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A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

Old Testament History And Recent Archeology From Solomon To Zedekiah

Gleason L. Archer, Jr.

The age of Solomon was noteworthy for the development of wisdom literature, at least according to the biblical record. Until recent times the tendency of liberal scholarship has been to declare spurious virtually all of the works attributed to Solomon, such as Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. As to the period when the Book of Job was written, there is no clear internal evidence, although most conservative scholars believe that it was composed at least as early as the reign of Solomon, if not several centuries earlier. It is usual for higher critics to look for some definite historical setting for the book to assign it to that period, on the supposition that its strict monotheism and concern for the philosophical problems indicated a postexilic or perhaps even post-Alexandrian milieu. This was then a sort of allegory of the sufferings of Judah during the Babylonian captivity, with Job representing the whole nation of Israel. From the occurrence of Aramaic terms here and there in the text, it was supposed that only a fifth-century or fourth-century date of composition could account for all of these phenomena. This has become virtually official dogma which students in most modern theological seminaries must embrace, on the penalty of incurring the label of obscurantism or stupidity.

It therefore comes as a surprise to discover that even a liberal authority like Marvin Pope acknowledges that a new look at the archeological data demands a revision of this postexilic dating. He points out¹ that the great antiquity of

¹ Marvin H Pope, *Job* in *The Anchor Bible*, p. xxiv.

the literary motif of the problem of suffering on the part of a righteous victim of misfortune was treated in Sumerian literature at least as early as 2000 B. C. S. N. Kramer discusses this Sumerian poetical essay² and points out that the basic issue is that discussed in the Book of Job. He states further: "Certainly if the work was composed in the exilic or early postexilic period, as many critics believe, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for the author to ignore the parallel between the sufferings of the individual and the nation. There is, however, not the slightest suggestion of interest in the fate of the nation Israel betrayed anywhere in the book as conservative scholars, we might add, have always maintained. The choice of a descendant of Esau as the representative righteous sufferer would rule out any likelihood that the narrator had in mind the nation Israel or Judah."³ This is an excellent example of how the argument from history can be turned against the settled conclusions of rationalist modern scholarship, an example all the more impressive because it comes from an erstwhile disciple of this school of thought.

Like W. F. Albright, Pope emphasizes that: "The patriarchal setting of the Prologue-Epilogue appears as authentic in detail and coloring as that of the patriarchal narratives in Genesis. Job's wealth, like Abraham's, consists of cattle and slaves. There is no priesthood or central shrine, and the patriarch himself offers sacrifice (Job 1:5; 12:8). The Sabeans and Chaldeans are represented as nomadic raiders with no hint of their later political or economic importance (Job 1:15, 17). The unit of money named in Job 42:11 is met elsewhere only in Genesis 32:19 and Joshua 24:32. The prologue-epilogue also presents a number of literary features and motifs which are characteristic of Semitic epic, as known from Akkadian literature, and more recently from Ugaritic texts. These epic literary features appear as a sort of substratum which may well derive from a very ancient Job epic.⁴ That there was an ancient Job legend, and perhaps a Job epic, which served as the basis of the biblical narrative,

² S. N. Kramer, *Man and His God*, pp. 170-82.

³ Pope, *op. cit.*, p. xxix.

⁴ Cf. N. M. Sarna, "Epic Substratum in the Prose of Job," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXVI (1957) 13-25.

is suggested by allusion to Job in Ezekiel 14:14, 20 where he is associated with the ancient worthies, Noah and Daniel." Here Pope understands the reference to Daniel as relating to Dan'el the son of Keret (who, however, was apparently a none too godly polytheist, according to the Ugaritic account).

Pope further suggests that since the literary parallels to Job go back to the beginning of the second millennium B. C., it may be that even the dialogue itself is older than commonly supposed. The choice of an Edomite hero would have been an affront to the nationalistic sentiments of later Judah, for it was the Edomite who in particular rejoiced over the humiliation of Judah and took full advantage of their brothers' discomfort and misfortune, thereby intensifying still further the enmity which had long smouldered between the two nations.⁵ As for the dialogue itself, the ideas championed by the three friends of Job were normative in Mesopotamian theology from the early second millennium. So the so-called Babylonian Job, or "I will praise the Lord of Wisdom,"⁶ a dialogue between a sufferer and a comforter—or heckler—is represented in the Babylonian Theodicy⁷ composed between the fourteenth and eighth centuries, most probably around 1000 B. C. Moreover, the use of the divine name *Shaddai* harks back to the patriarchal era, whether as a genuine reflection of the time of the narrative, or as a studied archaism.⁸

Before leaving the discussion of recent treatments of Job, mention should be made of A. Guillaume's article in the Leeds University Oriental Society which contains a well-reasoned argument for a North Arabian background of the entire Book of Job.⁹ Early Thamudian inscriptions refer to the land of Uz as located in the neighborhood of Medina and Khaybar in Hejaz. The name *Job* has been found in the vicinity of Tema. Despite the claims of many scholars concerning the occurrence of Aramaisms in the speeches of Elihu (Job 32-27), there are, according to Guillaume, no demon-

⁵ Pope, *op. cit.*, p. xxxiv.

⁶ *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, ed. by James B. Pritchard, pp. 434-37.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 438-40.

⁸ Pope, *op. cit.*, pp. xxxv-xxxvi.

⁹ A. Guillaume, "The Unity of The Book of Job," *Annual of Leeds University Oriental Society*, IV (1964), 26-46.

strable Aramaisms at all in his remarks, and only one doubtful example in all the rest of the book.¹⁰ Everyone of the alleged Aramaisms has been found in Arabic, and it is warrantable to hold that, apart from words of non-Semitic origin, only 103 roots in the lexicon of biblical Hebrew lack parallels in Arabic. Of these, hardly one fifth (i. e., about twenty-one) are to be found in preexilic writings and, therefore, to be regarded as resulting from an Aramaic sphere of influence truly divergent from the main stream of Arabian speech.

Guillaume then proceeds to discuss about twenty-four specific terms usually classed as Aramaic, and he finds them (sometimes by dint of reshuffling consonants and repointing the vowel signs) to be explicable as Arabisms rather than Aramaisms. This approach opens up a whole new line of investigation and is worthy of further study. But it obviously does not militate against a date of composition in the Solomonic period or in the second millennium B. C. The obviously conservative character of Arabic phonology and morphology can only be explained as preserving a very ancient, undoubtedly even the most ancient, form of the Semitic language group, even though the extant written examples of Arabic hardly antedate the first millennium.

As to the book of Proverbs, some of the standard higher critics regard Solomon as having contributed at least the earliest form of portions of chapters 10-22, whereas virtually all the rest of the collection comes from the late preexilic or even the postexilic period. More extreme critics like C. H. Toy regarded Proverbs as Hellenistic in period, with no part of it earlier than 350 B. C. The personification of wisdom (hokmah) in chapters 8-9 was identified with the Greek philosopher's apotheosis of *sophia*, and therefore a result of Hellenic influence. But such deductions were arrived at without a careful study of the literature of ancient Egypt, as Kitchen points out.¹¹ He states that his personification of wisdom is precisely the same technique as that employed in Egypt, where it was common to personify truth (ma'at or mu'at), justice, intelligence, understanding, and other such

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, p. 16.

abstract concepts. This was known in second-millennium Mesopotamia and among the Hittites and Hurrians as well, and hence it is entirely gratuitous to seek for a precedent in later Greek literature. As for the argument that a longer passage on such a theme demonstrates a later time of composition, this would be quite an astonishing argument to the Egyptian author of the Wisdom of Ptahhotep in 2300 B. C. or to Khety, the son of Duauf *ca.* 1980 B. C. The fact that R. H. Pfeiffer, Otto Eissfeldt, H. H. Rowley, and even G. W. Anderson in 1959 could show such a complete ignorance of these ancient Near Eastern parallels is very difficult to explain.¹² Can it be said that a selective approach to the available archeological data indicated more of a zeal to sustain the cherished opinion of their preceptors than to arrive at the historical facts?¹³

It is interesting to note that R. B. Y. Scott concedes the possible antiquity of the genre on Canaanite soil, in view of the two proverbs quoted in the Amarna correspondence emanating from Canaanite kings.¹⁴ He also indicates that a striking feature of Mesopotamian wisdom writings, and of the Egyptian as well, is the concern with *hokhmah* on two levels: the first, conservative, practical, or didactic; the second, critical and speculative, sometimes even a bit skeptical of traditional values and raising more abstract questions in the sphere of ethics and religion. Egyptian examples of the first type include "The Instruction of Ptahhotep," which teaches that wisdom will insure success, and "The Instruction of King Merikare" (from about 2100 B. C.), which teaches that the strength of a king is derived from the love of his subjects and the quality of his nobles, coupled with his own adherence to justice and integrity. The Egyptian king is responsible to revere the gods, to be faithful in worship, and to remember that an upright character is of decisive importance before the judgment which awaits both rulers and their subjects in the life beyond.¹⁵

In Akkadian proverbial literature, we have the "Hymn to Shamash," which expresses unquestioning faith in divine

¹² G. W. Anderson, *A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 188.

¹³ Kitchen, *op. cit.*, p. 126, note 56.

¹⁴ R. B. Y. Scott, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes in The Anchor Bible*, p. xli.

¹⁵ Pope, *op. cit.*, pp. xlii-xlv.

justice. Shamash is declared to punish evildoers, protect travelers and fugitives, condemn venal judges, and favor the honest merchant and the performer of kind deeds.¹⁶ Also from the early Babylonian period comes the work entitled "Counsels of Wisdom" which teaches: "Reverence begets favor, sacrifice prolongs life, and prayer atones for guilt. Do not covet anything which has been entrusted to you. If you have promised, give. Do not return evil to the man who disputes with you; requite with kindness your evil-doer, maintain justice to your enemy."¹⁷ After quoting these lines, Scott remarks: "From what has been said above . . . it will be evident that the Wisdom movement in Israel was an independent part of a much wider and older context in neighboring cultures. The resemblances are both in form and substance. . . . In intellectual penetration, ethical awareness, and in religious spirit it [the wisdom of Israel] is approached by these other literatures only here and there. Taken as a whole, it is unmatched in the surviving records of the wisdom of any ancient people."¹⁸ It is not even possible to point to the fundamental idea in the Hebrew book of Proverbs that God rules over the entire world rather than over Israel alone and assert, as Mowinckel did in 1955, in his discussion of Psalm 67, that it reflects a relatively late period.¹⁹ Yet, as Kitchen points out,²⁰ this kind of concept was current throughout the Ancient Near East from the third millennium on, as Albright showed.²¹ Kitchen then commented: "It is a matter for genuine regret when adherence to long-standing theories prevents scholars from seeing essential primary facts and realizing their direct implications."²²

So far as Ecclesiastes is concerned, the newer evidence has served to upset completely some of the earlier conclusions based upon the linguistic phenomena. Certain traits of grammar which were formerly held to be Mishnaic, and therefore extremely late, cannot be so precisely dated as was formerly

¹⁶ *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, ed. by James B. Pritchard, pp. 387-89.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 426-27.

¹⁸ Scott, *op. cit.*, p. lii.

¹⁹ Sigmund Mowinckel, "Psalm Criticism between 1900 and 1935," *Vetus Testament*, V (1955), 29.

²⁰ Kitchen, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

²¹ William F. Albright, *Stone Age to Christianity* (1940 edition, cf. pp. 213-17 in 1957 edition).

²² *Ibid.*

thought. For example, the Copper Scroll of Qumran Cave 3, dating from the midfirst century A. D. shows the abundant use of the relative particle *shē*, and other associated traits which indicated that the so-called Mishnaic Hebrew was used in ordinary conversation at a much earlier period than formerly supposed. Most instructive is the systematic analysis of the language of Qoheleth, published by M. J. Dahood.²³ This discussion established beyond question that in spelling, vocabulary, and grammar there is a more decisive Phoenician cast to the language of this book than of any other in the Hebrew Scripture.

Since this writer has already contributed a fifteen-page study of this phenomenon, it is only necessary to summarize some of the points set forth in detail in that article²⁴ There can be no doubt that the author of Qoheleth assumed the role of King Solomon, whether or not he wrote this work in the tenth century B. C. He mentions his own unrivaled reputation from wisdom (1:16), his financial resources surpassing those of all his contemporaries (2:8), his large retinue of servants (2:7), his unlimited opportunities for carnal pleasure (2:3) and his extensive building activities (2:4-6)—all of this on a scale matched by no other known figure of Hebrew history besides Solomon. The internal evidence of the text points to a period before the division of the Hebrew monarchy into the northern and southern kingdoms. But the language of the book is admittedly unique, and quite dissimilar to all other extant pre-Christian Hebrew literature, whether biblical or intertestamental. Franz Delitzsch and E. J. Young quite confidently dated the composition of this work in the fifth century, but even a superficial comparison with other works from the fifth century (such as Zechariah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Malachi) shows a complete and total dissimilarity with the Hebrew of Ecclesiastes. If therefore the book is to be dated in that period, there is no such science as comparative linguistics, and any book can be dated at any time regardless of philological considerations. No flimsier case for dating a biblical book has ever been made out by any con-

²³ M. J. Dahood, "Canaanite-Phoenician Influence in Qoheleth," *Biblica*, XXXIII (1952), 30-52.

²⁴ G. L. Archer, "Linguistic Evidence for the Date of Ecclesiastes," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society*, XII (1969), 167-81.

servative or liberal scholar than the case for a fifth-century date of *Ecclesiastes*.

But we are not left without guidelines for establishing the time when *Qoheleth* was composed. Since the language is dissimilar to the rest of Old Testament literature, but shows a pronounced Phoenician cast, the most likely date of authorship was at a period when the cultural relations between Israel and Phoenicia were at their closest, and when *hokhmah* literature was most diligently cultivated. At what other period were these conditions met than during the reign of Solomon, when Phoenician architects and craftsmen were employed in large numbers for the erection of the Temple and the palaces on Mount Moriah, and when a close commercial relationship was maintained with King Hiram of Tyre? Solomon's interests were so wide-ranging that he seems to have studied the science and literature of all of Israel's neighbors. It may well have been that he found in the philosophical essay a genre which had attained classical form in Phoenician literature.

As in ancient Greece, the Hellenic authors felt obliged to follow the conventional form established for each genre (Old Ionic for the epic, Doric for the choral poetry, Aeolic for love lyrics, etc.) regardless of their own native dialect, so also the composer of a philosophical essay in the tenth century B. C. may well have felt constrained to use that dialect of Canaanite in which this literary form had attained a classical standard. As Albright has pointed out, the language of epic poetry in Ugarit showed noteworthy differences from the language used in ordinary business documents and in correspondence. Definite stylistic conventions, traits of grammar, and turns of expression are observable in the various genres of Egyptian literature as well. Although no other examples of the philosophical essay have survived in the Canaanite language area besides *Ecclesiastes*, it is a fair inference that a previously set literary convention was responsible for the strong Phoenician influence observed in this work.

A brief summary of the specific data will suffice for our present purposes. In the first place, the spelling shows a distinct Phoenicizing tendency. Thus by several examples

Dahood shows that the variations between the Massoretic Text and the Septuagint in the use of *hāyāh* or *hāyū* are most easily explained on the supposition that the original text read simply *h-y* (cf. 1:16; 2:7); similarly a variation between *yippelū* ("they fall") and *yippōl* ("he falls") points to an original spelling *y-p-l*, which Phoenician would use in writing either form. The implications of this complete avoidance of vowel letters are far-reaching as to date. Terminal vowel letters already appear in the Hebrew Siloam Inscription, contemporary with Isaiah in the eighth century. While it may be that later Hebrew scribes wrote in vowel letters in subsequent centuries of copying, it is utterly inconceivable that they could have purposely left them out when their *Vorlage* already contained them. No example of such omission has ever been found in any Hebrew biblical manuscripts, and no psychological or logical basis can be suggested for such a procedure. Since terminal vowel letters are demonstrable in Hebrew orthography from the eighth century on, there is no possibility whatever that Ecclesiastes could have been composed subsequent to the age of Isaiah. The frequent relative pronoun *shē*, which has often been advanced as an evidence of late origin, turns out to be equally reconcilable with a Phoenicizing style, since '-s is the normal relative in Phoenician, rather than the classical Hebrew *'asher*.

The sporadic omission of the definite article *ha-* observable in *Qoheleth* also finds its counterpart in Phoenician, as witness the omission of *h-* before the attributive demonstrative in such expressions as "this citadel" (h-q-r-t z—Karatepe III: 14:15) and "this slaughtering place" (h-m-t-b-hz) (*Corpus Inscriptiunum Semiticarum* 3:4) As Zellig Harris remarks: "Phoenician has the same article *h-* as in Hebrew, but uses it much more rarely. Its use, though sparing in the Iahmilk inscription from Byblos . . . shows that it was at all events known to early Phoenician. It occurs more frequently in later inscriptions, particularly in those from Sidon. Its use is quite irregular; it was palpably not a basic feature of the language."²⁵ (This handily disposes of the argument used by late-daters of *Qoheleth* on the ground that Mishnaic Hebrew often omits the article before the demonstrative in such cases;

²⁵ Zellig Harris, *Grammar of Phoenician*, pp. 55-56.

Mishnaic simply exhibited a trait already known in Phoenician a thousand years earlier.)

In the area of syntactical peculiarity, Dahood points out that the infinitive absolute is accompanied by the independent pronoun in four or five instances in Ecclesiastes (4:2; 4:17; 8:9; 9:11, and possibly 9:15). Then in 4:2 the sentiment "and I praised" is expressed, *w^esabbē^ah, 'anī* (with the inf. absol.). From the letters written by the king of Byblos in the Amarna correspondence and the construction *qtl/yqtl 'nlc* in the Karatepe inscriptions, it is clear that this was a trait of Phoenician syntax. Dahood comments: "This penchant for the infinitive absolute may be ascribed to Phoenician syntactical influence rather than to mere 'lateness' of the language, because none of the other late books of the Bible evinces such a marked tendency."²⁶ Phoenician practice also accounts for the fairly frequent use of the independent personal pronoun as a copular verb, a trait which is usually labeled as late Hebrew. Yet this same usage is observable in the Yehawmilk inscription (k-m-l-k a-d-q h-, —with h-, being equivalent to *hū*' in Heb.), *Corpus Inscriptiunum Semiticarum*, 93:1-2; and also in Lidzberski 36:4 (where h-m-t is used like the Heb. *hēm^mah*) and even in the Sardinian inscription found at Nora (ä-h-, b-s-r-d-n, "which is in Sardinia").

Time will not permit a discussion of the many borrowings from Phoenician lexicography, or such key phrases as *tahat hassemes* ("under the sun"), which in all other Northwest Semitic literature thus far discovered occurs elsewhere only in Phoenician inscriptions of Tabnit and Eshmunazar of Sidon. Even such an Aramaic term as *re'ūt*, "striving, desire," occurs also in Phoenician documents, and Harris suggested that it may have been a loan-word from Aramaic.²⁷ As for the term *kisrōn* ("skill, success, profit"), Kautzsch's supposition that it was a borrowing from Aramaic is proved totally false by the discovery of the root k-th-r in Ugaritic (especially as the name of a deity); while k-th-r would become k-s-r in Canaanite (Phoenician and Hebrew), it would have to appear in Aramaic as k-t-r. The feminine demonstrative *zōh*, which occurs six times in Ecclesiastes instead of the normal Hebrew *zō, t* ("this"), turns out to be the normal

²⁶ Dahood, *Biblica*, XXXIII, 50.

²⁷ Harris, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

feminine form in Phoenician, and so there is no need of labeling it as a late Mishnaic form, as it is usually done. As for the allegedly late words, *pardēs* ("park") and *pitgām* ("official decision"), which are asserted to be from Persian, it so happens that they are also found in Sanskrit as *paradhis* and *pratigāma*, and therefore are reconcilable with Solomonic authorship. There can be little question that Solomon's trade connections extended to India and beyond. It has recently been pointed out that only from the east of India could there have been such a combination of imports as ivory, apes, and peacocks (I Kings 10:22); therefore, we must look to Indo-China for the land of Punt, rather than somewhere in Africa.

It is instructive to compare the steadfast opposition of adherents of the older liberal viewpoint.²⁸ Albright makes this concession: "Actually, Job and Ecclesiastes are both so full of Phoenician language, economic practice, cosmology, astronomy, and imagery, that it is increasingly difficult to believe that either was written outside of the Phoenician sphere of higher culture." Then he also adds: "After many years in which I insisted on a third-century date for Ecclesiastes I accepted Mitchell Dahood's late fourth-century date. Most recently I have changed my mind again, going back successively to the early fourth century and then to the fifth century B. C. . . . Furthermore, Qoheleth contains a very much higher proportion of Phoenician elements than Job. Yet it must be emphasized that not one of the supposed influences from Greek philosophy can be sustained. On the contrary, we have in Qoheleth some of the raw material on which the earliest Greek philosophers built their metaphysical structures."²⁹

By way of comment on the attempt to reconcile Phoenician influence with a fifth-century date, Dahood attempts to sustain this³⁰ with the supposition that a refugee colony of Jews gathered together up in Phoenicia after the fall of Jerusalem in 587. But in point of fact it is next to impossible to imagine how this could have happened in the light of the political situation which obtained in the sixth century B. C.

²⁸ Cf. Robert Gordis, *Koheleth: the Man and His World*, 1968 reprint of first edition (1951); H. L. Ginsberg, *The Romance of Koheleth the Canaanite*.

²⁹ William F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, pp. 260, 262.

³⁰ Dahood, *Biblica*, XXXIII, 30-52.

when Nebuchadnezzar maintained a tight control over the Phoenician mainland, completely destroying the mainland city of Tyre and subjecting even the offshore island of Tyre to a siege of thirteen years' duration.³¹ No refugee Jews, fleeing the wrath of the Chaldean government after the murder of Governor Gedaliah, could possibly have found asylum anywhere in Phoenicia except perhaps in the island city of Tyre. Of their presence there, no single shred of archeological evidence has yet come to light, so far as I am aware.

Turning now from the age of Solomon to the ninth century B. C., we find that excavations at Samaria have revealed some interesting sidelights concerning the career of this important capital for the days of King Omri and onward. Further excavation of the Israelite city wall was carried on from 1965 to 1967, and revealed the superior technique of stone dressing and building which characterized the period of Omri and Ahab, when stonemasons were hired from Phoenicia.³² A newer discovery was the Assyrian addition to the Israelite wall, which thickened it to a width of five and one-half meters; this apparently belongs to the period of Sargon II after 721 B. C., when he claims to have rebuilt Samaria "better than ever before."

The sustained examination of the site of Shechem, brilliantly written up by G. Ernest Wright, has yielded many valuable details relative to Hebrew history.³³ The evidence points to the later inclusion within the city walls of a shrine which was originally centered around a large oak tree outside the ramparts of the original settlement—suggestive of the place where Abraham first built an altar to Yahweh after arriving in the promised land. This seems to have been associated in the time of the Judges with a fortified sanctuary, which may well have been the temple of El-berith ("The God of the Covenant") which was finally destroyed by Abimelech, the son of Gideon. The destruction of Stratum XI was probably the result of Shishak's devastating invasion from Egypt in 918 B. C.³⁴ Near Shechem on Tell er-Räs a more likely site than the traditional one was found in 1964 for the

³¹ Cf. H. W. F. Saggs, *The Greatness That Was Babylon*, p. 267.

³² *American Schools of Oriental Research Newsletter* No. 9, Dec. 1967, p. 10.

³³ G. Ernest Wright, *Shechem: the Biography of a Biblical City*.

³⁴ *Bulletin of Archeology*, XXVIII (1965), 1 ff.

Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim. Its location is marked by the later Temple of Hadrian, measuring forty-five by seventy-three feet.³⁵

Lively discussion has continued on the vexed question of the regnal dates for Ahaz and Hezekiah. Despite the invaluable contributions made to the chronology of the divided monarchy by Edwin Thiele, his handling of the chronology of this period of the second half of the eighth century has proved to be far from satisfactory.³⁶ Thiele believed that he had discovered two different patterns in II Kings, the "Twelve-twenty Pattern" which dated the succession of Hoshea in the twelfth year of Ahaz and the twentieth year of Jotham, and the so-called "Two-seventeen Pattern," which stated that Jotham began his coregency with Uzziah in the second year of Pekah, and that Ahaz began his reign after Jotham's sixteenth year (so II Kings 15:32-33 and 16:1-2). This interpretation forced him to the position that II Kings 17:1; 18:1, 9-10 (belonging to the "Twelve-twenty Pattern") were actually in error by a margin of twelve years. His own words would seem to suggest that this error was included even in the original manuscript of II Kings: "For the task performed by the late Hebrew editor responsible for the synchronisms of II Kings 17 and 18 every serious student of Hebrew history should be grateful. He was a man who was deeply concerned about truth, but who did not understand all the truth. He was acquainted with certain facts of Hebrew history and their correlations with contemporary chronology, but he did not possess all the facts."³⁷

It should be clearly understood, then, that the dating of Hezekiah's reign as commencing at 715 B. C. rather than 728 involves the acknowledgement of error in the original autograph of Scripture; and it is a far more serious issue than simply another way of figuring on the basis of the biblical data. Those many conservatives who have accepted this 715 date should understand the serious implications involved and realize that if a sincere author of a book of Scripture could make a factual error in one point, there is no guar-

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Edwin Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 2nd ed.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

antee whatever that other biblical authors equally sincere might not have made other factual errors elsewhere.

Is there a better alternative than this to account for this apparent discrepancy? We believe that there is a very simple solution, and that is to recognize here a palpable scribal error. II Kings 18:1-2 affirms that Hezekiah's reign began in the third year of Hoshea of Israel, which unquestionably places it at 728 B. C. Verses 9-10 of this same chapter state that Shalmaneser of Assyria began his siege of Samaria in the fourth year of Hezekiah, which indicates that 724 was Hezekiah's fourth and 728 was his first year of rule, at least as coregent with his father Ahaz. Here, then, are two witnesses to 728 as Hezekiah's starting date. But when we get to verse 15 our received text tells us that Sennacherib's invasion occurred in Hezekiah's fourteenth year, which would come out to 714 (if we reckon from his coregency) or 711 (if we reckon from 725 as the first year of his sole rule). But from Assyrian sources we know that this invasion took place in 701 B. C. Therefore, there must be a ten-year error involved in the figure fourteen. Now it is significant that a change of but one letter would alter the Hebrew spelling of the number fourteen to the number twenty-four in eighth-century Hebrew orthography: i. e., the alteration of 's-r-h to 's-r-m (or 'esrēh to 'esrīm). If the original reading was "twenty-fourth year," then the twenty-fourth year of Hezekiah's sole rule from 725 would be exactly 701 B. C. The same mistaken figure of "fourteenth" instead of "twenty-fourth" was harmonistically imposed upon Isaiah 36:1 as well (or possibly the original place of error was the Isaiah passage, if that was composed earlier than II Kings, as seems more probable).

It is interesting to observe that Thiele found no difficulty whatever in accepting a decimal point copyist's error of this type in the age of young King Jehoiachin upon his accession. II Chronicles 36:9 gave his age as eight, but II Kings 24:8 as eighteen. Without even discussing the matter, Thiele assumes that eighteen is the correct figure, and eight is simply a decimal error.³⁸ It is difficult to see why he was unwilling even to discuss the same kind of textual error in the case

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

of II Kings 18:13, and felt constrained to resort to an explanation which by implication undermines the trustworthiness of even the original autographs of Scripture. (There are other attempted explanations which seek to reconcile the fourteenth-year reading with the accuracy of Scripture, but end up with grave improbabilities, such as a very long coregency shared by Hezekiah with his idol-worshipping son, Manasseh; or interpret the fourteenth year as representing the fourteenth year after Hezekiah's near-fatal illness in 714—even though the verses just preceding have uniformly used 728 or 725 as the starting point. The emendation of fourteen to twenty-four seems the most obvious and likely solution, in our opinion.)

In this connection, it ought to be mentioned that the Two-Invasion Theory of Sennacherib's aggression against Israel is heading for an early demise. That theory was based upon the assumption that the mention of Tirhaqah as king of Egypt in II Kings 19:9 demanded an invasion date later than 690, when Tirhaqah ascended to the throne. This was apparently reinforced by the mistaken interpretation of the Kawa Stela by M. F. L. Macadam,³⁹ to the effect that Tirhaqah could only have been nine or ten years of age back in 701 B. C. He construed V:17 of the stela to mean that Tirhaqah was twenty years old at the time of his accession to the throne in 690-689. But as Kitchen points out,⁴⁰ Leclant and Yoyotte's treatment of this text⁴¹ shows that this actually indicated Tirhaqah's age in 701, when he would have been old enough to lead an army as representative of his brother, King Shebitku. Since his father, Piankhy, must have died somewhere between 717 and 713, this would mean that Tirhaqah must, on Macadam's theory, have been born anywhere from four to seven years after his father died—surely an unusual feat for any mother! There is, of course, no real difficulty about Tirhaqah's being referred to as *king* back in 701; if the record of this campaign was written up after 690 B. C., Tirhaqah had become king by that time, and it would be natural to refer to him as such at an earlier point in his career. Surely no reader would object to a contemporary

³⁹ M. F. L. Macadam, *The Temples of Kawa*, I, 18-20.

⁴⁰ Kitchen, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-84.

⁴¹ *Bulletin de l'Institut Francais de l'Archeologie*, LI (1952) 17-27.

writer's making an introduction to an anecdote about Richard Nixon's childhood with the words: "Now when President Nixon was a boy of ten, . . ." who would rise to object, insisting that Nixon was not President when he was ten? It is instructive to discover that this same usage of speech occurs in the Kawa Stela itself (IV:7-8) when it says of prince Tirhaqah: "His Majesty was in Nubia, as a goodly youth . . . amidst the goodly youths whom His Majesty King Shebitku had summoned from Nubia."

As to the late seventh century B. C., Donald Wiseman's publication has cleared up several doubtful areas in the period between 626 and 556 B. C.⁴² The precise sequence of events in connection with the Battle of Carchemish and Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion of Palestine has been made clear. These tables also reveal a fact not previously known, that the Egyptian forces fought the Chaldeans to a stalemate in 601, which accounts quite satisfactorily for Jehoiakim's hardihood in attempting to throw off Nebuchadnezzar's overlordship in alliance with Egypt. It was this attempt at capitalizing upon the temporary discomfiture of the Babylonians that led ultimately to Nebuchadnezzar's second invasion of Judah, his capture of King Jehoiachin, and his carrying off the nobility and skilled craftsmen from the city of Jerusalem in 597.

We close this third installment of our series with a summary of Yamauchi's survey of contacts between the Near East and the western nations of the Mediterranean coastline.⁴³ He points out that the celebrated Queen Dido, immortalized in Vergil's *Aeneid*, was actually a great-granddaughter of King Ithobaal of Tyre, and therefore a grandniece of the infamous Queen Jezebel, wife of Ahab. Secondly, during the eighth century the trade relations with Greece are attested by an abundance of Greek geometric ware in such centers as Tarsus in Cilicia; Al Mina, Hama, and Hammam in North Syria; Tell Halaf and Nineveh; Megiddo, Samaria, and Achzib in Palestine. (All of these contacts with Greece have a bearing upon the historicity of the Book of Daniel, *ca.* 530 B. C., since chapter 3 contains three Greek names of musical instruments.) In 713 seven Greek kings from Cyprus are recorded as having done homage to Sargon

⁴² Donald Wiseman, *The Chronicles of the Chaldean Kings*.

⁴³ Edwin Yamauchi, *Greece and Babylon*, pp. 52-68.

II of Assyria at the city of Babylon. It is quite probable that the "Yamana" or "Yawani" used of the king who had to flee from Ashdod at the arrival of Sargon's troops, really meant "the Greek." In the reign of Esarhaddon (681-670) ten rulers from Cyprus contributed materials for the erection of new buildings at Nineveh. Lastly, he suggests that Antimenidas, the brother of the Lesbian love-poet Alcaeus, took part in Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Ashkelon in 604, since he served as a mercenary in his army.

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