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advanced by Himself. "This cup is the new covenant in my blood"; He declares his own life, on the ground of its sinlessness, to be the inauguration and the origin of an altered relation between the natural and the supernatural. We have seen, in a former Section, that the Christ whom St. Paul believed in was conceived by him to be a sinless Being; but, in the passage before us, we are put beyond all doubt that the Pauline conception was based upon a fact of history. It was based upon the fact that the Christian Founder had, in the strongest terms, claimed to be sinless, and claimed on that account the intervention of Heaven. To the mind of St. Paul, as to the mind of modern Christendom, there was present that picture which is unique in the world's history—the portrait of a Man belonging to a race of all others the most impressed with the consciousness of human depravity, and standing Himself in that immediate presence of death which is wont to lay bare the secrets of all souls; yet, in the very midst of his race and in the very presence of death, declaring Himself, by a life of unblemished sinlessness, to have bridged the chasm between the human and the Divine.

G. MATHESON.

*ASSYRIAN AND BABYLONIAN INSCRIPTIONS IN
THEIR BEARING ON OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY.*

VIII. DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH.

THE inscription that follows, translated by the Rev. A. H. Sayce from a tablet on which it is found both in Accadian and Assyrian, presents, it will be admitted, a degree of parallelism with the history of Genesis xix. sufficient to excite interest and curiosity. In its fragmentary state, making no mention of the names of the cities whose overthrow it records, it would perhaps be premature to affirm that it is

an actual reproduction of that history. I give Mr. Sayce's translation from *Records of the Past*, xi. 117.

"An overthrow from the midst of the deep there came,
The fated punishment from the midst of heaven descended,
A storm like a plummet the earth (overwhelmed),
To the four winds the destroying flood like fire did burst,
The inhabitants of the cities it had caused to be tormented; their
bodies it consumed.

In city and country it spread death, and the flames, as they rose,
overthrew;

Freeman and slave were equal, and the high places it filled.

In heaven and earth like a thunderstorm it had rained; a prey it
made.

A place of refuge the gods hastened to, and in a throng collected.

Its mighty (onset) they fled from, and, like a garment, it concealed
mankind.

They (feared) and death (overtook them),

Their feet and hands (it embraced).

* * * * *

Their body it consumed,

. . . the city, its foundations it defiled,

. . . in breath, his mouth he filled,

As for this man, a loud voice was raised; the mighty lightning flash
descended

During the day it flashed; grievously it fell."

* * * * *

It may be hoped that the remainder of the fragment will some day be discovered and interpreted. In the meantime what we have may provisionally be regarded as presenting at least a parallel to the Genesis history of the destruction of the cities of the plain. In the "man" who appears so abruptly in the last line but one Mr. Sayce finds a possible counterpart of Lot. He suggests with some probability that the expedition of Chedorlaomer, though it returned unsuccessful before the destruction, must have made the people of Assyria and Babylon interested in the cities which they had conquered. Tidings of the overthrow would naturally be

carried from the Jordan to the Euphrates by the travelling companies of Midianites or other traders.

IX. BALAAM THE SON OF BEOR.

No direct light is thrown by the inscriptions on the personal history of the false prophet who comes into so prominent a position in the history of Numbers xxii.—xxiv. His name is not found in them. The only mention of his dwelling-place is found on the monolith of Shalmaneser II., who records his victory over the “city of Pethor upon the river Sagura on the hither” (*i.e.* Eastern) “side of the Euphrates” (*R. P.*, iii. 93); Schrader, however, gives the “further” or Western side. (*Keilinschr.*, pp. 141, 220). Indirectly, however, we find much that throws light upon the prophet’s character and conduct. He appears on the scene as coming “from Pethor which is by the river (*i.e.* the Euphrates) of the land of the children of his people” (Num. xxii. 5). In his own utterance he describes the region more definitely; he has been brought “from Aram (= Syria or Mesopotamia) out of the mountains of the East” (Num. xxiii. 7), and this points to the higher rather than the lower valley of the Euphrates. In Deut. xxiii. 4 the vaguer Aram passes into the more definite Aram-Naharaim, the Syria of the two rivers or, as we translate it, Mesopotamia. So far, therefore, we are at least carried to the region from which the inscriptions come.

Of Pethor, as has been said, nothing is definitely known. The name has however been explained as derived from, or connected with, the Hebrew *pathar* = to “open” or “reveal” (the word rendered “interpret” in Gen. xl. 8, 16, 22; xli. 8, 12, 13, 15), and as pointing therefore, as a technical word, to the head-quarters of soothsayers of the Magi type, famous for their knowledge of Divine things, the Delphi or Dodona of Mesopotamia. It has been identified

with the *Phathuseæ* of Greek writers, and these with a site now known as *Anah*, an Arabic word of the same signification as Pethor (Knobel, quoted by Rev. S. Clark in *Speaker's Commentary*, i. p. 739). It will be admitted that these facts, even if they do not form a very solid basis for a superstructure of theory, are at least singularly suggestive. The Moabites and Midianites send to the oracle which was even more than an oracle, able to sway and guide the Divine will as well as to reveal it. They ask Balaam, the most famous priest-prophet of the oracle, to come to their help, as the Thebans in the old *Œdipus* legend sent for Tiresias (*Soph. Œd.-Tyr.*, i. 290-315), as the Athenians in the time of Solon sent for Epimenides of Crete (*Diog. Laert.*, i. 3, 10). It would be almost a superfluous task to dwell on the parallel which Balaam, from this point of view, presents to the soothsayers, diviners, magicians, and monthly prognosticators who at a later date made the word Chaldæan a synonym for astrologers and magicians. (*Isa.* xlv. 25, xlvii. 13; *Dan.* ii. 2, iv. 7). It is more to our present purpose to note that the ritual of Assyria appears to have abounded in formulæ of imprecation such as Balaam was invited to utter, in the belief that they would be potent for evil against the armies of Israel. Some of these, translated by the Rev. A. H. Sayce (*R. P.*, iii. 144), and by M. François Lenormant (*La Magie chez les Chaldéens*, p. 59), seem almost to have rivalled the memorable curse of Ernulphus of Rochester in their details of malignity. Like the tablets that record the traditions of the Creation and the Deluge, they seem to have belonged to the earliest period of Assyria, and though copied and translated (they are found both in Accadian and Assyrian) by the scribes of Assurbanipal, they are referred by Mr. Sayce to the reign of Sargon, an Assyrian king of the 16th century B.C.

Of these I give such illustrative extracts as seem sufficient.

“The beginning—The baneful charm, like an evil demon, acts
 against the man,
 The voice *that defiles* acts upon him,
 The maleficent voice acts upon him.
 The baneful charm is a spell that originates sickness,
 This man the baneful charm strangles like a lamb,
 His god in his flesh makes a wound,
 His goddess mutual enmity brings down,
 The voice *that defiles* like a hyæna covers him and subjugates
 him.

* * * * *

¹ Evil is to the substance of his body,
 Whether (it be) the curse of his father,
 Or the curse of his mother,
 Or the curse of his elder brother,
 Or the bewitching curse of an unknown man.
 Spoken (is) the enchantment by the lips of Hea.
 Like a signet may he be brought near,
 Like garden herbs may he be destroyed,
 Like a weed may he be gathered for sale.

* * * * *

May the man, by the enchantment, with eldest son and wife
 (By) sickness, the loss of the bliss of prosperity, of joy and
 gladness,
 (By) the sickness which exists in a man’s skin, a man’s flesh, a
 man’s entrails,
 Like this weed be plucked and
 On that day the consuming fire-god consume.”

Side by side with these we have formulæ of exorcism to
 avert evil, and of direct benediction (*R. P.*, i. 133).

“From the burning spirit of the entrails which devours the man,
 from the spirit of the entrails which works evil, may the king of
 heaven preserve, may the king of earth preserve.

* * * * *

“From wasting, from want of health, from the evil spirit of the
 ulcer, from spreading quinsy of the gullet, from the violent ulcer,

¹ Mr. Sayce refers this and the following anathema to have for their object
 the sorcerer whose spell is to be averted, but they are of course not the less
 illustrative of the practice and of the character of the execrations.

from the noxious ulcer, may the king of heaven preserve, may the king of earth preserve.

* * * * *

“On the sick men, by means of sacrifices, may perfect health shine like bronze; may the sun-god give this man life; may Merodach the eldest son of the deep (give him) strength, prosperity (and) health; may the king of heaven preserve, may the king of earth preserve.”

It will be admitted, I think, that these extracts throw a new light on the words with which Balak addresses the prophet of Pethor: “Come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me . . . for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed” (Num. xxii. 6).

The annals of Tiglath-Pileser (*R. P.*, v. 26) furnish, if possible, a still more striking illustration of Assyrian anathemas. The curse is pronounced on the man who shall dare to efface the king’s inscriptions.

“Ann and Vul, the great gods my lords, let them consign his name to perdition; let them curse him with an irrevocable curse; let them cause his sovereignty to perish; let them pluck out the stability of the throne of his empire; let not offspring survive in the kingdom; let his servants be broken; let his troops be defeated, let him fly vanquished before his enemies. May Vul in his fury tear up the produce of his land. May a scarcity of foods and of the necessaries of life afflict his country. For one day may he not be called happy. May his name and his race perish in the land.”

It is a possible explanation of the presence of an officer bearing the title of Rab-Mag = chief of the Magi (Gesenius), or chief priest (Sir H. Rawlinson), among the Chaldæan princes of Jeremiah xxxix. 3, that he attended the armies of Nebuchadnezzar as the augurs attended those of Rome, in his religious character, and for the purpose of pronounc-

ing imprecations like those which Balak expected from Balaam.

It may be added that other fragments of Accadian religious poems furnish suggestive parallels to the aspiration which at first seems so strange as coming from the lips of one in whom the greed of gain, characteristic of his class, was so dominant: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his" (Num. xxiii. 10). In that early form of religious faith, the earliest, perhaps of this world's revealed creeds, the hope of immortality was not absent. There also, amid whatever corruptions of a yet more primeval truth, there were those who looked for something more than "transitory promises." Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees, and afterwards Moses amid the wisdom of the Egyptians, must have been cradled in the belief of a life beyond the grave. Thus we have (*R. P.*, iii. 134) prayers for the soul of a dying man.

"Like a bird may it fly to a lofty place!
To the holy hands of its God may it ascend.

* * * * *

The man who is departing in *glory*,
May his soul shine radiant as brass.

To that man

May the sun give life!

And *Marduk*, eldest son of heaven,

Grant him an abode of happiness!"

A third fragment gives the picture of "the death of the righteous," such as may have been in the prophet's mind.

"Bind the sick man to heaven, for from the earth he is being
torn away,

Of the brave man who was so strong, his strength has departed,

Of the righteous servant, the force does not return.

In his bodily frame he lies dangerously ill,

But ISHTAR who in her dwelling is grieved concerning him

Descends from her mountain unvisited of men.

To the door of the sick man she comes.
 The sick man listens ;
 Who is there ? who comes ?
 It is Ishtar, daughter of the moon-god SIN,
 It is the god . . . son of Bel.
 It is Marduk, son of the god . . .
 They approach the body of the sick man.

* * * * *

They bring a *khisibta* ⁽¹⁾ from the heavenly treasury,
 They bring a *sisbis* from their lofty storehouse ;
 Into the precious *khisibta* they pour bright liquor.
 That righteous man, may he now rise on high !
 May he shine like that *khisibta* !
 May he be bright as that *sisbis* !
 Like pure silver may his garment be shining white ;
 Like brass may he be radiant !
 To the sun, greatest of the gods, may he ascend !
 And may the sun, greatest of the gods, receive his soul
 Into his holy hands."

Hardly less striking is the harmony between the stress laid on the mystic number seven in Balaam's reiterated injunctions, "Build me here seven altars and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams" (Num. xxiii. 1, 14, 29), and the prominence given to that number in the Accadian liturgical fragments.

Thus we have in a penitential hymn translated by Mr. Fox Talbot (*R. P.*, iii. 136):

"O my god! my sins are seven times seven!
 O my goddess! my sins are seven times seven!"

Or again in a fragment (*R. P.*, iii. 143), which Mr. Talbot presents as the song of the seven spirits:

"They are seven! they are seven!
 In the depths of ocean they are seven!
 In the heights of heaven they are seven!"

¹ The *khisibta* would seem from the context to have been a drinking cup: the *sisbis* a radiant garment given to those who were admitted to the company of the blessed.

The same mystic number is found in another tablet of exorcism (*R. P.*, iii. 143) for a sick man.

“The god . . . shall stand by his bedside,
Those seven evil spirits ⁽¹⁾ he shall root out; and shall expel
them from his body,
And those seven shall never return to the sick man again.”

and again in the Accadian poem on these seven evil spirits, *R. P.*, ix. 143.

It has been not seldom noticed by commentators (*e.g.*, Mr. Clark in the *Speaker's Commentary*), that the figurative language in which Balaam describes the vision of the future glory of the chosen people: “How goodly are thy tents O Jacob, and thy tabernacles O Israel! as the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters” (*Num.* xxiv. 5, 6), embodies his recollections of the scenery of Mesopotamia rather than the impressions made on him by the rocks and narrow gorge-like *wadies* which he saw from the heights of Moab. Passages from the inscriptions of Assyrian kings, painting a like scenery, are therefore of the nature of parallelisms, and it may be interesting to quote a few of them.

(1) From the “bull” inscription of Sargon at Khorsabad (*R. P.*, xi. 19). “Above the valley which is at the foot of the mountains, to replace Nineveh, I founded a town, and I gave it the name of Dur-Sarkin. There I planted a variegated forest reviving the memory of Mount Amanus, which contains all the different kinds of trees in Syria, and all the plants growing on the mountains.”

(2) From an inscription of Tiglath-pileser I., translated by Sir H. Rawlinson (*R. P.*, v. 22). “The pine, the . . . , and the *algum tree*, these trees which under the former kings my ancestors they had never planted, I took them from the

¹ *Comp. Matt.* xii. 45; *Luke* viii. 2.

countries which I had rendered tributary, and I planted them in the groves of my own territories, and I brought fruit trees; whatever I did not find in my own country I took and placed in the groves of Assyria."

(3) From an inscription of Ashur-akh-hal, one of the ancient kings of Assyria, translated by Mr. Fox Talbot (*R. P.*, vii. 17). "The former city of Calah . . . had fallen into decay: that city I built again. And I dug a canal from the upper Zab river, and I gave it the name of the Stream of Fertility. And I planted beautiful trees along its banks, and fruit-trees, the herbs of every kind, and vines."

The hanging gardens of Babylon which at a later date were the wonder of Greek travellers, reported to have been constructed by Nebuchadnezzar (*Diod. Sic.*, ii. 10), that his queen, of Median birth, might find the scenery of her native valleys reproduced within the precincts of her palace, furnish another illustration of the same practice. Such "a paradise," which the Lord had planted, came before the prophet's glance as a natural emblem of the future beauty and order of the tabernacles of Israel.

In yet another symbol, in which most interpreters trace undefined expectations of the nature afterwards known as Messianic, we may note the influence of Assyrian symbolism: "I shall see him but not now; I shall behold him but not nigh; there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (*Num.* xxiv. 17). Widely prevalent as was the thought that stars were at once the signs and the heralds of mighty rulers, as seen in the traditions connected with the births of Alexander the Great, Mithridates, and Julius Cæsar, there can be little doubt that the belief had its origin in the astrology of Chaldæa. So in the inscriptions of Nabonidus (*R. P.*, v. 146) the moon is addressed as "king of the gods of heaven and earth, and of the stars upon stars which dwell in heaven," and the same symbol (a six-rayed star) is used both for a star and a god;

and in an Accadian hymn (*R. P.*, xi. 132) a sacred mountain is described, "like the star of heaven it is a prophet and filled with sheen." Still more striking is the parallelism of Tiglath-Pileser's description of himself as "the ruling constellation; the powerful, the lover of battle" (*R. P.*, v. 13).

What has been said as to the probable position of Balaam as a Mesopotamian prophet throws at least some light on the substance of the great prediction of Numbers xxiv. 17-24. That prediction, uttered as it was against his will, and under the constraint of an inspiration which he could not resist, was something more than a forecast drawn from what came within the horizon that lay before his mental gaze. But with him as with other prophets, though the horizon was widened, the standpoint of the prophet remained the same, and what we note as the characteristic feature in his utterance is the prominence given, as at that time and in that region it would naturally be given, to the power of Assyria. Moab, Ammon, and the children of Sheth (= the children of noise, the tumultuous ones, as in Jer. xlvi. 45), are to pass under the sway of the sceptre that is to rise out of Israel. Amalek, the first of nations, is to perish for ever. The Kenites are to hold their rock fortresses for a time, and then the might of Asshur is to prevail and to carry them away captive, as in fact it did when the Rechabites, who were of Kenite origin, were driven from their homes by the Chaldeans who had succeeded to the inheritance of the Assyrian Monarchy, and carried into captivity (Jer. xxxv. 11; 1 Chron. ii. 55; Ps. lxxi. described in the LXX. as a "hymn of the sons of Jonadab, the first who were led away captive"). In the dim distance he sees that the pride of Asshur and of all the kindred race of Eber (Gen. x. 21, 22) should in its turn be brought low by some power from the west, "ships from the coast of Chittim" (=Cyprus, or generally the western regions of the Mediterranean), yet hardly within the range of his vision. If we accept the

views of some scholars (Movers, *Phön.*, ii. 2, 210; Gesenius, *Thes.*; Furst, *Lex.*; W. L. Bevan in Smith's *Dict. of Bible*, art. *Chittim*), that the isles of Chittim derived their name from fugitive colonies of the Hittites, we may perhaps connect the prophet's language with that of the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser I., whose curse has been quoted above, who describes himself as having subdued "rebellious tribes of the Kheti" (*R. P.*, v. 12) and smitten their city Carchemish (*Ibid.*, p. 18). As the same king describes himself repeatedly as having "trampled upon the whole Magian world," and especially those of Nairi (=Mesopotamia) (*Ibid.*, pp. 12, 17, 18), from which Balaam came, and was in this respect carrying out the policy of his predecessors, we may perhaps see how "the coasts of Chittim" rose before the prophet's thoughts, and trace in his language something analogous to the predictive formula:

"Exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor."

[*"Rise, thou avenger, from our bones at last."*]

Further light is thrown on the prediction, as will be seen in the next section, by the inscriptions of an Egyptian king of this period.

X. ACHAN AND CHUSHAN RISHATHAIM.

The history of Israel on its settlement in Canaan presents at least one point of contact with that of Babylon, and shews that that city was becoming famous for its commerce and manufactures. When Jericho was taken, the greed of Achan was attracted by "two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight," but chiefly, as the best prize of all the spoil, by a goodly Babylonish garment (literally a "garment of Shinar," Josh. vii. 21). Then, as at a later date, it might be said that "Haran, and Canneh, (=Calneh) and Eden, and Sheba and Asshur," were "merchants in all sorts of things, in blue clothes and broidered

work, and in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords, and made of cedar" (Ezek. xxvii. 23, 24). And probably then, as in the days of Ezekiel, the Tyrians were the medium through which these fabrics found their way to the inhabitants of Canaan. Of the high reputation gained by them we have an interesting record in the inscription known as that of the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser (*R. P.*, v. 42), in which that king records the tribute which he received from Merodach-pal-Ibtar of the country of the Sukhiim (nomadic tribes in the south-west of Babylonia) as including "silver, gold, pitchers of gold, tusks of the wild bull," and "garments of many colours and linen." It is a not improbable conjecture that Joseph's "coat of many colours" (Gen. xxxvii. 3) and the "prey of divers colours of needlework, meet for the necks of them that divide the spoil" (Jud. v. 30), on which Sisera's mother was counting, and the "scarlet and other delights," and "ornaments of gold upon their apparel," with which Saul adorned the women of Israel (2 Sam. i. 24), came from the same looms. Their fame kept its ground for fifteen centuries, and the younger Pliny (*Hist. Nat.*, viii. 48), records "*colores diversos pictura vestium intexere Babylon maxime celebravit, et nomen imposuit.*" If the Vulgate "*pallium coccineum*" represents a Jewish tradition, it indicates that a bright scarlet or crimson was the dominant colour.

The annals of the Judges, however, bring the history of Israel into more direct contact with the great powers of the north. The first of the invaders who oppressed them after their settlement in Canaan is described as Chushan Rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia (Hebrew, Aram Naharaim—Aram of the two rivers). It is disappointing that, so far as discoveries have as yet gone, no name resembling this has been found in any of the inscriptions. Probably, as often happens in the intercourse between nations speaking different languages, the name, as it now meets us, is a variation,

more or less distorted, of some Chaldæan original, the distortion being motived by the tendency to use a form which is more familiar to the ear or gives something like a meaning. Taking this view, Sir H. Rawlinson and M. Lenormant look upon it as a corrupt form of the name of an Assyrian king, Assur-rish-ilim, or Asshur-rish-ishi (Len. *Anc. Hist.*, i. 117). Of the name as it stands, Chushan reminds us of Cush, the traditional father of Nimrod (Gen. x. 8), and Rishathaim may mean "twofold wickedness" or "two victories" or "two Governments" (Furst, *Lex.*). The former word appears in the prayer of Habakkuk as the name of a region there connected with Midian (Hab. iii. 7). Of the presence of the Chaldæans in these regions as invading and plundering we have traces in Job i. 17; and the names of some of the kings of Edom about this period, Bela the son of Beor, Hadad, and Saul of Rehoboth (Gen. xxxvi. 32, 35, 37) indicate an Aramæan origin. The Egyptian kings of an earlier period, Thothmes III. (B.C. 1600), and Amenophis II. (B.C. 1566), record in their inscriptions expeditions against the Rutennu (= Syrians) of Mesopotamia, and the Kheta (= Hittites), which led them to Asshur, Babel, Nineveh, and Shinar, and the invasion of Chushan Rishathaim may have been an episode in this prolonged warfare. It is noticeable that these records speak of a naval as well as military warfare, and it is probable that the ships were manned by Phœnicians and by men of Cyprus (Canon Cook, in *Speaker's Commentary*, i., pp. 456-459). Indications of an Egyptian navy used in warfare are found at a somewhat later period (B.C. 1200), in the annals of Rameses III. (*R. P.*, vi. 31).

"I made for thee (Amen-Ra, the king of the gods) galleys, transports, and ships of war, with soldiers, equipped with their arms, on the Great Sea (= the Mediterranean). I gave them captains of the bowmen, and captains of galleys, provided with numerous crews without number, to bring the things of the land of Taha (=

Northern Palestine) and the hinder parts of the earth to thy great treasuries in Uas (= Western Thebes)."

Looking to these latter facts we may perhaps see in Balaam's mention of "the ships from Chittim," that are to break the power of Asshur, a reference to this as a new form of attack from the old hereditary enemy of Assyria, using the ships and seafaring population of Cyprus as a fresh and formidable weapon. Commonly the prediction has been thought to have found its fulfilment in the expeditions of Alexander the Great, and later on in those of the Romans; but it would be quite in accordance with the analogy of other historical prophecies to assume that here also there might be both an earlier and a later accomplishment, the one the pledge and earnest of the other; the one within the horizon of the prophet's gaze, the other beyond it.

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

CHRIST'S PROPHECIES OF HIS OWN DEATH.

I HAVE heard even the most sincere believers in our Lord's resurrection and Divinity express grave doubts whether the account given in our Gospels of his own predictions of his death on the cross, and of his resurrection, are consistent with the admitted dismay and general doubt into which the crucifixion actually threw the apostles; and while even the most earnest believers feel this difficulty, the anti-supernaturalists, of course, go further and further every day in their use of the argument from "anachronism," and their rejection of everything, even in the oldest of the Gospels, which implies that the future was ever in any degree really present to the mind of Jesus. M. Ernest Havet has just been writing an essay in the *Revue des Deux*