

ARTICLE V.

HISTORICAL OBSERVATIONS ON SOME
CHAPTERS OF GENESIS.

BY HAROLD M. WIENER, M.A., LL.B., OF LINCOLN'S INN,
BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

THE problems of patriarchal history have given rise to the most diverse solutions. Certain schools of polymaths who are incapable of weighing evidence of any kind have put forward extraordinary theories; as, for instance, that in dealing with the narratives of Genesis we are faced with astral myths or stories of ancient deities. It is only on a certain type of mind that such views can make any impression at all; and, as they are unsupported by evidence and have frequently been refuted, I do not propose to enter upon them here. Those who wish to see what can be said for and against hypotheses of this character may be referred to such works as the first volume of R. Kittel's "*Geschichte des Volkes Israel*" (2d ed., 1912), and B. D. Eerdmans's "*Vorgeschichte Israels*" (1908).

We must look to history, archæology, and textual criticism gradually to solve the difficulties that the last thirty-nine chapters of Genesis present to the modern inquirer. It has been one of the great misfortunes of the Biblical student of modern times that the historical method and the historical spirit have been entirely lacking in the thought of the dominant schools; and, if we wish to attain to true results in this field of study, it is from the historical spirit that we must seek our inspiration. In the present article I propose to offer some preliminary observations on some of the matters which will have

to be taken into account in any adequate discussion of the patriarchal history. It is useless to attempt to solve all the problems of Genesis by some hasty theory. Progress can be made only gradually, and we must walk before we run.

It is well to consider what archæology has done for the patriarchal history. It has not provided direct confirmation of any event recorded in it, nor has it afforded any information as to any person mentioned in these chapters of Genesis. On the other hand, it has given us a good deal of background and atmosphere, especially in the Egyptian chapters of the Joseph story. We now know that those chapters are true to life in all the local coloring.¹ We further know that at the time of Joseph, and indeed in the Egyptian references of the Pentateuch generally, the capital for the time being is correctly located. The proximity to Goshen is correct alike of the capital of the Hyksos² and of that of Rameses II. and Merneptah.

When we turn to Abraham we find that the present state of our knowledge is singularly tantalizing. The Egyptians cherished an unquenchable hatred of the Hyksos and did their best to obliterate all recollection of them. Hence scarcely any information concerning this age has been preserved in the land they ruled. Abraham buys the cave of Machpelah at a time when Hebron was in Hittite occupation, but archæology has not yet enabled us to date with certainty the period when the Hittites were so far south. Ezekiel, speaking of Jerusalem,

¹ See Orr, *Problem of the Old Testament*, pp. 413 ff.: Kyle, *Deciding Voice of the Monuments*, pp. 221-229.

² This has its importance in criticism. Thus W. Eichrodt, *Die Quellen der Genesis von neuem untersucht* (1916), p. 103, writes: "And if we have no precise information as to Joseph's residence, it may yet be assumed that the trusted adviser of the Pharaoh does not take up his permanent residence at the frontier." His permanent residence was presumably at the capital of the day.

says: "Thy mother was a Hittite" (xvi. 3, 45); and there is no doubt that he correctly represents Israel's historical recollection. This has now found archæological confirmation.¹ Kittel (*Geschichte*, vol. i. [2d ed.] pp. 215, 409) admits this, and it is amusing to note his astonishment that "P"—the supposititious late source to which he assigns Gen. xxiii.—should be correct in its history in contradiction of all the theories of the higher critics.

It must be noted that in this matter the antiquity of the political information given by Genesis xxiii. receives support from the archaic character of its legal information. As I pointed out years ago, the whole transaction by which the cave of Machpelah is conveyed to Abraham differs materially from the legal ceremonies of more advanced stages of society by the absence of writing.² This does not necessarily mean that writing was unknown, but it does mean that in the society of which the narrative speaks law, and consequently the civilization it expressed, had not yet advanced to the stage in which the duly authenticated writing is used for purposes of this kind. Legal history shows us that when a people whose civilization has not yet progressed to the level at which written documents play a normal part in the law of evidence comes into contact with a more developed society in which they al-

¹ See O. Procksch, *Genesis* (1913), p. 481; F. M. T. Böhl, *Kanaanäer und Hebräer* (1911), pp. 28 f. It seems reasonably clear that while our knowledge of the Hittites is still too fragmentary for any far-reaching theory, the name ARAD-hiba or Abdi-hiba contains as its second element the name of a Hittite divinity, though opinions may differ as to whether the name Hittite was not used with a wider meaning in some instances than in others. There may also be a reference in an Egyptian stela of the twelfth dynasty (Louvre C 1) to a people in southern Syria which may be Kheta, but the philologists differ as to the meaning (J. Garstang, *The Land of the Hittites* [1910], pp. 77, n., 323; Böhl, *op. cit.*, p. 20).

² See *Studies in Biblical Law* (1904), pp. 46 f. with 26 f.

ready play that part, it is unable to grasp the conception or adopt it in its proper sense.¹ The comparative historical jurist can have no doubt as to the state of civilization that gave rise to the events recorded in Gen. xxiii.

The bearing of archæology on Gen. xiv. in the present state of our knowledge is not as great as has often been suggested. Indeed, it is different alike in kind and in amount from what many modern writers would have us believe. Before the discovery of the Tell-el-Amarna tablets it was customary to endeavor to discredit the narrative on the ground of the mention of Salem in verse 18. It was said that the name Jerusalem was no older than David, and that the eldest narrator knew of no town in the region in question.² Since the Tell-el-Amarna tablets have shown us that Jerusalem existed and bore substantially its present name some centuries before the time of David, nothing more has been heard of these arguments. In fact, the higher critics, when dwelling upon the infallibility of their results, generally omit to mention that it was partly by this reasoning that they were obtained. I could wish that they would lay a little more stress upon it.

The name of the king of Elam, Chedorlaomer, has been shown to be a genuine Elamite formation, meaning 'servant of Lagamar,' an Elamite divinity. We know absolutely nothing else from archæology of any of the other kings' names mentioned in the chapter, despite the many confident assertions that have been made by modern writers. The attempt to identify Amraphel (or Amarphal as the LXX calls him, perhaps more correctly) with Hammurabi has failed miserably. Even a philologist could not explain the final l, while the

¹ See especially *op. cit.*, pp. 66 f.

² See, e.g., W. Vatke, *Historisch-kritische Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Bonn, 1886), p. 302. It was from Vatke that Wellhausen learned most and best!

equation of the other consonants of the names proceeded on the familiar philological method of assuming the identity and overlooking all the other possible Hebrew transliterations of the Babylonian king's name. As to the vowels, they were left out of account as being unworthy of consideration. Nothing that is known of Hammurabi's history fairly warrants the supposition that he ever played the part assigned to Amraphel in this chapter. His date is some centuries too early for Abraham. It was further said that Arioch was a Sumerian reading of the name Warad-Sin or Arad-Sin, though why a Sumerian form should be adopted was not satisfactorily explained. It is, however, now known that this monarch did not reign contemporaneously with Hammurabi. Rim-Sin, who was the contemporary king of the place which is assumed to have been Arioch's kingdom, does not bear a name that can be regarded as identical with Arioch. The name of the place is Larsa. The name of Arioch's kingdom is given differently by various old authorities, none of which make it Larsa or anything that can reasonably be identified with Larsa. According to the Massoretic text, it is Ellasar; Jubilees xiii. 22 and most Septuagintal authorities call it Sellasar; "The Syriac has Dalasar, and the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan Telasar" (R. H. Charles, *Book of Jubilees* [1902], p. 100). In explanation of the name Tidal or Thargal (so most Septuagintal authorities; Jubilees, Tergal), nothing but wild guesses has ever been advanced.

In view of the wide publicity that has been given to the assertions about the kings of Genesis xiv., it is right to dwell on the matter. The following passage is worth quoting:—

"In the past, many students, including the writer, have concurred in the contention that as the sign *NITAH* has the Sumerian value *uri* besides the Semitic value *warad*, and as *EN-ZU* can also be read *Aku*, taking into consideration the passage in Genesis xiv.

1, the name usually read Warad-Sin was really pronounced Uri-Aku = Arioch. Others, however, have contended that this king's brother and successor, whose name is usually read Rim-Sin, was the Arioch of Genesis; while still others have claimed that Warad-Sin and Rim-Sin represent the same individual.

"The new dynastic list, as mentioned above, settles the last-mentioned problem. The first-mentioned theory, namely, that Warad-Sin is Arioch, must also be given up, as this king was not the contemporary of Hammurabi — no not even when the latter was the royal prince during the reign of Sin-muballit, his father. The only conclusion, therefore, is that Rim-Sin is Arioch" (Yale Oriental Series: Babylonian Texts. Vol. I. Miscellaneous Inscriptions in the Yale Babylonian Collection, by Albert T. Clay [1915], p. 43).

It will be seen that Professor Clay does not suggest that Rim-Sin can be *read* as Arioch either in Babylonian or Sumerian or any other language. His whole theory of the identification rests on the hypothesis which is philologically, historically, and chronologically untenable, that Hammurabi = Amraphel.

A curious feature is, however, provided by the attitude of the critics. Just as they asserted that no city existed at Jerusalem in the age of Abraham, and that the name itself was not earlier than the time of David, and pronounced the chapter unhistorical because it did not square with these dicta, so they now assert that it cannot be historical because Abram was not contemporary with Hammurabi; so that there is a chronological blunder of some centuries.¹ This extraordinary piece of reasoning rests on the forced identification of Hammurabi with Amraphel, and is doomed to go the way of the Jerusalem argument.

On the other hand, it is probable that Genesis xiv. supplies the key to one of the problems of Babylonian history. The kings' list includes the kings of the sea country, some of whom

¹ See Procksch, *Genesis* (1913), p. 515; Kittel, *Geschichte*, vol. 1. (2d ed.) p. 432.

are known never to have reigned in Babylon. But it does not notice Amraphel or indicate with certainty any king of Babylon during the period from 1926 to 1760 B.C. (the dates are from King's History of Babylon [1915]). It may be that some of the sea kings ruled in Babylon for some portion of that time, but we have no evidence to that effect (King, *op. cit.*, pp. 107, 212). "They were evidently the only stable line of rulers in a period after the most powerful administration the country had yet known had been suddenly shattered" (p. 212). Our chapter suggests another possibility. They may have been the only *independent* line of rulers, for Chedorlaomer king of Elam appears clearly as the suzerain, and Amraphel seems to have been a vassal.¹ This would explain all the known facts.

There is another matter in connection with which archæology throws light on this chapter of Genesis, and on many another passage in the Old Testament, viz. the numbers involved. The admirable discussion on pages 77 f. of Eerdmans's "Vorgeschichte Israels" is worth quoting at length:—

"We must realise that the numbers of men employed in these times were relatively small. The population of Syria was not particularly numerous then. According to the annals of Thothmes III., 83 men were killed and 340 taken captive in the great battle at Megiddo in the twenty-third year of the king's reign. The whole of Syria (all towns and fortresses) yields 2,503 prisoners, of whom 1,796 were slaves (women and children are included in the number). The number of the conquered chariots of war was 924, from which we may infer an army of some 3,000 men. In the twenty-ninth year he captures 330 soldiers at Tunip, in the thirty-first 494 at another place, in the forty-second 691 in Syria. In the exceptionally important battle of Kadesh Rameses II. was in command of an army of 15,000 or 18,000 men. His combined enemies disposed of 2,500 chariots. There were three men in each chariot.

¹The mention of Amraphel first in ver. 1 appears to be due to the custom of dating by the Babylonian king which Abraham with his Babylonian associations might be expected to follow.

"The forces mentioned in the Amarna letters are often ludicrously small. Subajadi asks for a garrison of 50 men to defend his town (268, 11). Abimilki asks (150, 18; 151, 15) for 20 men for the same purpose. He is even (154, 14) satisfied with 10 men. Rib-Addi desires (83, 67) to have 40 men at his disposal to defend the town. In the case of an attack larger numbers are mentioned. 54, 24 speaks of 200 men, 68, 12 of 300, 69, 20 of 400, and 97, 9 perhaps of 600 men.

"It accords with this that the archæological discoveries show that the so-called towns were very small, and should rather be designated in our language as unimportant villages (cf. H. Vincent, *Canaan* [1907], p. 23; C. M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, p. 22; A. Musil, *Arabia Petræa*, vol. i. pp. 334 f.)."

If these facts be carefully considered, it becomes evident that a surprise attack executed at night by 318 men was a much more formidable operation relatively to the forces ordinarily employed in the warfare of that age than is generally allowed.¹ As a matter of fact, xiv. 24, with its mention of "the men that went with me, Aner and Eshcol and Mamre," suggests that Abram and his 318 were supported by certain local contingents (cf. ver. 13). The total attacking force, therefore, consisted of more than 318 men; and, in view of the darkness, the element of surprise, and the liability to panic of the half-trained forces of Oriental antiquity, it cannot fairly be said that there is anything incredible in this element of the narrative. There are other difficulties in the chapter which are as yet unexplained, and it would be unwise to make a premature attempt at solution, but I look to textual criticism to help us with many of them.

Eerdmans makes a strong point for the early origin of the chapter when he writes: "The kings and cities are very unimportant and small. The post-exilic period, which knew the great kings and their numerous armies, would scarcely invent

¹The route taken also suggests that Chedorlaomer's forces cannot have been very large (see the remarks below about the numbers of the Israelites).

such a tale" (*Die Komposition der Genesis*, p. 92). This may well be illustrated by contrasting the passage already quoted from the "Vorgeschichte" with a few extracts from the monolith inscription in which Shalmaneser II. tells of the forces opposed to him at the battle of Qarqar in 854 B.C. :—

"One thousand two hundred chariots, 1,200 saddle horses, 20,000 men of Dadda-Idri of Damascus; 700 chariots, 700 saddle horses, 10,000 men of Irkhulina the Hamathite; 2,000 chariots, 10,000 men of Ahab the Israelite; 500 men of the Quans; 1,000 men of Musri; 10 chariots, 10,000 men of the Irkanatians; 200 men of Matinu-Baal the Arvadite; 200 men of the Usanatians; 30 chariots, 10,000 men of Adunu-Baal the Shianian; 1,000 camels of Gindibu the Arabian; . . . 1,000 men of Baasha, son of Rukhubi the Ammonite—these twelve kings he took to his assistance. . . . Fourteen thousand of their warriors I slew with arms."

When this is put by the side of the figures of the forces used in the fighting of the second millennium B.C. in Syria, no doubt can be felt as to which of the two historical periods is reflected in Gen. xiv. How little it tallies with the facts of even so late an age as Ahab's!

The passage cited from Eerdmans illustrates other Biblical texts. It is well known that the numbers of the Israelites are quite impossible as they stand, being the result of faulty textual transmission (see *Essays in Pentateuchal Criticism*, pp. 155–169). Professor W. M. Flinders Petrie (*Researches in Sinai* [1906], pp. 205–208) estimates the Amalekite population at the time of the Exodus at about 5,000 souls. He points out that the battle of Rephidim was very nearly a drawn battle, and that this implies approximately equal forces on both sides. He thinks that not more than about 5,000 people could be taken out of Goshen or into Sinai. When we consider Ex. xiv. 7 in the light of experience of the history of the Biblical text, it is evident that the true reading cannot be "600 chosen chariots and all the chariots of Egypt." That is clearly the

result of glossing a text that told only of 600 chosen chariots — i.e. a force of 1,200 to 1,800 men. That, again, harmonizes completely with the results of Professor Petrie's investigations on the one hand and the data cited by Eerdmans on the other.

Another chapter that must be read in the light of what we know of the numbers usual in the second millennium B.C. and the size of the "cities" is Gen. xxxiv. The following may be cited:—

"A n'en juger que par l'étendue ou par la nature des ruines, les agglomérations qui vont être passées en revue mériteraient à peine le titre de *villages*. La plupart de ces localités répondent néanmoins à des noms sonores, Lâchis, Gézer, Megiddo surtout, que la Bible, de concert avec l'antiquité égypto-assyrienne, nous a habitués à appeler des villes" (H. Vincent, *Canaan d'après l'exploration récente* [1907], p. 23).

Bearing this in mind and the fact that in the Amarna letters Abimilki of Tyre asks for a garrison of ten men for the defense of his city, a treacherous raid by Simeon and Levi on Shechem at a time when all its able-bodied men were *hors de combat* is nothing like as impossible as is frequently represented. This is the argument of Eerdmans (*Die Komposition der Genesis*, pp. 62 f.). I do not, however, think that the narrative means that Simeon and Levi were unattended. It excludes the presence of other sons of Jacob. It does not exclude the assistance of such men born in the house or bought with money as may have attended these two sons of Jacob. We know from numerous passages that the patriarchal households really included a considerable *familia* — to use the appropriate technical term — of slaves (Gen. xxxii. 3-7, 10, 16; xiii. 7; xv. 2; xvii. 27; xx. 14; xxvi. 20, 25, etc.; cp. Kittel, *Geschichte*, vol. i. [2d ed.] p. 417. I should understand the statements about the attack by Simeon and Levi as tacitly in-

cluding a following of slaves just as does the account of Jacob's departure in chapter xxxi.

It is, however, well just to consider the view that this chapter in some way narrates an episode of the conquest. The theory is loaded with absurdities and impossibilities. Levi was never a secular tribe in any post-Mosaic time. If it had been, it never had any connection at all with Shechem. Neither had Simeon, the territory of which lay in an entirely different quarter. Dinah was not a tribe at all. No level-headed man reading the chapter can doubt that it relates a genuine love story and an actual physical outrage on a maiden, or that Jacob in fact feared the danger he mentions in verse 30. Nor can it be suggested that any nation invents such stories of its ancestry. If one thing appears clearly from the narrative, it is that a shameful deed — a deed that was felt by the popular conscience to be unquestionably shameful — had been wrought in Israel. Is that the way in which national "legend" glorifies the forefathers of a race?

There is another chapter to which the foregoing argument applies with even greater force — Gen. xxxviii. If ever there was a narrative which no people would invent of its ancestors and which bears on its face the stamp of grim and unlovely reality, that narrative is Gen. xxxviii. What do the higher critics make of it?

"It seems a more natural supposition, however, that the legend ignores the Exodus altogether, and belongs to a stratum of tradition in which the occupation of Canaan is traced back to Jacob and his immediate descendants" (Skinner, *Genesis* [1910], p. 450).

I will just put by the side of this a few sentences culled from page xiii of the same volume:—

"There is yet another element which, though not mythical or legendary, belongs to the imaginative side of the legends, and has to be taken account of in interpreting them. This is the element of

poetic idealisation. Whenever a character enters the world of legend, whether through the gate of history or through that of ethnographic personification, it is apt to be conceived as a type."

It is surely a grave omission on Skinner's part not to have shown how and where we are to find the element of "poetic idealisation" and the conception as types of the characters who have "entered" the "legend" of Gen. xxxviii., "whether through the gate of history or through that of ethnographic personification."

It is really impossible to follow the mental processes of men who on reading such a story will conclude that it belongs to a tradition which ignores the Exodus — an event which was indelibly graven on Israel's national consciousness — or can find in it an occupation of Canaan by Jacob.

The impression made by the general character of this narrative receives interesting confirmation from the history alike of law and of religion. In Genesis the head of the family exercises an absolute power of life and death over its members (xxii.; xxxi, 32; xlii. 37), as in so many other archaic societies, and we see this in operation in verse 24. In Exodus, on the other hand, this is no longer so. The death penalty is inflicted for certain specified offenses committed against parents, but *only as the result of a trial by the court.* It is no longer a purely domestic matter resting on the decision of the *paterfamilias.*

Similarly the word used in verses 21 f. (קדשה) means 'consecrated one,' 'hierodule,' and points to the rites of a Canaanitish divinity, probably Ashtoreth, the consort of the Canaanitish Baal, not to ordinary prostitution, still less to anything connected with the worship of Israel's God. "It is the hierodule, the familiar figure of the old pagan temple, the sacred slave consecrated to the temple and the deity for immoral purposes" (H. F. Rall, International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia

[1915], p. 2682). In this, as in other matters, the true state of affairs has been obscured by the removal of the word "Baal" through the editing of the Old Testament books to accord with the meaning put on such passages as Hosea ii. 16 f.¹ But for this change the religious setting of the story would have been apparent to every reader. Another alteration has also taken place as the result of the same principle of emendation in obedience to the supposed meaning of Biblical texts. When we look closely at the narrative it appears clearly that the word *קדשה*, 'votary' or 'hierodule,' has been replaced by *זונה* in verse 15 in deference to Deut. xxiii. 18 (17): "There shall not be a hierodule of the daughters of Israel." Tamar's special costume points in this direction. But the word still remains in verses 21 f., and the original setting of the narrative shines through the alterations. It is an old story of the patriarchal age in which Tamar disguises herself as a votary of Ashtoreth, and the religious *mise-en-scène*, like the legal, belongs to the pre-Mosaic period. The chapter is one of the most interesting monuments of the religion of Canaan in the patriarchal age, and illuminates the change in religious ideas and practices effected by the Law and the religious development for which it was responsible.

¹ See *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Jan. 1915, pp. 134-153; April, 1915, pp. 308-333; April, 1916, p. 332 (and footnote), Oct. 1916.