Recent Biblical Archaeology.

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The influence of Egypt on Israel has often been discussed. It must not be forgotten that it contributed, in some ways at least, to an advance in truth and morality. The ivories, *e.g.*, discovered at Samaria in the royal palace of Ahab are nearly all marked with Egyptian *motifs*, several of which seem to have a distinct connexion with Maât, the goddess of truth, justice, rectitude, integrity, and similar virtues. There is evidence that the doctrine of this goddess received an impetus in the Near East through the conquest of Jerusalem by Sheshonk I. (Biblical 'Shishak'), the first king of the Twenty-second or Libyan Dynasty, who ascended the throne *c.* 945 B.C. It is known that a powerful revival of Egyptian rule followed this conqueror's invasion of Palestine (1 K 14^{25ff}) and continued for many years. Along with it the moral qualities of Maât, which had probably exerted some influence already on Israel, found a new and more abundant entrance, and it is not unlikely that these had some effect on the prophetical schools of Israel, leading them to prefer the sacrifices of 'righteousness' to those of bulls and rams. We know that this preference manifested itself strongly at this period, increasing as time rolled on and occasioning much of the strongest invective. It became the main burden of the prophecy of Amos, and found its classic expression in the well-known words of Micah, 'What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly?' etc. (6^{6ff}, cf. Hos 6^6, Pr 17^1 21^3, etc.). At the same time, the fact remains that, on the whole, the life and religion of the Egyptians had an evil effect on Israel. We have ample proof of this in the amulets or charms which have been recently found in the tombs of Lachish. Many of these certainly received their inspiration from Egypt, while others had been imported from there. Several of them, made of blue glass paste, are images of the god Bes, in his traditional grotesque attitude, while others represent the sacred ram *Khnum*, the cat of the goddess Bast, the sphinxes, and other things. Such magical objects (cf. Is 3^{20} R.V. 'amulets'), which were believed to protect both the living and the dead against malign influences, have been discovered not only at Lachish but at Gezer, Taanach, Megiddo, and other sites. They show a wonderful variety in form, substance, and colour, and in numerous cases have been traced to Egyptian influence. At many sites, too, such as Gezer, Megiddo, Samaria, Beth-Shemesh, and others, Egyptian eye-beads ('Horus eyes') have been found. To the Egyptian these chiefly symbolized the sun-god's watchful care and providence, and to the Hebrews or Israelites they must have conveyed the same idea about Yahweh. In such a case they had no baneful association, except when used as amulets or magical objects. God 'sees' the worshipper, and naturally his 'eye' was regarded as the symbol of his watchfulness (cf. Ps 33^{18}, Ezr 5^5), and representations of His eye have been found on Hebrew seals. We have but to think also of the many-eyed wheels in Ezekiel's vision (Ezk 10^{12}, cf. also 1^8), and the many-eyed cherubim and seraphim in Enoch's (*Secrets of Enoch*, 21^1).

At ancient Mari, the powerful capital of Northern Mesopotamia in the days of Abraham (and also for many centuries before), further evidence of the marvellous culture in this region has been discovered by M. André Parrot, the Director of the French expedition. The great palace, which forms the most complete example of architecture hitherto unearthed in Mesopotamia, must have been the largest of its kind in the third millenium B.C. As at present excavated, it covers more than five acres, with 220 rooms or courts, though a full quarter of the building still remains to be revealed. The number of tablets that have been found stored away in the cupboards or scattered in different rooms has now reached nearly twenty-five thousand, and when these have been fully deciphered (the work has been entrusted to M. Dossin, Professor at Brussels and Liège), our knowledge of the whole story of the Babylonian world in the time of Abraham and Hammurabi will be considerably enlarged. The excavators have discovered the remains of a ziggurat or temple tower in the city. Though only the lower part of it is now in existence, this still reaches a height of nearly fifty feet. The interest of it lies mainly in the fact that there is a temple, in excellent condition, cut in its side. Two ferocious-looking bronze lions (in reality made of wood covered with thin bronze leaf), with snarling jaws and ready to spring, stand at the door, as an intimation that the temple was reserved for the initiated few. Quite a number of sculptured lions (about fifteen, judging from the stone eyes picked up) appear also

to have safeguarded the sanctuary, but all these unfortunately must have been destroyed (probably for the sake of the bronze) when Hammurabi sacked and burned the city (2032 B.C.). They remind us of the lions which adorned the great brazen laver of Solomon's temple (1 K 7^{29}), and which must have been of Babylonian or Mesopotamian origin. According to the tablets, one of the kings (believed to be Zimrilim, who reigned here in Abraham's time) kept a number of live lions. It was not unusual, indeed, for oriental monarchs to have pits or dens with live ones enclosed (cf. 'Darius the Mede,' Dn 6^{7}), the animals being used as executioners. The lions of Palestine and Mesopotamia made their homes in thickets (Jer 4^{7}), forests (Jer 5^{6}), mountains (Ezk 19^{9}), and similar haunts; and as they were less formidable than those of the African jungle (being sometimes attacked by shepherds single-handed, cf. 1 S 17^{34ff}), they could often be caught by driving them with loud shouting into nets or pits (cf. Is 31^{4}, Ezk $19^{4.8}$). Even though 'Darius the Mede,' into whose den of lions Daniel is said to have been cast (Dn 6^{16}), be a fictitious creation, the result of a mixture of confused traditions (as seems likely), the story of his live lions appears to have an historical basis, for a Persian cylinder-seal in the British Museum (No. 89, 132) gives a picture of Darius (probably Darius the Great, 521–485 B.C.) in his chariot hunting lions in a palm forest, evidently in order to secure them for his den.

In regard to the interpretation of the Lachish Letters, it is interesting to note that the conclusions which we put forward in March last, and which appeared in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES for May and in the *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* for July, have been arrived at also by René Dussaud of the Louvre, the well-known Semitic scholar. In a lecture on the subject given to the Académie des Inscriptions, on April 29th, he regards all the letters as dating just before the fall of Lachish (588 B.C.), and says in effect: 'The prophet mentioned cannot be Uriah, as Professor Torczyner thinks, for this individual was put to death several years earlier. He can only be Jeremiah, and the letters are all the more interesting on this account. Hoshaiah's group, from whom the letters came, consisted of pious Judæans, who were naturally supporters of Jeremiah, and the letters reflect this prophet's views.' The alphabetic script (generally known as the 'Phœnician') used for the letters raises afresh the whole question of writing in these early times. We not only find many new forms of the 'Phœnician' characters, but it is clear that such a script, which had probably been derived from the Proto-Sinaitic one (dating from the nineteenth century B.C.), was fully developed and in constant use among the Hebrews long before the close of the Jewish monarchy. The greetings contained in the letters and the conventional formulæ used, as well as the mention of other letters received, returned, or forwarded, show that written communications between individuals were common in the land. The script must be the same one used by Jeremiah when he 'wrote in the book' (אֶכְתֹּב בַּסֵּפֶר, Jer 32^{10}), and by Baruch when this scribe wrote down Jeremiah's words upon a roll (Jer $36^{2.4.28.32}$). It was probably employed by prophets, historians, psalmists, lawgivers, and others, and its development from the Proto-Sinaitic down through the Bronze Age to the Iron one, must have been largely due to the Hebrew race. As some of the examples of it found on bowls and other articles do not appear to be the work of highly cultured persons, it follows that it must have been understood and used by ordinary people. It was only during the Exile that the 'Phœnician' characters fell into disuse among the Hebrews and gave way to the 'Assyrian' form (consisting of square characters of Aramaic origin), which is the one now adopted, and the one used in the earliest manuscripts of the Old Testament that we possess; and ultimately, long before the Christian era, the 'Phœnician' script was abandoned and forgotten, though the Maccabees who relieved the Jews from oppression in the second century B.C. endeavoured to restore it and used it on their coinage. The usual writing material in Old Testament times, especially for sealed messages, was papyrus, which was unfortunately of a perishable nature in the Palestinian climate, and this accounts to a great extent for so few specimens of the script having been discovered, and for so many original documents and state annals having disappeared. Frequently, when papyrus was scarce owing to invasion or other national troubles preventing its import, writers fell back upon potsherds as Hoshaiah, the author of the Lachish Letter, did.

The Wellcome-Marston expedition at Lachish, which is now under the leadership of Mr. Charles Inge, has had another successful season. Notable among the discoveries have been three more examples of the 'Phœnician' script, just referred to, written in ink on fragments of pottery. One has on it five personal names, followed by numerals, which probably represent quantities of oil, wheat, or some other commodity. A second is apparently a receipt, and was found in a room which shows signs of a conflagration. It begins with the words 'In the ninth year,' and as this was the very year of

Zedekiah's reign when Nebuchadrezzar's forces invaded the land anew (after defeating the Egyptian army of Hophra) and finally burned Lachish (588 B.C.), we have an excellent confirmation of the Biblical record (2 K 25[1], 'the ninth year, the tenth month, the tenth day of the month'). The third fragment is a very small one, written on both sides. It begins with the words 'To my lord,' as the eighteen letters found in 1935 do, and is thus a document of the same type. In addition, some scribblings, believed to date about 600 B.C. or a little earlier, and to be the work of a schoolboy, have been found on the vertical face of one of the palace steps. They consist of rectangular lines, a drawing of a lion, and the first five letters of the 'Phœnician' alphabet in their accepted order. We may thus gather that this script was not only in general use, but was probably being taught in the schools as early as the seventh century B.C.

Although numerous temples of imposing grandeur, belonging to the third millennium B.C., have been unearthed in Mesopotamia, it must not be assumed that such buildings, with their professional priests and orderly ritual, existed also in Palestine in these early times. It was not until the Late Bronze Age (1600–1200 B.C.) that temples became common in the latter country. Before this period the sanctuaries were merely open-air shrines ('high places,' Hebrew, *bāmōth*), either outside or inside the city walls. We have an example of such at Bethel, where Jacob set up a sacred stone (Gn 12[6-8] 28[18]); at Shechem, near which there was a sacred tree in Abraham's time (Gn 12[6] 33[18-20]); and at Jerusalem, where the priest of El Elyon brought forth offerings and blessed Abraham (Gn 14[17ff], Ps 76[2]). In this early age the sanctuary or 'House of God' consisted simply of one or more pillar-stones, which served both as altars and images; a tree stump or post rudely carved as a rule into a human semblance; a well from which water could be obtained for libations; and often a tumulus where some ancient 'man of God' was buried and whose spirit was believed to brood over the place. The whole sanctuary, being sacred ground, was generally enclosed within a circle of boulders or standing stones. Many of these open-air shrines, such as the Canaanite ones, were connected with Baal and Astarte worship, and were loathsome to the Hebrews on their settlement in the land. They were taken over by them, however, without much change in appearance or form of worship, being merely consecrated in future to the worship of Yahweh. Excavation of such places shows that the old Canaanite type of worship was to some extent retained, though overlaid by the Israelite one—a fact in harmony with the universal experience of history as to the permanence of sacred sites.

The earliest temple building so far discovered in Palestine (apart from one at Aï, and one believed to have existed at Lachish) is at Shechem, and dates from about 1600 B.C. (the later period of the Hyksos). To a large extent it is an adaptation of the ancient outdoor high-place, for it consists of nine rooms surrounding a large, central, unroofed court. It was only after this time that worshippers in Palestine, influenced by the great neighbouring cultures, especially those of Egypt and Mesopotamia, began to erect suitable structures for religious service. It was probably through the influence of the Nile Valley that they developed such places and adopted a certain amount of style and ritual, and through Mesopotamian connexions that they were led into the cult of the mother-goddess, whose figurines have been discovered in such large numbers.

Remarkable correspondences are still being discovered between the Old Testament and the Ras Shamra tablets. One of the most interesting (to which H. L. Ginsberg has recently drawn attention) is in 2 S 1, where the lamentation of David over the death of Saul and Jonathan is given (being quoted from the 'Book of Jashar'). In v.[21] we read: 'Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew nor rain upon you, nor fields of offerings.' This is almost the exact language that occurs in the epic of Dan-el (1 D, 43 ff), where this demi-god, impelled by grief over the death of a beloved friend, calls down a curse of drought on the land: 'Seven years may Baal fail! . . . (Let there be) no dew nor rain, nor upsurging of the Deep [*i.e.* through the springs].' The importance of the identity of expression lies in the fact that, if we write the two parallel sentences out side by side in square Hebrew characters, we notice that the Hebrew words וּשְׂדֵי תְּרוּמוֹת ('nor field of offerings') in the Biblical text, which have proved a difficulty hitherto to Hebrew scholars, are probably miswritten for וּשְׂרַע תהמת ('nor upsurging of the Deep'), as found in the Ras Shamra epic. The identity, moreover, shows that David, if he was the author of the lamentation referred to, had some knowledge of the old Canaanite literature, written at least four hundred years before his day. It is probable that such literature circulated throughout the land, and its spread was aided by the remarkable commercial activity that went on from Phœnicia. Much of the literature (history, epics, mythology, etc.) must have been well known to the Israelite schools of the prophets, and hence the numerous cases of identity of expression on the part of the latter.