

Recent Biblical Archaeology.

The Old Testament in the Light of the Ancient East.

A NOTABLE contribution to this department of Biblical literature has recently been made by Dr. Alfred Jeremias of Leipzig, in his work entitled *Das Alte Testament im Lichte des Alten Orients*; mit 145 Abbildungen und 2 Karten (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1904; price M.6.50). This book deserves a fuller than ordinary notice. The personality and scientific individuality of the author are themselves sufficient to impose upon a reviewer the obligation to give exact details; but a still stronger claim is established by the weighty contents of the book, in which Dr. Jeremias' Assyriological and Biblical scholarship combines with his acquaintance with Egyptological studies to produce conclusions that are of extreme value as illustrating the most important occurrences in the history of the Ancient East. The title of the book corresponds in every respect with its contents. The author has evidently sought (without resorting to the strictly apologetic form) to write a defence of the early biblical history, and, in opposition to the destructive tendencies of the one-sided methods of the Graf-Wellhausen school, to rehabilitate the historical character of the oldest sources that are drawn upon in the Hexateuch. In the task he sets himself, Dr. Jeremias has had many predecessors, but these have all been lacking in one qualification, namely, an impartial standpoint, coupled with expert Assyriological training. Armed with the most modern scientific weapons, and freely surveying his task from an elevated viewpoint, Dr. Jeremias was thus in a position to throw all his predecessors into the shade, and to furnish readers who are interested in biblical studies with a book, which in its form and contents is strictly scientific, but is written in a style that is perfectly popular.

In the first two chapters the author builds upon the foundation of H. Winckler. He contends strongly for that scholar's theory of the 'mythological descriptive method,' and the 'mythological system,' and discovers in a recognition of the mythological system of the Ancient East the key to a doctrine of the forms employed in biblical literature. At the same time, he is careful at

every step to caution us against unduly exalting the form and resolving facts into mythological ideas. In short, it is the author's aim that his book shall not only help towards a recognition of the real nature of the biblical descriptive method, but at the same time promote an understanding of the contents of Scripture. Accordingly, in opposition to the hitherto prevailing tendency to lay the main stress upon the investigation of the outward form of the biblical tradition, he attaches the main importance to the contents of that tradition. In the arrangement of his matter our author follows the example set by Schrader in his *K.A.T.*, taking up the O.T. writings in the order of the Luther Bible, and contributing notes on the particular passages to be elucidated. The book commences with an account of the beliefs of the Ancient East and the closely connected conception of the world, and closes with the notes on the prophetic books.

It would be quite impossible within the space at our disposal to notice all the merits of Dr. Jeremias' book and the manifold stimulus it supplies; we must be content to select a few of the most important points, especially as we are convinced that some of the views put forward by the author will give rise to fruitful scientific discussion.

In discussing the biblical narrative of Creation, Dr. Jeremias starts from a cuneiform text (*Cuneiform Texts*, xiii. 35 f.), which is of extreme importance for the purpose of comparison, but whose real significance was first recognized by H. Winckler. Strangely enough, this text includes, amongst Marduk's first creations, the greatest temples of Babylonia, and, above all, the temple of Ê-sagila at Babylon. The creation of the world proper took place, according to this text, in the following way:—At first, all was *apsu* (= biblical *têhôm*); in this *apsu* was first formed the *heavenly world*: (1) Eridû and Ê-sagila, the *heavenly domain of water*; (2) the *heavenly domain of Anu*, the 'holy city' and 'dwelling-place' of the Anunnaki; (3) the *heavenly domain of Bel*, probably the zodiac. Then came—(4) *men, animals, and plants*; (5) *the earth* which, like the heavenly domain, originated through a mingling of earth and reeds, which produced a firm surface on the water; (6) *earthly places of worship*.

This hitherto neglected Creation narrative is now compared by Dr. Jeremias with the Egyptian, Phœnician, and Etruscan narratives, and he reaches the conclusion that the biblical story is dependent upon Babylonian material in certain points: particularly in the word *ēhôm*, the picture of the spirit of God 'brooding,' the notion of Creation as effected by the word of God, the creating of light by God (which is the same thing as the victory of light over darkness), the repeatedly recurring numbers 3 and 7, the forming of the earth into dry land, the creating of the vegetable world and of man. On the other hand, the Babylonian conception of the stars as spiritual essences has almost disappeared. The basis of the biblical narrative is thus Babylonian, but accommodated to the monotheistic standpoint.

In the story of the Flood, our author sees the astral myth of the watery region in the world-cycle, and labours with much ingenuity to establish a theory (although he cannot shake off the feeling that even here 'a historical occurrence in primeval times' underlies the narrative). For ourselves, we prefer to see an allusion to one of those natural occurrences, the recollection of which has impressed itself on the memory even of later generations. There are details in which both the biblical narratives (which have now been worked into one), exhibit deviations from the Babylonian story, but a much closer affinity can be proved here than in the Creation narrative.

With reference to the List of Nations contained in the tenth chapter of Genesis, Dr. Jeremias labours to refute the current view, represented in recent times by Socin in particular, that 'it would be an impossible task, from the data supplied by the list, to draw a map of the world as it then existed'; and seeks to show that the biblical writers were well acquainted with the political geography of their time. The popular lists of Darius Hystaspis are at the same time subjected to examination with special reference to the biblical Javan and its signification. We have, indeed, recently had other two discussions of this unfortunately as yet unsolved question: the one in Kiessling's Leipzig dissertation (1901), the other from Geiger's pen in the *Grundriss der iran. Philologie*; but the present attempt of Dr. Jeremias offers new suggestions which are sure to be welcomed by all friends of the Ancient East. Thus Jeremias separates the 'Sakâ Haumavarkâ' of Darius into two races, the

'Sakâ' and 'Haumavarkâ,' and compares the latter with the Ἀμύργιοι of Herodotus. The 'Iainâ Takabarâ' (i.e. the *pedasos*-wearing Greeks) he considers to be the Macedonians. The usual explanation of Kittim as Cyprus is rejected by Dr. Jeremias, who understands by it South Italy, but especially Sicily. Elisha, again, is taken to represent the main region of Phœnician colonies in North-West Africa, but especially Carthage.

Regarding the number of the patriarchs Dr. Jeremias maintains the same view as the present writer, who (THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, 1900, p. 320 f., 'On the Question of the Exodus') argued that the number of the biblical patriarchs must be increased by several names, and that 'Israel' itself is a patriarchal name that has been lost. Dr. Jeremias admits that the patriarchal narratives in their present form are *incomplete* and *idealized*. Traces of the latter phenomenon he discovers, particularly in the matter of circumcision, which he regards as having been interpolated into the earlier narratives, whereas it is expressly testified of Moses and his sons (Ex 4^{20ff.}) that they were uncircumcised. In spite of this concession, Dr. Jeremias holds to the historicity of the early narratives as a whole; and even individual patriarchs are to him historical figures. This can already be regarded as a fact in the case of Abraham, since the discovery of Hammurabi's inscriptions. It is true that Abraham is not a tribal ancestor in the ethnological sense but, according to Dr. Jeremias, a conqueror whose exploits are obscured, nay idealized, in the biblical narrative. It is only in this light that we can rightly understand the record of Gn 14, in which also Dr. Jeremias discovers a precious relic of ancient Canaanite annals. A mere shepherd-prince can scarcely have gained a brilliant victory over the powerful Elamite king and his allies, the latter including even Hammurabi (Amraphel).

Dr. Jeremias examines carefully the cuneiform and Egyptian witnesses to the pre-Israelite history of Canaan. He rejects what have come to be favourite identifications in the list of Thotmes III., namely, *Ja'kob-el* and *Isp-el*. In the case of Ja'kob-el it seems to us that he can hardly be right in so acting, for the occurrence of the name Ja'kub also in Hammurabi's contracts is of no weight. In dealing with the record of the travels of the Egyptian *mohar*, Dr. Jeremias retains the old reading 'Eutu for O-ŭ, and rightly identifies this place with the Greek *Palatyrus*. He is wrong,

however, in citing H. Winckler as the author of this identification, as he might readily have learned from the passage cited (Winckler, *Gesch. Isr.* i. 201) that the identification was first proposed and established by the present writer. The famous inscription on the stele of Merenptah, in which, as is well known, the Israelites are mentioned among the foes of Egypt, surely deserved fuller notice than it receives from Dr. Jeremias.

Everyone who has taken part in research in the department of biblical and the cognate ancient literature will be specially interested in the line followed by Dr. Jeremias in discussing the Habiri question. The course adopted by him appears to the present writer to be the most proper one. The identity of the two names *Habiri* and *Ibrim* is, indeed, beyond question; but we are not all too readily to identify the *connotative term* with its application as the name of a people, especially as it can be proved that the name *Habiri* and also the name *Ibrim* were each applied by their neighbours to a special body of people, and thus exhibited vacillation in their usage. In the Amarna period the name *Habiri* might quite well be given to the wandering sons of the desert, but it might with equal propriety be applied some two centuries later to the Israelite invaders who likewise emerged from the district east of Jordan to sweep over the land of Canaan.

Abraham is to Dr. Jeremias an historical personage, but his appearance upon the scene is viewed by the learned author as that of a religious innovator, a Mahdi. To the religious initiative of Abraham Dr. Jeremias seeks to trace back what he regards as the product of the patriarch's own experience, namely, the recognition of the interposition of the living God, the maker of heaven and earth, in the life and training of the human race. Abraham is thus to him from the first the founder of a new, ethically based, doctrine of God, who is called either by the Canaanite name *El* or the Babylonian *Ja'u* (*Jah*). Even Dr. Jeremias in this way admits a certain dependence of the Canaanitish-Israelitish monotheism upon Babylon, apart from the circumstance that this dependence is already placed beyond doubt by the undeniably Babylonian origin of Abraham himself. Anyone

who is convinced that Abraham is no mere shadow cast on the page of history must admit also that the ideas for which he procured acceptance were originally Babylonian. Consequently also the kernel of the patriarchal narratives must be historical, provided of course that we strip some of these heroic figures of the features of simple family life which have been given to them by a fondly naïve tradition. Abraham and his successors are powerful princes, who presumably betake themselves for protection against Babylon to Egypt, which had been reconstituted after the fall of the Hyksos; and at length one of them, known to the Bible as Joseph, brought the whole tribe to settle in the pasture lands of Goshen. The position attributed to Joseph, that of a powerful vizier at the court of a Pharaoh of the eighteenth dynasty, is genuinely Egyptian, and finds its counterpart in the rôle of a Janhamu of the Amarna period.

Israel's sojourn in Egypt and the Exodus are ingeniously treated by Dr. Jeremias. Here again the conviction forces its way that the occurrences brought into connexion with Egypt and the sojourn of the Israelites there have an historical kernel. Dr. Jeremias has been able to bring forward new considerations which witness to the historicity of the biblical narrative. He assumes as his starting-point a religious movement in Egypt in opposition to the polytheistic cultus. The representatives of this movement are supposed to have been in sympathy with the monotheistic nomads from Palestine. Traces of the Egyptian tradition on this subject are discovered by Dr. Jeremias in the well-known narratives of Manetho and Chæremon. The *Osar-siph* of Manetho is to him *Jo-seph*, an explanation which it will no longer be possible to reject unceremoniously. Only in regard to the date assigned to the Exodus—the time of the 'heretic' king Amenophis iv.—the present writer finds it impossible to agree with Dr. Jeremias. Some features, unfortunately overlooked by Dr. Jeremias, in the hieroglyphic tradition are intelligible only within the framework of the history of the nineteenth dynasty, especially in the long reigns of Ramses II. and his two immediate successors.

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