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THE
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

THE TELL-EL-AMARNA LETTERS.¹

BY PROFESSOR JOHN M. P. MURCALF.

II. WE turn now to letters from vassal princes in Syria, Phœnicia, and Palestine, from a great many different cities in all parts of these countries. They were all in a relation of dependence upon Egypt,—many of them being governors of Egyptian provinces, or rulers of cities acknowledging the suzerainty of the Pharaohs. As such they address the king as "my lord," and sign themselves "your servant." Despite very many letters, it is exceedingly difficult to give a true picture of the state of Egyptian possessions in Palestine. The tablets are often badly mutilated,—often just where they seem about to give valuable information. Where many letters are found from one author,—as, for example, Rib-Addi of Gebal, from whom there are about sixty letters,—it is not possible to arrange them in chronological order with any degree of certainty. Then again it is hard to tell whom to believe when two men tell facts inconsistent with one another. Identification of geographical names is not always possible. Still we may learn much, and often the state of affairs is not veiled in darkness. In briefly continuing our summary we shall speak

¹Concluded from the April number.

of these letters in two groups—a Northern and a Southern group.

1. Affairs in the North.—To begin with, we are led to the conclusion that the many professions of friendship on the part of Babylon and Mitani are not to be taken too literally. They must have realized that the hand of Egypt on Palestine, Phœnicia, and Syria especially, was relaxing, and they saw their own opportunity therein. They played a double game,—professing friendship to Egypt on the one hand, and on the other, seeking to further their own interests in the West by negotiations with various princes of influence, by sowing the seeds of discontent and revolt against Egypt, and by urging some to attack and appropriate the lands of those faithful to Egypt.

Thus Mitani and Kaš, Babylonia, were in league with Abd-ašrat and his sons, especially Aziru, of whom later.¹ Again we are told² that the latter parties were also playing into the hands of the Hittites. The Hittites were evidently here enlarging their dominions, and widening the circle of their influence. Their expedition into Mitani was, as we have seen, repulsed. Aziru, in three different letters,³ informs us that the king of Ḫatti has entered Nuhašši, is staying there and threatening other regions. A letter from Nuhašši princes⁴ speaks of the capture of certain cities by the people of Ḫatti. Akizzi of Katna⁵ writes⁶ that the Ḫatti have captured one of his cities, and stolen his sun-god—the latter item interesting from a religious point of view. From three different towns, also, comes the word that Itakama of Kadeš, together with the Ḫatti, had entered Amki.⁷ Rib-Addi refers to the Ḫatti several times

¹ According to Rib-Addi in No. 56, lines 13–16; No. 86, lines 18–24; and No. 87, lines 68–71.

² By Rabimur of Gebal, No. 119, lines 20–32. ³ Nos. 45–47.

⁴ No. 125. On the location of the land, see later.

⁵ Somewhere in North Syria. See later. ⁶ No. 138.

⁷ Nos. 131, 132. In league also with Itakama were Tiuwatti of Lapara, and Arzawia of Ruhizi.

in much the same connection, as appropriating territory,¹ as making tools of Abd-ašrat and Aziru,² as plundering the liege-men of Gebal.³ The king of Nuhašši, Ramman-nirari,—notice the Assyrian name,—tells Amenophis III., that the Hatti are already pressing him hard.⁴ Even far-off Alašia finally has felt the fear of the oncoming Hittites.⁵

In all this we see undoubtedly the beginning of a great forward movement on the part of the Hittites, and one that gives us the introduction to the picture presented by the Egyptian monuments some years later, the picture of the rivalry between Egypt and the great Empire centered at Carchemish. The first great Egyptian conqueror, Thothmes III., had fought with them the first of the great battles at Megiddo, about fifty years before, and had beaten back their armies and power. Now, encouraged by the weakness of Amenophis IV., they are again coming forward, and, with the rise of the active rulers of the nineteenth dynasty a little later, they have become a truly formidable foe. Rameses II., after twenty years of fighting, ending in the great drawn battle of Kadeš, is glad to make a treaty on equal terms with the great Hittite king. This is the scene to which the Tell-el-Amarna letters form an introduction.

In passing, a word as to the places in which the Hittites are mentioned in the Bible. The presence of colonies of them in Palestine in Abraham's day seems entirely possible, in view of the fact that even before his day Northern Syria went by the name of māt Hatti to the men of the Euphrates; so also their mention among the nations of Palestine at the time of the conquest, in view of the Egyptian records and of these letters. Very fitting would seem the words of Josh. i. 4, "From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the

¹ No. 79, Reverse, line 11. ² No. 87, line 71. ³ No. 104, lines 58-60.

⁴ No. 37, Reverse, line 4. ⁵ No. 25, Reverse, line 49.

land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your border." Compare also Judges i. 26. The Assyrian monuments also attest their presence on the field of the nations here during all the time in which they are afterward mentioned. Sargon's inscriptions are full of references.¹

But we must return to the lands threatened by the march of the Hittite conquests; and, first, Nuhašši, the letter of whose vassal king, Ramman-nirari, we have already mentioned. Other references to the land help in determining its location. Aziru² expresses fear that the king of Ḫatti, already in Nuhašši, will next attack Dunip. Katna was in Nuhašši,³ and is evidently in the neighborhood—more or less close—of Damascus,⁴ so that Nuhašši could not have been too far away from Damascus. Various uncertain attempts at more exact location have been made.⁵ From these same letters the city of Ni is more probably to be located on the Orontes than on the Euphrates.⁶ The location of Dunip, whose citizens send an appeal for help to Amenophis, is also a matter of dispute, but it was somewhere here in Northern Syria.⁷ They were threatened by Aziru, into whose hands the city of Ni had already fallen. This

¹ See Winckler's Sargon, Die Keilschrifttexte Sargons. In reference to the Hittites and the Bible, see Sayce, The Higher Criticism and the Verdict of the Monuments.

² No. 47, lines 38 ff. ³ No. 138, line 21. ⁴ No. 139, lines 63–65.

⁵ Erman and Zimmern identify with a town named in Egyptian records, see Zeitschrift für Äg. Sprache for 1890, p. 129. Cheyne (Acad., Vol. xxxix., No. 981, p. 187) and Halevy compare with the biblical חַנְןָה and make it = חַנְןָה, making חַנְןָה = cubitu.

⁶ No. 41, line 28; No. 120, line 15; No. 139, line 42. So with Winckler against several, for example, Bezold in the Introduction to the London texts.

⁷ Sayce, Records of the Past, New Series, Vol. iii. p. 55 = Tennib; cf. also Vol. i. Note 2. Howorth in Acad., Vol. xxxix., No. 981, p. 187, does not accept this view. See also, as to Dunip, Cheyne in Acad., Vol. xxxix., No. 981, p. 187; Tomkins, *ibid.*, No. 983, p. 236; Neubauer, *ibid.*, No. 984, p. 260.

brings us naturally to the rôle that Aziru was playing in the North.

We have seen already that he was more or less openly in league with the Hittites. He seems to have been one of a large party, who were playing a double game with Egypt. His name brings us into the very thick of the entangling and incriminating and false diplomacies of the various governors and princes of the land under Egypt's dominion. The party of Aziru was composed of his father, Abd-Ašrat, the latter's sons (among whom Aziru was easily chief), Aziru's sons and various other princes with whom they had formed connections, or whom they had instigated against Egypt, or against other princes loyal to Egypt.

Abd-Ašrat was governor of Amurru, appointed by the king of Egypt,¹ the writer of three, perhaps five, of the letters.² He professes fidelity as a most humble slave, dog of his master, and asserts his purpose to hold the whole land of Amurru for Pharaoh, as if his good intentions were called in question. He is in bad straits, the enemy are strong, he will do all the king commands, but seeks help because some are seeking to kill him. In Amurru itself he had his enemies,³ and Rib-Addi says⁴ that in Amurru itself they were looking for help from Egypt to overthrow Abd-Ašrat.

From Aziru there are more letters still,⁵ with also one from Egypt to him,⁶ and one from his son.⁷ Aziru is even more profuse in his professions of fidelity, maintains that others are slandering him, and urges the Egyptians not to believe any reports of his rebelliousness. He cannot now come to court and personally answer these charges, because the Ḥatti and people of Nuhašši are threatening invasion. He has constantly to defend himself. He will go to court, but does not; he will rebuild a city, but never does it; he

¹ No. 124, lines 30, 31. ² Nos. 38, 39, 40, and possibly 124 and 152.

³ No. 124, line 30. ⁴ No. 57, lines 15–23; No. 59, lines 47–50.

⁵ Nos. 42–49, 51. ⁶ No. 50. ⁷ No. 52.

will pay his tribute, will pay added tribute wherever he has made aggressions; he has to find excuses for evading an Egyptian messenger, and for treating a Hittite embassy more favorably than an Egyptian one. Pharaoh's letter to him is also full of accusations and grave doubt as to his sincerity, and is confirmatory of his hostility to Rib-Addi, and also of his league with Itakama of Kadeš.

In addition to those already mentioned as belonging to Aziru's party, were Biridašja, the kings of Bušruna and Halunni,¹ and probably Zimrida of Sidon,² and last, but not least, the Ḥabiri, of whom later. Those who were suffering under the persecution of Aziru and his associates were Dunip, Rib-Addi of Gebal, Ammunira of Berut, Abi-milki of Tyre,³ Namiawaza of Kumidi, and many others, whose names or locations or both are uncertain. From these latter come the great majority of the letters, from Rid-Addi about threescore. A full discussion of them is here impossible. Gebal is the Byblos of the Greeks. The profuseness of his writing is marvelous. No wonder Pharaoh wrote him to stop writing and defend himself.⁴

His complaint to Egypt runs thus: The former vigorous administration of the Egyptian domain in Palestine is at an end. The king comes no more himself. The Egyptian garrisons are withdrawn, and various princes, no longer in wholesome fear of Egyptian armies, are appropriating the country for themselves, and the people are deserting to these more independent rulers. Various Bedawin tribes are taking advantage of this state of affairs to enter in and plunder and appropriate, often joining themselves with these native independent princes. Thus Abd-ašrat and his sons, especially Aziru, in union with the Ḥabiri and Suti, are constantly extending their aggressions over a wider territory, and confining Rib-Addi and his friends more and more

¹ No. 142, lines 13–15. ² No. 149, lines 66–69.

³ Nos. 150, 151. ⁴ No. 100, lines 9, 10; No. 99, lines 15 ff.

closely to a few walled cities, where they are compelled to sell their very children for food, after disposing of all their property for provisions, and receiving no help from Egypt. They see city after city fall to the Ḥabiri or to Abd-ašrat's crowd. The whole land will soon be lost to the king if he does not send soldiers to garrison the cities, and men to win back the places already captured. The men of Gebal, yes, even Rib-Addi's own friends, urge him to go over to the other party, as the only hope of peace. He has written again and again, now to the king, and now to his high officials, and has sent embassy after embassy, but no answer and no help is returned. He has to send his family away to Tyre, and finally goes himself to Berut, and appeals in vain to Ammunira, returns and is himself shut out of his own city.

His brother, Rabimur, from whom there are two letters,¹ it seems, assumed command of Gebal in his absence, and delivered over Rid-Addi's sons to Aziru.² Rib-Addi again seeks refuge with Ammunira, and the latter promises to care for him until the king comes to his aid,³ and this is the last we hear of him.

The complaint of Abi-milki of Tyre deserves a word of notice here, and is just as pitiable. Zimrida of Sidon has united with Aziru, the people of Arwad, and the Ḥabiri, and together they are besieging Tyre. Abi-milki is confined wholly to the island, and therefore cannot obtain food or fresh water from the mainland to eat and drink, or wood to keep him warm. Aziru holds the town of Usu, from which place these things are secured. He pleads with Egypt to send him relief, ere he perish.⁴

Of Aziru the last we hear is that he finally went to Egypt to render account, and because he was detained there, some one, perhaps his son, writes pleading for his release. Many

¹ Nos. 119, 120. ² No. 129, lines 18–24.

³ *Ibid.*, lines 15–17. ⁴ Abi-milki's letters, Nos. 149–156.

interesting questions are raised by these letters. Just the reason why sometimes Abd-ašrat, sometimes his sons, and sometimes Aziru, is named, is hard to tell, unless there was a great partnership affair involving the whole family.¹

Another question is thrust upon us, that of the word Amurru, and so of the Amorites and Canaanites. That which in the cuneiform used to be read Alharru, West-land, is now, with more and more certainty, read Amurru. The Sumerian Mar.tu is to be so read. The word is frequently written in these letters so as to prove the reading Amurru, A-mu-ur-ru. To judge from these letters, the two terms Amurru, Amorites, and Canaanites are not interchangeable. Letter No. 50 from the king of Egypt uses both terms. Amurru was the seat of the operations of Abd-ašrat's combination, which, as we have seen, was in the north. The governor of Sidon was instructed to write all the news he heard from Amurru.² Suinur and Berut, towns in the neighborhood of Gebal, are located in Amurru.³

On the other hand, the governor of Tyre is asked to make report from Canaan.⁴ The city of Ḥinatōn-Hannathon of Josh. xix. 14, in Zebulon, is located in Canaan.⁵ The data here given seem to be all that is attainable, and would seem to indicate that Canaan was not interchangeable with Amurru, and that the latter was in the north and Canaan in the south. Hommel⁶ seems to accept this location for Amurru, and makes Canaan apparently the lowlands of Palestine,⁷ the latter being in accord with the idea that the Canaanites were lowlanders, and the Amorites highlanders, a theory which has still the support of Dr. George Adam Smith, and which seems to be definitely

¹ They evidently did not follow one another; at least their careers were cotemporary.

² No. 148, lines 24-26. ³ No. 81, line 14; No. 78, line 10.

⁴ No. 151, lines 49-51. ⁵ No. 11, lines 15-17.

⁶ *Gesch. des alten Morgenlandes*, 81. ⁷ *Ibid.*, 82.

taught in Num. xiii. 29.¹ The higher criticism has usually asserted the identity of the words Amorite and Canaanite, the one word belonging to the Elohist, and the other to the Jehovah.

That the terms are distinct—Amurru the North, and Canaan the South—has been recognized by several writers.² McCurdy denies their identity, though without reference to these letters.³ Winckler, in discussing the question, begins with an account of the movements of the Amorites, especially under Aziru, southward from Lebanon, goes on rather to discredit the theory of the identity of the two names, and makes Canaan the coast land as far north as Sidon, and Amurru the country stretching north from there, and especially the interior, and concludes that E, living in the North himself, knew and made the distinction, but that J, writing in the South, had no knowledge of the Amorites.⁴ The conclusions of the higher criticism would seem to be overthrown, as to the point of identity. Perhaps some additional light may come from a fact now to be mentioned. The letters from Canaan contain very many Canaanitish words, as glosses. Now it is a significant fact that the letters of the great Amorite leaders contain no Canaanitish glosses. I have by careful search failed to find one in the dozen letters from these worthies. This seems significant, in connection with the facts above mentioned, and tends to show that the Amorites were not a Semitic people. Another question is that as to the Habiri, but we will leave the discussion of the question until after we have briefly surveyed the letters from the south of Palestine.

2. Letters from Southern Palestine.—Here there is another combination of such disturbers as were active in the

¹ Historical Geography of Palestine, in the Expositor, 1892.

² Sayce in Acad., Vol. xl., No. 1013, p. 291; Delattre in Proc. Soc. Bib. Arch., Vol. xiii. p. 223.

³ History, Prophecy, and the Monuments, Vol. i. p. 131.

⁴ Geschichte Israels, 51–54.

North. There are the same pleas for help, the same charges and counter-charges, the same combinations with the Habiri against certain princes and in opposition to Egypt. All are either suffering from, or combining with, the Habiri. The leaders in revolt against Egypt, and in combination with the Habiri, appear to be Lapaja¹ and his sons, Milki-el² and Tagi,³ whose professions of fidelity are again outweighed by the mass of accusations brought by their opponents, Addu-ašaridu,⁴ Biridija of Megiddo,⁵ Abd-ḥiba of Jerusalem,⁶ and many others. Among these letters I shall make particular mention only of those from Jerusalem.

Abd-ḥiba is using all his power to put bounds to the aggressions of the Habiri, and consequently has incurred every one's hostility. He pleads for more troops to garrison his territory and protect it from the league of rebels threatening its existence. He is evidently a prince of some importance, was appointed directly by the king, and bore rule over many dependent cities. Milki-el was apparently under-governor of some of Abd-ḥiba's cities. Robbery and murder are rife in all the country; so much so that he cannot send on the king's caravans. One city after another is being lost. If the king cannot send troops, let him at least send a ship to take him to Egypt to die.

It is certainly very interesting to read these letters from Jerusalem, but I must speak of a point raised by Professor Sayce, and taken up by others. It may well be that the name Jerusalem, Urusalim, indicates that Jerusalem, centuries before David, was a religious center, but there is nothing here to indicate that Abd-ḥiba was a priest-king, and no comparisons can rightly be made between him and Melchizedek of Gen. xiv. Basing the statement on a wrong translation, or at least a wrong interpretation of some passages in Abd-ḥiba's letters, Sayce saw confirmation of Gen.

¹ Nos. 162, 163. ² Nos. 168-172. ³ Nos. 189, 190, 265.

⁴ No. 164. ⁵ Nos. 192-195. ⁶ Nos. 179-185.

xiv. He makes¹ Abd-hiba say that he was appointed by no earthly power, did not receive his territory from his father or his mother, but that he was appointed by an oracle of the "mighty king"—Melchizedek's god, god of Jerusalem. Hommel seems to have adopted this view,² and it has found its way also into many other books and articles.³

The passage in question is found in three letters,⁴ and reads as follows: ⁵A-mur a-na-ku la-a (amílu) a-bi-ja ⁶u la-a (amíltu) u-mi-ia ša-ka-na-ni ⁷i-na aš-ri an-ni-í ⁸zu-ru-uh šar-ri dannu ⁹u-ši-ri-ba-an-ni a-na bít (amílu) a-bi-ja. "Behold, neither my father nor my mother appointed me in this place. The strong arm of the king inaugurated me over my father's territory."¹⁰ This translation is absolutely certain. Sayce translates, "The arm of the mighty king." It is true that the Assyrian order—the Semitic order in general—would permit of this translation, for the adjective follows the genitive; thus, "The arm-of the king—the strong." In good Assyrian, however, the adjective agrees with its noun, and here is placed in the nominative, not the genitive; "dannu," not "danni." It is true, constructions are not so rigid in these letters, but in this case we could waive questions of grammar, and still be confident that ours is the correct translation. Abd-hiba simply says he was appointed to his position by Pharaoh, just exactly what many another writer says of himself,⁶ and there is no more reason for calling Abd-hiba a priest-king than several others.⁷

¹ So in preface to *Records of the Past*, New Series, Vol. iv.; also in *The Higher Criticism and the Verdict of the Monuments*, p. 175. Cf. also *Bibl. World*, September, 1896, and *Expository Times*, June and July, 1896.

² *Gesch. des alten Morgenlandes*, 63.

³ E.g., *Buried Cities in Bible Lands*.

⁴ Nos. 179, 180, 181. ⁵ No. 179, lines 9-13.

⁶ E.g., No. 124, lines 30-31.

⁷ E.g., Abd-Milki in No. 252; like many others, this name is made up of two words, one of which is the name of a god.

Of the other letters very little can be said, but we hear from a host of other cities, very many of them making mention of the Habiri letters from Akko, Sir-Bashan, Ha-sor, Gezer, Ashkelon, Lachish, Wurza, Gaza, Joppa, and many others. Very many are, however, fragmentary, containing little if any information, names often being wanting.

A few words seem in place about the two letters from Lachish which were found at Tell-el-Amarna, one¹ from Zimrida, which I will quote entire, because it is short, and representative of letters from vassals. "To my lord, my gods, my sun, the sun in the heavens:—Zimrida, the prince of Lachish, your servant, the dust of your feet. At the feet of my lord, the king, the sun in the heavens, seven and seven times, I throw myself. I have heard very well indeed the words of the messenger of my lord, the king, whom he sent to me. And verily, I will do according to his command." The other letter² is from Jabni-el,—the name along with Milki-el above, to be compared with the Jacob-el and Joseph-el of the Egyptian lists,—and contains almost exactly the same message as that given above. Jabni-el must have succeeded Zimrida, for we read in one of Abd-hiba's letters³ from Jerusalem, that Zimrida's servants were seeking to put him to death.

But the thing for which I specially referred to these letters, is the fact that the only piece of cuneiform writing yet found on the soil of Palestine was found at Lachish. The story of the excavations there of Flinders Petrie and of Mr. Bliss is well known; how they laid bare many cities of Lachish as they dug down into the heart of the earth.⁴ But most marvelous of all, at about the level supposed to represent the Tell-el-Amarna period, Mr. Bliss found what he had long hoped for—a clay tablet inscribed in cunei-

¹ No. 217. ² No. 218. ³ No. 181, lines 42, 43.

⁴ See *The Story of a Tell*, by Flinders Petrie, in *The City and the Land*.

form characters, with a letter, in which Zimrida of Lachish is mentioned. It appears to be written by some one who had accusations to bring against Zimrida, and the letter was perhaps captured by Ziinrida, and so not delivered in Egypt.¹ Mr. Bliss found also a bead inscribed with the name of Amenophis II.'s wife, Tí, and also alabaster vases inscribed with the king's name, and that of his wife.²

This suggests again the very important rôle played by this Queen Tí in the Mitani letters. She was evidently a woman of great influence. In connection, I would say that there are here at least four letters from women. One³ is perhaps from an Egyptian princess in Babylon to her father in Egypt. Another⁴ seems to be from a woman who is governor of a city, like any other governor, signing herself "the king's bondmaid." There are also two other letters⁵ from women, both of which are addressed to women. So much for an account of the letters.

NOTES UPON THE LETTERS.

The writers have varying proficiency in Assyrian—both in sign-making and in construction. The Babylonian and Assyrian letters of course, and also the Mitani letters, are well written, much better than the letters from Palestine. The king of Egypt, who has given us three letters,⁶ was not over-proficient. The Palestine letters stand by themselves, in peculiarities of sign-making and in construction, and contain many Hebraisms and Hebrew glosses, of which later. The characters are the Babylonian, rather than the Assyrian.

¹ No. 219. Original text in Constantinople, published in Maspero's *Recueil*, xv., by Scheil, and by Hilprecht in *Babylonian Exped.*, Vol. i. Pl. 64.

² So according to Sayce in *Higher Criticism and Verdict of the Monuments*.

³ No. 13. ⁴ No. 173. ⁵ Nos. 292, 293. ⁶ Nos. 1, 50, 294.

The general state of affairs, as revealed, has been pretty fully indicated already. The letters bear witness to the long-continued dominance of Egypt, the writers saying that their fathers and grandfathers have had dealings with Egypt. Reference is made to the king's own presence in Palestine,¹ with that of his armies, governors, and garrisons. Egypt seems to have maintained over-governors or governors at large (e.g., Amanappa often, Turbihaza,² Pahanatí,³ Janhamu often, Maia⁴) in addition to the rulers of individual cities. Offending governors were often required to answer for their conduct in Egypt, before the king himself.⁵ At other times Egypt sends a special commissioner to investigate charges and settle disputes between rivals.⁶ Minor offenders were usually delivered over to the wronged party.⁷ Burnaburiaš expected Amenophis IV. to punish with death the robbers who had plundered his merchants in Canaan, and to make indemnification for the lost property, because Canaan was under Egypt's suzerainty.⁸

We have already referred to a case of the extradition of property.⁹ Egypt's administration had grown very lax, and this led to many complaints and prospects upon the more vigorous rule of the past, as we have already seen, and as is also evident from Egyptian history. McCurdy has thus stated the condition of affairs: "Northern Syria may be regarded as lost to Egypt. Byblos, Tyre, and Be-ritt are being held with difficulty by the governors, who, in profession at least, are loyal, at great cost and in spite of great difficulties. The troubles come from three separate sources. From without, the Hittites [as he strangely calls

¹ E.g., in No. 69, lines 70-73. ² No. 84, line 34.

³ No. 38, lines 10, 32. ⁴ No. 218, lines 23-24. ⁵ E.g., Aziru.

⁶ Rib-Addi, No. 75, line 64; No. 92, lines 5, 6, 23, 24.

⁷ No. 77, line 25, and No. 50, Reverse, lines 10-32.

⁸ In two instances, No. 10, Reverse, lines 27 ff., and No. 11, line 8, Reverse, line 17.

⁹ No. 25, Reverse, lines 30-34.

them] are pressing southwards from their vantage-grounds lately secured in Northern Syria. Next, in their interest, an obscure foe of Canaanitish race, under the leadership of a certain rebellious plotter, Abd-ashera, is gradually seizing the outlying towns. Finally, there is dissension and rivalry among the Egyptian governors themselves, and they accuse one another to the king of disloyalty, each crediting his colleagues with the blame of the loss of cities and the lowering of the standard of the Pharaohs. The burden of the letters is the need of succor for the hard-pressed garrisons, with the reiterated entreaty that relief may be speedily sent.”¹ This picture deserves supplementing in at least one particular. The obscure foe mentioned is made too isolated, in view of the fact that in letters from all parts of Palestine this obscure foe is named, as threatening the very life of the king’s land, and as fast destroying the semblance of Egyptian rule.

This brings us to the first of a number of more general questions growing out of the letters—that of the character and rôle of this obscure foe, their name, and their possible relation to Israel. We have already referred to them by the name of Ḥabiri. They are so designated only in the Jerusalem letters.² In each of these, except two,³ the Ḥabiri are mentioned, and the name is written out fully, Ḥabi-ri. Apparently they were Bedawin, who were overrunning the country, seizing the strong cities, allying themselves where possible with native princes, and more and more bringing the whole land into their control. Such is their rôle as seen in the Jerusalem letters. In the other letters, in fact in letters from the North and the South, from pretty much all over the country, there is mention of a similar Bedawin people, who apparently were playing exactly the same rôle as that played by the Ḥabiri about Jerusalem.

¹ Nos. 183, 184. ² Nos. 179–185. ³ Nos. 182, 184.

Their name is, however, always written ideographically, usually SA.GAS, sometimes GAS alone. Winckler in his new book has translated this ideogram in every case by the term Ḥabiri without discussion. In his "History of Israel,"¹ he discusses the question, in connection with its relation to the term "Hebrew." The words are grammatically the same, the ȝ of ȝבּרִי being in Assyrian represented by h. He defends the identity of Ha-bi-ri and the people represented by the ideogram SA.GAS. In two letters² this people is connected with the Suti, who were a nomad tribe, often making inroads into the more settled regions, and often employed as mercenaries. The SA.GAS were doubtless, therefore, a similar people, and were also apparently employed as mercenaries, and once or twice on the side of Egypt,³ but usually they are robbing Egypt of her territory. GAS is ideogram for "kill"; in one place the SA.GAS are also denominated "amīlu ḥabāṭî"=robbers.

Still more may be said in favor of this identification, and I think these facts have not before been brought out. In the Jerusalem letters the Ḥabiri play the rôle elsewhere played by the SA.GAS, as we have seen, but more in several places⁴ they are represented as being the confederates of Milki-el and Lapaja's sons. Now in one letter where SA.GAS is found, the people so designated are represented as being in league with Milki-el and Lapaja's sons.⁵ The identification, therefore, of Ha-bi-ri and SA.GAS would seem practically certain, the latter being ideogram for the former. Thus the Ḥabiri were nomad tribes, who were making systematic effort to press into Palestine. The origin of the term Hebrew would seem to have found no solution entirely satisfactory. That the Ḥabiri made a terrible, a powerful impression on the inhabitants of the whole

¹ Pp. 15 ff. ² No. 144, line 27, and No. 216, lines 11-13; cf. No. 205, line 6.

³ E.g., No. 67, line 21. ⁴ Especially in No. 180.

⁵ No. 192, Reverse, lines 5-8.

country is very evident from these letters. That impression doubtless survived many years, and may have given name to the new invaders—the children of Israel. This would of course explain only how Israel came by the name. Much has been written both as to Habiri and עברִי, but the term Habiri has been usually interpreted from the root חָבֵר, and here with the meaning “confederate.”¹ In this connection the discovery of the name “Israel” upon Egyptian monuments of Merenptah, the supposed Pharaoh of the Exodus, is interesting, but its significance is not yet exactly determined.

Another question arises with reference to the Philistines. At the time of these letters they had not yet come into Palestine, but the cities, later occupied by them, were already there; so that they, on immigrating, must have taken over the cities their names and probably their civilization. The well-known Philistine cities of Lachish,² Ashkelon,³ Gaza,⁴ and Gezer⁵ are found here. They must have been Canaanitish cities. The Philistines seem also to have adopted the religion of the Canaanites. Dagan, long thought to have been a Philistine god, is now proven by these letters to have been a native Canaanitish deity. There are two letters here from Dagan-takala, a name compounded of the name of this god, Dagan, and of a word from the Assyrian root, נַגְעַת, to be strong, to have confidence.⁶

¹ So Müller, *Asien und Europa*, p. 396; Winckler, *Geschichte Israels*, p. 17, note 1; Sayce, *Records of Past*, New Series, Vol. ii. p. 60; Higher Criticism and the Monuments, p. 333; Curtiss, *Old and New Testament Student*, Vol. vii. p. 418. Sayce and McCurdy at least have connected the term with the ancient city of Hebron, the root letters of which are the same. According to Sayce, the name occurs in a hymn K. 890; according to Winckler, in IV. R. 34, 2 (Zimmern, *Z. A.*, vi. p. 247), and in Scheil's boundary stone (Maspero's *Recueil*, vi. 32).

² Nos. 217-219. ³ Nos. 207-213.

⁴ No. 182, Reverse, line 6; No. 185, line 20; No. 214, line 32.

⁵ Nos. 204-206.

⁶ Sayce in Higher Criticism and the Monuments, p. 325, still makes Dagan a Philistine god.

Again, consider the extent of trade and communication carried on between all these countries in these early days. There was a lively trade, not only between Egypt and Palestine, but back and forth, and all the way between Egypt and the Euphrates Valley. We read continually of merchants, of caravans, and of the activity of the interchange of commodities from one land to another. The allied rulers of Babylon, Assyria, Mitani, and Alashia, and Egypt are ever professing a willingness to send from one land to the other anything desired, and Egypt's products found their way to the far East, and those of the Euphrates and of Mitani and Alashia were sent into Egypt. A full account of these things would occupy too much space, but the story is one full of interest to the student of civilization and of international relations. Chariots, horses, male and female slaves, all sorts of manufactured articles, such as couches, footstools, articles of ivory and of gold and silver, valuable woods and precious stones, apparently valuable breeds of oxen,¹ all sorts of ornaments, stuffed animals,² wood inlaid with ivory, images and statues, enamel, oil, and copper, etc., etc. Some of these were sent as presents, and some merely in the way of trade. An immense interchange of gold and silver took place between Egypt and the far East. Alashia sent quantities of copper. In Palestine there were evidently large transactions in grain and provisions.

Perhaps of greatest interest are the letters containing simply long lists of the presents, forming the dowries of the daughters of the great kings, one from Egypt to Babylon,³ and two from Mitani to Egypt.⁴ These are truly marvels in their suggestiveness as to the state of international trade, and of civilization. From Egypt is a letter of four and a half pages—a list of all manner of objects, many of the names unknown, gold and silver articles, jewelry, vessels

¹ No. 25, line 23. ² No. 8, lines 25–36.

³ No. 294. ⁴ Nos. 295, 296.

of all sorts, garments, images,—of men and animals and their young,—oil jugs, boxes made of precious woods, etc. And from Mitani are two letters, in all ten pages, closely written—a list of the dowry of Dušratta's daughter, and closing thus: "These are the wedding presents, all of them, which Dušratta, king of Mitani, gave to Nimmuria, his son-in-law. When he gave Taduhipa, his daughter, to Egypt, to Nimmuria, as wife, at this time he gave them." In these letters are found a good many Egyptian and Mitanian words.

Of not less interest are the evidences found of religious interchange. From Mitani we learn that Ištar of Nineveh had twice made pilgrimage to Egypt, had there been revered, and then returned to her own country, once in the reign of Dušratta, and once in that of his father.¹ From Dunip we hear that for years the worship of the gods of Egypt had been established there in Syria.² From Katna, also in Syria, comes the information that the fathers of Amenophis IV. had made for Akizzi's father a sun-god, adorned with an inscription. Now that the king of Hatti had carried it off, Akizzi begs for another one to take its place. Rib-Addi prays not only to Ba'lat of Gebal, but also to Ammon of Egypt.

In this connection the lofty terms in which the Pharaoh was addressed seem significant. Almost the prevailing address is, "To my lord, my god, my sun." This deification of Pharaoh was in entire accord with Egyptian usage itself. They even went a step further and often said, "My lord, my gods, my sun." This reminds us immediately of the Old Testament usage of בָּנָה—the plural—for God. It seems to me that Sayce has drawn just the wrong conclusion from this use of the plural in these addresses.³ I take it to be a strong confirmation of that interpretation of

¹ No. 20, lines 13-25. ² No. 41, line 9.

³ In Higher Criticism and the Monuments.

which makes it a plural of majesty. Note also, in connection with this matter of religious interchange, the Assyrian name of the king of Nuhašši, Ramman-nirari, containing the name of the god, Ramman.

Another important subject is really only a part of this matter of international relations. Two hundred years before the Exodus, the Babylonian system of writing and the Babylonian language were used, not merely in the Euphrates Valley, and not merely in Mesopotamia and Northern Syria, but in all Palestine as well. Marvelous enough is it that men all up and down Syria and Palestine could write in this way, and it were strange enough had we discovered that Palestinians wrote to the Empires in the East in the Babylonian writing and language, but how much more marvelous to discover that these men write to the king of Egypt, and that the king of Egypt and high officers of his court write back to them, in the wedge-shaped characters of the Babylonians and Assyrians! Years before Moses, there were very many men, scattered all up and down Palestine, who could write letters on clay in the Assyrian character. It was no easy way of learning to write; for it involved the use of say four hundred different signs, most of which have more than one phonetic value, and many of which have also one or more ideographic values in addition.

This art of writing was very well known in Palestine. It was the universal international language, and employed not merely in high diplomatic circles, but in the trifling correspondence of petty governors and princes in all Palestine. It must have been more to that day than was the Aramaic in the same regions centuries later, or later still, than was the French in Europe. It means the decided confirmation of all we have said of the predominant influence of Babylon in the West through long centuries before the time of these letters. So powerful, so prevailing, were

the culture and civilization of Babylon in all the West land, that these influences outlived decades on decades, yes centuries, of Egyptian rule. Egyptian armies marched from end to end of the land. Egyptian rulers were recognized, her governors and garrisons were in all the cities; but, in spite of it all, Babylon was predominant in her culture, her civilization, her method of writing, and her language.

Writing was thus a well-known art, and the existence of written documents in these very early times is made certain, and can no longer be at all denied, as has been done oftentimes by our zealous critics. Especially in view of Mr. Bliss's discovery at Lachish, we may confidently expect the discovery of further cuneiform tablets in the soil of Palestine. It would seem also that Sayce¹ is right in urging the strong probability that there may have existed in Palestine written records that formed the sources for parts of our Pentateuch narratives. There seems absolutely no reason to the contrary. Sayce urges this especially for the creation story, the flood story, Gen. xi. and Gen. xiv., and brings forward one or two telling facts to show that some of these records were actually translations from the cuneiform.

That the creation and flood legends may have been in circulation in Palestine in these days is entirely probable, and is made doubly probable from the fact that among these Tell-el-Amarna tablets is one which contains a mythological text, entirely analogous to those of the creation and of the flood, and which, curiously enough, was used in Egypt as an exercise in learning to read the wedge-shaped characters. As it is often difficult for the learner to see readily just how many signs go to make up a word, this scribe had put a red ink dot at the end of each word in the text. Other Babylonian legends may well have been in circula-

¹ Higher Criticism and the Monuments.

tion. Kirjath-Sepher, much discussed and laughed at, would seem to deserve consideration in this connection as the city of the scribe. May Deborah's pen of the scribe have been the stylus with which men wrote in clay, as Sayce suggests? Deborah's song is acknowledged by all critics to be very old. At any rate, the probability of written records at very early dates is abundantly established.

In closing, I must at least refer to another interesting feature of these letters. We have already given an account of one or two letters, containing other languages than the Assyrian, written, however, in the cuneiform character. In the Palestine letters we find the wedge-shaped characters used to write one more language, and in this case, not a non-Semitic one as in the cases above, but one that seems very, very like our Hebrew, in fact, practically the same language. The Palestine letters are full of glosses in the Hebrew language. That the language of those who lived in Canaan two hundred years before the Exodus was Hebrew, is conclusively proven by these letters. The Moabite stone proves that the Moabites used a language very closely allied. Here there is no room for a full account of these glosses, but some examples may be given. The writers put the Canaanitish or Hebrew word after the corresponding Assyrian word, putting a line of separation between.

A few examples must suffice, but the subject is one of considerable importance, and will deserve fuller consideration. For Ša-dî, mountains, occurs the gloss, ha-ar-ri, הַר¹; for hu-ha-ri, cage, net; ki-lu-bi, בְּלֵב²; for Kâ-tu, hand, zu-ru-uh, עַרְעָה³; for hal-ka-at, perish (fem. s.), a-ba-da אֲבֹדָה⁴; for ḥak-ḥa-du-nu, our head, ru-šu-nu רְאַשְׁנָנוּ⁵; for Ša-mí heavens, ša-mí-mí, שָׁמִים⁶. These are only a few. There are a great many of them, and they will doubtless greatly

¹ No. 55, line 20. ² No. 55, line 46. ³ No. 180, line 27.

⁴ No. 181, line 51. ⁵ No. 189, line 18. ⁶ No. 191, line 24.

reward thorough study from more than one standpoint. Such a study would of necessity include consideration of the Canaanitish names found among the names of early kings of Babylon, and also of the Canaanitish words found in Egyptian records; for example in the "Travels of Mo-har."