

Recent Biblical Archaeology.

BY THE REVEREND J. W. JACK, D.D., GLENFARG, PERTSHIRE.

CUNEIFORM tablets, throwing a welcome light on historical conditions in the second and third milleniums B.C., are now being discovered in large numbers in Mesopotamia and Syria. The recent expedition to the Habur region, under Mr. M. E. L. Mallowan, has brought to light a Record Office at Chagar Bazar, containing seventy tablets, carefully stacked on flat trays of pottery, and inscribed with over 2200 lines of script. They date from 1900-1700 B.C., and so far as deciphered at present appear to be accounts recording the receipt of wheat and barley from numerous farmers. At Brak, which lies about twenty-five miles south-east, Mr. Mallowan has discovered a vast Sumerian palace, erected about 2300 B.C., having a ground plan one hundred and sixty yards in length, and with a long range of dwelling-houses abutting on one end. In one of the houses was a private chapel, with a decorated semicircular clay altar in the corner. In the front face of the altar, in one of the middle panels, there was a small hole penetrating right through the altar into a secret chamber at the back. The purpose of the opening seems clear: it must have served as an oracle hole or speaking-tube, through which a priest in concealment behind could make his pronouncements. In the aperture was found a gold finger-ring—perhaps the price of some consultation. There is no evidence that the Israelites, even in the primitive stage of their history, ever resorted to deceptive divination of this nature. But the statement that Rachel 'went off to consult Yahweh' (Gn 25²²) certainly suggests an oracle of some kind, and an interpreter like the Arab *kāhin*, as also does the same expression in Ex 33⁷ and elsewhere. Similarly, the early laws ordaining that certain cases were to be brought before God for decision (e.g. Ex 21⁶ 22^{8f.}, etc.) imply an oracle, or at least a priest at a sanctuary to pronounce God's will. We read also of a 'terebinth of the oracle-giver' (Gn 12⁶, translated 'oak of Moreh' in A.V.), where God is said to have spoken to Abram, and a 'terebinth of the soothsayers' (Jg 9³⁷, translated 'the plain of Meonenim' in A.V.). With the gradual rise of true religion in Israel under the teaching of the prophets, such early modes of seeking to discover God's will were slowly abandoned, and in course of time were forbidden (cf. Mic 3⁶⁻¹¹).

In a previous article (Dec. 1936) we referred to

the official correspondence of the Assyrian kings during the Sargonic period (722-625 B.C.), consisting of 1471 tablets in cuneiform preserved in the British Museum. The publication of these by Professor Leroy Watermann has now been completed and gives us much valuable information bearing on the Old Testament. With very few exceptions, they were discovered at Nineveh, having been sent there from various parts of the Assyrian empire and even far beyond it. The writer has gone through the whole of the correspondence, and would draw attention to the light which the Letters throw on the Biblical record:

- No. 48: The author of this letter says, 'I lift up my hand (to God),' and in No. 370 prayer is called the 'lifting up of our hands.' Cf. Abram, Gn 14²²; also Dn 12⁷, Rev 10⁶.
- No. 65: From the word used ('*adri*'), we find that the portion of the temple which constituted the private apartment of the god was a dark chamber (from the Assyrian word '*adāru*' = 'to be dark'). This reminds us of the unlighted room which constituted the 'oracle' in Solomon's Temple (1 K 6¹⁹⁻²⁰ 8¹²). The private chambers of the gods in Egyptian temples were similar.
- No. 67: We read here (also in 119 and 706) of a revolt in '*Ebir-Nāri*, which is equivalent to '*Eber-hannāhār*' ('Beyond the river') in the Bible (cf. Jos 24², 'Your fathers dwelt in '*Eber-hannāhār* in old time'; also Neh 2⁷⁻⁹, Ezr 4-7). At first the expression signified the land immediately west of the Euphrates, but by the time of the tablets it had come to include also Syria and Palestine.
- No. 108: Here an officer, *Rab-mugi*, is mentioned (also in 154, 843, 1217, 1343). He is to be identified, no doubt, with '*Rab-mag*' of the Old Testament (cf. Jer 39⁸⁻¹³), and appears to have been an official with a variety of activities, though his specific functions are not clear.
- No. 186: We read of 'mothers who pour out libations to Enlil.' (Cf. Jer 44¹⁶⁻¹⁹.) This letter seems to imply that certain murderers were arrested in spite of the fact that they had taken refuge in the temple, and it thus illustrates 1 K 2²⁸⁻³⁴.
- No. 220: The name Sarai ('*Sarāi*') occurs as the author of this communication (to the scribe of the palace): 'Your handmaid Sarai.' Hence, considering the date of the Letters, it can hardly be an earlier form of '*Sarah*,' as some scholars have supposed (cf. Gn 17¹⁵). The fact is that the termination *-ai* is an ancient Aramaic or Syrian

- feminine (found also in Arabic and some cognate languages), while *-a(h)* is the equivalent Hebrew one.
- No. 255: Hammurabi (the king) is twice mentioned here as *Ammurapi*, which appears to have been the Assyrian pronunciation of the name, the former being the Amorite. This leads to the identification of Hammurabi with Amraphel of Gn 14, for *bi=pil* or '*phel*' in the cuneiform.
- No. 286: The name *Mardukh* occurs (also in 1456). Cf. Mordecai (Ezr 2^a, etc.).
- No. 353: Here we find the title *Rab-shaki* (also in 1451), proving the existence of an official with this designation, and hence confirming 2 K 18¹⁷, etc. His office was probably of a diplomatic and military nature.
- No. 404: Here 'eyestones' or 'stones with eyes' are mentioned (cf. Zec 3⁹).
- No. 599: The name *Abirame* occurs as that of a singer in Urzuhina. It is found in the Old Testament (cf. Nu 16¹⁻¹³, 1 K 16³⁴, etc.), and corresponds to the Biblical Abrām. In the other form, 'Abraham,' the *h* appears to have developed from the long vowel *ā*.
- No. 632: Mention is made of tribute from Judah (probably during Manasseh's reign), of which the Book of Kings (2 K 21) and the Book of Chronicles (2 Ch 33) give no hint.
- No. 633: Here we read of *Halbishu*, 'the Samaritan,' who lived in Gozan (cf. 2 K 17⁹), and of other individuals bearing Israelite names (*Paltiah* and *Neriah*, which have Yahweh terminations). In No. 1009 we have also mention made of Samaritans (*Samirnai*) serving in the Assyrian army. The reference in these cases must be to the members of the Israelitish captivity of 722 B.C. (2 K 17⁹). In No. 1201 we read of tribute grain received from the Samaritans, but here the correspondent evidently means the mixed population settled in Samaria after the deportation (2 K 17²⁴).
- No. 771: Here we find the words 'the plant of life he (the king) has put to our nostrils.' Cf. Ezk 8¹⁷, a text hitherto obscure.
- No. 1041: This letter speaks of messengers sent to Judah (*Bit-Iaudi*, 'House of Judah'). The reference may be to the incident in Is 39, where we read of Merodach-baladan sending a message to King Hezekiah.

The whole of the tablets bear eloquent witness to a far-seeing systematic effort to keep cities, provinces, and even the remotest outposts in vital touch with the capital. As most of them called for replies, thousands of important texts must still be buried in the rubbish heaps of ancient Assyria.

The excavations at Lachish (now under the control of Mr. Lankester Harding since the lamented death of Mr. J. L. Starkey) have shown that the city experienced a widespread conflagration in the latter part of the thirteenth century B.C. This con-

clusion is evident from the large amount of ashes and burnt remains in this layer, combined with the fact that many pieces of imported Mycenaean vases and Aegean incised ware, as well as a scarab of Rameses II. (1301-1234 B.C.), were found there. It seems possible to reach a more precise date for the conflagration from the bowl (in twenty-five fragments, now put together), the discovery of which we mentioned in a previous article, and which is inscribed on both sides in Egyptian hieratics. The text is very imperfect, but relates to deliveries of wheat, evidently for tax purposes, and bears three dates all in the fourth year of some Pharaoh. As the fragments were found in the burnt layer, the conflagration must have taken place that year or shortly after. It is clear that the Pharaoh in question could not be Rameses II. (for, as Albright has pointed out, the city was certainly not destroyed at the beginning of this monarch's reign of sixty-seven years), but must be one of his successors. All the facts seem to point to his immediate successor, Merenptah (1234-1224 B.C.). According to this Pharaoh's triumph stele, he invaded Palestine in his fourth or fifth year (1230 or 1229 B.C.), when he 'destroyed Israel,' took Gezer and other cities, and reduced 'Kharu' (*i.e.* the southern parts) to submission. Was the destruction of Lachish at this time due to his campaign? We know that Gezer and Lachish were closely associated in government as well as in art and culture, and the devastation of the former would naturally involve the latter. At all events, Lachish was in Kharu, and would probably be included in the invasion. It is not unlikely, indeed, that the destruction of other cities also (cf. Debir, *e.g.*), which seems to have occurred towards the end of the thirteenth century, was the result of this Pharaoh's ruthless campaign. According to some archæologists, it was caused by the Israelite entry or Conquest, which they are inclined to place at this later date on the ground that such cities show no material traces of Israelite settlement earlier than this. But if there be no such recognizable traces before Merenptah's time—and this, to say the least, is very doubtful—due regard must be had to the slow process of assimilation that went on. The Israelites, who had only been used to a nomadic or pastoral existence, could not adopt city life or ways within a single generation, but, like all desert tribes under similar circumstances, required one or two centuries to make any effective settlement in the land, especially in some centres where Canaanite or Egyptian influences were strong. This is evident from the pottery alone, which did not assume a distinctively

Hebrew type until the time of David and Solomon. Moreover, Merenptah's invasion was no mere idle boast. As early as his third year, we find (according to Papyrus Anastasi III.) a well, a fortress, and a city in Palestine all named after him; and that the subjugation of Gezer must have caused him considerable trouble, and perhaps a siege, is apparent from his subsequent title, 'The Binder of Gezer.' No record of his campaign, it is true, remains in the Biblical record, but it must be remembered that there is no mention there of other historical events, even greater, such as the invasion of Palestine by the 'Sea Peoples,' the occupation of the Shephelah by the Philistines, or the burning of Gezer in Solomon's time.

The excavations which were begun over a year ago by Mr. P. L. O. Guy at *Tell Kudadi*, near the mouth of the Auja or Yarkon river, two or three miles north of Jaffa, are being continued by Dr. E. L. Sukenik, of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. The *tell* measures some fifty by twenty-five metres, is about nine metres high, and at the present day has on it a lighthouse and a small war memorial. 'It is the most interesting small site I have visited,' says Mr. Guy. The opening-up of it may add an important contribution to Old Testament study, for not only did the boundary of the tribe of Dan pass near here (Jos 19⁴⁶), but it was probably to this very spot that the wood for the building of the First and Second Temples was brought from Tyre and Sidon (cf. 1 K 5⁹, Ezr 3⁷). The neighbouring haven of Joppa was a dangerous one owing to low sunken rocks, and it was often impossible to approach it, whereas here floats were able to come with ease close up to the bank. The remains of a building, evidently a fortress, containing a number of rooms, have been unearthed. The walls, which were of dressed sandstone, still stand about four and a half metres high, and appear to have been surmounted by a tower. According to the potsherds, the structure dates from about 1000 B.C. As there are walls running in various directions, showing different types of masonry, as well as indications of two conflagrations, the place must have undergone successive changes in the course of time. Further reports will no doubt give us more definite information.

Dr. Nelson Glueck, who has been making explorations recently in the land of Ammon, has been able to fix the northern boundary of the Nabataean kingdom. Judging from the sherds found on the surface, he is of opinion that a line drawn from about the north end of the Dead Sea, and running east through Mâdebâ to the desert, would mark

the boundary here. North of this lay the Ammonite kingdom, whose territory was one of the richest in Transjordan. Here he has examined many of the strongly built circular towers or fortresses, with which the land is dotted. These towers have immense walls composed of great flint blocks, and some of them adjoin rectangular structures built in the same massive style. At some places there are several of these complexes grouped together, but there does not seem to have been any outer city-wall surrounding any of the groups, nor are such walls to be found on most of the Ammonite sites. In the past, investigators have assigned these buildings variously to the Megalithic, late Neolithic, Chalcolithic, and Early Bronze periods, but Dr. Glueck, on the basis of the pottery found, places their erection in the Early Iron Age (1200-1100 B.C.), and regards the Ammonite civilization at this period as an advanced one, with a flourishing state and an intensive system of agriculture. Probably Dr. Glueck's dating will not be considered as final by all archæologists, seeing that more than surface exploration is required to reach certainty. Many sherds get removed in course of time, others are buried deep, others are worn to dust through centuries of ploughing, while all traces of others are cleared away by successive building on the same sites.

Large numbers of 'toggle-pins' (so-called) have been dug up in the course of time in Palestine and neighbouring regions. These are long thick pins (made of bronze, bone, silver, gold, or other material), having a round hole through them some distance from the top or even quite near the middle. Though not mentioned in the Bible, such pins must have been common among the early Hebrews. Recently Mr. E. Henschel-Simon has made researches into the use and origin of them. He comes to the conclusion that they were not hairpins, as some archæologists suggest, but that with a few exceptions—such as the Mesopotamian ones, which were possibly used as a kind of stiletto—they were intended for fastening garments. A string was kept tied to the hole, and after insertion of the pin through both edges of the garment, the string was wound several times round the two projecting ends, so as to keep the pin in position. The earliest specimens, he finds, come from Mesopotamia (Ur and Kish) as early as c. 3400-3100 B.C. Considerable numbers, dating about five hundred years later, have been found in northern Mesopotamia, especially at Tepe Gawra and Tepe Giyan, and others of still later time in Palestine and various countries surrounding the Mediterranean. All the pre-Hyksos

types (two of which have been found at Megiddo) form a more or less homogeneous group, and appear to have had a common origin, no doubt Mesopotamian (Tepe Gawra), with possibly one centre of manufacture, though some specimens in the foundation deposit at Byblos are probably of Caucasian origin. A new wave of toggle-pins appeared in Palestine with the Hyksos. During this period

they were a popular object of daily use, but the Hyksos type seems to have had no immediate connexion with the Mesopotamian, but may have had a Caucasian origin. After the expulsion of the Hyksos from Palestine, these pierced pins lived on, though reduced in numbers, and by the time of the Early Iron Age they had disappeared and become replaced by the fibula.

In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

A Wise Wish.

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'And God said, Ask what I shall give thee.'—I K 3^d.

NOT long ago, as no doubt you know, there was a wedding, a royal wedding, between King Farouk of Egypt and the lady who is now Queen Farida. Farida was not her former name, but one specially chosen for her by her husband. It is said to mean 'the unique one.' So it was quite a natural name to choose, since any man who loves his wife thinks there is no one quite like her in all the world. Farouk's own name, however, has a meaning too, 'the one who distinguishes between right and wrong.' A fitting name for a king indeed, for it is a king's duty to try to do right and avoid wrong.

It reminds us exactly, does it not, of another king, one of the wisest kings of all time. I mean Solomon. One night Solomon had a dream, and he dreamt that God said, 'Ask what I shall give thee.' And what did he ask? What would we have asked? Riches, and honour, and high position? Or long life, perhaps? No, Solomon asked none of these things. 'Give thy servant,' he said, 'an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great people?' A great wish, wasn't it? And God gave him his wish. And Solomon became a very wise ruler, distinguishing between right and wrong. Also as a result his country flourished in his reign.

Now, that power of judging aright is one of the best gifts a person could have, especially one who has much authority and may need to make important decisions. It is said that the late Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Davidson, prayed in this wise

for his successor, Dr. Lang, 'O Lord, give thy servant judgment.' It was a good prayer. I think his prayer has been answered, and that his successor has been able to decide with wisdom in many complex and difficult things.

In our own smaller affairs as well, that is a gift that we all need. In order to keep to the straight path and to do what is right, we must know what is right or wrong. But God has given us that power without our asking. He has put a still, small voice within us, which we call Conscience. I am sure we can catch it whispering sometimes, 'This is right,' or 'That is wrong.' Of course we must not regard our conscience as one boy did. Asked what conscience was, he replied, naming a friend of his, 'Conscience is a wee thing inside me what tells me when Willie Smith's done wrong.' A very convenient sort of conscience no doubt. Ah, but our conscience isn't meant to be the traffic-controller for Willie Smith, it's the traffic-controller for ourselves, to warn us when we may go wrong.

And, remember, there is always One who is even surer than our own Conscience, Some One who was sent by God to be the Conscience of the world. Sometimes we may be a little uncertain about our own conscience. It may not be speaking very clearly. So what can we do? Here is what we *should* do, check our conscience by His. Ask what He would say, or what He would do. So we shall not distinguish wrongly. Because the Lord Jesus Himself is The Truth. Anything He ever said, and anything He ever did, couldn't be wrong. You remember, for instance, how He once said, 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy: but *I say* unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.'