

*PHYSICAL AND HISTORICAL PROBABILITIES  
RESPECTING THE AUTHORSHIP AND AU-  
THORITY OF THE MOSAIC BOOKS.*

V.—THE DISPERSION AND ABRAHAM.

THE narrative of the flood is followed by some religious and prophetic details, which, though valuable as the inauguration of a new portion of the divine programme with respect to man, do not so much concern our present purpose as the genealogical table of the affiliation and dispersion of men given in the tenth chapter. These "Toledoth" of the sons of Noah, being of the nature of a dry and condensed list of names, and not directly referring to the spiritual interests of humanity, are, of course, regarded as an "Elohistic" document, though in the only reference to God in the chapter He is designated by the name Jehovah. We need not, however, trouble ourselves with this distinction, as we shall find that this, like some other documents we have been studying, carries its date within itself.

The great historical value of this table is almost universally admitted, but it has met with somewhat unfair treatment at the hands of some historians and archæologists, apparently from the circumstance that their line of study has accustomed them to trace backward obscure trains of events, and to infer the classification of peoples from cranial and linguistic characters. They seem to forget that an annalist, who is writing of actual migrations occurring in his own time, is on different ground and must proceed in a different way. His statements are hence said by them to be "ethnographical rather than ethnological"; as if a document that can inform us that certain people of a certain known lineage actually went to a particular country and settled there, could be less scientific than the inferences which a later enquirer, entirely ignorant as to the actual

facts, could deduce from skulls and languages. Our old ethnologist seems to have foreseen this treatment, and takes care to tell us four times over that he treats of the descendants of Noah after their known genealogy, their languages, their countries, and the nations that proceeded from them. With him all this is a matter of certain contemporaneous history, not of inference. Nor does any later hand seem to have added to his work, for it is very limited in time, and takes no notice of the later migrations, intrusions and mixtures which we know to have occurred. Beginning with the three sons of Noah—Shem, Ham and Japheth—he takes them in reverse order, evidently because he cannot trace the progeny of Japheth so far as that of the others, and because his subsequent history is to deal mainly with the race of Shem. He knows of seven sons of Japheth as founders of tribes or nations, but he can trace only two of them to the second generation, and he can designate their habitation only by the vague term, the “Isles” (or the sea coasts) of the Gentiles,” meaning the northern shores of the Mediterranean.

The descendants of the four sons of Ham are better known to him. He traces them for three generations, mentions in some detail the early Empire of Nimrod, unless we regard this as a subsequent insertion by a so-called Jehovist writer; and gives some geographical details as to the natives of Palestine and Northern Africa.

The children of Shem he traces in some instances to the fourth generation, but disposes summarily of the different lines except that of Eber, preparatory to the more detailed account of the Hebrews in the special genealogy of Shem. Here then again we seem to have a dated document, probably by a Semitic writer, whose geographical standpoint may have been in or near Shinar, from which he believes the early migrations to have radiated, and his standpoint in time toward the close of the Nimrodic Empire, before the

early conquests of the Elamites, and before the movement of the family of Abraham from Mesopotamia. His latest note as to this is the two-fold division of the family of Eber<sup>1</sup> into Pelegites, who went northward and westward into Syria and Palestine, and Joktanites who went south to found the Semitic tribes of Arabia. His time of writing was after the founding of the first Babylonian and Assyrian nations, and before the date of the oldest inscriptions of Tel-loh and Mugheir. We may thus believe that his time, though perhaps a little later, is not very different from that of the "Jehovist" who gives us the description of Eden, and whose position in place and time we have already noticed.

It is to be noted that, like the so-called Jehovist who precedes and follows him, the writer of Genesis x. believes that the survivors of the Deluge and their immediate descendants were civilized men, capable of practising agriculture, of building cities and towns, and of migrating by sea as well as by land. We may also infer that he regards the primitive language of man in Shinar as that Turanian monosyllabic tongue spoken and written by the earliest Akkadians, while the Semitic and Aryan languages were later derivatives, though of very early origin. We may also fairly infer that, according to him, the primitive type of man was that of the early Chaldean, and that the diverse characters which we find so early in Asia and Africa had sprung of isolation, change of habits of life, and unmixed heredity. In these short statements we may sum up his philology and ethnology.

We may now inquire as to his facts respecting the primary dispersion of men, bearing in mind that his table of affiliation extends over only three generations, and cannot be held responsible for any subsequent movements or mixtures of nations. This limitation of his range removes many

<sup>1</sup> The name Peleg refers to this division of the land (Gen. x. 25).

difficulties which have been conjured up by continuing the record conjecturally into later times. It thus happens that even old writers, from Josephus to Bochart, by attending to the limit of time, could, in the main, understand his statements, though in modern times discoveries in Chaldea and Egypt have thrown very important light on some of the more difficult points.<sup>1</sup>

From our author's point of view there are naturally three main branches, corresponding to the three sons of Noah; but these branches are not equal in magnitude or extension. In this the children of Ham take the lead, establishing the first empire and giving off three main streams of migration. Japhet comes next with two main lines of colonization; Shem, though spread east, west, and south, seems to move more slowly, and to follow in the wake of the Hamites, whom in many places he supplants.

Ham obviously represents that vast assemblage of people whom ethnologists have been in the habit of naming Turanian. The language of the early Akkadian empire of Chaldea was of Turanian type, and with this the features of the earliest rulers represented in the monuments correspond. The faces of these men, while somewhat triangular and sometimes with oblique eyes, strongly resemble those of the earlier Egyptians and the Punites of Southern Arabia as well as the Lapps, Chinese and Japanese. Our author does not tell us of their settlements in Northern and Western Europe, and in Northern and Eastern Asia, which may not have been peopled so early. He gives, however, some detail as to other lines of migration. One of these is to the south-west along the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea, and thence to the Upper Nile. This was the line of the Cushites and their allies, and while the early settlements

<sup>1</sup> The excellent series of racial types from Egypt, prepared by Prof. Petrie for the British Association, is of great value, and also the figures found by De Sarzac at Tel-loh.

of Cush were in Chaldea the name ultimately became localized in Africa. A second branch, that of Mizraim, made its way to Lower Egypt, the Mazar or Misr of all subsequent history. A third stretched from the Persian Gulf and the Valley of the Euphrates to the Coast of the Mediterranean, and thence the Phœnicians or Canaanites took to the sea and "were scattered abroad," at the same time acquiring a language of Semitic type. We may remark here that the early monuments both of Chaldea and Egypt show that these primitive Hamites were not negroid, though some of them were dark, and classed by the Egyptians among the black races. If negro races are included in the record, they appear only as the descendants of Put or Phut, a name which may have referred to negro nations lying to the south of Egypt; but the majority of the Hamites were not black or with negroid features, and it is certain that at a very early period they became intermixed both with the Japhetic and Semitic tribes. Of the two lines of travel assigned to the sons of Japheth, one runs northward to the regions bordering the Black Sea and the Caspian, the other westward along the south coast of Europe, the coasts or isles of the Gentiles, constituting the Greek and allied races of the northern side of the Mediterranean.

For the family of Shem, we have at this early time no very extensive geographical distribution. Asshur represents the early Assyrians, who borrowed letters and many of the arts of life from the Chaldeans, whose empire they eventually subverted. Elam represents an early and formidable nation in the hill country of Western Persia. Aram, Arphaxad and Lud, occupied the Upper Euphrates and regions adjoining as far as Asia Minor, and portions of Palestine, mixing there with the Canaanites. Joktan went southward and mingled with the Hamites in Arabia.

It is evident that this affiliation of nations belongs to an early date, and extends over only a limited area of the old

continent, which constitutes the known world of the author. This world extends from the Euphratean Plain to Persia on the one hand, and Greece on the other, and from the Black Sea on the north to the Upper Nile on the south. It includes the world as known to the earliest Chaldeans and Egyptians, probably the whole peopled world of the time, unless in the case of roving tribes, who had moved beyond the ken of the more central communities. It is not too much to say that, regarded with this limitation, all modern research has vindicated its accuracy, and where it seems to be contradictory to ethnological facts this has been found to depend upon later intrusions and mixtures. It would require a volume with many pictorial illustrations to give the evidence in full of this statement; but this can be obtained in many commentaries and historical books. A summary of the main facts, though with some errors and omissions, will be found in Sayce's little work, *The Races of the Bible*.<sup>1</sup>

I have already referred to the early date of this document, and the notes of an historical character interspersed, and which might be supposed to be later additions, all keep within the same time-limits. The writer never by any chance shows the least knowledge of the subsequent history of the peoples to whom he refers. It is scarcely possible to imagine a later writer persevering in such reticence. Even in the previous episode of the prediction in very general terms of the future destiny of the sons of Noah, this is given as a prophecy by the patriarch, not as historical fact; and the history as given in the tenth chapter shows no indication of its fulfilment, but rather the contrary, in the early dominance and expansion of the Hamites.

<sup>1</sup> Religious Tract Society. Bochart's *Phaleg* is still of great value, and Lenormant's *Manual of Early Oriental History* and *Beginnings of History* are useful. Eadie's *Early Oriental History* has a useful summary, also Delitzsch's *Commentary on Genesis*.

The prominence given to the early Cushite and Asshurite nations on the Euphrates and Tigris are also very characteristic of an early date. It now appears<sup>1</sup> that we may safely identify Nimrod with the Chaldean hero-hunter Gisdubar, a usurper who subverted, as far as the Cushites were concerned, the old patriarchal rule by a military despotism, and seems to have introduced a new priestly system in the form of Shamanism. This is, I think, the interpretation we should give to his alliance with his friend and adviser Heabani, who is represented pictorially as a man with the horns, feet and tail of a bull, and hence has been supposed to be altogether a mythical personage; but if we take this as intended for his official garb, he assumes the guise of an American medicine-man. It is quite likely that a similar explanation applies to many of the so-called demons and genii of Babylonian and Assyrian sculptures, and that the Chaldean magi were originally Shamans. If, in addition to all this, Merodach the later tutelar god of Babylon, is a deification of Nimrod,<sup>2</sup> we see that Moses had good reason to preserve and hand down to succeeding times the old story of the Nimrodic Empire.

We may note here that there is a remarkable absence from these documents of the race prejudices and hatreds which arose from later conflicts, except perhaps in the one instance of Noah's prophecy. All the great branches of humanity are alike to our annalist, except in so far as concerns the religious destiny of Shem, and that enlargement of Japheth which only modern times have seen fully realized. In this connection we must not forget that Moses was in a better position than we are to realize the actual facts of the dispersion of mankind. Independently of the Abrahamic documents to which he had access, we know that centuries

<sup>1</sup> Hommel, *Proceedings Society of Biblical Archaeology*, 1893, pts. 1, 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Sayce has argued in favour of this in the *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, vol. xi.

before his time the geography and ethnology of the regions covered by Genesis x. were well known in Egypt. To this both the Egyptian monuments and the Tel-el-Amarna tablets testify. But, on the other hand, the Egyptians regarded themselves as distinct from and superior to the other races of men. This idea must have sunk deeply into the minds of the Hebrew slaves during the long reign of Rameses II., and they must have greatly needed the facts stated in the ninth and tenth chapters of Genesis to raise them to a conception of their equality with their lordly masters, who we know regarded themselves as little less than gods, and the Hebrews as well as the mixed multitude which we find allied with them, as altogether inferior races. There was no later phase in the history of Israel in which such ideas were so much needed. With their sequel in the story of the Exodus they were indeed promulgated in Genesis for all time, wherever there has been the tyranny of race over race, or slaves to be freed. They are echoed in the wild chant of the negroes at the time of the American Civil War:—

“ Oh go down, Moses,  
Way down in Egypt's land,  
Tell King Pharaoh  
To let my people go.”

But their first and great occasion was the liberation of the Hebrews under Moses.

I do not propose here to take up the tempting philological problems of the Tower of Babel, but may remark that its significance also is Mosaic and Exodic. It teaches the primitive unity of man on his new departure after the flood, that dispersion and national differences are parts of the Divine plan, though direct results of human ambition and love of aggrandizement; and that the great cities and magnificent temple-towers, whether of Egypt or Babylon, are not necessarily connected with the Divine favour, but

may be monuments of an idolatry oppressive to man and hateful to God. Thus the catastrophe of Babel was distinctly in furtherance of the mission of Moses, which looked forward to a kingdom of God and restitution of all things, in which the edict of national dispersion would be revoked.

It would be interesting to know more of the fortunes of those early nations which migrated from Shinar, but our historian, bridging over the intervening space with a mere genealogical list, passes at once to a different sphere in time, the age of Abraham and his contemporaries. Great political changes had occurred in the meantime. The kingdom of Nimrod had been broken up into smaller states. The warlike people of the Elamite mountains, under their king, Kuder Nankundi, a predecessor of Kuder Lagamar, the Chedorlaomer of Abraham's time, had invaded the lowlands and reduced them to subjection, and had even pushed their conquests as far as the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. At one time the adventure of Abraham with the five kings from the East, recorded in Genesis xiv., being vouched for only by the Bible, was regarded as mythical; but now we have it confirmed by contemporary inscriptions as well as by the later records of the Assyrian kings, who invaded Elam and restored to Babylonia idols which had been captured by the Elamites ages before. Thus this fragment of ancient history is authenticated by modern discovery, and proves to have been a contemporary record, for no subsequent writer up to recent times was likely to have met with it. Nor is the insertion of this episode in the history of Abraham unnecessary or gratuitous. It points to the origin of the first movement of the family of Abraham from Ur, before he received his divine commission, and to that probably enforced division of the Semites from which Peleg got his name. It serves also to point out the embryo condition at that time of nations at a later date great and populous, to indicate the wide extent of their

movements, and to illustrate the character and position of the patriarch himself.

Tomkins, in his *Studies on the Times of Abraham*, has well illustrated many of these points; but some singular confirmations of the history have appeared since the publication of that work. One of the most curious of these is a letter of the king of Jerusalem, whose name has been read Ebed-tob, to King Amenophis IV. of Egypt, in the Tel-el-Amarna tablets. This letter shows that Salem or Jerusalem was a very ancient city, that it had a temple of a god recognised as the Most High, that its ruler was a priest-king, supposed to be appointed by the oracle of the god himself. Ebed-tob must have lived nearly two hundred years after Abraham, but his letter fully confirms the notice of Melchizedek, king of Salem, in Genesis, and the much later inferences from it in the Epistle to the Hebrews. There is on the other hand reason to believe that before the time of Moses, Salem had fallen into other hands, and that its people had lapsed from that purer faith with which Abraham had fraternised.<sup>1</sup> Here again we have reference to historical facts which had become obsolete even in the time of Moses, and certainly must but for him have fallen out of sight in later times.

An eminently Mosaic and most graphic picture in the life of Abraham is that of the overthrow of the Cities of the Plain. It stands forth in ancient literature as a unique description of a bitumen eruption, a kind of catastrophe to which the valley of the Lower Jordan, from its geological structure, was eminently subject, and of which we have an account that even now we could scarcely have understood, were it not for the destructive accidents of a similar kind, but on a smaller scale, which have occurred in the petroleum districts of North America. I have fully discussed this catastrophe in an article on the "Physical Causes of

<sup>1</sup> See the later notices in Joshua.

the Destruction of the Cities of the Plain," in this Journal.<sup>1</sup> Everything here is natural, even to the final encrusting of the remains of Lot's wife in the saline mud which accompanies eruptions of this kind. It bears evidence at once of the testimony of a contemporary, and of the careful diction of a man of scientific training, and it is not too much to say that the knowledge displayed in this episode exceeds anything that existed between the science of ancient Egypt and that of our own time.

But this, it may be said, was a miracle. True, but it was a miracle of the Mosaic type. It is a natural occurrence, but one rare and exceptional, and rendered miraculous by its association with divine justice and with moral and spiritual things. Had the great eruption of Krakatoa, or that of the hot springs of New Zealand in our own time, been predicted beforehand, and connected with the iniquities of men who were "sinners before Jehovah exceedingly," and had heavenly messengers been sent to deliver righteous people from these calamities, they would have been miraculous, precisely to the same extent in which the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was miraculous.

Here we have another dated document belonging to the time of Abraham, if edited by Moses; and that it could not have belonged to more recent times is rendered evident by the myths, exaggerations and absurdities which have been heaped around it by later commentaries belonging to ages of comparative ignorance, and of which no trace can be found in the original record. It would be invidious as well as unnecessary to give references. Instances abound everywhere in ancient and modern literature.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> January, 1886.

<sup>2</sup> I may say here that the tendency of writers on Scriptural subjects to show their research by gathering around Bible history fables of every kind which have been connected with it, is most hurtful to the interests of truth. The retelling of Arab and mediæval legends about Nimrod and the "Dead Sea," which one finds even in modern commentaries, are cases in point.

The moral lessons of this narrative, and the interest of Lot in it would insure its preservation among the records of Abraham, and it would commend itself to the lawgiver, who insisted so strenuously on the punishment of sin in this world. It was left for Christ to show that in the judgment to come greater guilt will attach to the rejection of His loving message of salvation, than to any iniquity chargeable against the wicked inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.

We must reluctantly pass over the times of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, which are replete with interesting proofs of the thesis of these papers, and must in the last of the series go on to the Exodus, in the account of which, if our hypothesis is correct, we shall find Moses writing of the events of his own time, and in which he himself played a great part.

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## NEW TESTAMENT NOTES.

### (1) THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A DOVE.

IN the Gospel according to St. Luke iii. 21, 22 we read: "Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that, Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon Him, and a voice came out of heaven, Thou art my beloved Son; in Thee am I well pleased."

My remarks will bear upon the comparison of the Holy Spirit to a dove. The words of St. Luke are: *ἐγένετο . . . καταβῆναι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον σωματικῶ εἶδει ὡς περιστέραν ἐπ' αὐτόν.* The Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark omit *σωματικῶ εἶδει*, e.g. St. Matthew says: *εἶδεν (Ἰησοῦς) τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ καταβαῖνον ὡσεὶ περιστέραν ἐρχόμενον ἐπ' αὐτόν.* St. Mark says: *εἶδεν (Ἰησοῦς) τὸ πνεῦμα ὡς περιστέραν καταβαῖνον εἰς αὐτόν.*