

OLD TESTAMENT AND BABYLONIAN LANGUAGE.

THE discoveries of the Oriental excavations have not only thrown much light on the history of the ancient peoples, but have cast many new shadows as well. Each fact is true, especially in regard to the Old Testament. It is certain, on the one hand, that many difficulties, which the text of the Old Testament formerly presented to the expositor, have been removed by recent discoveries. We need only think, for example, of the names Ur, Pethor, Karkemish and Phul! But how many new questions have been raised by these finds also! One of the most important of the problems concerns the relationship of the Babylonian language and writing to the origin of the Old Testament.

This question, indeed, is still young, but on that account all the more troublesome. Scarcely a decade has passed since we first heard of it. It was only in the year 1902 that H. Winckler put forward the suggestion that the cuneiform character was even for Israel the script of religion and state administration.¹ Following him, A. Jeremias next assumed that the Decalogue was written in Babylonian cuneiform, and that even in the time of Isaiah this script was regarded as the sacred one.² Im. Benzinger, advancing on the same line, has actually maintained that the reformation of Josiah marks the close of the Israelitish use of cuneiform script.³ But the most vigorous defender of this theory is Ed. Naville.

¹ Hugo Winckler, *Altorientalische Forschungen*, vol. iii., p. 165 ff.

² A. Jeremias, *Das A.T. im Lichte des alten Orients* (1906), p. 263.

³ Benzinger, *Hebräische Archäologie* (1907), p. 178.

He contends that those portions of the Old Testament which existed up to the time of Solomon were written in the Babylonian language and script.¹ This most surprising assertion calls imperatively for a criticism of the grounds on which it is based. The most natural course for the inquiry to take, it seems to me, will be that of setting out and examining, first of all, the various reasons which have led to the propounding of this new thesis. After that we shall consider whether there are not also facts which directly contradict the new assumption.

I.

1. The great event, which gave the decisive impulse towards this questionable theory, was admittedly the discovery of the Amarna-texts. Although it happened as early as 1887-8, and an English and German translation appeared in the following decade, the full significance of this event was but gradually recognised and examined in detail. It is not surprising, therefore, that Naville (*Arch.*, p. 10) starts afresh from this event as the foundation of his argument. On this fact he builds the statement that "Babylonian cuneiform was the usual written language in Palestine at the time of the Eighteenth Dynasty." He repeats this assertion in ever varying forms (e.g. on pp. 15, 26, 203). But is he not exaggerating the significance of that incident? Others have done so before him. Because of the discovery of these very Amarna-texts, the assertion has frequently been made that Canaan, before the immigration of Israel, was "an entire domain of Babylonian culture."² We see that this is an exaggeration directly we begin to examine the differences which existed, partly in secular and partly

¹ Ed. Naville, *La découverte de la Loi sous le roi Josias* (Paris, 1910), p. 29; *Archaeology of the Old Testament* (London, 1913), p. 3 ff.

² Friedrich Delitzsch, *Babel und Bibel*, i., p. 28; H. Winckler, *Religionsgeschichtlicher und geschichtlicher Orient* (1906), pp. 15 f., 33, and others.

in religious matters, between the culture of Canaan-Phoenicia and that of Babylonia.

Some of these differences are found in the names of the months, the opening of the year, and the chief gods of the lands above mentioned.¹ Is there a similar exaggeration of the purport of the Amarna-texts in Naville's thesis which we are now considering? Let us see how the matter stands.

The Babylonian cuneiform was undoubtedly used to a very large extent. It meets us eastwards from the middle Tigris in discoveries which have been made at Susa; in Armenia in inscriptions, among the Hethites in Cappadocia, and also in Palestine, as is proved not only by the Amarna-texts, but also by the cuneiform tablets of Ta'annek and two contracts from Gezer. It meets us finally in Egypt, as is proved, once more, by the Amarna-texts. All the same, it is too much to say that "the whole world" in the age of the Amarna-texts wrote the Babylonish character,² and it is also quite uncertain as regards Palestine whether in the Amarna period the Babylonian language and script were the only means of writing. The Egyptian rulers of Tyre and Sidon did indeed write in Babylonish (Naville, *Arch.*, p. 13). But we know only this, that they wrote to Egypt in this form. They may, no doubt, have chosen a means of communication which was familiar to both sides. Nothing is positively proved except that during this time, and by the parties concerned, Babylonian cuneiform was *one* means of written communication. No fact beyond this can be securely ascertained.

A glance at Egypt suffices to warn us that caution is necessary in examining the subject. For there undoubtedly

¹ A more detailed explanation will be found in my *Geschichte der alttestamentlichen Religion* (1912), p. 275 ff.

² A. Jeremias, *Der Einfluss Babyloniens auf das Verständnis des Alten Testaments* (1908), p. 8.

in the time of Amenophis III. and IV the Babylonian language and script were used. But this was done only in the answering of letters which had arrived in this language and writing. Naville indeed observes (*Arch.*, p. 10) that letters such as those sent at that time from Palestine to Egypt "must be in the language either of the ruler or the subject." But he has overlooked a third possibility, namely that the language (and writing) in question is that which was relatively best known to both parties. In any case such was the custom in Egypt. Cuneiform writing and the Babylonian language were indeed used in order to maintain diplomatic intercourse with Babylonia and the governors in Palestine, etc. ; but during that very time the Egyptians actually possessed and used their native writing and language. For these reasons it is an unnatural assumption of Naville (*Arch.*, pp. 17 and 204) that *Moses* was taught the Babylonian cuneiform writing at the court of Egypt. There is the less reason to presume such a fact because the Egyptians could have had no interest in facilitating or suggesting to him any kind of intercourse with other Semites. And we cannot deduce from the mere fact of the Amarna-texts or the Ta'annek letters that Moses used the Babylonian cuneiform writing. For these letters belong to the period before Moses ;¹ and, moreover, the writings of Moses were composed outside Canaan.

2. But another very important consideration—much used of late in support of the view we are discussing—is associated with the age of Moses. It has been said that the

¹ That the Amarna-letters, these witnesses to the Egyptian rule over Canaan, were written after the time of Joshua, was incorrectly assumed by Böhl (*Kanaanäer und Hebräer*, 1911, p. 95), as this view cannot be reconciled with the complete silence of the Israelitish testimony as to such a political situation. The correct view is that accepted by Naville (*Arch.*, p. 16), "The Egyptian captivity (of Israel) is the time of the Tel-el-Amarna correspondences."

script of legal codification was the "holy" form of writing, for law was a part of religion in Israel as it was among other peoples of antiquity.¹ This kind of writing was that used by the learned, and was sent on Babylonian cuneiform tablets from the Euphrates to Canaan. This is alleged to have been the "writing of God" of Exodus xxxii. 16 (Naville, *Arch.*, p. 17). But we note, *first*, there is no proof that the kind of writing which was used in drawing up the legal code was regarded as the "holy" one. As far as Israel is concerned, this supposition is entirely erroneous, for the expression, "the writing of God," has no reference whatever to written copies of legal enactments, but is employed solely with reference to the Decalogue. Therefore the Hebrew sources do not permit us to force upon them the idea that a "sacred" (i.e. the Babylonian) writing was employed for the enumeration of laws or religious texts.

Secondly, the expression of Exodus xxxii. 16, *mikhtab elohim*, means "writing, or something written by God." For this expression refers back to the words of xxxi. 18, that the tables of testimony were "written with the finger of God." The expression *mikhtab elohim* is distinctly explained in Deuteronomy x. 4: "And He (God) wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments."²

Both points were overlooked by Winckler, Benzinger and Naville. The expression used in Exodus xxxii. 16 does not therefore mean a special *kind* of writing or alphabet, and consequently has no reference to the Babylonian cuneiform. In the matter, we may add, affected in any way by the allusion to Egyptian expressions made by Naville (*Arch.*, p. 17 f.)? According to the well-known Rosetta stone the

¹ Benzinger, *Hebräische Archäologie* (1907), p. 177.

² *Mikhtab elohim* is correctly interpreted, for example, in *Gesenii Thesaurus*, p. 723a, where it is translated "Scriptura scripta a deo." B.D.B. Oxford Lex., 508a: handwriting.

hieroglyphs were named the writing of divine words ; and when an inscription, which was supposed to have been engraved by the god (Thoth) himself, is described as " writing of the divine words which are the Book of Thoth," the meaning is that the inscription concerned was written in hieroglyphics. But this fact alters nothing in our understanding of the Hebrew expression *mikhtab elohim* (Exodus xxxii. 16), as this idea is deduced from the words, " written with the finger of God " (xxxii. 18). " Written by God " is not the same as " written over with a divine writing." The Hebrew does not imagine that a script, or at least a kind of lettering, was invented by a god. Therefore for him the expression " writing of God " cannot mean a *kind* of writing invented or employed by God. This one example shows that the " Egyptian " interpretation of the Old Testament, which is expressly recommended by Naville,¹ may lead us to place Hebrew and Egyptian modes of expression on the same level, and thus to lose sight of the distinctive characteristics of Hebrew thought.

3. The age of Solomon is supposed to supply a third main argument for the new thesis. For in that age, according to the view of Naville, Deuteronomy was written in the Babylonian language and script, and placed in the foundation walls of the Temple, to be brought forth once more in the reign of King Josiah in the year 621 (2 Kings xxii. 8). On what grounds did Naville reach this conclusion ?

His starting-point is a custom which was observed in Egypt. In that country written documents and architectural plans have actually been discovered in the foundations of temples and under statues.² The recognition of

¹ *La Découverte*, etc., p. 12: " donner au texte l'interprétation égyptienne."

² Naville in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, 1907, and *La Découverte*, etc., pp. 3-8; Joh. Herrmann in *Z.A.T.W.*, 1908, p. 291 ff.

this fact led him to the conclusion that in Egypt it was the custom to place religious texts in the foundation-walls of sanctuaries, and this circumstance seems to him to throw a clear light on the events which are narrated in 2 Kings xxii. 8. We remember that in the account of the restoration of the temple given in that passage it is stated that the high priest Hilkiah said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord."¹ But there are several circumstances which prevent us from seeing in this narrative a parallel to these Egyptian discoveries.

(a) In the first place, there is no reason and no possible excuse for assigning to the age of Solomon the date of the composition of Deuteronomy. The "kingly law," for example (xvii. 14-20), is directed against those very errors of the kings of Israel which were actually begun by Solomon (1 Kings x. 28; xi. 1 ff.; Cant. vi. 8). And further, the rule forbidding a multiplicity of places for Jahve's worship, which is so thoroughly characteristic of Deuteronomy, (xii. 4 ff.), could have no reference to the age of Solomon, or to any period earlier than the reign of Hezekiah (2 Kings xviii. 4).

(b) In the second place, there is no reference in the account of the building and consecration of the temple (1 Kings vi.-viii.) to the laying within the foundation walls or beneath the foundation stone of a copy of the book of the law. Naville (*La Déc.*, p. 21) thinks, indeed, that he can "easily" get rid of this objection. For as there is no mention of the laying of the foundation stone in the account of the temple building, there was no occasion, he thinks, to refer to the deposition of the book, which, as in Egypt, must have formed part of the ceremony of stone-laying. But,

¹ The translation "a book of the law" (Klostermann, *in loc.*) is incorrect. For the indeterminate nature of the matter is not indicated here, as in Deut. xvii. 18, by the meaning of *miachné*, "duplicate or copy."

reversing the argument, we may say that this act would have been mentioned in the narrative of 1 Kings vi. if it had been carried out with any such fulness of ceremony as the deposition of original documents and the walling-in of a copy of the law-book would of itself have demanded. Note further, that the "foundation stone" is never mentioned in the old Hebrew writings. Twice we read of the "corner stone" (Isa. xxviii. 16; Job xxxviii. 6; cf. "head of the corner" Ps. cxviii. 22), and even this is not named in passages where, besides 1 Kings vi. 1, we might naturally expect to find it mentioned.¹ Therefore for this very reason it is improbable that a copy of the book of the law was deposited in the foundation walls, or rather in the foundation stone of the Solomonic temple. On the other hand, we are distinctly informed that a copy of Deuteronomy was deposited in the side of the ark of the covenant (Deut. xxxi. 26). Naville tries to explain this verse, which contradicts his argument, in the following way. He suggests that the words of Deuteronomy xxxi. 26 imply that a Deuteronomy—a copy of it—was deposited in the side of the ark. But the literal words convey no such meaning, and Naville's explanation is inadmissible. The text simply states that the book of the law should be preserved by the side of the ark. Tradition knows *nothing* of any other place where Deuteronomy or a copy of it had been deposited.

(c) In the narrative of the temple-renovation under King Josiah the purpose of the work is simply said to be that of "repairing the breaches of the house of the Lord" (2 Kings xxii. 5), i.e., the broken down or ruinous places. The concern of the workmen at that time was to restore such breaches in the masonry as were then apparent in the temple structure. The narrative does indeed mention the purchase of timber or hewn stone (v. 6), but there is not a

¹ Hag. ii. 16; Zech. iv. 9; Ezra iii. 6; 2 Chron. viii. 16.

hint as to the breaking up of the foundation, or of any interference with the foundation walls. Naville tries to deduce some such action from the use of "hewn stones" (*La Déc.*, p. 11). But the 'abenê machsēb mentioned in the narrative might have been inserted in the walls here and there, without any disturbance of the foundations of the building. The digging up of the foundation stone of the structure would have involved its entire rebuilding, not the repairing of the breaches of the house.¹ We have lately, indeed, been reminded that "in ancient times the foundation stone was let into the wall not beneath but above ground."² This, however, proves nothing as to the possibility that the book of the law was discovered in the foundation stone of the temple. For in order to make such a thing possible, an opening up of the foundation wall would have been necessary. Now an operation of this sort is incompatible with the statement as to the object of the work undertaken, that of "repairing of the breaches of the house of the Lord." And besides, the defenders of the new theory ignore the words of the high priest, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord." For if the book of the law had been found during the excavation of the foundation stone, it would not have been found by the high priest himself, but by the workmen engaged upon the building, and in that case, also, it could not be said that the former had found it in the "house of the Lord."³ We see, then,

¹ Hub. Grimme thinks he can come to Naville's aid by translating Deut. xxix. 29, "This is that which remained hidden for Jahve, our God, and has been revealed again for us and our children, that we may do all the words of this law"; Naville accepted this assistance (*La Déc.*, p. 18), but this translation is made impossible by the position of the expression "ad 'olam," "for ever." Moreover, the subject of the sentence, "This is," should have been expressed by a demonstrative pronoun.

² Riessler, *Das alte Testament und die babylonische Keilschrift* (in the *Tübinger Theologische Quartalschrift*, 1911, p. 494).

³ There is no justification for explaining this passage as Naville does, in the following way, "Hilkiah found it in the rubbish, or he picked it up when it fell out of its hiding-place" (*Arch.*, p. 129).

that in Hebrew antiquity there is no parallel to the custom which we observe in Egypt, of depositing written documents, as for instance portions of the so-called Book of the Dead, under the statues of gods.¹ The most probable theory as to the mode in which the book of the law was found in the year 621, is that the discovery was made *on the occasion* of this temple renovation. In all probability the book of the law was removed from the holy of holies under Manasseh and deposited in a side-room. But now, during the examination of the whole temple building, which naturally took place, it came once more under the high priest's notice. For the rest, we may add, the suggestion which has recently been often made, that the discovery of the book of the law was a fiction, finds no support, either direct or indirect, in the text of 2 Kings xxii.

(d) The most important point is the following. The words of 2 Kings xxii. 8, which inform us of the discovery of the book of the law, run thus: "And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, 'I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord.' And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it." From these words, Naville (*La Déc.*, pp. 12, 23, 28) draws the twofold conclusion: (a) the high priest had not read the book himself because he could not read it, and (b) the scribe was the first who read the book aloud to the high priest, and the scribe was able to read the book because he, as secretary of state, knew Assyrian, which was the diplomatic language of Hither Asia.

¹ If, however, I am not in a position to establish such parallels from the matter supplied by these sources, my attitude is not correctly defined in the words, "König rejects the use of the Egyptian discoveries as a help in explaining the finding of Deuteronomy" (Riessler, *op. cit.* p. 494). The expression "rejects" seems to imply some arbitrary caprice on my part. I have set forth in careful detail the reasons which prevent me from accepting the view recommended by Naville (*La Déc.*, pp. 2, 22) on the "Egyptian interpretation of the Old Testament."

But let us ask, *first*, whether the high priest really could not read the book which he had found.¹ Such a fact, if it were true, would certainly have been noted in the narrative. Without an actual mention in the text, we have no business to assume such an unlikely circumstance. And further, not only is such an allusion quite lacking in the account, but words are introduced which are contrary to Naville's theory. Did not the high priest describe the book he had found as "the book of the law"? This would seem rather to point to the opposite of Naville's supposition. For these words of the text do not naturally lend themselves to Naville's idea,² that the high priest named the book "the book of the law" because he had found it in the house of the Lord. "Text of the law and building of the temple go together," says Naville, for Joshua, (according to viii. 32) wrote a copy of the law on the stones of the altar. This combination forms very threadbare stuff, and affords no natural basis for the clear and definite statement of the high priest, in which he simply designates the book he had found as "the book of the law." A book found in the temple might, for instance, have been "a book of the upright."³ Naville remarks (*Arch.*, p. 130), "When Hilkiah says he has found the book, why does he give it to Shaphan? why does he not read it himself? Because most likely he could not read cuneiform." But if up to that time the law had been written in cuneiform, the priests would in all reasonable probability have known this form of the law. For they were the very persons on whom was laid the duty of transmitting the law to the people (Deut. xvii. 11; xxxi. 25 ff.; xxxiii. 10, etc.). How unnatural it is, then, to assume that the high priest could not read the book of the law!

¹ This is suggested also in *Arch.*, p. 193.

² *La Découverte*, p. 13; *Archæology*, p. 130.

³ Cf. 2 Sam. i. 18, and the βιβλίον τῆς ἐπίσης in LXX on 1 Kings viii. 53.

Secondly, Naville thinks (*La Déc.*, p. 13) that he is at liberty to alter the closing words of 2 Kings xxii. 8 as follows, "And the scribe read the book aloud to him."¹ He supposes that because the narrative is so very brief, it must be all the more remarkable that we are told that Shaphan read the book. According to his view, we must therefore translate, "And Shaphan gave him a reading of it, or read it aloud to him." But no, the words, as they stand, have a perfectly natural meaning. The text takes for granted, and makes no mention of the obvious fact that the high priest *had* already read the book. In order to indicate this, the narrator rightly thought it sufficient that he should put into the high priest's mouth the designation of the book as the book of the law. Further, the corresponding Hebrew verb (*kara'*) means simply "to read," and does not of itself convey the meaning "to read aloud." If the meaning had been "and he read it aloud to him," then *kara' lephanaw* would have been written, the expression we find immediately afterwards in v. 10 b; or use would have been made of the frequent word-conjunction *kara-be'oznaw*, "to read in his ears," an expression found in 2 Kings xxiii. 2, etc.

Thirdly, the idea that the high priest could not read the book he had discovered cannot be brought into the literal meaning of 2 Kings xxii. 8 even by a reference to the text of 2 Chronicles xxxiv. 14 b. For in that passage we read, "Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses." Naville (*La Déc.*, p. 23) applies the added words, "given by or through Moses," not to the law, but to the book, and considers that the meaning is that the book was written "as it was written in the time of Moses."² But if the syntax of the expression "through Moses" per-

¹ "Shaphan reads it aloud" (*Archæology*, etc., p. 130).

² "Comme on l'écrivait de son temps."

mitted such a meaning, this would have been made expressly clear by the introduction of the participle, "written," or some similar word. For the words, "by means of or through Moses," are often found in conjunction with the *law*, and this was perfectly natural because the law was revealed through the mediation of Moses. The transmission of the law itself was more important than the production of a copy of it.¹

Fourthly and lastly, the suggestion that the high priest could not read the book of the law which he himself had discovered cannot be attributed to the Hebrew sources on the ground that in the *Egyptian* texts we read that "the great Rule of the plan of Dendera was found in an old text written on a goat-skin, belonging to the time of the servants of the god Horus" and so forth.² Statements of that sort prove nothing as to the meaning of the Hebrew narratives. *The position then is this.* In the Egyptian texts it is expressly said that the documents discovered belong to dim antiquity, but in the Hebrew narratives there is no similar statement. In these we find not the slightest indication that the newly found book had been written in an ancient script, which at the time of the discovery was legible to few. Nor is there the faintest hint in the Hebrew sources that the book had been composed in a foreign language. And since this is neither directly nor indirectly mentioned in the Hebrew texts, we have no right to read such a meaning into them. Therefore the assertion that the book of the

¹ For the association of the name of Moses with the book, Naville finds support in the translation *διὰ χειρὸς Μωυσῆ*, which was chosen by the LXX for 2 Chron. xxxiv. 14, while this version often elsewhere translates the Hebrew *b'jad* *év* *χειρ*. But I have examined all the instances from Genesis to Joshua and have found that *b'jad* is translated *διὰ χειρὸς* in more cases also where a spiritual confirmation by God is meant (Lev. x. 11; Joshua xx. 2, etc. So the *διὰ χειρὸς* in 2 Chron. xxxiv. 14 in no way hinders us from thinking of the transmission of the *law* through Moses.

² Cf. Naville, *La Déc.*, pp. 5-7; or Herrmann in *Z.A.T.W.*, 1908, 292 f.

law which was found in the temple had been written in the Babylonian language or script has no more foundation in the sources than the assumption (Navelle, *La Déc.*, p. 29) that the newly discovered law was forthwith translated into the language of the later time.

4. The new theory finds its main support in Isaiah viii. 1.

In this verse the prophet is bidden to write "with the pen of a man" this sentence, uttered as a solemn warning, "The spoil speedeth, the prey hasteth." It is not certain whether the *gillajôn gadol* on which the prophet was to write was a large smooth tablet or a piece of papyrus or skin (Navelle, *Arch.*, p. 18). But the former is more probable because the same word *gillajôn* in iii. 23 (a point overlooked by Navelle) means a smoothed surface κ. έ., i.e. the hand-mirror. But the construction of the tablet *material* is less important than the nature of the writing which the prophet was instructed to employ. This is indicated in the words *cheret enôsch*. *Cheret* means practically the same as "pen," and the word is used figuratively to denote the art of writing. The more exact meaning of *enôsch*, "Man," is understood from the context. Because the warning inscription which was probably meant to be placed in the outer court of the temple would naturally be read by every passer-by, including people of all ranks in the nation, the expression *enôsch* must signify the simple, or lowly man, and as a genitive attribute it is equivalent to the adjective "well-known" or "familiar," expressed also by *isch*, "Man," and the plural "men" in Deuteronomy iii. 11, and Ezekiel xxiv. 17, 24. It is probable, however, that by this universally legible script we are meant to understand large and disconnected alphabetic forms of a kind which the simple man, little accustomed to write, would be likely to use.¹

¹ This interpretation is rightly given to the expression by Marti, *in loc.*; Condamin, *Le livre d'Isaïe* (1905), p. 52: "in large characters";

We find, too, on inscriptions elsewhere a large alphabetic form without connexion, and such letters may be seen in the stone-writing of the Samaritans.¹ We remember also the words of the Apostle Paul, who was usually wont to have his letters written by a "quick, i.e. practised writer" (Ps. xlv. 2, etc., "My tongue is the pen of a ready writer"): "See with how large letters I have written unto you with my own hand!" (Gal. vi. 11). The Egyptians also developed a kind of alphabet used by the people (Herod. ii. 36).

But is there an allusion in Isaiah viii. 1 to the difference between the Babylonian script as the "holy" one, and the ordinary "profane" mode of writing? Naville, following H. Winckler and A. Jeremias, gives an affirmative answer to this question.²

We reply first that no mention is made among the Hebrews of any sacred or divine mode of writing, which might be contrasted with *cheret enôsch*. It is useless for Naville to quote the words, "written with the finger of God" (Exodus xxxi. 18), for these words, like *mikhtab elohîm* (xxxii. 16) speak of a work *produced* by God, but not of a divine *mode* of forming written characters (see above under 2). As, then, the Hebrews knew nothing of a divine *mode* of writing, the expression *enôsch*, we remark secondly, can have no indirect allusion, as Naville fancies, to such a matter. Such a meaning is all the less derivable from *enôsch*, because the expression in no way refers merely to man in comparison with God. That contrast is also indicated when the word *adam*, "human being," is used. *Enôsch* is not used only "of

v. Orelli, 1908; Gray in the *International Critical Commentary* (1912) *in loc.*; "in the ordinary alphabet with which everyone was familiar"; Duhm, 1914, *in loc.*, "*Enôsch* is the ordinary, perhaps the old-fashioned man, who did not yet understand the current script of books—possibly writing like that on the Siloah-inscription."

¹ Bickell, *Outlines of Hebrew Grammar*: Riesen, *Schrifttafel, gezeichnet von J. Euting*, col. 35 and 39.

² Naville, *La Déc.*, p. 29; *Archæology*, p. 19.

man in comparison with God" (Naville, *Arch.*, p. 19), and *enôsçh* is not an expression found only in the poets. It is used also by the orators (eight times in Isaiah),¹ and further in 2 Chronicles xiv. 10. Thirdly, if *cheret enôsçh* was meant to imply a "profane" method of writing, the unnatural position would be suggested that this "profane" mode of writing had been chosen by divine direction for the recording of a divine message.

We see, therefore, that the only fact which may be deduced from Isaiah viii. 1 is that in the time of the writer the Israelites distinguished between "two kinds of writing." The expression "two writings" (Naville, *Arch.*, p. 20) is accurate, but, as we have set forth and proved already, all that he adds about the "two writings" is fanciful: "one which was considered as having been originally the work of God engraved by His finger, the cuneiform, and one which was called human because it was used in every-day life and not for law or any literary purpose." The closing words of this sentence are expressly contradicted by Isaiah viii. 16. For in that verse the prophet states that it is his task to "bind up the testimony." That expression points to the use of a roll of manuscript, and cuneiform was not written on such rolls. The verse makes it clear that Isaiah wrote the divine words which were given him to proclaim to the people in quite a different kind of writing, and Naville's suggestion that the case mentioned in viii. 16 forms an "exception" in his writing, is put forward (*Arch.*, p. 20) without any authority whatever. There is no foundation, then, for the remark he makes, in agreement with A. Jeremias (see above, p. 1) on p. 193 that "the prophets may have used cuneiform as a sacred writing."² He might

¹ Isaiah viii. 1; xiii. 7, 12; xxiv. 6; xxxiii. 8; li. 7, 12; lvi. 2.

² H. Winckler, ignoring all the facts which contradict his theory, says in his posthumous work, *Vorderasien im Zweiten Jahrtausend* (1913), p. 16.

have spared himself the trouble of making the further deduction from his theory, that it is doubtful whether Amos could write his own prophecies.

5. The discovery of the two mercantile contracts which were excavated at Gezer as documents of the years 650 and 647 B.C., has served as a point of departure for far-reaching conclusions. Benzinger¹ maintains that "the reformation of Josiah, which involved a sundering of the nation from Assyria, marks the earliest period at which cuneiform was abandoned, and the national alphabetic script was recognised as the state-writing." Naville (*Arch.*, pp. 11, 15) is sure of this at least: "The two contracts are legal documents which have a local origin, and were composed in a language which must have been the official language of that town."

But we must take into account, before going further, the possibility that these two contracts, although in one of them one of the parties is an Israelite, may have some connexion with the Assyrian garrison or colony which established itself perhaps at Gezer after the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom (722).²

The reformation of Josiah, be it observed, had no direct contact with the political relation of Judah to Assyria and Josiah fought with that Pharaoh who marched against the Eastern world-power in the year 608. While the narratives dealing with that period say nothing about the separation of Judah and Assyria, they provide the earliest evidence (Jer. xxxvi. 9, 22) of the transition from the ancient Hebrew New Year, which was in autumn³ to

that "Isaiah and Jeremiah had studied their cuneiform, as a mediæval priest learned his Latin."

¹ Benzinger, *Hebräische Archäologie* (1907), p. 178.

² The cuneiform texts of Gezer, in the view of Meinhold (*Mose* xiv. (1911) p. 14) may possibly have originated with Assyrian officials in Gezer.

³ According to Exodus xxiii. 16, etc.; in *Z.D.M.G.*, 1906, p. 624 ff.

the Babylonian New Year, which was observed in spring.

The same origin may be attributed, perhaps, to the fragment of a cuneiform inscription, and an Assyrian letter-wrapping which, as Professor Lyon wrote in the *Sunday School Times* of 1911, were found by the American expedition of 1909 in the town of Samaria. This is all the more probable because this fragment of cuneiform inscription was found at the foot of a wall erected in the Babylonian style. The following fact is, moreover, noteworthy. The Hebrew accounts of the reform under Josiah mention various things which were changed at that time (2 Kings xxiii. 4 ff.), but not one word is said as to a change in the language or writing.

These cuneiform documents of Gezer and Samaria could afford in any case no positive proof that cuneiform was the only kind of script which was used at that time by the Israelites (cf. for instance the Siloah-inscription), and that it was used for the purpose of writing the distinctive literature of Israel. The instances enumerated on behalf of the new theory fail entirely to establish any such conclusion. On this point they yield *no absolute certainty*. Naville (*Arch.*, p. 12) relies on the following sentence of Sellin: "In the already extensive excavations carried on in Palestine, no document was ever found except in Babylonian writing." But even if that statement were strictly accurate (see below), it would not prove that the Hebrews down to the time of Solomon wrote their literature in the Babylonian language and script. For in this case also the *argumentum e silentio* is incurably weak.

All the arguments which have been, and which can be, adduced in favour of the new theory, are seen, when closely examined, to have no such far-reaching significance as the supporters of that thesis have ascribed to them. And is it not possible that these writers have overlooked many points which ought to be carefully considered by those

who wish to understand the problem under discussion? We shall answer that question in the second part of our inquiry.

ED. KÖNIG.

THE SENSE OF SIN IN GREAT LITERATURE.

II.

“PEER GYNT.”

It is the customary thing to say that Ibsen in *Peer Gynt* set himself to hold up the mirror to the moral countenance of his native Norway. Here, however, as elsewhere, the insight of genius, like the word of God, is never of merely private interpretation. “Peer Gynt” is not simply a Norwegian of our time; he is a man of all time. The poet has grasped the principle of his life so deeply, has with such fairness and inevitableness pursued what may have seemed to Peer Gynt himself to be casual and irrelevant words, imaginations, actions, to their one source in his ultimate nature; that in writing the play, *Peer Gynt*, Ibsen has declared from the housetops the secret of many hearts. For, once again, we men and women have come a long way, and have in the course of our voyage seen many things by land and sea. We have trafficked in strange merchandise. The reminiscences of infinitely various experiences lurk within us, written, as it were, on the tablets of our heart, in invisible ink. And at the challenge of a deep-seeing report concerning any one human soul, the hidden characters in every human heart stand out.

I am quite sure that if *Peer Gynt* had a fair chance, it would do an enormous moral service. In spite of its apparent richness and complexity, it is a simple drama. The very opening words, “Peer, you’re lying!” put the clue