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ARCHÆOLOGICAL DISCOVERY FROM THE TIME OF ABRAHAM.

By SIR CHARLES MARSTON, F.S.A.

THE educated public do not yet seem to realise that during the past eighteen years great strides have been made in the Science of Archæology. These are especially due to the classification and dating of the pottery fragments which lie among the ancient relics of civilization in Bible Lands from before the days of Abraham. When Archæologists dig among these antiquities they now know where they are in time. And these dated fragments fit into the periods of Bible History to which they belong like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. So there has come to light evidence testifying to the historical Truth of the Old Testament which our forefathers did not possess, and which would be even unknown in the Time of Our Lord.

One would suppose that this War would arouse a quest for new Truth, and would mark a break in the false materialistic ideas of the early part of this century. But the time has hardly yet come for this in Bible study, and prominent scholars are either unaware of, or seek to ignore, results reached through the dating of pottery.

The Bible is a Biography of Abraham and his Descendants, and in these Last Days, the ground is cleared for its verification.

The pottery found in Professor Garstang's excavations at Jericho supplied a date of about 1400 B.C. for its destruction. This was a key date, and if the chronology of the Old Testament is based upon it we are able to work backwards or forwards with simple, clear, satisfactory results. The dates thus obtained satisfy the Old Testament statements and coincide with what is known of the outside chronology of adjoining countries. Nevertheless, some still try to cling to those old conjectures which create confusion in the ordered sequence of events.

On the basis of the Jericho pottery, Abraham was born in B.C. 2160 and entered Canaan in B.C. 2085. The cities associated with him in Genesis that have been identified contain pottery fragments which indicate they were in existence at this period. The identification of Hammurabi with Amraphael, King of Shinar, mentioned in Genesis xiv furnishes an outside date. The evidences of both Archæology and Astronomy indicate that Hammurabi began to reign in B.C. 2067, while the Jericho dating makes Sodom and Gomorrah to be finally destroyed in B.C. 2060. That leaves an interval of seven years in which the raid on these cities by Chedorlaomer and his associates could have taken place. It is perhaps

a shorter interval than one would assume from a cursory reading of the Sacred Narrative ; but there is nothing intrinsically improbable about it, while the immense interval of time covered by both dates makes their coalescence inexplicable unless they are substantially correct.

It is now generally recognized that Abraham's Race—the Hebrews—appear in outside history from B.C. 2200 as mercenary soldiers and traders in Babylonia and Assyria. This gives colour to the tradition that Abraham's father—Terah—was a military leader. And further support is derived from the Ras Shamra tablets (B.C. 1400) which contain a traditional account of the invasion of Palestine by a host of foreigners under Terah.

This in turn links up with the statements of Josephus that the Hyksos invaders of Egypt were the Hebrews.

The Book of Joshua contains the statement that Abraham's father and grandfather "served other gods." This can be identified with moon god worship. Nevertheless, the Hebrew National God according to inscriptions, was Elohim, a name used for God something like two thousand times in the Old Testament. Abraham therefore revived the original monotheistic beliefs of his Race. We know from Sir Leonard Woolley's excavation of Ur of the Chaldees that Abraham lived there in highly civilized surroundings. The houses were three stories high, built round a courtyard. They had bath rooms and other modern conveniences. The ruins of the rooms contained cuneiform tablets—some were historical, others hymn books, others were treatises on mathematics or arithmetic. Among the latter were forms for extracting both square and cube roots. According to Josephus, when Abraham visited Egypt he taught the Egyptians mathematics. A modern writer has represented Abraham to be a "herdman," instead of an employer of three hundred herdmen and what we should call today a great Sheikh. He gave up civilization and its idolatry, at the Commandment of God, and went to live in Canaan. He looked for a city which hath foundation, whose Builder and Maker is God. Thus he became "the Father of the Faithful."

Let us pass on nearly five hundred years over the biographies of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, until we come to Moses. The Jericho chronology tells us that he was born in B.C. 1520. Instead of the great Babylonian civilization we are now in contact with the Egyptian. It was a time when the native Egyptian dynasty had finally expelled the Hyksos invaders, and the Israelites, being Hebrews by descent, had become an object of hatred to the Egyptians. The most remarkable woman in all Egyptian history, Hatshepsut, the daughter of Thotmes I, by birth and by ability already exercised a dominating influence over the Egyptian Court. She maintained her position for forty years. It must have been

she who found the infant Moses floating on the Nile in an ark of bulrushes, and rescued him and adopted him as her son. This period of forty years in Egypt corresponds with the time of Hatshepsut's rule over it. Josephus, the Jewish historian, records incidents in the life of Moses at this time which coincide with what we know of incidents in Hatshepsut's reign.

In the interior of the Peninsula of Sinai there is a temple used for the type of worship which we read about in Genesis and Exodus. The place is called Serabit, and this temple belonged to the Midianite miners employed in the neighbouring turquoise mines. The Egyptian monuments there record that it was enlarged and beautified by Hatshepsut. Sir Flinders Petrie led an expedition there in 1904, and discovered that the miners had cut inscriptions in an alphabetical script on the neighbouring rocks. This is the oldest known alphabetical script, and goes back to the days of Moses, and some think to an even earlier date. When we excavated the Bible city of Lachish in South Palestine in 1933 specimens of this script painted on pottery were found in the rock tombs under the city. And a date of B.C. 1300 was ascribed to them. It would therefore seem as though the Israelites had learned this script when in Sinai under Moses, and brought it with them when they entered Canaan under Joshua.

It makes these facts more significant if we reflect that when Moses left Egypt, about the time of the death of Hatshepsut, he fled to Midian and lived there forty years. During this period Thotmes III, the greatest Pharaoh in history, made seventeen expeditions into Palestine and Syria and conquered these countries. His badge was the hornet, and the references in the Pentateuch to that insect helping the Israelites in their conquest of Canaan probably refer to these campaigns of Thotmes III, for this Pharaoh's conquests paved the way for Joshua's invasion forty years later. It must have been after the death of Thotmes III in B.C. 1447 that Moses returned to Egypt to demand the release of the Israelites from his successor Amenhetep II.

It is *most* significant that 1 Kings vi 1 dates the Exodus 480 years before the founding of Solomon's Temple, which took place between B.C. 967 and 957. When 480 years are added to these figures we have a margin for the Exodus between B.C. 1447 and 1437, a margin which begins with the very date of Thotmes' death. If, on the other hand, the 40 years Wandering in the Wilderness is deducted from B.C. 1437, the destruction of Jericho cannot be later than B.C. 1397, although the pottery dating of Jericho would allow a margin of another twenty years.

Considerations of space preclude discussion of other incidents in the life of Moses, but Archaeology has recently cast a great deal of light on the Legislation associated with him. We have been in

the habit of assuming that this Legislation, especially the Ten Commandments, was promulgated new to the world from Mount Sinai. It may have been so in form, but, with one exception, it had existed in substance long before Moses. Thus the deceased in the Egyptian Book of the Dead is made to say—"I did not slay men. . . . I did not steal. . . . I did not speak lies. . . . I did not commit adultery." Again, the tablets recently discovered at Ras Shamra in Syria prove that there, between B.C. 1400 and 1360, Sacrifices, similar to those we read about in the Pentateuch, were being used for polytheistic worship by Arabs speaking Archaic Hebrew. Their relationship to the Old Testament Sacrifices is beyond doubt, but how it came about is a subject of its own. But the effect was to make already existing Laws, Rituals, and Legislation, a framework for the all-important Covenant with the descendants of Abraham.

The conquest of Canaan under Joshua, which immediately followed the death of Moses in B.C. 1400, began with the siege of Jericho. Some reference has already been made to the excavation of that city. Professor Garstang found that the account of its destruction contained in the Book of Joshua was strictly correct, and justified the suggestion that the record came from an eye witness. The conquest of Canaan by Joshua at the date supplied by the Jericho pottery corresponds with the period of the Tel-el-Amarna correspondence. These letters from Palestine contained appeals to the Pharaohs Amenhetep III and IV for help against invaders from the other side of the Jordan called the Habiru and the Sagaz. There seems little doubt now that these were the Hebrews under Joshua whose name actually occurs on one of these tablets. And other evidences of identification can be quoted.

Archæology is suggesting that the Egyptians helped the Israelites in their conquest of Canaan. At the time the event occurred a monotheistic revival at the Egyptian court had brought the religion of its rulers into harmony with that of Israel, and hostile to that of the idolatrous and untrustworthy Canaanites. Archæology also tells us that, after the conquest of Canaan, the Israelites were in constant contact with Egypt. On the other hand, save for allusions to the Exodus, the Old Testament ignores Egypt from the time the Israelites entered Canaan, until the days of Solomon. The silence may be due to the fact that the annual Feast of the Passover celebrated Israel's deliverance from Egypt. And it would have dimmed its glory to record that Egypt helped the Israelites when and after they reached the Promised Land.

Space only permits references to a few more archæological contacts with the long history of Israel and Judah. The first was when we laid bare the remains of the Jebusite City of Jerusalem captured by David, and revealed how Joab effected an entry into that impregnable stronghold.

For the time of Solomon, Dr. Glueck, excavating on behalf of The American School of Oriental Research, uncovered the remains of a factory for the manufacture of copper articles at the head of the Red Sea Gulf of Akaba. There the copper nails were made for the ships that fetched the gold from Ophir, and other articles for exchange for the gold.

In the days of Solomon's son Rehoboam, Shishak, the first Pharaoh mentioned by name in the Old Testament, captured Jerusalem. It is interesting to record that Egyptian chronology makes his reign coincide precisely with that of the Old Testament based on the Jericho pottery date.

A reference to the discovery of the Lachish Letters, written in the days of Jeremiah the prophet, make a fitting end to this archaeological summary. These are the only personal letters of Old Testament times yet brought to light. They consist of eighteen pieces of pottery with ink writing upon them. The writing is in the alphabetical Phœnician Hebrew script used by Hebrew scribes before the Captivity. It represents a series of messages to the Governor of Lachish concerning the affairs of Uriah the prophet mentioned in Jeremiah xxvi. Some idea of the value of this discovery is gained when we consider that the oldest existing Hebrew Manuscript of the Old Testament was written about A.D. 900 in the Assyrian Hebrew script which came into use after the Babylonian captivity. These letters are therefore fifteen hundred years earlier, written in an earlier script which we know was used as early as B.C. 850. Experts say it may actually date back to Moses, like the alphabetical Sinai Hebrew script found in the rock tombs under the city. Although this Phœnician Hebrew script is so much older than the Assyrian Hebrew in which our copies of the Old Testament are written, yet in phraseology, spelling, style, and composition, the letters agree with 2 Kings, or Jeremiah, written about the same time.

It is earnestly hoped that this summary will convey some idea of the progress that Archæology has made during the past eighteen years in throwing light on the Bible; and that this outside evidence about the Old Testament will be embodied in future teaching in Schools and Colleges.