

*EZEKIEL'S VISIONS OF JERUSALEM.*

THE tragedy of the fall of Jerusalem is a theme of undying interest. Regarded from the point of view of a later generation it seemed quite unparalleled, because of the development which had taken place in Israel's conception of God. That so great and peerless a God should abandon His people, and suffer His own temple to be laid low, was a marvel that could not have been believed, had it not been experienced. True, it had been foretold by the prophets, but the overpowering dreadfulness of the blow, regarded from the later point of view, exceeded the ability even of a prophet to express. It may be questioned, however, whether another event in the later history of Judah does not contain still more of the making of a tragedy. For if Josiah was really such an ardent reformer as he is represented, if he really adjusted the forms of the national life to the demands of a divinely sanctioned righteousness, and if men of piety were convinced that "righteousness exalteth a nation," what a contradiction to the divine justice was the defeat and death of the righteous king!

What, then, was it that Josiah did and Jehoiakim undid? What was the reformation of the one, and what the reaction of the other? The two questions naturally go together, but it is only the second which we can now consider. To answer the first, we should have to make a study of the narrative of the reformation; to answer the second, it must here suffice to make some examination of the visions described in Ezekiel viii.-ix. It should be mentioned that the present writer does not see his way to agree with the majority that the harmful type of religion established by Manasseh was Assyrio-Babylonian; he thinks that it was more probably in the main of north Arabian

origin. It is indeed not to be disputed that danger threatened the land of Judah in the later reigns from Babylon, but there was also danger, as the Old Testament, critically examined, appears to show, from north Arabia. One would therefore expect to find that some at least of the lower cults described in Ezekiel viii. was north Arabian, though beside them one would naturally look out for others that were Babylonian. And if Manasseh's type of religion was mainly north Arabian, one would expect the popular cults under Jehoiakim and Zedekiah to be also on the whole north Arabian.

Let us now turn to Ezekiel viii., and examine the details as briefly but as penetratingly as limits of space permit. In verse 3 we read that a spirit, or divine energy, lifted Ezekiel up and brought him "in visions of God" to Jerusalem, to the door of the north gateway of the inner court of the temple, "where was the place of the image of *Ḳin'ah hammaḱneh*." The prophet means to say that he was brought to the very same place where formerly (under Manasseh) the image referred to had stood. In a subsequent passage (*v.* 5) he says in effect that when his attention was free, he observed that the same image (removed by Josiah, and not yet set up again when the prophet left Jerusalem as an exile) had been erected once more, though in a different place. This, I think with Kraetzschmar, must be the meaning of the passage (*cf.* *v.* 3), which appears to run thus, "And I lifted up mine eyes northward, and, behold, north of the gate of the altar (?) was that image of *Ḳin'ah* at the entrance." <sup>1</sup>

Now, as to the name of the deity, *Ḳin'ah* and [*Ham-*]*maḱneh* are both plainly impossible; "that provokes to jealousy" is of course nothing but an attempt to make sense out of a second miswritten form of the name of the deity.

<sup>1</sup> Cornill omits this last word.

What can *Ḳin'ah* have come from? Not from *Kewan*, a title of Saturn and of the sun (cf. Am. v. 26<sup>1</sup>; not from *Ḳaneh*, "reed," as Gunkel supposes,<sup>2</sup> comparing Psalm lxxviii. 31 [30] "Rebuke the beast of the reeds," and interpreting the phrase "the image of the reeds" of the mythological dragon *Tiâmat*. Not improbably we should connect *Ḳin'ah* with the legendary names 'Anak, Akan and even *Kena'an*. If so, the name is north Arabian, and is probably a corruption of a title of the goddess *Asherah*. Several scholars have already recognized *Asherah*,<sup>3</sup> but not ventured on an explanation.

It is equally hard to understand and to trace the origin of the superstition referred to in verse 10. There we read, "And I entered, and looked, and behold, every form of reptiles and (other) beasts [abominations] and all the idols of the house of Israel, graven upon the wall round about." The explanations of Robertson Smith, Toy and Gunkel seem to me hardly satisfactory. Neither clan-totems, nor Babylonian dragons ("helpers of Rahab," Job xi. 13) can justifiably be found here, especially as neither theory is consistent with the words, "and all the idols of the house of Israel," which intervene between "abominations" and "graven." It is only an enlarged experience of similarly corrupt passages elsewhere, and of the habits of the scribes, which can help us much here. For my part I am satisfied with making this suggestion—that both here and in Ezekiel xviii. 6 (as well as in some other Old Testament passages) "Israel" has been miswritten by the scribe for "Ishmael." As for the words rendered "reptiles and beasts," I take them to be a gloss consisting of two regional names, and defining for ancient readers the geographical meaning of

<sup>1</sup> *Expository Times*, December 1898; Stade's *Zeitschrift*, 1901, p. 201.

<sup>2</sup> *Schöpfung und Chaos* (1895), p. 141.

<sup>3</sup> Davidson, for instance, says, "The image here may be this Ashera."

Ishmael in this passage. As the most probable original form of the text of verse 10, I would propose, "every form of abominations (=images), namely all the idols of the house of Ishmael, graven in the wall round about." North Arabian again.

Babylon, however, is not to miss its chance. It is in itself an extremely plausible view that the "women weeping for the Tammuz" (v. 14) are acting in accordance with Babylonian ritual. Tamûz was in fact one form of the name of the Babylonian god of vernal vegetation, whose disappearance was mourned by weeping women. I do not, however, think a reference to the Babylonian cult quite certain. Ritual mourning for the dead god existed in Canaan long before Zedekiah's time. Isaiah xvii. 10 (*see* Rev. Vers. marg.) suggests the name Na'aman; Hadad and Rimmon would also perhaps be possible. It is worth considering whether the description of a scene from the cult of Ashtart in Jeremiah vii. 18 and xlv. 17 ff. may not throw light on our passage. In a word, it may be at the sacred meal that the women are sitting, while they utter ritual benedictions (read *mehhārekōth*, "blessing," for *mehakkōth*, "weeping") on the goddess, one of whose many titles may have become corrupted into something like Tammuz.

That the sun-worship described in verse 16 is Babylonian rather than north Arabian, or north Arabian rather than Babylonian, it would be difficult to prove, while neither from Babylonian nor (so far as we know it) from north Arabian religion can we account for the "putting the branch to the nose" in verse 17. Years ago (1888), in my small book on Jeremiah, I gave my adhesion to the view that the practice referred to is Persian—a bundle (called *baresman*) of branches of certain flowering trees was held before the face by worshippers that their breath might not contaminate the

glory of the sun. But apart from the improbability of the word *sholehim* just here, verse 17 seems clearly to express the climax of Israel's offences, and that climax is not connected with ritual but with ordinary morality. And most probably, as I have pointed out elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> it is one of those fearfully common sins against women's purity (Deut. xxii. 23), which is referred to in this closing passage.

Our work, however, is not yet done. We have not yet sufficiently answered the question, In which of the popular cults of Zedekiah's time can the religious influence of Babylon or of north Arabia be recognized? We have explored the dark corners of Ezekiel viii.; is there any further help to be derived from chapter ix.? This passage contains a terrible imaginative account of the massacre of the wicked inhabitants of Jerusalem by seven heavenly semi-divine beings in human form. One of the seven is clothed in linen; linen represents the luminous appearance of the divine body. The same great Being is said to have a writer's inkhorn at his side (v. 2). According to Gunkel and Zimmer,<sup>2</sup> this is a Hebraized form of Nabû (Nebo), the Babylonian writer-god (cf. Enoch in the later Hebrew writings), by whom the destinies of men were written down on the heavenly tablets, and who was also one of the seven planetary deities. Certainly the parallelism is too obvious to be disregarded. But we must not, in my opinion, forget two other important parallelisms with Exodus xii. 23 and Daniel x. 5 respectively. In the former passage (cf. 2 Sam. xxiv. 16) "the destroyer" is clearly that warlike supernatural Being generally called Mal'ak-Yahweh and sometimes Mal'ak (for which most give as equivalents, "the Angel of Yahweh" and "the Angel," but, as I venture to think, wrongly), a Being believed in probably by the north Arabians before

<sup>1</sup> *Critica Biblica*, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*, p. 404.

He became known to the Israelites. In the latter (as is also said in the Talmud) the man clothed in linen is Gabriel, who is but a faint copy of Mika'el (Michael), a Mighty One who has the same origin as Mal'ak,<sup>1</sup> i.e. is primarily north Arabian. And I cannot for my part suppose that such a personage, the Helper of the great God, was provided with fresh Babylonian characteristics, belonging properly to Nabû, in the time of Ezekiel. I admit, of course, the affinity of many points in the Babylonian and other Western Asiatic religions, but I do not feel it necessary to assume that when two religions have points in common one of the two must necessarily be the original of the other. Babylon may from time to time have directly influenced Israelitish religion, but upon the whole the popular religion borrowed much more from north Arabia, and the origin of north Arabian religion is not at present a subject ripe for discussion.

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### *THE HEAVENLY TEMPLE AND THE HEAVENLY ALTAR.*

#### II.

THE previous article closed with a survey of some Babylonian conceptions. That survey appeared to show: (1) that certain Babylonian temples were believed to have been constructed from plans revealed by the gods; (2) that the temples (in some cases at least) were regarded as a symbol of the cosmos, types, to use an older method of speech, of which the whole cosmos was the anti-type; but (3) that evidence appears to be wanting that the Babylonians believed in a temple and altar in heaven, or that the earthly temples and altars were copies of such particular heavenly originals; the anti-type of the earthly temple with its altar

<sup>1</sup> See EXPOSITOR, April, 1906.