

as the circumstances of the "chosen vessels" through whom, and for whose benefit, He speaks.

At the same time, the devout soul will love to realize that "a greater than Joshua is here"; and to trace in the stately staves of this uplifting melody the steps of that march from conquest to conquest which the Captain of Salvation trod "in the days of His flesh." Such a soul, too, will delight to see, withal, the application of the Psalm to the experiences of the whole "Mystical Body"; and to those, also, of the several members of that Body as they "fight the good fight," "accomplish their course," and "keep the faith." To such souls the present writer, in winding up this paper, would commend Newton's two hymns on this Psalm: the one beginning "That man no guard or weapons needs": the other beginning "Incarnate God! the soul that knows." To have enriched Christ's Church with only those two hymns is something for which a man might well thank the Giver of "every perfect gift."



## Pre-Mosaic Literature and the Bible.

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**L**ESS than two generations ago the statement implied in the title of this paper would have been universally regarded with incredulity or even derision; no one who is in the least conversant with the discoveries which have been made in the archæology of the Nearer East since then will so regard it now. Sceptics and sceptically-minded critics may disbelieve the Bible and deny that the Moses of the Pentateuch is more than a legendary name, but they know better, most of them, than to deny the existence of considerable literature of a date earlier than that which Scripture history tells us was the period of Moses.

In this and a subsequent article I propose to describe briefly the extent and character of the literary remains of pre-Mosaic

times, and their bearing upon the literary and historical study of the Pentateuch.

The birth of Moses I take to have occurred during the reign in Egypt of Rameses II., the Pharaoh specially "who knew not Joseph," his son and successor, Merenpthah, being the Pharaoh of the Exodus.<sup>1</sup> It follows, therefore, that any literary remains which have come down to us, whether in Egyptian or Hittite hieroglyphic, in Babylonian cuneiform or Cretan pictograph, or in any other species of script whatsoever of any period before Merenpthah, may be regarded as "pre-Mosaic literature."

Of those different scripts, the several kinds of Cretan are as yet undeciphered; while the Hittite, which the determined attacks of many scholars—and notably the perseverance of Professor Sayce—have *almost* succeeded in compelling to yield up its secrets, have not quite succeeded—so, at least, as to make the records it enshrines yield any effective contribution to our present subject. Practically, therefore, we are left with the inscribed monuments of Egypt, which are chiefly of stone and papyrus, and the inscribed remains in cuneiform, chiefly from Babylonia, but with some important yields from Palestine, which are written for the most part upon clay tablets, but some upon hard stone and other material. Examples of the whole of this literature, with their importance for the Biblical student, I will deal with under the three heads of Egypt, Canaan, and Babylon.

#### EGYPT.

A great deal of written matter, in hieroglyphic and its hieratic modification, belonging to pre-Mosaic times is extant. Indeed, the propensity the ancient Egyptians showed for writing on almost anything or anywhere proves to us that education was widespread among them. At certain widely-

<sup>1</sup> The argument for this date I developed in a couple of articles entitled "Moses and the Pharaohs" in the *Churchman* for May and July, 1900. The argument then given might be somewhat modified and strengthened if written now, but, generally speaking, it stands good as there stated.

separated epochs literary ability of a high order was shown, as evidenced by specimens which have come down to us.

For example, from the far-back age of the fifth dynasty and of the sixth there were sages in Egypt who wrote down their aphorisms of conduct which would not be discreditable from the pen of authors living some thousands of years later. The famous "Precepts" of Ptah-hetep, of the fifth dynasty, taught his son thus: "Be not puffed up because of the knowledge which thou hast acquired, and hold converse with the unlettered man as with the learned, for there is no obstacle to knowledge, and no handicraftsman hath attained to the limit or knowledge of his art. . . . If thou art in command of a company of men, deal with them after the best manner and in such wise that thou thyself mayst not be reprehended. Law (or justice or right) is great, fixed, and unchanging, and it hath not been moved since the time of Osiris. Terrify not men, or God will terrify thee."<sup>1</sup> This book of Ptah-hetep has only come down to us in a papyrus of about the twelfth dynasty, about a thousand years later than when first written, but the copy is believed to be practically exact of the original. Whence we gather that a good work even in those ancient days was cherished and copied with little, if any, alteration for long centuries, as we also believe the books of Moses and later Scriptures were by Hebrew priests and scribes, who, however, had a motive for their literary care, which the copyists of Ptah-hetep had not—namely, the religious motive and a deep belief in the Divine inspiration of the Biblical writings.

Next I would mention the monumental records of Rameses II., which describe his great battle with the Kheta (who were probably the Hittites) and their allies at Kadesh, on the Orontes, a battle which (so civilized were they) was concluded by a treaty of extradition between the two great powers. The record of that battle is inscribed upon the walls

<sup>1</sup> "A History of Egypt," by Dr. E. A. Wallis Budge, Keeper of the Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities in the British Museum, vol. ii., pp. 148, 149 (1902). See also papers by Mr. E. L. Griffith in the Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology, vol. xiii. (1890-1891), pp. 65, 72 *et seq.*, and 145.

of various Egyptian temples, and is also contained in a heroic poem by Pentaurt, who is aptly described as the "Poet Laureate" of Rameses II. As a specimen of the work, take the following extract from Pentaurt's description of Rameses' expostulatory intercession with his god Amen, when he found himself surrounded by the Kheta army and cut off from his own troops: "Have I for nought dedicated to thee temples and filled them with prisoners, and given thee of all my substance, and made the whole country pay tribute unto thee, and ten thousand oxen, besides sweet-smelling woods of every kind? . . . Behold, O Amen, I am in the midst of multitudes of men who have banded themselves together against me, and I am alone and no one is with me, for all my soldiers and charioteers have forsaken me. . . . But thou, O Amen, art more to me than millions of warriors, and hundreds of thousands of horses, and tens of thousands of brothers and sons, even if they were here all together. The acts of hosts of mighty men are as nothing, and Amen is better than them all."<sup>1</sup> Besides this, which is but one sample of the high level of literary production of that time, let us have before our minds the elaborate and spirited scenes of warlike strategy, equipment, organization, and action, which are pictured on the walls of that Pharaoh's temples;<sup>2</sup> of charioteers and footmen, in attack and defence, of disciplined hosts in battle array and of detached groups—all the story and incident of war are depicted in those scenes. Having in view the warcraft, the statesmanship, the civilization, the literary and artistic culture of the time of Rameses II., we feel quite justified in believing that, humanly speaking, one brought up in that court, the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, which Moses was, and educated accordingly, was well fitted to be the leader and organizer of the children of Israel at the Exodus and in the wanderings, and to be the writer, substantially as we have them now, of the books of the Pentateuch. The rhetorical style of

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Budge, "History of Egypt," vol. v., p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Which are well represented in vol. v. of Dr. Budge's "History of Egypt."

the Egyptian records just mentioned reminds us of the more rhetorical parts of the four later books of Moses, notably of the Book of Deuteronomy. Of course, I am now speaking only of the outward forms of literary effort of national and military organization displayed in the pages of the Pentateuch, and to the making of which further elements of great importance have to be added, such as Moses' forty years' sojourn with Jethro, the high-priest of Midian, the discipline of his life there, the discipline and schooling of the new nation at the Exodus and in their wanderings, and, chiefest of all, the Divine call, inspiration, miracles, and chastisement, which are shown forth in the pages of the first five books of the charter of God's kingdom on earth.

#### CANAAN.

But Egypt had direct literary connection with the land of Canaan (which was politically subject to Egypt) and with Babylonia for a period previous to the Exodus of Israel. This was in the Tell el Amarna period—that is, the time when Amen-hetep III. and his son, Amen-hetep IV. (Khu-en-Aten), of the eighteenth dynasty, ruled over Egypt. The last-named Pharaoh built himself a new city, into which he moved his court from Thebes. That new capital soon after Khu-en-Aten's decease was forsaken, went to ruin, and was entombed in the sand; it is now known as Tell el Amarna. In the winter of 1887-1888 the recoverable archives of that ruined palace came into the hands of European students. They consisted, not of what we usually know as inscribed Egyptian monuments—viz., of hieroglyphics engraved upon stone or of hieratic writing upon papyrus—but of clay tablets of the sort usually found in the ruins of Babylonia, and curiously enough inscribed (with a few local variations) in Babylonian cuneiform. They were really letters (some 300 of which have been preserved) to the Egyptian King from his governors and tributary princes of the lands of Canaan (including Phœnicia) and Mesopotamia. The last of them was written some sixty or seventy years before Rameses II. began his long reign of sixty-six years, thus all of them are

pre-Mosaic. The contents of those letters are political—complaints of sedition and appeals for help to the Egyptian suzerain, excuses and exculpations from those accused or suspected of disloyalty. But more important than the contents of the letters, from our present point of view, is that the Babylonian language was the *lingua franca* of diplomatic correspondence with Egypt from Southern Palestine to Northern Mesopotamia; and that such language and its cuneiform script were known and used by scribes attached to the Pharaoh's court. This is a token to us of the powerful influence of the literary culture of ancient Babylonia, while the numerous place-names given in the tablets testify to, at least, the general accuracy of the geography of Palestine as represented in the earliest books of the Bible.

As soon as it was realized that many cuneiform letters from the land of Canaan had been found in the ruins of ancient Egypt, it was felt to be probable that the replies to those letters, and very likely other literary matter as well, would be found in Palestine on excavating its ancient sites. That expectation, as many of our readers will know, has been justified. Every year now the scientific exploration of Bible sites yields cuneiform remains. Most of those hitherto discovered are of the Tell el Amarna period, though at Gezer there has been found a business tablet of much later date—viz., of the seventh century B.C. The pre-Mosaic tablets discourse of family and domestic as well as of political subjects. Hence we learn that reading and writing in the Canaan of those days—and such reading and writing (of cuneiform script) as educated men of Europe in these days often find hard to learn—were by no means uncommon; a fact of very great importance in discussing the literary history of the Pentateuch, but one which “the higher critics” have not yet duly considered.

It may be added that among the Tell el Amarna literary remains there are preserved mythological stories—namely, of the goddess Irishkigal, now in the British Museum, and that of how Adapa broke the wing of the south wind, now in the Berlin Museum. It is not unreasonable to suppose, then, that

at that time and later, in Canaan and in Egypt, Babylonian legends of the Flood and of Creation may have been current in a literary form, and therefore that, under Divine inspiration, Moses might have selected from them what was true and edifying for his Book of Genesis. The literary history of those early days thus shows us that Moses might have written that book, and in writing it made such selection and compilation as we know the inspired writers of the Books of Kings and Chronicles exercised.

But although Moses appears to have had documentary sources for his earlier narratives, it is not to be supposed that they came to him through legendary story-tellers who found their way into Canaan, and found hospitality there while the children of Israel were shepherds in Goshen. It is probable, for reasons which will appear in my next and concluding article, that the patriarch Abraham was the possessor, not merely of unwritten traditions, but of cuneiform records of the childhood of mankind—records which, as Professor Sayce believes, he may have found in Canaan (in which case Abraham might have obtained them from Melchizedek), or he may have brought them with him from Ur of the Chaldees, or at least from Harran; records which, in any case, were probably very different from the mythological stories which, so far, we have found on cuneiform tablets—simpler, purer, and truer; records which would be treasured in the patriarchal households, and to which their own family histories would be added, partly in the land of Goshen and partly earlier. Of course, Genesis i., and something more than that, must have been given by direct Divine revelation.

*(To be continued.)*

