

OLD TESTAMENT AND BABYLONIAN LANGUAGE.

II.

1. In examining the positive side of the question which now occupies us, the point of departure, in my opinion, is that the people of Canaan *possessed a language of their own* at least from the Amarna period onwards (circa 1400 B.C.). For the Canaanitish language shows itself as a living tongue even among *those* Canaanites who, in the Amarna letters or in the texts found at Ta'annek, used the Babylonian language and script. Proofs of its existence are found in large numbers in the Canaanite glosses and other features which have been noticed in the cuneiform texts already mentioned. For example, we find in them, along with a considerable number of Babylonian words, a Canaanite expression as explanatory, e.g., *abadat*, "she perished," is placed after *chalkat* (Amarna, letter 181, line 51), or *anaji* is met with as an interpretation of the Babylonian *elippu*, "ship,"¹ and in the Ta'annek texts, for example, the Canaanitish-Hebrew expression *arzi* may be read instead of the Babylonian *erizu* for "cedar."² A further proof of the existence of this special language of the Canaanites may be seen in the proper names of these people, as, e.g., Malkisedek or Adonisedek. Naville thinks, indeed (*La déc.*, p. 27), that he can set aside this instance by assuming that the Canaanitish proper names which have come down to us are of Hebrew origin. But this is a risky and, in some cases, quite inadmissible theory. For instance, we cannot trace back the word *adon* in these

¹ Franz Böhl, *Die Sprache der Amarnabriefe* (1909), pp. 81-84.

² Frd. Hrozný in Sellins' *Tell el-Ta'annek* (1905), p. 38.

proper names to the Hebraising of a Babylonish-Assyrian expression, because the same expression *adon*, "Lord," apart from its use in proper names, is familiar in the Phœnician inscriptions.¹ Is it suggested that we are to regard it there also as Hebrew imported goods ?

The Hebrews, then, according to all that we know about them, spoke from the first a branch of middle-Semite, which was closely allied to the Phœnician-Canaanitish tongue. All those sources of the history of Israel, which are of special value in describing cases of changing culture,² testify that in intercourse with the Canaanites the Hebrews needed no interpreter, and among the Hebrews of the earlier time we find not a trace of any change of language. And further, so far from there being any indication of a solidarity between the Israelite and the Babylonish-Assyrian language, we find actual testimony in Israel's literature that this language was regarded by the Israelites as another, an incomprehensible and an unknown tongue. This may be proved from the following three passages.

Isaiah announces to the enemies of the prophets that the Eternal will speak to this people "with stammering lips and another tongue" (xxviii. 11). This does indeed mean, in the first place, that God would be compelled to use the language of threatening instead of His early words of promise. But that explanation does not exhaust the meaning of the passage.³ For in order to emphasise that meaning, the expression "in another tongue" would naturally have sufficed. The words "with stammering lips" would not have been necessary for that purpose. The mention of "stammering lips" points to the strangely-sounding words

¹ Cf. A. Bloch, *Phönizisches Glossar*, p. 19, etc.

² Many examples are enumerated in my *Geschichte der alttestamentlichen Religion kritisch dargestellt* (1912), p. 5 f.

³ In contradiction to Riessler in the *Tübinger Theol. Quartalschrift*, 1911, p. 495.

of *that* people whom the Almighty is to employ as the executor of the threatened punishment. The inflictors of that chastisement were the Assyrians, and therefore it is right to recognise in [Isaiah xxviii. 11 an allusion to the Assyrian tongue, the words of which had for Israel a foreign sound. This is all the more probable because in another passage of the Book of Isaiah, Israel is threatened with the advance of "a people of a deeper (i.e. impenetrable) speech than thou canst perceive" (xxxiii. 19). There is no real authority for referring this passage to "the enemy of the last time" (Riessler, *l.c.*). In any case, the Assyrian language, even according to Isaiah xxxvi. 11, was one unknown to the Israelites, of which they made no current use. For when the ambassadors of Sennacherib in the year 701 brought an enticing message to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, they did not speak Assyrian, but Jewish-Hebrew.

The assumption that the Babylonish-Assyrian language was used by the Hebrews in the earlier centuries may be refuted, moreover, by the following consideration. For the earlier time we can trace no influence of the Babylonish-Assyrian language on the storehouse of Hebrew speech, unless the *chanikh* (Gen. xiv. 14) reminds us of *hanakuka*, "thy comrades in arms," in the Ta'annek Letter (VI. line 8). The linguistic elements in which such influence shows itself with a high degree of probability or with certainty are traceable only from the seventh century onwards, therefore from the time in which, after the founding of the new Babylonian kingdom, the intercourse between Israel and Babylonia became direct and continuous. Hence we may derive that word *'aschté*, which accords with the Babylonish-Assyrian *eschten*, "one," and appears in Hebrew in one expression for "eleven." For the form *'aschté 'asar*, and *'aschté 'esré*, appears for the first time, if we begin with reliably dated writings, in Jeremiah i. 3; xxxix. 2; lii. 5;

Ezekiel xxvi. 1; xl. 49; Zechariah i. 7; 1 Chronicles xii. 13; xxiv. 12; xxv. 18, and xxvii. 14. We can see clearly that this form of expression is the later, if we take the trouble to set side by side all the passages of *both* forms for "eleven" (*achad 'asar* and *'ashtê 'asar*, etc.).¹ It is certain that Babylonian elements are to be found in the language of Ezekiel. Although the number of Babylonian expressions which this author adopted from his environment are fewer than has sometimes been supposed, still some are undoubtedly genuine, especially *agappim*, "wings of the army" = armed "troops,"² etc. I have examined this matter in detail in my *Geschichte*, p. 405.

The proper language of Canaan, the existence of which is proved by the above-mentioned glosses to the Amarna letters and elsewhere, *may* have been used *along with* the Babylonian, and we have already shown (I. no. 1) that this was actually the case in Egypt, the native and the foreign language being used together. But according to Naville,³ the native language of Canaan was only a spoken and *not a written tongue*. If, however, the Hebrew language existed at all in Canaan (and its existence is admitted by Naville), that language might also be used as a means of expressing written thought; in other words, it might serve as a written tongue. To such a possibility all will agree. Many dialects which have a very limited circulation are employed in verse and in local papers (as, for instance, the remains of the Celtic tongue in Great Britain), and such use *may* be made of *every* dialect. This fact is not contradicted, but rather confirmed, by Naville's reference (*Arch.*, p. 7) to the popular dialect of Geneva, for a poem was composed in that very dialect in the year 1602.

¹ Cf. e.g. my *Hebräisches Lehrgebäude*, II. p. 211.

² Seven times in Ezekiel xii. 14-xxxix. 4, and cf. the Babylonian *agappu*.

Naville, *La déc.*, p. 25, and *Archæology*, etc., p. 8.

Naville repeats, none the less, in ever-varying forms and applications, his favourite theory that Hebrew was not in the earlier times a written language. He tries to prove his argument by saying: "Hearing of this great deliverance, Deborah did not sit down to write a poem (Judges v. 2 ff.). She breaks out into a pæan of praise and joy. She sings, 'Awake, awake, Deborah, utter a song!' She is carried away by her feelings, and such a mighty exultation can only be expressed in language spontaneous and familiar to her, such as she, as well as the triumphant Israelites, speak every day. She does not consult the books which may exist at the time, she does not shape her sentences in accordance with the words of the law, of which she was probably absolutely ignorant; she sings."¹

But all these words have no foundation in the facts. If Deborah composed a poem in the language of her contemporaries, she *did* actually create a literary product in that language. It is a totally *irrelevant* question whether she consulted books or not. Therefore her presumed ignorance of the words of the law would have *no* bearing on the matter in hand, even if it were not a merely fanciful supposition. To ascribe to the prophetess and judge (iv. 4) such ignorance as regards the legislative principles of the Mosaic religion, is all the more rashly venturesome because she herself mentions "the writer" (v. 14). The idea that the poem did not receive its present form until a later age puts a no less unjustifiable strain on the facts. The language of Deborah's song differs in no important point from the mode of expression common to other ancient poetical portions of Hebrew literature.² We have therefore no right to separate that poem of Deborah from the products of the written language,

¹ Naville, *La déc.*, pp. 25, 31; *Archæology*, etc., p. 9.

² Cf., e.g., Gen. xlix. 3 ff.; Numbers xxi. 14b, 18, 27-30; Deuteronomy xxxiii. 6 ff.

and to assume that there existed, besides the Hebrew used in Deborah's song, a foreign tongue as "the written language" of the Hebrews.

Naville himself indirectly admits this (*Arch.*, p. 9), when he concludes his comments on Judges v. 2 ff. with these words: "We might be tempted to regard the Deborah song as a portion of a written literature, if the discoveries of the last twenty years had not revealed to us the enormous use made in Palestine of the Babylonian cuneiform."¹ But we ask, in the first place, How can the fact that Deborah's song is written in the Hebrew language be set aside by the discovery of the Amarna letters? Under no conditions can that possibly be done. *Two* facts confront us, and they must be reconciled with each other. Such a reconciliation, we note secondly, is possible, if only the value of the Palestine discoveries of cuneiform texts is not exaggerated as it has been by Naville and his predecessors. The principal fact overlooked by these writers is that no cuneiform text has been discovered which contains a portion of the Hebrew literature, or may be attributed with certainty to an Israelite.

Naville fails utterly in his attempt to set aside the fact that even in Deborah's song Hebrew appears as a literary language. That song of triumph, as even the sharpest critics acknowledge,² is an actual echo of the historical situation there celebrated. We see, therefore, that in the beginning of the period of the Judges, at the latest, there existed *a written language* of the Hebrews. In any case, then, Naville is wrong in his assertion (*Arch.*, p. 3, etc.) that "all the writers in Israel who composed books before the age of Solomon used the Babylonian language."

2. The new theory and the history of Hebrew *writing*.

¹ *La déc.*, pp. 25, 31; *Archæology*, p. 9.

² Th. Nöldeke, *Die Semitischen Sprachen*, 2nd edition (1899), p. 32; Ed. Meyer, *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme* (1906), p. 487; Driver, *Introduction*, etc., 8th edition, p. 171 (1909).

(a) The supporters of the new opinion lay emphasis constantly on the simple fact that the records in the old Hebrew tongue, which have been discovered up to the present during the excavations, belong only to the ninth century B.C. This is certainly true, for the most ancient writings in the old Hebrew alphabet are the *circa* 70 ostraca which were discovered in 1910 at Samaria by an American expedition under the leadership of Professor Reisner, and which were written, as clear indications prove, in the reign of Ahab (ca. 876-854). Next in age come the following examples of old Hebrew writing: the Mesa-stone of ca. 850; the Siloah inscription from the time of Hezekiah (2 Kings xx. 20; 2 Chron. xxxii. 30; Sir. xlviii. 17); the Gezer calendar, which was discovered in 1908 by Mr. Macalister, and which, from the form of the letters, must be placed in the seventh century B.C.;¹ the two seals which were found at Megiddo (Tell el-Mutesel-lim), and the thirteen jug-handles which were found during the excavations at Jericho, but which are not of great antiquity, although they cannot be exactly dated. But the question cannot be settled by merely stressing the single fact that up to the present no more ancient documents in early Hebrew characters have been discovered (Naville, *Arch.*, p. 13, etc.). Are there not two other possibilities?

(b) It is possible that the Hebrews, even if in earlier centuries they used the Babylonian language and script, had other writings as well in which both the Hebrew language and the Babylonian script were employed.

Among the Hethites at least the fact has been observed, that in one part of their original documents and contracts they have used the Hethite language and the written characters of the Babylonians. So we find it in the texts which were discovered at Boghaz-Köi.² It was indeed more

¹ W. H. Bennett, *The Moabite Stone* (1911), Appendix, pp. 84-86.

² Winckler in *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orientgesellschaft*, no. 35, p. 43 f.

probable that in the literary usage of the Hebrew language an alphabetic script (which the Babylonish Assyrian cuneiform was not) should be used. It was especially natural that the most distinctive principles of Israel, which formed the foundation of its separate religious and moral position, should be fixed in the "national script" (Benzinger, p. 178). But was there such a script in Israel during the earlier centuries?

(c) The Phœnician writing, with which the early Hebrew was virtually identical, may possess a remoter antiquity than critics have ventured to assume in recent decades. The circumstances which lead us to such a conclusion are as follow:—

(a) The fact must not be lost sight of in this investigation that the *argumentum e silentio* affords no decisive proof. New excavations may bring to light examples of old Hebrew documents. This possibility deserves mention all the more because portions of the Israelite literature which were written in the Babylonian language and script have not yet been found. (β) We must, furthermore, not assume with Naville (*La déc.*, p. 25) that in the letters of Amarna and Ta'annek the complicated script of the Babylonians would not have been used if the simple Phœnician script had existed. For it was neither complication nor simplicity which determined the choice of the mode of writing used in this correspondence between princes and vassals. Far more important was the widely extended current *knowledge* of the mode of writing concerned. Therefore in these letters that script was chosen which corresponded to the language then accepted as the most widely intelligible means of communication between the rulers of different nations.

(γ) The Phœnician early Semitic alphabet is not a daughter of Babylonian cuneiform, as Friedrich Delitzsch and others suppose.¹ As along with the Sumerian-Babylonish

¹ Hommel, Winckler and Benzing, *Archäologie* (1907), p. 174.

cuneiform a special development shows itself in the script of the Elamites,¹ so the Phœnician script had its origin *side by side* with the Babylonian, and most probably in dependence upon the simplified written characters of the Egyptians, who discovered the principle of alphabetic writing.²

Further (δ) this Phœnician, early Semitic script, according to sufficiently reliable traces, was gradually developed during a long period, before it attained the form which meets us in its oldest monuments.³

Proof of the slow development of the Phœnician-Semitic script lies before us, first of all, in the fact that the Southern Semitic writing did not grow up out of an alphabet such as we see on the Mesa-stone, but from another branch of the Phœnician-Semitic stem. This development turns our gaze back "to a period long before that of Mesha."⁴ And, further, the Phœnician alphabet seems to have been accepted by the Greeks between 1200 or 1000 B.C.⁵ Then, too, the writing material which, according to recent observation, was used in Phœnicia at an early date, makes it improbable that cuneiform was employed there except in diplomatic

¹ Ferd. Bork in the *ZDMG*, 1910, 579 f.; A. Jeremias, *Handbuch der altorientalischen Geisteskultur* (1913), p. 1.

² Ed. Meyer, *Geschichte des Altertums*, I. 2 (1909), § 203. Another independent kind of writing was also discovered by Flinders Petrie in the neighbourhood of Sinai. On account of its wholly undeveloped signs he dates it from about ca. 1500 B.C. (*Researches in Sinai* (1909), p. 131).

³ In this view Hartwig Hirschfeld, in his acutely reasoned essay "Recent Theories on the Origin of the Alphabet" (*Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 1911, p. 965), agrees [with S. Zerbe, *The Antiquity of Hebrew Writing and Literature* (1911), p. 154 f.

⁴ F. Prætorius, *Das kanaanitische und das südeusemitische Alphabet*, in *ZDMG*, 1909, p. 191.

⁵ Zerbe, *op. cit.*, p. 136; W. Larfeld, *Griechische Epigraphik*, 3rd edition (1914), p. 208. "The transition is older than the seizure of the west coast of Asia-Minor by the Greeks, which took place about 1000 (according to Eduard Meyer, *Geschichte*, I. 336: 1100); for the Greek settlers brought their alphabet with them from the mother country to their new home" (p. 209). "The adoption of the Phœnician alphabet by the inhabitants of the eastern Hellenic continent" dates "from about the eleventh century."

correspondence such as that of the Amarna letters (see above, I. 1). Iṣr in the account of the Egyptian Wen-Amon¹ about his stay in the Phœnician town of Byblos (ca. 1100 B.C.) five hundred rolls of papyrus which had been imported from Egypt to Phœnicia are mentioned, and papyrus was unsuitable for the use of cuneiform.² And even among the Hebrews we hear nothing whatever as to the use of clay-tablets for writing upon.

We learn, therefore, from the most recent studies of the history of *writing* that the Israelites may possibly, in recording their national history, have used at a very early date, e.g., in the age of Moses, an older form of the Phœnician alphabet.

Is it likely, on the other hand, that the Phœnician script was unknown to the Israelites before the age of Solomon? Naville gives an affirmative answer to this question (*Arch.*, p. 13), when he says, "The Canaanite writing cannot be traced in Palestine before the time of Solomon, that is, not until there were close relations with the Phœnicians."

But relations had long existed between the Canaanites on the seashore and some regions of Israel. In Jacob's blessing of the tribes (Gen. xlix. 3 ff.) we are told that the tribe of Zebulun "shall dwell at the haven of the sea . . . and his border shall be unto Zidon" (v. 13). In Deborah's song (Judges v. 17) we read that the tribe of Dan "remained in ships" (presumably as a mercenary in the service of the Phœnicians). Apart, then, from the fact that Hiram, king of Tyre, was "a friend of David" (1 Kings v. 15; Luther's Bible; v. 1, A.V. and R.V.), there existed long before the age of Solomon a manifold association between Phœnicia and Israel, and before that time the latter people had opportunities of knowing the Phœnician alphabet. In answer to

¹ E.g., in Gressmann, *Altorientalische Texte*, etc. (1909), p. 225 f.

² This is admitted by Naville himself (*Archæology*), pp. 13, 19,

Naville's theory already quoted, some positive facts may be set out.

The historical books of Israel inform us that in the reign of Solomon various things were brought from Phœnicia : cedars of Lebanon and costly stones for the building of the temple, and also an artist of semi-Israelite birth (1 Kings v. 6, 17 f. ; vii. 13 f.). But nothing is said about the importation of the Phœnician script ; and we, as historians, must content ourselves with that which the sources narrate about the time in question. The duty of keeping to the sources is all the more imperative because the historical books of the Hebrews have expressly noted many steps of progress on the pathway of civilisation, as will be shown more fully in the following paragraphs. It follows, then, that it is neither necessary nor possible to set up the theory that the Phœnician alphabet was first known to the Hebrews in the age of Solomon.¹

3. Other arguments from Israel's history and tradition.

(a) Let us next consider the chief positive argument against the new assumption, that the literature of the Hebrews up to the age of Solomon was composed in Babylonian and was translated at a subsequent date into Hebrew. This argument lies in the fact that such an exchange is *never mentioned* or in any way indicated in the historical books and the Hebrew literature generally.

Never in the whole early Hebrew literature do we meet with the suggestion that portions of it were translated out of another language.

Is the opposite suggested, for instance, in Proverbs xxv. 1 ? [“ These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied out.”] No. Hezekiah's scribes were simply instructed to gather together into a new collection such proverbs as they might find in other places.

¹ See Naville, *Archæology*, etc., pp. 26 and 203.

For the correct reading is, "These also are proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah brought forward again."¹

The Septuagint describes the nature of the work undertaken in the word ἐξεγράψαντο,² and adds to "the proverbs" αἱ ἀδιάκριτοι as well. That expression most probably signifies "the undivided or unseparated," and this attribute is based on the fact that in this collection a thought is often set forth in more than two lines, as, e.g., in xxv. 6 f., 9 f., 21 f.; xxvi. 18 f., 23–28, etc. It is much less likely that by αἱ ἀδιάκριτοι is meant "the incomprehensible" ("unintelligible," Naville, p. 193), and this expression has no reference in any case to the nature of the script and lettering in which these proverbs were written. For we remark in the first place that the Greek expression affords *in itself* no sure ground for the assumption that "Solomon wrote in cuneiform" (Naville, *Arch.*, p. 194), and, secondly, there are various things which tell against the view, as, e.g., the word ἐξεγράψαντο itself—a circumstance which Naville has overlooked, while he seeks to use another point in the Greek rendering in support of his theory. He tries even to exploit the *translulerunt* of the Vulgate in his own favour. But this word may also be correctly applied in its local sense, and if it were used in a figurative sense this would be inaccurate. For *hēctik* does not mean "to transfer from one language into another."

Nor can we find a hint of any such action in the famous expression *mephorāsch*, which meets us in Nehemiah viii. 8. There we are told that the Levites "read in the book of the law of God distinctly."³

¹ Hēctikū, cf. the Assyrian, etc., in my *Hebr. Wörterbuch*, 335a.

² So Nowack, Wildeboer, Frankenberg, *in loc.*, "they selected, or made an extract." ("sie exzerpierten.")

³ "Distinctly" is also given by Batten in the *International Critical Commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah*, 1913, p. 356. The translation "by sections" is discussed in my work, *Die moderne Pentateuchkritik und ihre neueste Bekämpfung*, 1914, p. 69 f.

First, the word *mephoräsch* does not mean primarily "translated," if we regard the usual meaning of the verb here employed, according to which it means "to separate, to decide." Secondly, the Hebrew language had been at the time (ca. 444 B.C.) still in use for centuries, and therefore did not require any translation before Israelites. Thirdly, there is in the Old Testament another expression for "translated," i.e., *methurgām*, and *this expression is verily used in a neighbouring passage, where the reference really is to a translation* into another language, namely, the Aramaic (Ezra iv. 7). Naville is wrong therefore in interpreting the word *mephoräsch* again as "translated" (*Arch.*, p. 178). It is useless for him to represent the rendering of the law from "the Aramaic or popular form, the literary form of Babylonian cuneiform, with the Jewish tongue" (see below), as if it were not "really a translation." Such a theory could only be set up by one who was unacquainted with these branches of the Semitic language.

(b) The Hebrew sources contain, further, not the slightest trace of the suggestion that the Israelitish literature or a portion of it had been transferred from Babylonian cuneiform into the old Hebrew alphabet.

It is true that some critics (cf. Riessler, *l.c.*, p. 496) have recently discovered a "hint" of such a transcription in the reference to Ezra as a *sopher mahir bethorath mosche* (Ezra vii. 6). But how can the words of that passage, "And he was a ready, i.e., a rapid, scribe in the law of Moses," possess that sense? Even if the word *sopher* is meant to indicate the idea "scribe" there given to it in Ezra vii. 6, it could only mean one skilled or practised in his art of writing, just as in Psalm xlv. 2 the same expression is used with exactly the same meaning. But it is more probable that the expression *sopher* in that saying on Ezra is used in its second meaning, "one skilled or learned in the

law.”¹ For the addition “in the law of Moses” does not explain itself quite naturally, if *sopher* is translated merely “scribe.” For how could such a one be skilled only in this particular work of transcribing the Pentateuch? In no case, however, is there any “hint” in the words of Ezra vii. 6 that the law of Moses had been *re-written* by Ezra from Babylonian cuneiform into another language. This sense cannot even be put into the words if we call to aid 4 Esdras xiv. 42 (Riessler, *l.c.*). According to that passage Ezra dictated the law, which had been lost, and which he had re-discovered, to five men, of whom we read, “Scripserunt quae dicebantur excessiones noctis, quas non sciebant.” Riessler gives the words this meaning, “they recorded the matter dictated to them in signs which they did not understand.” But the words are these, “They wrote what was spoken (by me), happenings (or appearances) of the night, which they did not know.”² Here also we find *nothing* about a *transcription* of the law.

The fact that the ancient Hebrew literature never mentions anywhere that portions of that literature had been translated from one language into another, and re-written out of one script into another, is very important on three main grounds.

In the first place, this silence is of weighty import because the literature of Israel contains surprisingly numerous references to the occurrence of changes in the progress of events and of the culture of Israel. For we find there a very large number of notices on change in the names of places (Gen. xiv. 2b, etc.), change in the names of the months, of the titles of God, of customs, etc.³ And are we to suppose that in the entire literature of this nation there would be no

¹ Cf. on this developed meaning of *sopher* my *Geschichte*, etc., p. 416 f.

² “Excessiones noctis” is translated “night visions” by Zöckler in the *Kurzgefassten Kommentar* of Strack and Zöckler on the Apocrypha.

³ A collection of instances is given in my *Geschichte*, p. 5 f.

reference whatever to such an exceedingly important cultural change in the life of the people as an alteration with regard to the language and the alphabet?

Secondly, we observe that another transcription of the law is actually announced in the later books of Israel. For in the Talmud (bab. Sanhedrin 21b) we read that "in the beginning the law of Israel was given in the Hebrew language." In this script it was given to the Samaritans, and from this fact we can see more clearly than ever what that "Hebrew script" was. For we know that the Samaritan alphabet corresponds in its main features to that of the old Hebrews and Phœnicians, as we may read it on the Mesastone and elsewhere.¹ "In Ezra's days," that passage from the Talmud goes on, "the law was given to Israel in a different kind of writing." This is designated as *ashshuri*, and this attribute "Assyrian" is put instead of *arammi*, "Aramaic"—as was possible later, and indeed actually happened. In the later centuries the expression "Asshur" was applied to the Babylonian and even to the Persian kingdom (2 Kings xxiii. 29; Erza vi. 22), and thus the Aramaic script which was used in the new Syrian realm might be designated "Assyrian" (*ashshuri*). Thus we see, *thirdly*, that even in reference to the transference of the law from one mode of writing into another a notice is preserved in Israelitish tradition, but this notice distinctly states that the law was first written in Hebrew characters. Not only is there *an absence of the slightest hint* as to a transcription of the law out of Babylonian cuneiform into another alphabet, but that mode of transcription is *clearly set aside* by a distinct testimony to the Israelitish transmission.

In my judgment these facts are of sufficient weight to decide the question.

¹ Riessler is therefore quite mistaken (*loc. cit.*, p. 496) in his view that the passage from the Talmud we have mentioned does not contradict the assumption that the law was first written in Babylonian cuneiform.

Along with them there are other circumstances, of lesser importance no doubt, which must not be wholly neglected in our estimate of Naville's theory. In this class I put especially Naville's view as to the place occupied by the *Aramaic* language and writing in the cultural history of Israel. We need only look up the expressions "Aramean, Aramaic language, Aramaic alphabet" in the index of his book *Archæology, etc.*, and we shall at once recognise the significance of this factor. The most important points to which attention should be called are the following:—

(a) In the first place, he says repeatedly that "Moses called himself an Aramean like all the Israelites of his age" (*Arch.*, pp. 21, 204). In proof of this he quotes the words, which in Deuteronomy xxvi. 5 are put into the mouth of the Israelites in reference to Jacob: "*arammi obēd abî.*" These words are on the whole correctly translated in the Revised Version, "An Aramean ready to perish was my father," but *obēd* would probably be still better interpreted "straying" or "wandering" (cf. Ps. cxix. 176, where *obēd* means "separated from the flock" ¹ ["I have gone astray like a lost sheep"]. But this is of minor importance. The main point is that the words of Deuteronomy xxvi. 5 look back to the long exile which Jacob endured in the Aramean country.

That interpretation seems justified by the immediate context of the passage quoted, which contains a *direct* reference to another exile of Jacob. The opening words of verse 5, as is clear from the context alone, do not refer to Jacob's ethnological position, but to his actual place of abode. The passage has a *local* meaning. In support of this view many other places might be cited, according to which the Hebrews, descendants of Arphaxad, etc., ranked *along* with the Arameans as a particular branch of the

¹ See Paul Haupt in *ZDMG*, 1910, p. 704.

Semites (Gen. x. 21 ; xiv. 13, etc.). Have we not a testimony to the fact in the frontier settlement drawn up according to Genesis xxxi. 44 ff. between Laban and Jacob? No difficulty on this point is raised by Naville's allusion to Josephus, who remarks, before his account of Jacob's emigration to Egypt, that the Israelites were "Mesopotamians and not Egyptians."

(β) Second, and of more importance, is the relationship of the Old Testament writings to the Aramean language.

Naville characterises the relationship in this way. If the so-called priestly code was written in the fifth century by Ezra, it was written in the Aramaic language.

For Ezra came from Mesopotamia, where *Aramaic* was the literary language (*Arch.*, p. 105). This statement might be excused as a misprint, if he had not written the following sentence on p. 178, "In my opinion the law was written in Aramaic, the popular form, the book-form of cuneiform." But this connexion of Aramaic with the language of cuneiform is purely fanciful. He thinks he can prove his statement in the following words, "Even if we admit that Old Hebrew was a script and an idiom for books, we do not see how Ezra could pass from the Canaanite alphabet to square Hebrew, which is a modified form of Aramaic, without having first passed through the stage of Mesopotamian Aramaic" (p. 181 f.).¹

But who says or is compelled to say that Ezra employed at once the later square Hebrew? He naturally accepted that form of the Aramaic script which was then in use, but there is not the slightest ground on that score for the deduction that a stratum of the Pentateuch, or the whole Pentateuch, was written in the Aramaic language. All the passages which Naville has written further on this point (pp. 24, 50, 115, 183 f., etc.) are mere repetitions of the same

¹ Naville ignores the ostraca of Samaria, etc.

assertion, and are very far from establishing the fact that Ezra used Aramaic in writing out the Pentateuch. The actual Aramaic portions which exist in the book named after Ezra (iv. 8 ff., etc.) show *on the contrary* the difference that exists between them and the Hebrew texts. And besides, the portion that begins with Ezra iv. 8 is expressly indicated as "*translated into Aramaic*" (ver. 7).

Naville moves in a perfect circle of errors, and whence do they arise? First of all from his failure to give due consideration to the clear words of Genesis xxxi. 47, Isaiah xxxvi. 11, and Ezra iv. 7. Even the first of these three passages shows clearly that the Hebrew and Aramaic languages must be carefully distinguished from one another, for the Hebrew Jacob expresses "heap of witness" by *gal éd*, but the Aramean Laban uses the expression *jegár sâhadútha*. Further, according to Isaiah xxxvi. 11, the Aramaic idiom was for the mass of the Hebrew people an unknown quantity, and only the higher state officials knew Aramaic, because it had become an unduly circulated medium of diplomatic intercourse. For that very reason documents addressed to the Persian government were translated into Aramaic (Ezra iv. 7).

Secondly, the fact that the Jews in Elephantinê wrote Aramaic is mistakenly interpreted and exploited by Naville. According to him the Aramaic language was brought to Elephantinê as their mother-tongue by the Jews who emigrated to Egypt.¹ But we need not recur to the well-known theory that the founders of the community at Elephantinê belonged for the most part to Samaria, as it is very probable they did, and that Aramaic was better known to them than to the inhabitants of Judæa, owing to the settling of colonies in the north and east of Samaria (2 Kings

¹ *Archæology*, pp. 145, 163, 173. Moreover a trace of Hebrew has been discovered in the Elephantinê sources by Strack (*ZDMG*, 1911).

xvii. 24). The following factor only needs to be mentioned in explanation. The colonists in southern Egypt used Aramaic partly because they entered into correspondence with Persian officials, and partly also they wrote Aramaic as Israelites abroad, where Aramaic was a more familiar Semitic dialect than Hebrew.

We see, then, that both the events out of which Naville seeks to derive an entirely new conception of the origin of Old Testament literature (*Arch.*, pp. 9, 139, etc.)—the discovery of the Amarna correspondence and of the papyri of Elephantinê—have no such significance as he attributes to them. The Hebrew language and the Phœnician old Hebrew script are robbed by him of their importance for the origin of the Old Testament. But they will not permit themselves to be set aside.

I do not now criticise the numerous observations made by Naville in the course of his work on the origin of the Pentateuch. For it is unmethodical to scatter by the way such isolated passages throughout an investigation, in order to arouse suspicion against a great conviction—the newer theory as to the Pentateuch (*Arch.*, pp. 24, 71, 118, 130, 204). It is the less needful for me to discuss in detail these remarks of Naville, which have no direct concern with the answering of the question as to the relation of the Old Testament to the language and script of the Babylonians, because this subject, “Modern Criticism of the Pentateuch and its Latest Opponents,” has recently been elucidated by me in a special book.

ED. KÖNIG.

BOLDNESS IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

(1 JOHN iv. 17.)

IN the fine collect for St. John Baptist's Day the Baptist is characterised as speaking the truth and boldly