturgical use of these psalms, of which we have no other trace.<sup>45</sup>

As to these suggestions it may be remarked : *a*) that we have just seen what good reason the editors themselves have for retaining the *διάψαλμα* in Ps. 18:10 ; *b*) that the fact that Selah occurs but twice in the whole collection is sufficient to discredit the conjecture that they were inserted "in order to assimilate [these psalms] more closely . . . to the Davidic collection." *c*) Over against the objection to a liturgical use for these psalms may be placed the following statements, taken from the Introduction, pp. xxv, lix, lx :

The Psalms, according to most critics, were written in Hebrew for liturgical use. They probably would not be so used save in the near neighborhood of Jerusalem, etc.

<sup>44</sup> Ryle and James, *Psalms of Solomon*, p. 148.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

There follows an argument based on this assumption. Again :

It is possible that the whole collection was intended for public, or even for liturgical, use. The occurrence of "Selah" (διάψαλμα) in 17:31; 18:10, if originally part of the text, and not introduced out of mere imitation of the canonical Psalter, would go to support this view. Similarly, if the titles of Pss. 8, 10, 14 are genuine, they would indicate that these psalms at least were originally designed for adaptation to music.

To return to Ps. 17:31. It may be well to quote vs. 30-32, as the use of Selah in this passage is one to raise questions. The Messiah and his kingdom are being described :

Vs. 30. For he shall take knowledge of them, that they be all the sons of their God, and shall divide them upon the earth according to their tribes.

Vs. 31. And the sojourner and the stranger shall dwell with them no more.

He shall judge the nations and the peoples with the wisdom of his righteousness. *Selah.*

Vs. 32. And he shall possess the nations of the heathen to serve him beneath his yoke; and he shall glorify the Lord in a place to be seen of the whole earth, etc.<sup>46</sup>

At first sight Selah seems to be out of place; but on a closer look it becomes apparent that vs. 32 might be connected with vs. 31a as easily as with vs. 31b, so that the connection between vs. 31 and 32 is not so close but that a Selah could intervene. The explanation is simple, if it be remembered that Selah does not indicate, according to this theory, a *necessary*, but a *permissible* division in the psalm, and only shows that the section thus marked off may be omitted when advisable. Vs. 31b would form the most fitting conclusion for a stanza to be found in this portion of the psalm. On the other hand it is quite conceivable that this half of vs. 31 may have been quoted by itself in the same way in which Pss. 3:8; 46:7, and like passages from the canonical Psalter are incorporated repeatedly in the various parts of the Jewish Prayer Book. It reminds one of Pss. 96:13b; 98:9b from the Hallel.

Thus the two examples of Selah in the Psalms of Solomon favor the interpretation now under consideration. The passages in the Jewish Liturgy remain for examination.

We have first to consider the five authenticated examples; namely, those in the שְׁמוֹנֵה עֶשְׂרֵה and those in the morning benedictions preceding the שְׁמֵעַ.

<sup>46</sup> Ryle and James, *Psalms of Solomon*, pp. 139-41.



The third of the eighteen benedictions reads as follows: "Thou art holy, and thy name is holy, and holy beings praise thee daily. (*Selah.*) Blessed art thou, O Lord, the holy God."<sup>47</sup> There is no difficulty in explaining the use of this benediction (or of the first three benedictions out of the eighteen) apart from the rest. We have already seen that the first three and the last three are accounted by scholars to be the most ancient of these ancient blessings. Not only so, but they are used more frequently than the rest, and this third benediction occurs repeatedly by itself in the Prayer Book. The only difficulty lies in the position of *Selah* in the midst of the blessing. Even this difficulty is removed, however, when one turns to the *Authorised Prayer Book* (p. 239), and there, among the references to the parts of the book containing the prayers for the New Year service, reads this direction: "For the commencement of the Amidah, see pp. 136-8, from 'O Lord, open thou my lips,' to '*praise thee daily. (Selah.)*' Then continue: etc."<sup>48</sup> It is customary, therefore, in the Jewish ritual to omit the words following *Selah* in this third benediction, on certain occasions. This is exactly what an advocate of our theory would have been likely to suggest as an explanation of the original use of *Selah* in this passage, had there been no such liturgical direction to support his theory. In the eighteenth benediction *Selah* occurs twice. The immediate context is as follows: "and everything that liveth shall give thanks unto thee *forever* (Hebr. סלה), and shall praise thy name in truth, O God, our salvation and our help. (Hebr. סלה left here untranslated.) Blessed art thou, O Lord, whose name is All-good, and unto whom it is becoming to give thanks."<sup>49</sup> These words come at the close of what is the longest of the eighteen benedictions. Both *Selaha*s may be explained on the supposition that they indicate how the prayer may be shortened, or where extracts may be made.

In the prayer beginning אל ברוך גדול דעה *Selah* occurs at the end as follows: "Be thou blessed, O Lord our God, for the excellency of thy handiwork, and for the bright luminaries which thou hast made: they shall glorify thee *forever*" (Hebr. סלה).<sup>50</sup> It is difficult to judge of this passage, unless one knows whether it stood originally by itself or not. Jacob speaks of this and the

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *Authorised Prayer Book*, p. 45.

<sup>49</sup> *Authorised Prayer Book*, p. 53.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. also pp. 245, 256.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 38.

prayer which is next to be considered as "the morning benedictions before the Shema." These two prayers are separated by a short passage which bears some marks of a late date. A portion of it, however, resembles our "benedictions" and may well have formed part of an original series of benedictions now imbedded in later prayers or lost entirely. In the absence of proof, however, this must be counted among the doubtful uses.

The prayer beginning with the words "אהבה רבה אהבתנו" אלהינו closes thus: "Thou hast chosen us from all peoples and tongues, and hast brought us near unto thy great name *forever* (Hebr. סלה) in faithfulness, that we might in love give thanks unto thee and proclaim thy unity. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who hast chosen thy people Israel in love."<sup>51</sup> How shall we explain Selah in this passage? As an example of misplacement, because it might well stand before the "Blessed art thou," after the example of benedictions 3 and 18? or as indicating the possibility of closing the prayer with the words "unto thy great name"? Both explanations are purely conjectural, and yet either one suits the case much better than those afforded by any of the other interpretations proposed for Selah.

Of the examples that remain two are clearly not genuine, and the others are of questionable origin. One of these appears at the close of the prayer appointed for the sabbath preceding the new moon, following the *amen*. Its originality has been doubted on the ground that it is lacking in this prayer as quoted in the Talmud. But whether this Selah be genuine or not, it might be explained on the assumption that it indicated a permissible break or close for this portion of the liturgy, the only difficulty being its presence after the *amen*.

The last example is that which occurs in the brief blessing: "May he who bestowed all good on thee bestow all good on thee. *Selah*." This benediction may have originally formed one of a group. But as nothing certain is known as to its date or original context, we have no means of judging as to the authenticity of the Selah. Certainly it does not count against our theory.

Thus it is evident that, in spite of a few doubtful cases, all of which may be explained in one way or another, the *use* of Selah is accounted for in a reasonable manner by the theory that it marks the end of a section, or the secondary close, in psalm or

<sup>51</sup> *Authorised Prayer Book*, p. 40.

prayer. This is the only one of the theories considered which has satisfied all the requirements of the case. The support of the LXX may be claimed for it, and it is favored by such traditions concerning the temple ritual as are preserved to us in the Talmud.

The Jewish tradition as to the meaning of Selah and the early Christian tradition as to the meaning of *διάψαλμα* still remain to be accounted for. In his recent article on Selah,<sup>52</sup> Professor Briggs offers an explanation which seems to reconcile this conflicting testimony, to do justice to the modern theories here discussed, and to throw light upon the use as well as upon the meaning of Selah. He suggests that when a section of psalm or prayer was used apart from its context in liturgical service, it was followed by a doxology: so that סלה marked the place for a doxology. Psalter and Prayer Book alike bear testimony to the early fondness of the Jews for the doxology. Graetz<sup>53</sup> writes as follows: "Zum Schlusse des Psalmes oder der Psalmgruppe pflegte der Liturge noch eine *Doxologie* hinzuzufügen;" and again, referring to the benedictions at the close of Pss. 41, 72, 89, 106, he writes: "Die Benediction gehört . . . keinesweges ausschliesslich diesen vier Psalmen an, sondern war bei jeder Recitation irgend eines Psalmes in Gebrauch."

Baethgen<sup>54</sup> quotes Jacob of Edessa (Bar Hebr. 10:1) in the following words:

In einigen . . . Exemplaren ist statt *διάψαλμα* *בכל זמן* (d. i. *dei*) geschrieben. Nämlich allenthalben wo die Sänger, welche Gott mit Lobliedern priesen, ihre Worte abbrachen, musste das zuhörende Volk nach ihnen dies "immer" anstimmen, sozusagen: immer sei Gott gelobt und gepriesen durch diese Loblieder, ebenso wie bei uns in der Kirche nach dem "jetzt und immerdar und in alle Ewigkeit" das Volk zur Bestätigung "amen" sagt.

Baethgen's comment is:

Diese Erklärung würde sachlich völlig befriedigen; es ist aber nicht erklärt und lässt sich nicht erklären, wie סלה zu der Bedeutung *da* kommen sollte.

But if the rendering of the Jewish-Palestinian versions is the last word of a doxology, used according to ancient custom to represent the whole doxology; and if Selah marks the place where this doxology was used, then indeed it is easy to explain how Selah

<sup>52</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>53</sup> *Comm. z. d. Psalmen*, pp. 63, 92.

<sup>54</sup> *Handkommentar z. Alt. Testament*, II, 2, p. xii.

came to have the meaning of *âel*. According to this view the Jewish tradition preserves not the meaning, but the use, of Selah, as marking the place for a benediction.

Professor Briggs explains the early Christian tradition by the fact that such benedictions were usually sung or chanted; so that the place marked by *διάψαλμα* was frequently the place for a change in the music. This conclusion harmonizes with the result reached by him in his inductive study of the Selah psalms; namely, that Selah "indicates some kind of a change in the musical rendering." It also seems to meet the requirements of scholars who have been led to think that Selah marked the place for prayer, for a change of some kind in the music, for a pause in the service, and the like.

There is some doubt as to the etymology of סִלְהָ. Scholars differ as to its derivation in accordance with their different views as to its meaning. Origen transliterates סִלְהָ by *σελ*. This looks as though the ה were an addition to the stem. In that case סִלְ would be the imperative of סָלַל "to lift up," and סִלְהָ would be the cohortative imperative.<sup>55</sup>

Jacob suggests that the Massorites, not understanding Selah, but accepting the traditional Hebrew interpretation that it was a synonym for נִצְחָה, pointed accordingly סִלְהָ, the patach becoming qāmes before ה.<sup>56</sup> Compare with this the pointing of the divine name יְהוָה. This explanation seems more satisfactory than the usual one, that the pointing is that of the imperative in pause. The meaning which this derivation gives to Selah, *i. e.*, *Lift up* (the voice in a doxology), corresponds with the service which the word seems to have rendered.

Our examination of the various conjectures as to the meaning and use of Selah has led to the following conclusions:

- a) That Selah does not mean *forever*, but it marks the place for a doxology ending in *forever*.
- b) That Selah does not indicate the close of a strophe, but it usually stands at the end of one.
- c) That Selah is not an abbreviation, but the word by which it is translated in many versions represents an entire sentence.
- d) That Selah was not a musical note, but it indicated the place for the singing of the doxology with such musical changes as custom may have dictated.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. C. A. Briggs, as quoted in footnote 1.

<sup>56</sup> *ZATW.*, 1896, p. 173.

e) That Selah was not, strictly speaking, a call to prayer, and yet it marked the place where psalm or prayer might be brought to a close with a doxology.

f) That Selah was a liturgical direction, providing for the *lifting up* of the voices in a doxology at the close of a liturgical section, and indicating the proper division of psalm or prayer in liturgical usage.

This seems to have been the significance of Selah. It is a meaning in harmony with the rendering of the versions, with the simplest and most commonly accepted derivation, and with the usage of the word in the Scriptures, the Psalms of Solomon, and the Hebrew Liturgy. It seems to satisfy all the requirements of the case. But supposing that it does so, there still remain many questions which call for an answer. How are we to account for the absence of Selah from 100 or more of the 150 psalms of the canonical Psalter and from 16 out of the 18 psalms of Solomon? Granting that there was an early as well as a late use of Selah, was there any difference between them? Was there an independent use of Selah among the Jews of the dispersion? Questions such as these remain for the consideration of scholars.