

The Old English "Exodus," II. 63-134

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THE OLD ENGLISH 'EXODUS,'

ll. 63—134.

As this passage stands there is considerable confusion in the arrangement and order of the matter. The description of the pillar of cloud is immediately followed in l. 86 by the third encampment, with a brief allusion in ll. 93 sqq. to the two pillars, as though *both* had been already described, whereas only the pillar of cloud has hitherto been spoken of, no mention whatever of the pillar of fire having been made. Then the trumpets summon the host to arise, and the Israelites resume their march. Here the narrative is suddenly interrupted by a description of the pillar of cloud, as though it were something new (*oðer wundor*) and had not been alluded to before. Then we are abruptly carried back to the journey of the Israelites to the Red Sea.

I venture to suggest that a simple transposition of ll. 86—107 and ll. 108—124 will restore order and yield a perfectly natural sequence of events, and I print them below with the arrangement thus altered.

We now get (1) ll. 63—67, second encampment; (2) ll. 68—85, description of the pillar of cloud; (3) ll. 108—124, description of the pillar of fire; (4) ll. 86—107, and ll. 125—129, third encampment and further march until stopped by the Red Sea; (5) ll. 129—134, fourth encampment.

The cause of the displacement of the two passages was, no doubt, the wrong folding of a couple of leaves in the MS. from which Junius XI was copied or at any rate descended. If we assume that the two joined leaves in the middle of a quire, containing 1a + 1b (= ll. 108—124) and 2a + 2b (= ll. 86—107) respectively, got wrongly folded and were thus bound, the sequence in the MS. would be 2a, 2b, 1a, 1b, which is the actual sequence in the Junius MS. That the pages contained so few lines (1a + 1b = 17 lines, and 2a + 2b = 22 lines) can be accounted for by assuming spaces for pictures.

- 63 Heht þa ymb twa niht tinfæste hæleð,
siððan hie feondum oðfaren hæfdon,
- 65 ymbwicigean werodes bearhtme,
mid ælfere Æthanes byrig,
mægne mæste mearclandum on.
Nearwe genyddon on norðwegas,
wiston him be suðan Sigelwara land,
- 70 forbærned beorhhleoðu, brune leode
hatum heofoncolum. þær halig god
wið færbyrne folc gescylde,
bælce oferbrædde byrnendne heofon,
halgan nette hatwendne lyft.
- 75 Hæfde wederwolcen widum fæðmum
eorðan ȝ uprodor efne gedæled,
lædde leodwerod; ligfyr adranc,
hate heofontorht. Hæleð wafedon,
drihta gedrymost. Dægscealdes hleo
- 80 wand ofer wolcnum; hæfde witig god
sunnan siðfæt segle ofertolden,
swa þa mæstrapas men ne cuðon,
ne ða seglrode geseon meahton
eorðbuende ealle cræfte,
- 85 hu afæstnod wæs feldhusa mæst.
- 108 Æfena gehwam oðer wundor,
syllic æfter sunnan setlrade beheold
- 110 ofer leodwerum lige scinan,
byrnende beam. Blace stodon
ofer sceotendum scire leoman,
scinon scyldhreoðan, sceado swiðredon;
neowle nihtscuwan neah ne mihton
- 115 heolstor ahydan. Heofoncandel barn;
niwe nihtweard nyde sceolde
wician ofer weredum, þy læs him westengryre,
har hæð[broga], holmegum wederum
o[n] ferclamme ferhð getwæfde.
- 120 Hæfde foregenga fyrene loccas,
blace beamas, bellegsan hweop

63. *MS.* tinfæstne. *Cp. Cosijn PBB.* 19, 460. 67. *MS.* mægnes. *Or read*
mæгна, *gen. pl. ?* 70. *MS.* burhhleoðu. *Cp. note.* 81. *MS.* swegle.
113. *MS.* sceaðo. 118. *MS.* har hæð. *Cp. Cosijn PBB.* 19, 460. 119. *MS.* o.

- in þam hereþreate, hatan lige,
 þ he on westenne werod forbærnde,
 124 nymðe hie modhwate Moyses hyrde[n].
 86 Siððan he mid wuldre geweorðode
 þeodenholde; þa wæs þridde wic
 folce to frofre. Fyrd eall geseah
 hu þær hlifedon halige seglas,
 90 lyftwundor leoht; leode ongeton
 dugoð Israhela þ þær drihten cwom,
 weroda drihten wicsteal metan.
 Him beforan foran fyr 7 wolcen
 in beorhtrodor, beamas twegen,
 95 þara æghwæðer efngedælde
 heahþegnunga haliges gastes,
 deormodra sið dagum 7 nihtum.
 Þa ic on morgen gefrægn modes rofan
 hebban herebyman hludan stefnum
 100 wuldres woman. Werod eall aras
 modigra mægen, swa him Moyses bebead,
 mære magoræswa metodes folce,
 fus fyrdgetrum; forð gesawon
 lifes latþeow liftweg metan.
 105 Segl siðe weold, sæmen æfter
 foron flodwege; folc wæs on salum,
 107 hlud herges cyrm. Heofonbeacen astah;
 125 scean scir werod, scyldas lixton,
 gesawon randwigan rihte stræte,
 segn ofer sweoton, oð þ sæfæsten
 landes æt ende leodmægne forstod,
 fuson forðweg. Fyrdwic aras,
 130 wyrpton hie werige; wiste genægdon
 modige meteþegnas hyra mægen beton.
 Bræddon æfter beorgum, siððan byme sang,
 flotan feldhusum; þa wæs feorðe wic,
 randwigena ræst be þan readan sæ.

124. *MS.* hyrde. 87. *MS.* þridda. 104. *MS.* lifweg. 105. *MS.* swegl.
 128. *MS.* leo mægne.

NOTES.

68. This line of course means, 'The difficulties facing them (*nearwe*, i.e. the heat, if they took a southerly direction) forced them to the north.' It does not mean with Grein, 'Mit Nachdruck eilten sie an Nordwege,' nor with Johnson, 'Straitly they pressed on the northern roads.'

70. MS. *burhhleoðu*. The original no doubt had *beorhhleoðu* 'mountain slopes.' It is true that a similar misspelling is recorded once, viz. Riddle 28², but the *eo* form is the only one found elsewhere. It occurs *Elene* 788 and 1009; *Exodus* 448; *Riddle* 58²; *Genesis* 2159 (where the MS. has *beorh-*, not *burh-*, as is erroneously given in Grein's *Sprachschatz*). Conversely in the glosses we meet with the misspelling *beorhleoð* 'municeps' for *burh-*, where the original undoubtedly had *burh-*: cp. Napier, *O. E. Glosses*, note to 7, 293.

109. The difficulty in this line seems to be the *beheold*. One expects a verb meaning 'began,' and, though *ongann* would be a bold emendation, it would yield good sense. 'Each evening another wonder, a strange one, after the setting of the sun, began to shine with flame over the people, a burning pillar.' There is however great difficulty in seeing how the mistake could have arisen.

107. *Heofonbeacen astah*, 'The heavenly beacon (the sun) arose.'

129. Instead of *fus on forðweg*, the reading of the MS., which is retained in most of the editions, I propose to read *fusion forðweg*. 'Until the sea-fastness (i.e. the Red Sea) at the limit of the land blocked the further journey to the host, to the eager [troop].' For *fusion* = *fusum*, cp. *sweoton*, l. 127 etc. *Forðweg* is the object of *forstod*. In most cases where it occurs it is preceded by the preposition *on*, and the phrase *fus on forðweg* (*Menologium* 218 and *Guthlac* 918, cp. also *Guth.* 773) must have been familiar to the scribe. This led him to divide *fusion f.* into *fus on f.*

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