Old Testament History and Recent Archeology From the Exile to Malachi

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Few major discoveries have been made in recent years which have an important bearing upon the exilic and post-exilic periods of Old Testament history. Mention has already been made of the finding of the true site of the schismatic Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim, commencing with the 1964 Drew-McCormick campaign at Shechem and continuing in subsequent years. The traditional location of this sanctuary, cherished by the modern Samaritan sect, now appears to have been of later origin during the Roman period.[1] The original Samaritan temple was of course razed by the Romans and a temple of Hadrian was built upon its ruins. Therefore, the remains from the postexilic and Hellenistic eras are rather meager.

Another new area of excavation is the site of ancient Heshbon, explored in 1968 by an expedition under the direction of Siegfried Horn, of Andrews University. He reports of the strata uncovered from the Arab and Byzantine levels, and then mentions the discovery of an ostracon from Area B containing a text of five lines, written in a script dating to about 500 B. C.[2] It is broken, faded, and hardly legible in spots, but it contains a list of names of West Semitic character, along with one Egyptian and one Babylonian. The patronymics are expressed with the Canaanite *ben* ("son of") rather than the Aramaic type *bar* (which one would expect for this period).

[1] Cf. *Biblical Archaeologist,* XXXI (1968), 58-72.
[2] *Ibid.,* XXXII (1969), 26-41.

From the fourth century B. C.—which is beyond the purview of our present study, and yet has a bearing upon the Samaritan sect—there have come to light some interesting fragments of Aramaic papyri hidden in a cave in the Wadi el-Daliyeh, southeast of Samaria. This cave was explored by Paul Lapp of the American School of Oriental Research after local Bedouin began marketing some of these fragments. They were apparently left there by fugitives from the vengeance of Alexander the Great visited upon Samaria after its abortive revolt against his authority in 331 B. C. During that revolt they had burned his general, Andromachus, alive and thus incurred the great conqueror's displeasure. With his customary thoroughness Alexander tracked them down to this cave and destroyed them there. But they left behind these interesting documents which are intended for early publication.[3]

The principal discussion for this period continues to center around the Book of Daniel. One interesting Neo-Babylonian text received more extended analysis.[4] Although the tablet in question does not contain the name of the king, owing to its fragmentary condition, it is written in the Neo-Babylonian dialect, and it mentions metes and bounds such as would pertain only to the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar himself. The virtues of this monarch as the framer of just laws and rigorous enforcer of them are extolled in such a way as to make of him a second Hammurabi. It is indicated several times that he was appointed by the gods to uphold justice in the land. Both his wisdom and his power are described in such terms as to accord perfectly with the portrait given of him in the Book of Daniel. The last legible line of text (reverse column V, 20) states that he conquered all lands from Egypt to Lydia (another confirmation of his Egyptian conquests, which used to be viewed with skepticism by an earlier generation of scholars in the present century). This is considered by Lambert to be the clinching argument for assigning this eulogy to the credit of Nebuchadnezzar, since no other Chaldean monarch ever conquered Egypt.

[3] According to *American Schools of Oriental Research Newsletter* No. 9 for 1967-68.

[4] W. G. Lambert, "Nebuchadnezzar, King of Justice," *Iraq,* XXVII (Spring 1965), 2-11.

From the standpoint of the rise of the prophecy genre such as appears so prominently in the Book of Daniel, Yamauchi points out[5] that Grayson and Lambert[6] regard Akkadian prophecies as bearing a distinct resemblance to those in Daniel. Therefore, Daniel 8:23-25 and 11:3-45 resemble certain early second-millennium Akkadian prophecies in foretelling the rise of certain anonymous kings. Their reigns are described in such vague terms that only a person fairly well-read in the history of the period could possibly identify the events intended. Furthermore, Daniel's career of rising, falling, and rising again in his influence at the royal court is quite parallel to the biography of Ahiqar in the seventh century, as narrated in a fifth-century Aramaic document from the Elephantine. Yamauchi also refers to the letter of King Adon of Ashkelon to Pharaoh in the sixth-century period (probably around 606 B. C.), and states that it further confirms the Aramaic of Daniel and Ezra as belonging to the sixth or fifth-century period.[7]

Some interesting statistics are given concerning the vocabulary of the Aramaic chapters of Daniel in Kitchen's article, "The Aramaic of Daniel."[8] He reports that nine-tenths of this vocabulary is attested in texts of the fifth century B. C. or earlier (including the Akkadian inscriptions). Of the remaining one tenth, there is slender assurance that those words, so far attested only in later Aramaic literature will not turn up in future discoveries, just as has happened in the past. For example, the word *hemer* (wine), which the *Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon* labeled as "late," has since turned up in fourteenth century Ugaritic. The verb *ä^epar* ("be fair, acceptable") labeled in the same work as "rare and mostly late," occurs at least twice in the fifth century Ahiqar papyrus (11, 92, 108, and perhaps 159), and also in the eighth century (Sefiré Stela, III, 29). The sign of the direct object spelled as *y-t* in biblical Aramaic, and alleged by Rowley in 1929 to be late, turned up in Papyrus Brooklyn 3:22, as published by E. G. Kraeling in 1953. So the fallacy of assuming the lateness of words hitherto attested only in later literature is being

[5] Edwin Yamauchi, *Greece and Babylon,* p. 90.
[6] *Journal of Cuneiform Studies,* XVIII (1964), 10.
[7] Yamauchi, *op. cit.,* p. 91.
[8] *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel,* pp. 31-79.

made increasingly clear.

One of the most significant linguistic testimonies of international Aramaic is found in the *Genesis Apocryphon* of the first century B. C., discovered in Qumran Cave One, but not capable of publication until 1956, after the difficult problems of unrolling the brittle, conglutinated scroll had finally been solved by an Israeli technician named Biberkraut. Nahman Avigad and Yigael Yadin produced the printed edition in Jerusalem, through the Magnes Press of Hebrew University. The writer made a detailed linguistic analysis of the five legible columns of this text in a paper entitled "Comparative Dating for Aramaic of Daniel and the Genesis Apocryphon," delivered before the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society at Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia, in December, 1968. Since this discussion will appear in published form soon, in a volume containing some of the contributions made at these sessions, it is unnecessary to repeat that study in any great detail now. It should be stated that a systematic search was made of all the extant Aramaic literature prior to the *Genesis Apocryphon,* including Lidzbarski's glossary in his *Handbuch der nordsemitschen Epigraphik"* (the Hildesheim reprint, 1962.)[9] Occasional reference was made to the seventh-century Aramaic letter from Asshur published by Lidzbarski in 1921 and other separately edited documents. For Targumic and Talmudic Aramaic, another work was constantly consulted.[10]

The discovery of a first-century B. C. manuscript of this sort immediately gave rise to new possibilities of useful discussion beyond anything feasible in the earlier treatments of this problem. Here at last was a fair sample of undisputed authenticity concerning the kind of Aramaic used in Palestinian Jewish circles within a century of the alleged time of composition of the Book of Daniel itself, according to the widely held theory of a Maccabean pseudepigraph. From the standpoint of spelling, grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, it is now possible to determine within quite narrow limits what would have been likely or possible back in 168 B. C., so far as

[9] Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century, B. C.,* and of course the biblical Aramaic vocabulary itself.

[10] Marcus Jastrow, comp., *A Dictionary of the Targumin, the Talmud Babli, and the Midrashic Literature. With an Index of Scriptural Quotations.*

literary Aramaic is concerned. It is now no longer a matter of mere suppositions and theories, but it may be established on objective linguistic grounds that the Aramaic of Daniel is centuries older than that of the first-century *Genesis Apocryphon.*

In the area of morphology, for example, it is noteworthy that *Apocryphon* often uses for the biblical third feminine singuar suffix pronoun *-ah* a spelling with h-', a form not hitherto known in Aramaic before the Targumic period.[11] Therefore, we find *midn^e^ha'* ("her sheath") for the biblical *nidnah,* and *ruh^e^ha'* ("her spirit") for biblical *ruhah.* Further, *Apocryphon* often adds a final nun to the *-ö* of the perfect third plural masculine of lamedh-aleph verbs, which never takes place in Daniel or Ezra, but is classified in Stevenson[12] as characteristic of the Palestinian Talmud and Midrashim. For example, *b^e^'ön* ("they sought"), instead of biblical *b^e^'ö* (19:15); or again, *'atön* for "they came" (19:26), instead of the biblical *'^a^tö.* As for the third feminine singular perfect of lamedh-aleph verbs, *Apocryphon* shows an insertion of the third-radical yodh which never occurs in Daniel or Ezra, but which is labeled by Stevenson as characteristic of the Palestinian Talmud and Midrashim.[13]

Turning now to matters of vocabulary, we note formations which have not been found in any pre-Christian Aramaic hitherto. Such is *hākāh,* "hither," "here" in 2:25, and *k^e^dēn* for "thus so" in 2:17, instead of the biblical *kid^e^na^h^,* and *dēn* (2:15) for *d^e^na^h^,* "this" (although the form *z-n* is found in Old Aramaic inscriptions). Quite striking is the use of the Targumic particle *'^a^rë* to mean "because, that" (as in 20:20 and 21:14). In biblical Aramaic the particle *'^a^rü* occurs, but it means "behold" only, and never serves as a purpose particle. The same is true of Lidzbarski Old Aramaic inscriptions; not even *'^a^rü* occurs in Cowley's Elephantine Papyri. Then there is a very late prepositional phrase, *bit^e^lal,* for "on account of," for the sake of," which occurs in 19:16, 19:20 and elsewhere. In pre-Christian Aramaic generally the *t^e^lal* means only "shade, cover, screen," and never in this causal connection.

[11] William B. Stevenson, *Grammar of Palestinian Jewish Aramaic,* 51S, lists this as "OJ," or "Onkelos and Jonathan."
[12] *Ibid.,* §28.
[13] *Ibid.*

Another purpose phrase is *b^e^dïl,* "for the sake of, on account of" (19:20), which is familiar enough in post-Christian Syriac, but has never been found earlier.

Another distinctive feature in the *Apocryphon* is a late vocalization of familiar words, such as *qüstä* for "the truth" in 2:5, a Targumic form[14] in contrast with the biblical *q^e^söt* (which, however, does not occur in the emphatic state in Daniel or Ezra, and consequently an exact basis for comparison is lacking). But there is no question about the lateness of the pe'al infinitive form in 19:15 ("to leave"), in place of the pre-Christian pattern *misbaq.* As for *bil^e^hodōha^h^* ("by herself") in 19:15, the combination *l^e^höd* or *l^e^hüd* occurs in Jastrow as meaning "singly, separately," and the combination *l^e^höd* or *l^e^hödiy* as "by myself," but this has never been found in pre-Christian Aramaic.

Very numerous are nouns and verbs which simply do not occur in extant Aramaic prior to first century B. C., although they are listed in Jastrow. For example, *k^e^lä* in the aphel, meaning "call, shout," occurs in 19:16 as *'^a^kylya't* (note the third-radical yodh and the aleph before the *t*-ending): "she cried out." Then there is *h^a^sä,* "feel, suffer" in 20:16; *ginnün,* "bridal chamber," and the adjective *'^a^lëbä,* "humble, poor." Often the verb *d^e^baq,* which means only "connect together" or "adjoin" in pre-Christian Aramaic, is employed (e. g., 19:8) to mean "reach" a place—a usage which does not clearly appear even in Jastrow, however.

The foregoing examples have been given for the sake of their cumulative impact, not because of the decisive value of any individual word cited. It is true, of course, that some of the vocabulary hitherto known only from post-Christian sources (i. e., Targumic times or later) may turn up some day in Aramaic documents dating from the second century B. C. or earlier. Nevertheless, there are enough forms and inflections in the text of the *Apocryphon* which suggest that a definite turn toward Targumic morphology and usage was already taking place by the first century B. C. The only fair inference resulting from a comparison with the biblical Aramaic chapters is that the latter represents a stage of the language centuries earlier than the *Apocryphon.* There are no

[14] Jastrow, *op. cit.,* p. 1344b.

longer any haphel casusatives, but only aphels; no longer any hitpeels, but only itpeels and itpaals as in late Aramaic. There are (unlike Daniel) absolutely no internal vowel passives, such as hophals, in the *Apocryphon,* so far as can be ascertained from the unpointed text. Its word order is distinctly that of Western Aramaic, rather than showing the tendency to delay the verb until later in the clause—a trait of Eastern Aramaic very characteristic of Daniel (which therefore could hardly have been composed in Palestine). The spelling proliferates vowel letters such as characterize the so-called Hasmonean orthography of the Hebrew sectarian documents from the second century B. C., discovered in the Qumran caves. (Incidentally, the absence of these extra vowel letters in the Hebrew and Aramaic received text of Daniel virtually excludes the possibility of its composition in the Hasmonean period as the Maccabean Date Theory demands.) It is therefore safe to say that any unprejudiced examination of the *Apocryphon* on the part of a trained philologist would unavoidably lead to the verdict that the biblical documents were centuries earlier. This poses such problems for the committed antisupernaturalist, who can only explain the successful predictions of Daniel as prophecies after the fulfillment, that he is not likely to be swayed by any amount of objective evidence whatever. Nevertheless, such evidence continues to pour in, making it clear that the Maccabean hypothesis is utterly untenable as an explanation for this remarkable book.

With this we bring our survey of recent archeological findings to a close. There are undoubtedly many other discoveries and recent discussions which might have been included in this summary, had time permitted. But within this limited compass of four lectures it is hardly possible to do more than operate according to a principle of selection, pretty largely restricting the discussion to those findings which have a direct bearing upon the great turning points in the history of Israel during the Old Testament period. Discoveries relating to the fortunes of individual cities within Israel, or pertaining to changing fashions of architecture or artifacts in the course of the nation's cultural development, could hardly be included in this discussion. But we trust that enough evidence has been adduced to show that the biblical account

of Israel's historical development, and the biblical indications of authorship of various Old Testament books may still command the respect and trust of any thinking man who is willing to face all of the facts bearing upon the trustworthiness of Holy Scripture.

Rather than a surrender of intellectual integrity in order to retain the historic Christian faith—as the opponents of evangelicalism falsely assert—the present crisis in American Christianity requires us all as evangelicals to master all of the disciplines of linguistics, exegesis, and archeology in order that we may have a reason— a powerful and compelling reason—for the hope that is in us, with meekness and godly fear. With such a preparation as this, the carefully trained minister of Christ may stand even before councils of kings and know that he has for them an all-sufficient and authoritative word from the Lord.

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