# *LĔ'IŠ ḤĂSIDEKA*, DEUT. 33:8

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All commentators agree in pronouncing the construction harsh and obscure. The Gordian knot is cut by the emendation *lĕ'iš ḥasdĕka* or *ḥăsadĕka* (Ball, Bertholet, Hummelauer, Ehrlich, Marti, Smend). As the text stands the variants חסידיך, חסדיך Kennicott are orthographic, the majority of exegetes, among them Driver and Steuernagel, take the second noun as an appositive to the first, while a minority, as Castalio, Stade, Dillmann, König, E. Meyer[1] regard *ḥăsidĕka* as a genitive after *'iš* in the construct state. Exception is taken to the former view on the ground that the first noun should have the article (*ha'iš*; so Dillmann. Flier answers by recourse to the sparing use of the article in poetry. König knows better: the determination is not effected by the possessive pronoun affixed to the attribute. We find *bĕno ha-bĕkor*, 'his eldest son,' or *bĕni bĕkori*, 'my eldest son.' *'et binka bĕkorĕka*, *'et binka 'et yĕḥidĕka*; nowhere *ha-ben bĕkoro*, etc. If the construction were that of apposition, we should expect *le'iška ha-ḥăsidĕka*. *'iš* with the masculine possessive suffix is found in the Bible only, 1 Kings 20:20 in the phrase *'iš 'išo*; in the Mishnah we encounter *'iši kohen gadol*, Ioma 1:7; Tamid 6:3. But *'iš ha-'ĕlohim* is frequent enough; Moses is so designated repeatedly, as in the first verse of this chapter, which of course is editorial. One might think that in addressing God Moses could be spoken of as *'iška*. I doubt it. For, though the phrase clearly signifies originally one possessed by *'ĕlohim*, specifically by *ruḥ 'ĕlohim* (so Hölscher), yet the genitive is not what we call possessive; the phrase is rather tantamount to *'iš 'ašer ruḥ 'ĕlohim bo*. Hence *'iška* would seem intolerable.

According to the second view, *ḥăsidĕka* is interpreted as the genitive of possession, 'belonging to thy *ḥasid*.' We may imme-

[1] Wellhausen: 'dem Manne deiner Freundschaft.' It is not clear whether an emendation is implied.

diately dispose of the altogether untenable notion that *ḥasid*, 'clemens,' 'Getreuer,' is an appellation of the Deity (Castalio, Stade); in the first place God himself is addressed (Rashi), and then *ḥasid*, though used predicatively (Jer. 3:12; Ps. 145:17; hence included among the seventy 'Names' of the Deity in *Agadath Shir Hashirim*, ed. Schechter, *JQR.*, VI, 678), cannot be said to be an appellation of the Deity. Dillmann, König, and E. Meyer take *'iš* collectively: 'Mannen,' the body of the Levites who are said to 'belong to,' 'be descended from (fictitiously),' God's godly one, Moses (or Aaron; so König; then the descent need not be fictitious). The collective interpretation of *'iš* is shared by many commentators who support the first view mentioned above. The proof that *'iš* may be used as a collective is derived from Isai. 21:9, where, however, the collective force inheres in the antecedent noun *rekeb* and is then transferred to the governing noun *'iš*; but in particular from the well-known combinations *'iš* Israel, *'iš* Judah, *'iš* Ephraim, *'iš Ṭob*, Is-sachar, *'iš* Gad, the latter occurring on the Mesha Stone. I cannot understand how the phrase *'iš ḥăsid* Jahveh can at all be placed on the same footing with *'iš* Israel, etc. In the latter combination the genitive is not of possession, 'the men belonging to the body of Israel,' but rather of explication (*baiān* of the Arab grammarians). In other words, *'iš* Gad means 'the body of men constituting Gad,' not 'the body of men belonging to, or descended from, Gad.' Accordingly, the noun serving as explicative must be a collective likewise, a tribe-name; only thus is the collective force imparted to the antecedent *'iš*.

Whether *ḥăsidcka* be an appositive in the same case as *'iš* or an explicative genitive taking the place of an apposition, *'iš* must, grammatically speaking, denote an individual. Of course, *'iš* is in the construct state. *'is ḥăsid* Jahveh has its analogues in *'ĕlohe ṣuri*, 2 Sam. 22:3, for which we find *'eli ṣuri* in the parallel passage, Ps. 18:3; *ḥalle rĕša'im*, Ezek. 21:34; *'anše ḥatarim*, 1 Kings 10:15; *betulat bat* Zion, 2 Kings 19:21; *bene fariṣe 'ammeka*, Dan. 11:14; *'anše bĕne bĕliya'al*, Jud. 10:22, contrast *'ănašim bĕne bĕliya'al*, Deut. 13:14; hence, despite *'anašim gibore ḥail*, 1 Ch. 5:24, it is permissible to view *'iš* in *'iš gibor ḥail*, Ruth 2:1 as in the construct state. Note *gĕbar tamim* Ps. 18:26. In our case, because of *lĕ-*, this view is the only possible one.

I said that *'iš* denotes here grammatically an individual. We know the Hebrew idiom *'iš sar ṛē-šofeṭ*, *'anašim aḥim*, *'iša'h 'almanath*, and the like, where normally the expletive is best left untranslated (comp. AV. Gen. 13:8 and contrast 2 Sam. 14:5). Nevertheless, the poet indulged in the pleonasm, because *'iš 'ĕlohim* was in his mind. It is true, Aaron, as the interpreter of his brother, might be spoken of as his *nabi'* (), and Moses, as his inspirer, as *'ĕlohim*; but *'iš 'ĕlohim* could scarcely be made to refer to Aaron. Hence the poet has Moses in mind. He thinks of him as the Levite par excellence, the one who was the originator of the Levitical functions. By his side and after him the whole tribe acts as he does; hence the transition from the singular to the plural in the sequel, to be resumed by the singular at the end; the commentators should not have troubled themselves at all about this supposed difficulty. *'iš ḥāsid* Jahveh is Moses, primarily for himself, then also as the leader of a like-minded body of men.

Had the poet seen fit to consult one of us, we might have suggested to him: *lĕ'iš sodĕka*, which is the only exact Hebrew rendering of Wellhausen's 'dem Manne deiner Freundschaft,' to the man *'āšer 'amad bĕsod* Jahveh, who was *ne'ĕman bĕkol bĕto*. But he chose to coin his own phrase. The *ḥāsidut* of Moses is apparently exemplified by the relative clauses following. Both verbs (*niṣṣāh*, *rib*) must be taken in bonam partem, in terms of commendation. So the Targum and Sifre by true instinct; so also the Peshita and probably Symmachus. If there be any difficulty about the second verb, there is certainly none about the first. Isai. 51:22 will serve as an example. It still implies that Moses had a *rib* with a third party and that he was vindicated by the Deity. That squares with the account in Numbers, though not in every detail; it simply shows that 'the sin of Moses' is an afterthought. The Hebrew construction will hardly support E. Meyer's reconstructed myth, according to which Moses wrestled with the Deity like a second Jacob and won the divine oracle, the Urim and Thummim. The Midrash speaks of Moses wrestling with the angels, when he stormed heaven and snatched the Torah. So the myth is plausible enough; only it is not borne out by the Hebrew.

We must fall back principally upon *niṣṣāh* as pointing to the manner in which *ḥāsidut* manifests itself. Just as Israel tests

the Lord to find out whether the Lord is among them or not (Ex. 17:7), so the Lord tests Israel to know whether he will walk in his law or not (16:4), whether he will keep his commandments or not (Deut. 8:2; see also Jud. 2:22; 3:4), whether they love the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul (Deut. 13:4). The purpose is most comprehensively stated Deut. 8:2: *lada'at 'et 'ăšer bilbabka*, comp. 2 Ch. 32:31: *lada'at kol bilbabo*. The Psalmist prays that the Lord may put him to the test (*baḥan*, see Targum and Syriac in our passage; *nissa(h)*), assay (*ṣaraf*) his reins and heart (Ps. 26:2). His heart will be found pure (51:12) as gold (*zahab ṭahor* frequently). Just as he is certain of his justification (*mišpaṭ*) because he conducts himself with straightforwardness (*holek bĕtummo*), with a heart straight (*yašar*, 2 Kings 10:15, with no ups and downs, such as characterize *leb 'aḳob*, Jer. 17:9 LXX; the opposite of *'aḳob* is *mišor*, Isai. 40:4), free from turns and twists (*'iḳḳšut*, *'aḳmomet*, Berak. 59a, requiring straightening out, *pašaṭ*, *ib.*), wholly devoted, loyal (*šalem* frequently; free from duplicity, *leb ḳaleb*, Ps. 12:3, the opposite of *kol lebab*), faithful (*ne'ĕman*, of Abraham, summing up the result of all the tests to which he was put, comp. *ubĕkullam nimṣa(') šalem*, Abot derabbi Nathan, c. 33), so he invites the divine test because he has had before his eyes, was constantly guided by, the Lord's *ḥesed* and walked in his *'emet*. The two are repeatedly collocated. It is needless to go through the ramifications of meaning of the word *ḥesed* or to speak of the difficulty which translators have with it. 'The virtue that knits together society' (Robertson Smith), whether we call it kindliness, or mercy, or grace, shows itself in devotion born of affection or implicit trust (Jer. 2:2). It reveals the superficiality of our grammarians and lexicographers when they waver between the active and passive signification of *ḥasid*, now comparing *ḳaṣir* ('reaper,' Isai. 17:5) and *paḳid*, now *sakir* and *'asir*. The adjective is clearly denominative, *ḥasid* is *'iš ḥesed* (comp. *'anše ḥesed*, Isai. 57:1), just as *sa'ir*, 'hairy,' is the same as *ba'al se'ar* Nedarim 30b (in 2 Kings 1:8 the phrase is tantamount to *ba'al 'aderet se'ar*). Micah 7:2; Isai. 57:1; Ps. 12:2 are the three passages in which lament is made for the disappearance of that class of men, the *'anše ḥesed*, the *ḥasid*. In each case a different synonym is used in the parallel clause: *ṣaddik*, *yašar*, *'emunim* ('faithful ones,' not 'faithfulness'; comp.

2 Sam. 20:19: *šĕlume 'ĕmune* Israel, of the good old time, 'schlecht und recht.') The qualities of the *ḥasid* manifest themselves in justice, uprightness, faithfulness. The *goi lo(')* *ḥasid* is paralleled by *'iš mirma(ḥ)* *ṿĕ'awla(ḥ)* (Ps. 43:1). The plural, *ḥăsidim*, which occurs only in the Psalter (also in the Psalm of Hannah, 1 Sam. 2:9 kere; also Prov. 2:8) 'and chiefly, if not entirely, in late Psalms,' are, to judge from parallel expressions, the faithful ones, those that love the Lord, that turn unto him with their heart (85:9 LXX), that make a covenant with him over sacrificial feasts, and the *ḥasid* is the trusting servant of the Lord. Priests and *ḥăsidim* are juxtaposed Ps. 132:9, 16. Here, in Deuteronomy, the term is applied to the first priest, Moses, and through him to the priestly tribe Levi. Where others lacked faith, their devotion faltered not.

Were I of those who are ready with 'Maccabeanizing' all sorts of portions of the Old Testament, in the Psalter, in the Prophets, and elsewhere, I might be tempted to pronounce the whole Levi blessing in Deut. 33 a Maccabean interpolation. The 'Blessing of Moses' is placed by the majority of critics in the times and surroundings of Jeroboam II. Now, according to 1 Kings 12:31; 13:33, Jeroboam I, after the separation, appointed priests from among the mass of the people, 'such as were not of the children of Levi,' at the high places, and as it would seem from 12:32, also at Bethel. The account, of course, is post-Deuteronomic, post-Josianic (see ch. 13); the Deuteronomic point of view manifests itself in viewing as a sinful contravention of the law what was regarded as perfectly lawful in the times antecedent to the reformation of Josiah. The critics accept the fact of the non-Levitical priesthood in northern sanctuaries; though, to effect a compromise with the narrative of the institution of the Levitical priesthood at Dan in the person of a descendant of Moses, Jud. 18 (according to verse 30 it remained in the family until the captivity of Israel), it is said that the non-Levites were employed by the side of the Levites. Kittel finds in 2 Ch. 11:13 ff. so much truth that certain Levitical families, refusing to fall in with Jeroboam's policies, emigrated to Judah. How then, we ask, could an Israelitish writer, as the author of Deut. 33:8 ff. does, vest priestly functions, such as manipulating the sacred oracle, judging and teaching, and ministering at the altar, in the tribe of Levi? One more point,

Verse 9 unmistakably refers to the golden calf incident and to the part taken by the tribe of Levi at the command of Moses in exterminating the idolaters as narrated in Exodus 32 (compare also Deut. 10:8 'at that time'; the verse obviously connects with v. 5). The golden calf story is evidently a persiflage on the northern worship so ruthlessly attacked by Hosea; if then the narrative makes it a point to connect the institution of Levi as a priestly tribe with the extermination of the golden calf worshippers, it would follow that in the North, at the royal sanctuary at Bethel for instance, the priesthood was not recruited from the tribe of Levi. The poet who penned the 'Blessing of Moses', to judge from v. 17, has no scruples about picturing Ephraim as a young bullock, possessing horns of immense size, with which it butts the remotest nations. Hence, it is conceivable that he might not be among the iconoclasts objecting to the use of that very symbol in Joseph's sanctuary. Now read verse 11. 'Bless, Jahveh, his *ḥail*, and accept the work of his hands; smite through the loins of them that rise up against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.' *ḥail* cannot possibly mean here 'substance, wealth' (so Sifre); it may mean 'force, army' or simply 'might' in the sense of 'ability, efficiency.' The priests are spoken of as *gibore ḥail mĕle(')ket 'abodat bet ha-'ĕlohim*, 1 Ch. 9:13; comp. similarly of the Levites 26:8. Following out Wellhausen's observation with regard to *ṣaba(')*, how it originally denotes 'military service' and is then reduced in P to the meaning of 'Levitical service,' we might see in the use of *ḥail* here to indicate not strength for battle, but efficiency for Levitical service, an indication of late times, of the period of P and the Chronicler. The second half of the verse which speaks of enemies does not look as if it had in mind ordinary opponents who disputed the spiritual rights of the Levitical priests. At what time, then, were the descendants of Levi beset by warring enemies if not at the period of the Maccabees? The Maccabees, moreover, belonged to the division of Jehoiarib, which means 'Jahveh contendeth.' It might be assumed that the poet in verse 9b plays on that name: *tĕribehu*. Into the Maccabean situation fits the appellation *ḥasid* which became the party name of those who resisted Hellenization. Pseudo-Jonathan understands by the enemies Ahab and the false prophets who opposed Phineas-Elijah; but also the adversaries of John

the highpriest (see Rashi and the midrashic sources adduced by Berliner).

The plea for a Maccabean interpolation would be seductive enough. But Jud. 18 with its Levitical priesthood at Dan remains unimpeachable. The iconoclast Hosea disparagingly alludes to the priests ministering to the calves of Bethel as *kĕmarîm* (see Zeph. 1:4; 2 Kings 23:5; Elephantine papyrus No. 1). But in chapter 4 (the emendation at the end of verse 4 is ingenious but nevertheless unconvincing) the prophet, in upbraiding the venal and unworthy priesthood of his day (Micah and others do the same for Judea), shows unmistakable knowledge that the priestly order rests upon divine institution. 'Because thou hast rejected the knowledge (of God), I will reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me.' Rejection (*ma'as*) is the counterpart to *baḥar*; comp. Jer. 33:24. Accordingly, the ancestors of Hosea's contemporaries in the priesthood were once elected to be priests (*lĕkahen*). Of course, that does not say that they were Levites. Yet, in the sense given the term by Wellhausen they were Levites. And that squares with the ancient accounts in Deuteronomy and the pre-Deuteronomic sources. Hosea shows himself well-versed in the ancient sagas. He puns on the name Israel (12:4) and, it seems, purposely makes use of *rib* (verse 3). May not the use of the verb *rib* in 4:4 likewise be a play upon some such narrative as underlies Deut. 33:9? And may not the conjecture be advanced that the priesthood at Bethel went by the name of Jehoiarib and that the Maccabean family, which lived in obscurity far from the capital, had recruited itself from the scattered elements of the older Israelitish branches? We know that Zadok supplanted Ebiathar who belonged to the Elide family at Shiloh, and that in the passage 1 Sam. 2:27 ff., though the abiding priesthood is promised to Zadok, the election (*baḥar* . . *lĕkohen*) to the priesthood is vested in the *bet 'ab* from which Eli was sprung. We may therefore rest content with the Israelitish origin of the Levi pericope. The priesthood was apparently beset by opponents. If it had opposition, it must itself have provoked it by placing itself athwart certain other movements or institutions. The hierarchical tendencies of the priesthood, which developed their full strength between Ezra and the rise of the Maccabees, that is when the country was politically under foreign dominion and

its autonomy was of the spiritual or cultural kind, the tendencies in the direction of centralizing the guidance of the people must have been asserted against the politically autonomous state at a very early period. So soon as a state was created, as under the Maccabeans, the secular power absorbed the priestly, dominated it; and under Herod and the Herodians the highpriest was a mere puppet in the hands of the ethnarch. Apparently in Israel a similar process took place. Ahab and the Omrides were intent upon building up a secular state; the prophets appeared as the troublers of Israel; it is they who undermined the state; and the priests, as Wellhausen puts it, always profit by the legacy of the reforming prophets. The arm of the state, of the king, was heavy upon them. Religion as represented by the Levitical priesthood made opposition to the secular tendencies of the state which would hold it in check. These movements and counter-movements have not ceased yet. Hosea may have had reasons enough to find fault with the priests as he knew them; but he never disputed their right to ascendency based upon divine election. The kingship was to him and to the prophets in general a heathen institution, given in divine anger. The poet of Deut. 33 is nationalist enough to rejoice in Israel's victorious position; but the spiritual leadership in that state he would accord to Levi. He would have it as in the days of Moses when Jahveh was King and the prophet-priest his *hasid*, his devoted servant.