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K. A. KITCHEN, B.A.

Egypt and the Bible: Some Recent Advances

Introductory

Ever since the dramatic resurrection of the long-derelict remains of the brilliant civilisations of Egypt and Mesopotamia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there has been a steady flow of studies that have sought to exploit our increasing knowledge of Ancient Egypt in order the better to interpret and evaluate the Biblical references to Egypt and matters Egyptian.

Though interest in the general subject of Egypt and the Bible has never died, there has been no major work in this field since before the late war. Professional Egyptologists with plenty of other highly urgent tasks on their hands have largely been disinclined to involve themselves in the controversies with which Biblical studies abound and to spend time on a subject which could contribute but little to Egyptology itself.

However, a steady stream of papers on a wide variety of particular points has never failed,¹ and some Egyptologists are once more beginning to devote attention to this field.²

This paper offers a selection—emphatically and necessarily a very modest and uneven selection—of material bearing on Egypt and the Bible. Two classes of matter are here drawn upon. On the one hand,

¹ For bibliography of pre-war studies to 1941, see I. A. Pratt, *Ancient Egypt, A List of Sources in the New York Public Library* (New York, 1925), and Pratt, *Ancient Egypt: 1925-1941* (New York, 1942), under the sections 'Egypt and the Bible'. Articles of the years 1939-47 are in the eight lists by W. Federn in *Orientalia*, **17** (1948), **18** (1949) and **19** (1950). For nearly everything from 1947 onwards, consult J. M. A. Janssen (ed.), *Annual Egyptological Bibliography*, published in Leiden every year since then. Recent Egyptian works bearing on Old Testament studies have been usefully surveyed by Janssen in the symposium *L'Ancien Testament et l'Orient: Études présentées aux Vies Journées Bibliques de Louvain* (11-13 septembre 1954) (Louvain, 1957), pp. 29-63.

² Including Dr Janssen, cf. preceding note and on Joseph, below; P. Montet, *L'Égypte et la Bible* (Paris/Neuchâtel, 1959) (doubtless to appear in English through the S.C.M. Press); J. Vergote on Joseph, see Joseph-section below; É. Drioton on the date of the Exodus and the relationship between Proverbs and Amenemope (see sections on these below)—to name only four scholars out of several.

attention is drawn to some important recent studies devoted specifically to Egypt and the Bible.¹ On the other hand, a brief selection has been taken from the rich potential of useful background-material which is so largely locked away in the multitude of specialised Egyptological publications. This material itself falls under two heads. Some of it has already been brought into connection with Biblical studies by specialists,² whereas a few points from the rich potential available as 'raw material' are here presented in relation to Scripture for the first time.³

Early References

Two small points in the 'Table of Nations', Genesis x, are worthy of brief notice.⁴

1. *Pûṭ*. It has been evident for some time that the *Pûṭ* of Genesis x. 6, Nahum iii. 9, Jeremiah xlvi. 9, Ezekiel xxx. 5, etc. is a term for Libyans, especially Libyan warriors. This identification rests on the equation of Old Persian *Putiya* and Babylonian *Putā* (= Hebrew *Pûṭ*) with Ta-Temehu (*Ti-Tmḥw*), a native Egyptian term for Libya(ns), offered by trilingual inscriptions of the Persian emperor Darius I (c. 522-486 B.C.)⁵ set up in Egypt.⁶ The term *pûṭ* may possibly be derived from the old Egyptian term *pedjty* (*pḏty*),⁷ 'foreign bowman' with application to the Libyans *par excellence* who were noted archers.⁸

Now, the term and form *Pûṭ* for Libyans has turned up as a specific

¹ See below, Joseph-section, point 3; Moses/Exodus section, points 2, 3, 5, 6; Solomon/Egypt section, point 2.

² See below, Early References, point 1; Joseph-section, points 1 and 2; Moses/Exodus section, points 1 and 6; Solomon/Egypt section, point 1 (Siamun-relief); Later Contacts, points 1 (Karnak list), and 3 (So as vizier and not Re'e).

³ See below, Early References, point 2; Joseph-section, point 4; Moses/Exodus section, points 4 and 7; Solomon/Egypt section, points 1 (Egyptian foreign policy, Dyn. 21 weakness); Later Contacts, points 2 and 3 (Egyptian foreign policy; So as Osorkon IV).

⁴ On Table of Nations, see recently D. J. Wiseman, *Trans. J. Vict. Inst.*, **87** (1955), 14-24, 113-118.

⁵ Date based on tables of R. A. Parker and W. H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology*, 626 B.C.-A.D. 75 (Providence, R.I., 1956).

⁶ See G. Posener, *La Première Domination Perse en Égypte* (Cairo, 1936), pp. 186-187.

⁷ By the fourteenth century B.C., as the Amarna Letters show, the *ḏj*-sound (*d*) had shifted to *d/t*, giving *pit/date* (and *pit/de*); cf. W. F. Albright, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, **5** (1946), 14, on entry no. 16.

⁸ Cf. U. Hölscher, *Libyer und Ägypter*, = *München Ägyptologische Forschungen* No. 4 (Glückstadt, 1937), pp. 38-39 and references.

term in Egyptian itself, in a group of funerary documents in hieratic (cursive) script, dated to the late 21st Dynasty, c. 970 B.C. These fulminate against any magical threat from Egypt, Nubia, or Puda (*Pw̄d̄i*), i.e. Libya.¹ These new examples have in turn helped to bring to light another one, Puyad or P̄id (*P̄ȳd̄*), 'Libyans', in the reign of Osorkon II, c. 860 B.C.,² a contemporary of Omri and Ahab. Thus the history of this name can be sketched through the second and first millennia B.C. both in Egypt and in Western Asia.

2. *Naphtuhim*. Classed under Mizraim (Egypt) in Genesis x. 13 and 1 Chronicles i. 11, the term Naphtuhim has always been obscure and difficult to identify. Long ago, the pioneer Egyptologists Brugsch³ and Erman⁴ sought to interpret Naphtuhim as a Hebrew transcript of the Egyptian Pa-ta-mehu (*p̄i-ti-m̄h̄w*), a term for the Delta or Lower Egypt to balance the mention of Pathros, 'Upper Egypt'; but they could only obtain this equation by resort to the unsatisfactory expedient of drastic emendation of the Hebrew text. It is now possible to offer two almost equally good Egyptian originals for Naphtuhim without any recourse to emendation at all.

Firstly, Naphtuhim can stand for a Late-Egyptian **na(yu)-/na(en)-pa-idhu* (*m̄(yw)-/n̄i(n)-p̄i-id̄h̄w*, the *d* becoming *t* as often in Egyptian, i.e. 'they of the (delta-)marshland', the people of the Lower Egyptian Delta that Brugsch and Erman had wished to identify here, but with a much closer equivalent than theirs. (Pa-) Idhu, 'the marshland', is a well-known Egyptian term for the Delta,⁵ and the construction *nayu-*

¹ See I. E. S. Edwards, *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum*, 4th series (1960), 2 vols. Reference in vol. I, *Text*, p. 10, note 23, on text 'L-1' (Papyrus Br. Mus. 10083), obverse, lines 26-27. Further occurrences and variant spellings are to be found in the parallel documents 'L-3', 'L-6', 'T-2', 'P-3', 'P-4'. As Egypt, Syria and Nubia are separately named in the texts, the comparison with *Puf*, *Pufa*, is immediate.

² Published, unrecognised, in *Recueil de Travaux . . .*, 18 (1896), 50, lines 16; pointed out by Edwards, loc. cit. New publication by H. K. Jacquet-Gordon, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 46 (1960), 12-23.

³ H. Brugsch, *Hieroglyphisch-Demotisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 6 (Leipzig, 1881), p. 633 (p. 80 of vol.).

⁴ A. Erman, *Zeitschrift für Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 10 (1890), 118-119.

⁵ Erman and Grapow, *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache*, vol. i (Leipzig, 1926), p. 155, and references under nos. 5 to 8 in *Belegstellen*. The exact form *pa-idhu* occurs in a text of Rameses III's eleventh year, roughly 1180 B.C.; see Epigraphic Survey, *Medinet Habu*, vol. ii (Chicago, 1932), plate 82, line 30; translation, Edgerton and Wilson, *Historical Records of Rameses III* (Chicago, 1936), p. 80.

(sometimes *na(en)-*), 'they of . . .' was in current use with place-names from Rameses II's reign (thirteenth century B.C., age of Moses) and onwards.¹ Naphtuhim would then indeed be the Lower-Egyptian pendant to Upper-Egyptian Pathros in Genesis. x.

The second alternative is to take Naphtuhim as a transcript for a Late-Egyptian **na(yu)-/na(en)- pa-ta-(we)ha(t)*, (*n:(yu)-/n:(n)- p:-t:-(w)h:(t)*), with elision of weak semi-consonants and customary loss of final feminine (*t*), 'they of the Oasis land'—i.e. as a term for the inhabitants of the line of oases in the desert to west of the Nile valley,² as a whole.³ This would be a suitable location for Naphtuhim if Mizraim were held to include Lower Egypt without specific mention of the latter;⁴ but perhaps the Delta-explanation is more satisfying, even if the Oasis-suggestion is more interesting!

The Age of Joseph

New source-material and new studies have recently appeared that bear directly on this period. The new material of special interest is Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1446, splendidly published by W. C. Hayes of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.⁵ This papyrus sheet was originally a page in the Register of Current Criminals of the great prison at Thebes in Upper Egypt in the tenth to thirty-first years of the 12th-Dynasty pharaoh Amenemhat III, c. 1833-1812 B.C.,⁶ in the

¹ For place-names constructed with *Nayu-*, etc. cf. Sir A. H. Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica*, vol. ii (Oxford, 1947), pp. 82*-83*, no. 377B, and pp. 146*-149*, no. 401, under *Rameses II* and III.

² For *ta-wehat*, 'Oasis-land', see Erman and Grapow, *Wörterbuch*, vol. i, p. 347, ref. 23. The form *pa-ta-(n-)wehat* actually occurs in the thirteenth century B.C. (Pap. Anastasi IV, 10: 9; 11: 4, 5, cf. R. A. Caminos, *Late-Egyptian Miscellanies* (Oxford, 1954), pp. 176-177), and again in the tenth century B.C. (Dakhleh stela of Sheshonq (I), cf. Gardiner, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 19 (1933), 22, 29, plate 5, 4th line).

³ Yet a third perfectly good original for Naphtuhim, closely related to the second offered above, would be **na(yu)-*, etc., *pa-ta-ih (n:(yu)-*, etc., *p:-t:-ih)*, 'they of Ox-land', i.e. the inhabitants of the oasis of Farafra, but this would probably narrow down the scope of Naphtuhim too much. On early Egyptian references to, and relations with, the oases, c. 2600-1600 B.C., see H. G. Fischer, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 16 (1957), 223-235.

⁴ For Mizraim with the specific nuance of Lower Egypt alongside Pathros for Upper Egypt, cf. Isa. xi. 11 or Jer. xliv. 1, 15.

⁵ W. C. Hayes, *A Papyrus of the Late Middle Kingdom in the Brooklyn Museum* (New York, 1955).

⁶ Dates based on Parker, *The Calendars of Ancient Egypt* (Chicago, 1950), p. 69.

general period of the Hebrew patriarchs. Some sixty years later, in the 13th-Dynasty, c. 1750 B.C., the reverse of the sheet—now 'scrap paper'—was used by an official to draw up a list of slaves in his household to be bequeathed to his wife. Both sides of this document throw vivid light on conditions in Egypt within decades of Joseph's enslavement and promotion there, roughly 1700 B.C.

1. *Egyptian Prisons*. Papyrus Brooklyn sharpens our understanding of the Egyptian prison-system especially when studied in conjunction with previously-known data.¹ Egyptian prisons had three functions: that of a criminal lock-up; that of a place of detention for offenders remanded in custody (as was Joseph); and that of a labour-camp or reserve on which the Labour Bureau ('Office of Provider of People') could readily draw for essential *corvée*-work on the canals and drainage-dykes that were vital to Egypt's economic existence. Outside of Thebes, prisons were located in other main centres and large towns. One such was at Re-honé (modern Lahun, across the Nile, south-west of Cairo), attached to Ithet-Tawy,² the administrative capital of Egypt under the 12th and 13th Dynasties taken over by the Hyksos. Joseph's prison could have been this one or in this region unless, as has been recently suggested,³ Joseph, the butler and the baker were actually under house-arrest. The Register shows that each offender was filed systematically under seven headings including name, sex, charge, whether remanded, completion of the case, etc.

2. *Semites in Egypt*. The slave-list on the reverse side of the papyrus directly illustrates the conditions under which Semites served in Egypt in the eighteenth century B.C. Of some seventy-nine servants in this list, not less than forty-five were 'Asiatics' who bear, for the most part, good West Semitic names of precisely the same linguistic stock as the early Hebrews, especially Jacob and his sons, of this same general period. So high a proportion of Semitic servants in an Upper Egyptian household far from Palestine in an age when the pharaohs were hardly in a position to campaign in Syria for slaves (most 13th-Dynasty kings were ephemeral), is remarkable. It is in the highest degree likely that many of these had been traded into Egypt as Joseph later was, but probably less dramatically. These often intelligent foreigners were

¹ For such a study, cf. Hayes, *Papyrus*, pp. 36-42. For a brief appreciation of this papyrus and reference to prisons, cf. K. A. Kitchen, *Tyndale House Bulletin*, 2 (1956/57), 1-2.

² Hayes, *op. cit.* p. 41, note 148 and references.

³ By J. Vergote, *Joseph en Égypte* (Louvain, 1959), p. 40.

frequently given more congenial tasks than slower-witted Egyptian labourers; hence Joseph's advancement in Genesis xxxix rings true to life. Nor does Papyrus Brooklyn stand alone here; in an important review-article on Hayes's book, Posener has sifted and adduced further scattered evidence for Asiatics in Egypt at this general period.¹

The Semitic personal names have been specially studied by Albright.² Sakar and Sakratu are linguistically one with Hebrew Issachar; there is an 'Asher, compare Hebrew Asher; 'Aqab and 'Aqabtu are from the same base as Jacob (*Ya' aqōb*). In parallel with later Hebrew names are a *Mnḥm*, compare 'Menahem', and *Šmštu* a feminine form directly reminiscent of Hebrew Samson. For Shiprah, see *Moses and the Exodus Period*, point 1, below. The genuine antiquity of some patriarchal names is thus brightly illumined.

3. *Two Recent Studies* of Joseph's Egyptian background deserve special (if too brief) mention: a paper by J. M. A. Janssen of Leiden,³ and a book by J. Vergote of Louvain.⁴ Of particular interest in Dr Janssen's paper are his study of dream-interpretation or oneiromancy,⁵ the place of Semites in Egypt,⁶ and of famines.⁷

In his book, Professor Vergote has systematically commentated a long series of selected points in Genesis xxxvii, xxxix-1, in the light of present day Egyptological knowledge. Among many other useful things, Vergote gives a full, up-to-date statement of the evidence for the Egyptian origin of the Hebrew term for magicians, *ḥarṭummīm*; a most rewarding study of the post of 'butler' (or better, 'cupbearer' as he demonstrates); and an intriguing suggestion to replace the 'captain of the guard' (*sar-tebbaḥīm*) by the 'chief provisions officer'.⁸ On the thorny problem of Joseph's own post as directly responsible to the pharaoh,

¹ G. Posener, *Syria*, 34 (1957), 145-163.

² W. F. Albright, *Journal of American Oriental Society*, 74 (1954), pp. 222-233.

³ J. M. A. Janssen, *Jaarbericht Ex Oriente Lux*, 14 (1955/56), 63-72.

⁴ J. Vergote, *Joseph en Égypte* (Louvain, 1959), = *Orientalia et Biblica Lovaniensia*, vol. iii.

⁵ An excellent treatment of this topic, of rather wider scope, is A. L. Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East, with translation of an Assyrian Dreambook* (Philadelphia, 1956), being *Transactions of American Philosophical Society*, new series, 46, part 3, as a monograph.

⁶ An earlier study of Janssen's on this is in *Chronique d'Égypte*, 26/No. 51 (1951), 50-62.

⁷ A useful monograph on this is J. Vandier, *La Famine dans l'Égypte Ancienne* (Cairo, 1936).

⁸ In Vergote's original French (following Montet), 'l'officier de bouche', *Joseph en Égypte*, p. 33.

Vergote cautiously retains the view that the Hebrew text substantially represents Joseph as a vizier¹ but in 19th-Dynasty (thirteenth century B.C.) terms of usage, i.e. the period of Moses. Janssen² preferred to consider Joseph as a *ra-ḥery*, literally 'Chief Mouth', an official who could be responsible directly to the king for a specifically commissioned task. Still more recently, Ward has insisted that Joseph was simply minister for agriculture and the crown estates but directly responsible to the king.³ In point of fact, all these explanations are feasible and each has its own drawbacks. The truth is that our understanding of the real functions behind the ornate titulary of the elaborate Egyptian bureaucracy is still very far from adequate.⁴

The full tale of useful documentation collected by Janssen and Vergote must be passed over here, but one other point in Vergote's work demands mention. At first, Vergote had conducted his study of the Joseph-narrative and the Egyptian data without reference to the literary-critical, documentary theories of Old Testament studies. Then, at an advanced stage, his Old Testament colleague Professor Coppens suggested that Vergote should take this branch of study into account. But when he came to apply the documentary theory in conjunction with certain dating-elements derivable from the Egyptian material, Vergote concluded that the basic Joseph-story was a product specifically of the 19th-Dynasty period, the thirteenth century B.C., and that the best explanation of these facts was that Moses was the author of that first narrative—a truly remarkable result!⁵ However, the documentary hypothesis is in fact not really relevant to this dating at all,⁶ and Vergote admitted⁷ that the J/E analysis actually complicated the problems attending on the position of the keeper of the prison. Full-scale study of Egyptian and Western Asiatic literature and Old Testament literature

¹ Vergote, *op. cit.* pp. 102 ff., esp. pp. 107, 121, 133-135.

² Janssen, *Jaarbericht*, pp. 66-67.

³ W. A. Ward, *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 5 (1960), 144-150, following on his earlier study is *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 114/No. 453 (1953), pp. 55 (no. 13), 59.

⁴ As is evident from the limited results attained even in extensive studies of Egyptian officialdom, like those of H. W. Helck, *Untersuchungen zu den Beamtentiteln des Ägyptischen Alten Reiches* (Glückstadt, 1954) (*München Äg. Forsch.*, 18) and *Zur Verwaltung des Mittleren und Neuen Reichs* (Leiden, 1958).

⁵ Vergote, *op. cit.* pp. vi, 205-210, following on his detailed main text. The present writer would heartily agree with a Ramesside/Mosaic date for the Joseph-narrative.

⁶ See the writer's forthcoming review of Vergote's book in *J. of Egypt. Archaeol.*, 47 (1961).

⁷ On his pp. v-vi.

against each other within their common background will in due time demonstrate the superficiality and unreality of the documentary type of analysis of ancient writings.¹

4. *Early Evidence for the Horse in the Nile Valley.* In Joseph's day (c. 1700 B.C.) the horse was already known to the Egyptians according to Genesis xlvii. 17; as a rare and valuable, still rather 'new' animal then, it is there named before the more usual flocks and herds and ubiquitous asses. Although the horse is known to have been used in Asia Minor from the nineteenth century B.C.,² and with chariots in Syro-Mesopotamia in the eighteenth century B.C.,³ no trace of the horse had turned up in the Nile valley before the eve of the New Kingdom, c. 1600 B.C., until very recently. But in 1958-59, while excavating the ancient Egyptian fortress at Buhen (Wady Halfa) for the Egypt Exploration Society, Professor Emery found 'the skeleton of a horse lying on the pavement of the Middle Kingdom rampart in circumstances which indicate that it is a good deal older than the burning of the fortress in the seventeenth century B.C., and thus antedates considerably the supposed introduction of the horse into the Nile valley by the Hyksos'.⁴ This is clear evidence for knowledge and use of the horse in the Nile valley long before Joseph entered Egypt and so agrees perfectly with Genesis xlvii. 17.

Moses and the Exodus Period

Here also, only a handful of recent points can be touched on.

1. *Names of the Midwives, Exodus i. 15.* The names of these two, Shiprah and Puah, are now known definitely to be authentic and early West Semitic personal names, in contrast to the naïvely negative attitude of certain Old Testament scholars.⁵ 'Shiprah' first occurs as a woman's name in the Asiatic slave-list of Papyrus Brooklyn, c. 1750

¹ Provisionally see briefly below (Moses/Exodus section, 7). The full weight of evidence is reserved for later and properly detailed treatment.

² A. Goetze, *Kleinasien* (1957 edn.), p. 77 with notes 6 and 7 and Tafel 7, Abb. 13.

³ In the Mari archives. Cf. G. Dossin, *Archives Royales de Mari*, vol. i (1950), letter 50, lines 11-14; C. F. Jean, *ibid.* vol. ii (1950), letter 123, lines 10 and 22; Dossin, *ibid.* vol. iv, 1951, letter 38, line 11; Dossin, *ibid.* vol. v (1952), letter 20, lines 7-9, 18-20.

⁴ R. O. Faulkner, Editorial Foreword, *J. Egypt. Archaeol.*, 45 (1959), 1-2.

⁵ For example, M. Noth, *Die Israelitische Personennamen*, 1928, p. 10, whose dismissal of these names as 'purely artificial' was thus quite unjustifiable.

B.C., already commented on above,¹ some four centuries before Moses. Pu'ah (*Pḡt*) is equally well attested, this time in the N. Canaanite texts from Ugarit in Phoenicia of the fourteenth to thirteenth centuries B.C.²

2. *Enchanted Serpents*. When in Exodus vii. 8-13, Aaron at Moses' command cast down his rod to become a serpent before Pharaoh, the Egyptian magicians 'did in like manner with their enchantments' (verse 11). While Aaron and Moses' feat remains in the realm of miracle (Exodus iv. 2-5), it is perhaps possible to offer some explanation of the magicians' 'enchantments'. If first snake-charmed, the Egyptian cobra (Arabic *naja haje*) can actually be rendered immobile (catalepsy) if pressure be deftly applied to the muscles at the nape of its neck.³ This act of grasping a serpent by its neck appears to be shown on some Egyptian scarab-amulets,⁴ and was performed (and photographed) in Egypt as recently as 1954.⁵

3. *The Plagues*. The tenth plague (death of the first-born) belongs in the realm of miracle, but the preceding nine demonstrated God's use of the created order to achieve certain ends, and recent investigation tends to confirm both the reality of their occurrence and the powers of accurate observation of the narrator of Exodus vii. 14-x. 29. G. Hort has pointed out⁶ that the first nine plagues form a connected sequence, triggered-off by an abnormally *high* Nile-flood in July/August. In Egypt, too high an inundation was just as disastrous as a too low one. Such an excess flood could bring with it microcosms known as *flagellates*. that would heighten the colour of the river and produce conditions unfavourable for the fish so that they died wholesale as recorded (first plague). Decomposing fish in their backwaters drove the frogs ashore in hordes (second plague), having also infected them fatally with *bacillus anthracis*. The third plague (Exodus viii. 16-19) represents an abnormal multitude of mosquitoes, result of the favourable breeding-conditions offered by a high inundation. The 'murrain' (fifth plague) on

¹ Cf. Albright, *Journal Amer. Oriental Society.*, 74 (1954), 229, 233.

² Albright, *op. cit.* p. 229, note 50; C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Manual*, vol. iii, (Rome, 1955), Glossary, p. 313, No. 1566, *pḡt*, 'girl' and as personal name.

³ L. Keimer, *Histoires de Serpents dans l'Égypte Ancienne et Moderne* (Cairo, 1947), pp. 16-17.

⁴ Scarabs in Keimer, *op. cit.* figs. 14-21.

⁵ According to H. S. Noerdlinger, *Moses and Egypt* (Univ. S. California Press, 1956), p. 26. Despite this book's exotic origin as the background to a film (*Ten Commandments*) by a non-Egyptologist, this work is quite well documented.

⁶ In two articles: *Zeitschr. f. Alttest. Wiss.*, 69 (1957), 84-103, and *ibid.* 70 (1958), 48-59.

the cattle in the fields (not in the byres or stalls) would be anthrax, contracted in the river-meadows where the frogs had died of this class of *bacillus*. The 'blains' (sixth plague) on man and beast, especially legs and feet, would be a skin-anthrax, contracted from a principal carrier, the fly *stomoxys calcitrans*, encouraged in its breeding (like the mosquitoes) by conditions following on a high Nile; these would also be the 'flies' of the fourth plague.

As it affected flax and barley but not yet wheat and spelt, the hail and thunderstorm of the seventh plague would fall about early February. Heavy rainfall earlier on in North Abyssinia and environs would not only cause the extra-high Nile in the first place but favour also the onset of the unusually severe swarms of locusts (eighth plague) that ate up whatever had survived the hail. Finally, a strong *Khamsin* wind (early March, ninth plague) arose, made dark not only by ordinary dust or sand but also with masses of fine particles of *Roterde* ('red earth') deposited by the high Nile previously and since dried to a fine dust.

The whole account as it stands is clear, accurate and consistent; any attempt to split it into 'sources', 'documents', or 'hands' (J, E, etc.) *automatically* makes nonsense of the phenomena recorded in the narrative—and on this ground alone stands methodologically self-condemned.

4. *Organisation of Labour*. Often enough the plight of the Israelites in having to find their own straw and yet maintain their full production ('tale') of bricks (Exodus v. 6-19) has been aptly compared with the passages in the almost contemporary Anastasi papyri in the British Museum, in which one official smugly records that his brickmakers are duly producing their daily stint, while another complains that he has neither straw nor men to make bricks.¹ The effect of putting straw or chaff into mud bricks is now understood,² and Egyptian bricks often show traces of former straw-stalks in them.³

In modern Egyptology, a neglected class of antiquity has been accorded increasing attention: the hieratic ostrakon (plural, ostraca). These are simply potsherds or limestone flakes that bear in cursive script (hieratic) the random business and other workaday jottings of

¹ Most recent translation in Caminos, *Late-Egyptian Miscellanies*, pp. 106, 188.

² References in A. A. McRae in symposium *Modern Science and Christian Faith* (Wheaton, Illinois, 1948), pp. 215-219; cf. also A. E. Lucas, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries* (1948 edn.), p. 44.

³ See C. F. Nims, *Biblical Archaeologist* 13 (1950), 21-28.

the ancient Egyptians—in short, their equivalent of scrap paper and memo.-pads! In these ancient memoranda, snatches and quotations from Egyptian classical literature, or hymns and prayers, or magical spells rub shoulders with mundane accounts for bricks or donkey-loads of straw, reminiscent of Exodus v; there are lists of victuals and firewood, notes of work done, marriage-contracts, notes of legal proceedings, consultation of oracles—a living picture of the workaday Rameside Egypt in which the Hebrews laboured until their Exodus.

The pharaoh's charge against Moses and Aaron in Exodus v. 3-8 (i.e. of inducing idleness among the Hebrews under cover of celebrating a religious festival) gains colour when, among the ostraca, one sees in the day-to-day 'journals of work' the detailed records kept of days actually worked and of absences of workmen, often with the reasons added. One superb such ostrakon of Rameses II's fortieth year (about 1260 or 1250 B.C.) accounts for 50 workmen in this way:¹ absent through illness (once, 'bitten by a scorpion'), or on other jobs or family matters, or for religious festivals (as Exodus v. 8), or labelled simply *wsf.* 'idle'! Another ostrakon² mentions 'a day of idleness spent by the foreman Khons'. When such close account was kept of ordinary Egyptian workmen, the captive Hebrews could hardly escape equally close oversight.

5. *Date and Route of the Exodus* cannot be tackled here. But attention ought to be drawn to a very useful survey of solutions proposed, recent studies, and the present state of these questions that has been published by Dr C. de Wit of Brussels,³ who favours a date like that proposed by É. Drioton.⁴ Further studies on this perennial topic will doubtless continue to appear.⁵

6. *The Tabernacle*. The Tabernacle reputed to have been constructed during Israel's journeyings was in essence 'a portable temple',⁶ and was

¹ J. Černý and Sir A. H. Gardiner, *Hieratic Ostraca I* (Oxford, 1957), plates 83-84. This sumptuous folio volume is but one of many specialist publications devoted to ostraca, too numerous to list here.

² Černý and Gardiner, *op. cit.* plate 65: 1.

³ C. de Wit, *The Date and Route of the Exodus* (Tyndale Press, 1960).

⁴ É. Drioton, 'La date de l'Exode', in symposium *La Bible et l'Orient* (1955), pp. 36-49, = (Cahier) No. 1 of the *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses*.

⁵ For a further compact and comprehensive treatment of the date of the Exodus, see Kitchen and Mitchell, 'Chronology of the Old Testament', in Bruce, Packer, Tasker, Wiseman (eds.), *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, 1961 (forthcoming).

⁶ To quote F. M. Cross, *Biblical Archaeologist*, 10 (1947), 61.

in fact a prefabricated structure for religious use, to employ modern terms. Its construction of vertical boards, frames, tenons, sockets and bars, gold-overlaid, with curtains and coverings, was designed for ready erection and dismantling. Too often in the past, this structure has been dismissed as 'quite unrealistic', or, 'its very possibility is doubtful', by some Old Testament scholars.¹ In actual point of fact, there is ample Egyptian evidence for long and regular use there of prefabricated structures, especially for religious purposes, to refute easily the misplaced charge of late fantasy emitted by such scholars. The very constructional techniques listed above are well exemplified in the great bedroom-canopy of Queen Hetepheres I (4th Dynasty, c. 2650 B.C.), to mention only one of several early examples. The religious use of such structures is illustrated by the 'Tent of Purification' (associated with the rites of embalming). Representations of these² show a portable structure with hangings or curtains of cloth upon a framework of vertical poles linked by horizontal bars and beams: structurally and functionally directly reminiscent of the Hebrew tabernacle. The long chain of evidence comes right down to the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C. and beyond, from a variety of sources and all in religious contexts. Hence, the pattern shown to Moses on the mount would enable him and Bezalel to exploit fully the best-tried and most appropriate constructional techniques of the day, essentially practical and straightforward, not fanciful, and providentially familiar to them from long residence in Egypt.³

7. *Ancient Literature and Documentary Criticism.* The still-customary⁴ documentary hypothesis of the formation of the Pentateuch is based on a series of formal 'criteria':⁵ double names of deity (e.g. YHWH/Elohim), of individuals (e.g., Israel/Jacob, or Reuel/Jethro), of groups (e.g., Ishmaelites/Midianites, or Canaanites/Amorites), of places

¹ Quoting Bentzen, *Introduction to Old Testament*, vol. ii, p. 34; Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to History of Israel* (Meridian edn., 1957), p. 39.

² Blackman, *Rock Tombs of Meir*, vol. v (1952), plates 42, 43.

³ Compact treatment of this topic with fuller references, Kitchen, *Tyndale House Bulletin*, Nos. 5/6 (1960), pp. 7-11 with 12-13.

⁴ 'The documentary hypothesis still commands general acceptance' so J. Bright, *A History of Israel* (English edn., 1960), p. 62.

⁵ One of the most systematic treatments of these is still probably S. R. Driver, *Introduction to Literature of the Old Testament* (9th edn., 1913). A more recent work of the same type is O. Eissfeldt, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (3rd edn., 1956).

(e.g., Sinai/Horeb), or use of (para-) synonyms (e.g., 'amāh/shiphḥāh, 'handmaid'/'bondmaid'); major changes of style; superficial repetitions ('he said . . . so said he'); and several others. However, the whole apparatus of such 'criteria' is in fact arbitrary and meaningless when placed against the relevant background of strictly contemporary ancient Egyptian and West Asiatic literatures. If such 'criteria' are applied to *precisely similar* 'phenomena' as they appear in texts from these various literatures, often so similar to the Hebrew writings in the external forms of expression, they produce nothing but manifest absurdities. The plain fact is that such 'phenomena' in Old Testament and Ancient Orient alike have quite other *raison d'être* than that of marking imaginary 'hands' or 'documents'.

A few examples may make this clear. For double names of deity: the official Ikhnofret (*c.* 1850 B.C.) on his stela from Abydos now in Berlin uses *four* different names and fixed epithets for the god Osiris as well as several combinations of these (*cf.* YHWH-Elohim), all in one modest inscription.¹ Four double personal names: one need only recall the scores of Egyptians who bore two (or more) names;² two must suffice here—'Sebekkhu whose good name is Djaa' (*c.* 1850 B.C.), known from two Abydos stelae, one each in the Manchester and British Museums;³ and a scoundrel Mersakhme also called Peroy,⁴ *c.* 1180 B.C.⁵ For multiple group names: compare the brief record of Sesostri III's Palestinian campaign on Sebekkhu's Manchester Stela, where the one general Palestinian foe is referred to by *three* distinct terms: *Mntyw-Stt*, 'bedouin of Asia'; *Rtnw*, 'Syria(ns)'; *Amw*, 'Asiatics'. As for place-names, one need only cite Merenptah's famous 'Israel Stela' (*c.* 1230 or 1220 B.C.) in which Memphis is called by three names, one an abbreviation of one of the others (*Mn-nfr*; 'Inb-ḥd'; *Inb*),

¹ Namely Osiris (*Wsir*), Wennofre, Khenty-Amentyu, Lord of Abydos (Neb-Abdju). Hieroglyphic text in K. Sethe, *Aegyptische Lesestücke* (1928), pp. 70-71. These phenomena can only be properly studied in the original language, as English translations do not always reflect them.

² On the various names of the Egyptians, see vol. ii of Ranke's *Aegyptische Personennamen* (Glückstadt), 1952.

³ British Museum stela No. 249 (1213), Budge and Hall, *Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae, etc.*, in *Br. Mus.*, vol. iii (1912), plate 12; Newberry, *Journal Egypt Archaeol*, 18 (1932), p. 141. Manchester stela, in Sethe, *Aeg. Lesestücke*, pp. 82-83.

⁴ References in Černý, *J. Near E. Stud.*, 14 (1955), pp. 162-163.

⁵ For similar Hittite and Hurrian evidence on double names, see Kitchen, *Hittite Hieroglyphs, Arameans and Hebrew Traditions* (1962) (forthcoming).

and Egypt by two names (*Kmyt* and *Ti-mri*).¹ For common nouns, compare the *five* different terms for boats and ships, some common and some special, used in the recently discovered historical inscription of king Kamose which describes part of his war against the Hyksos.² These examples (plus others for further 'criteria' for which space forbids treatment here) could be multiplied a hundredfold, and not from Egyptian only.³ No Egyptologist (or other Orientalist in parallel disciplines) is such a fool as to see 'sources' behind such texts and inscriptions, or to scissor up either these stone stelae or the hieratic papyrus draft behind each, where the very possibility of any long or involved literary conflation or prehistory is wholly excluded by the very nature and circumstances of the texts themselves, often composed and engraved within months, weeks or even sometimes days of the events commemorated. The history of texts, literary and otherwise, must be determined by objective and wholly different methods.

Solomon and Egypt

Only two points can be dealt with quickly here.

1. *Solomon's Alliance with Egypt*. During the general period c. 1085-945 B.C., contemporary with the later judges, Saul, David and Solomon in Israel, Egypt after the death of her last nominal 'emperor' (Rameses XI) was ruled by the pharaohs of the 21st Dynasty from the great North-east Delta seaport of Tanis, the Hebrew Zoan. These kings bore direct rule over Lower Egypt only—they ruled Upper Egypt indirectly, through the persons (and by permission) of the almost independent military dynasty of High Priests of Amun at Thebes, an arrangement

¹ W. M. F. Petrie and W. Spiegelberg, *Six Temples at Thebes*: 1896 (1897), pp. 26-28 and plates 13-14.

² Published by L. Habachi, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte*, 53 (1955), 195-202, and M. Hammad, *Chronique d'Égypte*, 30/No. 60 (1955), 198-208. The words are: 'ahā'u, imu, ba'u, mek, and djā't, in lines 5, 6, 13 and 7 respectively.

³ The present writer has examples collected from Babylonian and Assyrian, Ugaritic (N. Canaanite) and Phoenician, Hittite and even Old South Arabian texts as well as more Egyptian and Coptic examples. This mass of material must await a full and detailed future treatment. Provisionally cf. also Kitchen, 'Egypt: Literature', in *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (1961) (forthcoming). Nor is this writer alone in his scepticism. Note a parallel brief study by the well-known Jewish orientalist C. H. Gordon, in *Christianity Today*, 4, (1959), 131-134.

probably reached by a mutual bargain and agreement.¹ This peculiar situation helps to explain why these pharaohs did not pursue an aggressive foreign policy in Syria-Palestine, but rather sought security on their Asiatic frontier by limited 'police-action' in the adjacent 'Gaza strip' and Philistia, and by alliance with the principal Palestinian states including Israel.

This policy is clearly exemplified by the pharaoh who smote Gezer and gave it as dowry with his daughter's hand in marriage-alliance,² to Solomon (1 Kings iii. 1; ix. 16). This alliance guaranteed the mutual security of both states on their common frontier and probably reciprocally benefited both commercially also (cf. 1 Kings x. 28-29). From Egypt at this period comes one scrap of evidence that may perhaps identify the pharaoh in question. At Tanis itself (modern San el-Hagar), Montet discovered a badly damaged triumphal relief-scene of king Siamun. This depicts the king in the conventional attitude of smiting an Asiatic foe; but the impotent alien on this block clutches an axe of Aegean type—perhaps Philistine.³ This would agree quite well with a 'police-action' of Siamun in Philistia, culminating in the capture of Gezer and an alliance with Solomon.

2. *Egyptian Wisdom and Proverbs.* Besides the general heading of Proverbs i. 1, chapters x to xxiv are directly, and xxv to xxix via Hezekiah's copyists, ascribed to Solomon. In xxii. 17-xxiv. 22, Solomon explicitly quotes what he calls 'the Words of the Wise'.⁴ The authorship of chapters i to ix is not explicitly stated. Old Testament scholars often consider it to be the latest part of the whole book, but this judgment is based mainly on its supposedly 'advanced' (and so 'late') theological

¹ On the origins and rise of the general Herihor and his high-priestly dynasty see Drioton and Vandier, *L'Égypte* (1952), pp. 362-366, 381, 511-512, 556 ff., for history and references, and especially Kees, *Herihor und die Aufrichtung des Thebanischen Gottesstaates* (1936), in *Nachrichten d. Gesellschaft d. Wissensch., Göttingen*, Phil.-Hist. Kl., Fachgruppe I (Alturtumswiss.), Neue Folge, vol. ii, No. 1.

² That a pharaoh should marry off his daughter to a foreign potentate (instead of vice-versa) was a signal honour; cf. A. Malamat, *Biblical Archaeologist*, 21 (1958), 97-99, plus *ibid.* 22 (1959), 51.

³ Often illustrated in Montet's Tanis publications. Most recently in his *L'Égypte et la Bible* (1959), p. 40, fig. 5.

⁴ Note the wording of xxii. 17—'hear the words of the wise', in parallel with 'apply thine heart to my knowledge': i.e. Solomon (x. 1) has utilised profitably the words of the wise in the wisdom that he now passes on.

concepts, especially the personification of Wisdom. This judgment is in fact quite unjustified because its grounds are erroneous: so far from being 'late', personification was a concept widely and frequently used and understood throughout the ancient Biblical East from the third millennium B.C. downwards, for centuries before Solomon was even born. He could therefore have readily used personification and have himself prefaced our chapters x to xxiv with the long introductory exhortation of i to ix by way of prologue, rather as did Ptahhotep and Amenemope in Egypt.¹

In Ancient Egypt, written treatises of proverbial wisdom have a very long history, beginning with the sage Imhotep (c. 2700 B.C.) and continuing down to the Christian era, very nearly.² Among these, when published in 1923,³ the Teaching of Amenemope was quickly seen to contain various proverbs directly related to those in Solomon's 'Words of the Wise'. Ever since Erman's famous first study of Amenemope and Proverbs in 1924,⁴ it has rather become a shibboleth among Old Testament scholars⁵ that Proverbs must have borrowed from Amenemope, not vice-versa.⁶ However, the French Egyptologist Dr É. Drioton has now produced weighty reasons for suggesting that the Egyptian Amenemope is actually an indifferent Egyptian translation from a Semitic—Hebrew—original, itself composed by Jews in

¹ References for, and compact treatment of, early use of personification in Kitchen, *Tyndale House Bulletin*, Nos. 5/6 (1960), 4-6 (other Egyptian matters are covered in this paper, not repeated here). The other reason usually offered for a late date of Prov. i-ix is that of language. But this reason is no sounder than the theological one, as will be shown on another occasion.

² For Egyptian wisdom and other literature, see the inventory and studies by Posener, *Revue d'Égyptologie*, 6 (1949), 27-48; *ibid.* 7 (1950), 71-84; *ibid.* 8 (1951), 171-189; *ibid.* 9 (1952), 109-120; *ibid.* 10 (1955), 61-72; *ibid.* 11 (1957), 119-137. Some translations in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (1950/55) pp. 412-425. Note also the ode to writing and sages, *ibid.* pp. 431-2.

³ Budge, *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum*, 2nd series (1923). See also F. Ll. Griffith, *Journal Egypt. Archaeol.*, 12 (1926), 191-231, and H. O. Lange, *Das Weisheitsbuch des Amenemope* (1925).

⁴ Erman in *Sitzungsberichte d. Preussischen Akad. d. Wiss.*, Phil. Hist. Kl., XV (Berlin, 1924), pp. 86-93).

⁵ Almost none of whom can read Late (or other) Egyptian.

⁶ Representative survey by W. Baumgartner in H. H. Rowley (ed.), *The Old Testament and Modern Study* (Oxford, 1951), pp. 210-216, esp. pp. 210, 212. Oesterley, *The Wisdom of Egypt and the Old Testament* (1927), suggested that Proverbs and Amenemope both drew on a common source, but this found little favour. Kevin's attempt to show that Amenemope had borrowed from Proverbs was largely rejected.

Egypt.¹ This would be the 'Words of the Wise' on which Proverbs also subsequently drew. Drioton points out a series of un-Egyptian usages in grammar, syntax and vocabulary—usages that become entirely natural when translated back into Hebrew. Drioton's thesis will be difficult to controvert, and if it wins acceptance will be of the greatest importance for Old Testament studies.

Later Egypto-Hebrew Contacts

Much could be said also of the period after Solomon, but again space and time permit only a glimpse of the possibilities.

1. *Shishak*. In 945 B.C., a new, Libyan, prince ascended the Egyptian throne: Sheshonq I, founder of the 22nd Dynasty. He speedily brought all Egypt under his control, Upper as well as Lower, securing Thebes by appointing his own son Iuput as non-hereditary High Priest of Amun. After some years of quiet administration that doubtless benefited Egypt internally, Sheshonq sought to adopt a more aggressive foreign policy than his predecessors: to gain security and commercial advantage by subduing any possible Palestinian rivals, and regain Egypt's old trade-relations in Phoenician Byblos.² In Palestine, Sheshonq bided his time while Solomon yet lived, harbouring useful political pawns like Jeroboam son of Nebat (1 Kings xi. 29-40). This prudence paid dividends when at Solomon's death he allowed Jeroboam to return to Israel and precipitate the break-up of that kingdom. Subsequently Sheshonq—Shishak—invaded and subdued not only Judah (1 Kings xiv. 25; 2 Chron. xii. 2-12), but Israel as well (stela at Megiddo;³ the Karnak relief). The great triumphal relief and topographical list of Palestinian place-names sculptured on the wall of the temple of Amun at Karnak in Thebes to commemorate his victory⁴ has long been known, but its value not fully appreciated until more recently. Fresh study has shown

¹ In two articles: *Mélanges Bibliques André Robert* (1957), pp. 254-280, and *Sacra Pagina*, vol. i (1959), pp. 229-241; more is to follow. On date of Amemope and therefore of the Words of the Wise, see also provisionally Kitchen, 'Egypt: Literature', in *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (1961) (forthcoming).

² Survey of Egyptian relations with Byblos (documented) in Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte* (1928). Sheshonq I dedicated a statue in the temple of Baalath, goddess of Byblos, cf. Dussaud, *Syria*, 5 (1924), 145-147, plate 42.

³ See Lamon and Shipton, *Megiddo I* (1939), p. 61 and fig. 70; or Fisher, *The Excavation of Armageddon* (1929) p. 16, figs. 7-9.

⁴ Beautifully facsimiled in Epigraphic Survey, *Reliefs and Inscriptions at Karnak* (1954). Convenient photo in Pritchard, *Ancient Near East in Pictures* (1954), p. 118, fig. 349.

that this list preserves useful information on Palestinian topography, especially for the Negeb or Southland.¹

2. *Shishak's Successors*. At first Sheshonq I's successors tried to emulate both his policy and his success. Osorkon I probably sent out 'Zerah the Ethiopian',² and his ignominious defeat at the hands of Asa of Judah (2 Chron. xiv) probably spelt the end of the aggressive policy.³ Another major factor that would contribute to a change in Egyptian foreign policy was the progressive weakening of the central power and authority of the Libyan pharaohs inside Egypt itself, especially under a nonentity like Takeloth I, and the increasing independence of the provincial chiefs and of Thebes under High Priests once again virtually a dynasty on their own. Hence, Osorkon II apparently returned to the old 21st Dynasty policy of security by alliance; a presentation vase inscribed with his name and titles was found long ago in the palace of Omri and Ahab at Samaria.⁴

3. 'So'. This renewed Egypto-Hebrew alliance would explain how it was that Hoshea, Israel's last king, turned so naturally to 'So, king of Egypt' for help against Assyria, c. 725/4 B.C. (2 Kings xvii. 4). So's identity has always been obscure. This problem has been complicated hitherto by attempts to equate So with the supposed 'Sib'e', an Egyptian commander mentioned in texts of Sargon II of Assyria (722-705 B.C.), and also with the Ethiopian pharaoh Shabako (c. 715-702 B.C.), thought of as a commander in 725/4 B.C. In fact, this whole tissue of equations is unworkable on both chronological and philological grounds. Firstly, Shabako could not be commander in Lower Egypt in 725/4 B.C., because Osorkon IV was nominal king and Tefnakht and Bakenranef of Sais were successively the real rulers of Lower Egypt then, and So is a king, not a commander. Secondly, it appears that the cuneiform 'Sib'e' is now to be read as 'Re'e',⁵ and so this commander can be neither

¹ See Maisler-Mazar, *Vetus Testamentum, Supplement*, vol. iv (1957), pp. 57-60. On the Sukkiim, cf. Albright in Rowley (ed.), *Old Testament and Modern Study* (1951), p. 18, following Spiegelberg and Gardiner.

² Osorkon and Zerah are not identical as sometimes thought; philological difficulties apart, Osorkon is a Libyan king and Zerah an Ethiopian commander—different in race and office.

³ But Osorkon I did maintain relations with Byblos as shown by his statue found there, Dussaud, *Syria*, 6 (1925), 101-117, plate 25.

⁴ Reisner, Fisher, Lyon, *Harvard Excavations at Samaria*, vol. i, p. 247, fig. Statue of Osorkon II from Byblos, Dunand, *Fouilles de Byblos*, vol. i, pp. 115-116 (No. 1741), plate 43.

⁵ See R. Berger, *J. Near E. Stud.*, 19 (1960), 49-53, esp. 53.

So nor Shabako. All three individuals are quite distinct. There are two identifications for So that can be suggested. Firstly, this 'name' may just be the Hebrew transcript for Egyptian *tja'*, 'vizier' and 2 Kings xvii. 4 be understood to say that Hoshea sent to 'the vizier (*'šō' = t*) of the king of Egypt', i.e. to Pharaoh's chief minister.¹ The other solution is to take So as an abbreviated reference to Osorkon IV,² the last shadowy king of the 22nd/23rd Dynasty, who reigned nominally in the East Delta at Bubastis (Pi-Beseth) as late as 716 B.C.³ Hence, So is probably either Osorkon IV or his vizier.

Conclusion

The foregoing survey is a very paltry selection from recent work by present-day scholars and from the new material still waiting to be used. Inadequate as it is, however, this selection may serve to indicate how rich a potential for Old Testament studies Egyptology has to offer, more than ever before. The day is ripening for a stock-taking in this rich field, a task which, *Deo volente*, it is hoped to undertake in the not too distant future.

DR D. VERE: We have listened to two papers this afternoon. The first, dealing with Genesis i-iii, suggested that there was no attempt at full historicity, and the aim was simply to teach spiritual lessons. The second, dealing with other chapters nearby, suggested that detailed, absolute historicity obtained in them. As someone who knows nothing of ancient language, may I ask where I am to draw the line between these two forms in Genesis?

K. A. KITCHEN (Liverpool) in reply to Dr Vere's query concerning the degree of historicity in Gen. i-iii: It is not possible for me to answer Dr Vere's query really adequately in a brief comment; what now follows is merely my own personal impression and is in no way definitive. The historical *mien* of Genesis xi. 1 is beyond doubt: real people do things attested of other real people in contemporary documentation at the relevant periods in antiquity. Genesis x likewise records actual peoples and communities in the second millennium B.C.,

¹ This is the suggestion of S. Yeivin, *Vetus Testamentum*, 2 (1952), 164-168.

² Osorkon IV with prenomen '*A-kheper-Rē*'. For this kind of abbreviation, compare Sese for *Rameses* (II) in 19th Dynasty, Caminos, *Late-Egyptian Miscellanies*, p. 47 and references.

³ As *Shilkanni*, who sent a present to Sargon II of Assyria in 716, cf. H. Tadmor, *J. Cuneiform Stud.*, 12 (1958), 77-78.

perhaps owing their names to various founding fathers.¹ The only satisfying interpretation of Genesis vi-ix is surely as a straight narrative of actual if very distant events. The Flood was also sufficiently real for the ancient Sumerians and Babylonians to insert it into their historiographic king-lists² as well as in their heroic literature (Gilgamesh). The names in the genealogies, etc., of Genesis iv-v are not just fanciful but real names, mainly early Semitic in their present form. It is, however, quite possible that they are not continuous in the strict sense (i.e. father to son), but selective—a phenomenon amply attested elsewhere both in the Bible (Ezra; genealogies in Matthew and Luke) and in the genealogies and king-lists of the strictly contemporary Ancient Near East.³ So, the plain reading of Genesis iv-x (like xi. 1)—whether in Hebrew original or English version—suggests that it is essentially a factual record: compressed, concise, intended primarily to convey definite truths and message but on a basis of actual fact.

Hence, it is not unreasonable to expect that Genesis i-iii will similarly be based on historic occurrence rather than be purely symbolical 'picture-language', unless clear indication is given to the contrary. In fact, both Hebrew original and English versions alike *read* stylistically as a plain narrative;⁴ the rivers of Genesis ii. 10-14 are real ones of no 'pictorial' value whatever. That man in the full sense (not just physical) had a definite start, was the last and culminating part of the animate creation, was granted as such, a definite relationship with his Creator and lost it by disobedience—all this is inherently straightforward enough, needing no allegorising. And the narrative of Genesis i is in essence simply a *summary* of creation: its one great affirmation is the one supreme God's initiative without any reference to means used,⁵

¹ Cf. D. J. Wiseman, *J. Trans. Vict. Inst.*, 87 (1955), 14-24, 113-118, on Gen. x.

² Translation in Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 1950/55, p. 265; Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List* (Chicago, 1939).

³ A striking random example is the Abydos king-list of pharaohs set up by Sethos I (c. 1300 B.C.); at one point, he leaves out five dynasties between the 12th and 18th Dynasties without comment—not captiously, but for reasons that are irrelevant here.

⁴ Note also the brief but judicious review of this matter by T. C. Mitchell, *Faith and Thought*, 91 (1959), 48-49.

⁵ The original and strictly physical theory of evolution (a means) cannot therefore confirm or refute Gen. i (cause); they are virtually irrelevant to one another, and the famous controversy of late last century was fundamentally wholly unnecessary. Evolution or any other theory may disagree with our *interpretation* of scripture, but this is not the same thing as clashing with the text of scripture itself. The 'evolution' that must be rejected is the illegitimate

beyond the initiatory Divine will and word. It could hardly be any more compact; some aspects are almost just commonsense—one cannot put plants and animals in earth and heaven unless the latter have been created before them, and plants must precede animals; and this passage is as remarkable for what it does *not* say. It has a definite, limited purpose in God's economy of Scripture, and everything foreign to this is rigorously excluded and does not pander to our curiosity. It is surely basically fact, but of the greatest conciseness. The New Testament (e.g. Paul in Romans on Adam, first man) would endorse a factual interpretation.

This does not mean that there are no difficulties in interpretation in two respects. Firstly, there may sometimes be difficulty in correlating the little that is said in Genesis with current results of scientific inquiry into the origins of the universe; this is to be expected just as long (very long, I fear!) as our scientific knowledge (despite its remarkable scope) remains as imperfect and vastly incomplete as it in fact is—new facts turn up, theories come and go. Such difficulties can occur in later Biblical books whose historical nature is denied by none, and hence are no criterion of historicity or otherwise. Secondly—and again as in some passages elsewhere in historical Scripture—there are always the isolated textual points whose correct interpretation is open to honest differences. One thinks of the 'rib' (or better, 'side?') in Genesis ii. 21-23; woman is certainly a basic side to man, but in what sense here? Or, there is the serpent in Genesis iii: the devil could as easily take this form as that of an 'angel of light', or (as elsewhere in antiquity and modern times alike) is it perhaps used as an epithet to express the devil's nature (like 'the old serpent . . .')? But interpretational matters of this kind are not peculiar to Genesis i-iii, as students of the prophets and epistles will know. Although the main point of these early narratives must always be the truths and lessons they teach and were intended to teach, yet they would appear to do so not by fiction that suddenly switches to history after Genesis iii, but through a basic minimum of historic facts, revealed or transmitted compactly over a long period of time until incorporated in written records in the third and second millennia B.C. With Abraham, God's dealings with men were specially concerned with one individual and his descendants, and the historical perspective of revelation changed focus to greater detail in a smaller field—but not in its essentially historical nature.

and unjustified extension of the original theory to inappropriate fields ('evolution of religion', the spirit, etc.).