

NOTES BY MAJOR CONDER.

I.

CHRONOLOGY OF POTTERY.

THAT the chronology of pottery is more likely to give good results in the hands of Mr. Petrie than of most antiquarians, I feel convinced, on account of his experience. The distinctions between early pottery, and that of Byzantine or Roman times, is also well marked; but, as Mr. Petrie has himself noted, the old black pottery is still made in Palestine.

The question is, whether the results as to date agree with those which may be deduced, with greater certainty, from other data. No scholar acquainted with the history of letters can doubt that the Lachish text, found by Mr. Petrie, dates about 7-800 B.C., and I think the date of the capital is also fairly certain. Yet Mr. Petrie has suggested much earlier dates for Lachish ruins, being guided I understand by the pottery. I do not know that any data exist whereby to judge of the age of "Amorite" pottery, or how it is known to be "Amorite," especially as the Amorites lived in the Hebron mountains, and not in the Philistine plains.

I had seven years' experience of pottery of every age in Palestine, and always examined that found at the ruins. But I consider that the character of lettering on texts, the character of the tombs found at a ruin, and of the masonry and architecture, form together much safer data for determining date than can be ever expected to result from study of the uninscribed pottery.

II.

THE HEBREW WEIGHTS.

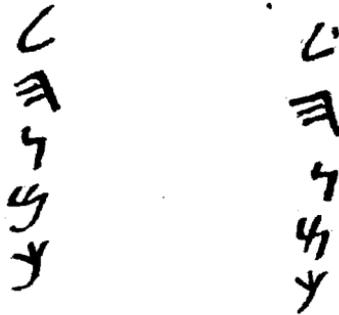
THE weights published in the last *Quarterly Statement* weigh 80 grains and represent the quarter of a weight of 320 grains—that is to say, a quarter of a shekel. As my father, the late F. R. Conder, M. Inst. C.E., pointed out more than ten years ago, the old Hebrew shekel had this weight (*see* "Conder's Handbook to the Bible," p. 63). Maimonides ("Constit de Siclis," 1-2) says that, under the Hebrew Kings, the shekel weighed 320 grains of barley, and this would weigh close upon 320 grains Troy. Moreover (p. 64), this determination my father checked by the Assyrian weights from Nineveh, and got the same result. In a later time (*see* p. 63) the values were changed, but the old Hebrew shekel was worth 3s. 4d. of our money.

This being, therefore, so fully confirmed by the recent discovery, the reading of שֵׁל should be regarded as a contraction from שֵׁקֶל, *shekel*, and it has nothing to do with Israel. The word נִצַּן probably comes from יָצַן, "to establish," as Dr. Neubauer has suggested, and would mean "standard." There is no known notice of a weight so called, as far as my reading goes, nor is it necessary to drag in the "Hittites," concerning whose weights we know nothing. It appears that in the Greek town of Naucratis the same standard of weight was used, that was common to Assyrians, Phœnicians, and Hebrews.

III.

THE LACHISH INSCRIPTION.¹

THIS may, I think, very clearly be read לְהַנִּיךְ, and the forms of the letters resemble those in use about 700 B.C., as shown opposite, the second column being from certain gems of that date.



The translation is in this case very clear. In Aramaic we find the root הִנִּיחַ, "profit," "health," "wholesomeness," and in Arabic, هَنَّاءٌ has the same meaning. When a guest drinks water at dinner, his host says *Henean*, as I well remember, and as Lane remarks ("Modern Egyptians," 1, p. 183), the meaning of which is, "may it profit you," or "may you digest." Here we find, on the old water pot made about 700 B.C., the same wish expressed, "to your digestion," or "health," but it is remarkable that I cannot find the root in Hebrew, but in Buxtooff's Chaldee Dictionary. This indicates an Aramaic rather than a Hebrew population in Lachish, and we must remember that in 700 B.C. the first transportation of Aramaic tribes into Palestine took place, with the fall of Samaria.

¹ *Quarterly Statement* p. 230, 1890.

IV.

THE LACHISH PILLAR.

AFTER inspecting the cast of this pillar it becomes more possible to obtain some idea of its date. The dressing is compared by Mr. Petrie to that of the masonry of Herod's Temple. Professor Hayter Lewis has noticed the same dressing on Carthaginian monuments, which are equally of late date, and it has recently been pointed out that the Greek sculptors used the same sort of tool, in finishing the less polished parts of their statues. As far, therefore, as the dressing is an indication, the pillar should belong to the Greek period in Palestine.

Mr. Petrie also compares this pillar to that found by Sir C. Warren west of Herod's Temple enclosure. The site where it was found is that where the Jews of the second century B.C. erected the Xystus, in imitation of Greek custom. The general style of the Palace of Hircanus, built in the same century east of Jordan, agrees also with this attribution.

Capitals have also been found in Cyprus, at Athieno, which present a close resemblance, in general idea, to that discovered by Mr. Petrie; and this Cypriote style is accompanied, in at least one instance, by a text in Greek language and character.

These various considerations lead me to suppose that the Lachish capital is not older than 300 B.C., and belongs to the time when a rude art grew up in Syria and in Cyprus, based on Greek influence—an influence which was so strong as to lead to the revolt of Judas Maccabæus in whose time Greek manners, architecture, and even Greek rites, were adopted by the Jews. The text on the pot and the capital together, seem to indicate that at Lachish we have to deal with ruins extending from 700 to 200 B.C., and perhaps later. When the site is more fully explored we may discover yet older remains; but alphabetic texts older than about 1,000 B.C. are hardly to be expected.

V.

QUOTATIONS OF PSALMS.

IN reply to the question asked in the last *Quarterly Statement*, it may be noted that quotations from Psalms were very commonly placed on the walls of houses in Palestine in the fifth and sixth centuries B.C. Many are known in the Hauran and in Northern Syria. I discovered one in Southern Palestine. They are many centuries older than the earliest known MS. of the LXX. (see "Scottish Review," July, 1890).

VI.

THE KHABIRI OR ABIRI.

PROFESSOR SAYCE informs me that German scholars were inclined at first to suppose that the Khabiri or Abiri were Hebrews, but abandoned the idea because the sign in Assyrian does not represent 'a, but only the letters which in Arabic are ح and ح̣.

This objection does not, however, seem to be a strong one. As mentioned before, the name of Gaza **גזא** is spelt *Khazati* in the same letter. The distinction of ח and ח̣ is not found in the early Semetic alphabets, both letters being represented by the same sign **ח**, although the same alphabets carefully distinguish **צ** from **ד** and **ט**, as also **ק** from **כ**, and **ח** from **ת**. We do not, perhaps, know the exact sound of the Hebrew name, which the Greeks rendered by *Ἐβραῖος*; but we know it was written with the letter **ח**, whatever may have been the exact sound given to that letter, and that it was therefore written with the same letter used in the name of Gaza.

In this connection it is to be observed that the Fellahin still confuse, in their dialect, the gutturals ח ח̣ and ח̣; and it is very remarkable that the Phœnicians should not distinguish the ח and ח̣ even as late as 200 B.C.

It appears, therefore, that the objection is hypercritical, especially in dealing with a period as early as 1450 B.C. It has been suggested that the *Khabiri* were "Hittite" allied tribes, but this would conflict both with Biblical and also with monumental history. There were Hittites in Hebron in Abraham's time, according to Genesis; but their power was much shaken by Thothmes III in 1600 B.C., and in 1350 B.C. we only read of them in the north of Syria, where also they appear in the Tell Amarna texts. The conditions which prevailed in Palestine in 2000 B.C., did not, apparently, prevail 500 years later, after the first Egyptian conquest.

VII.

THE SCULPTURED TOMB AT SHEFA 'AMR.

THIS tomb I measured in 1875. A view of the façade is given in "Tent Work" (Frontispiece, Vol. II), and an account in the "Memoirs" (I p. 340), where, however, I have only ventured to give those letters of the inscription which appear clearest. Herr Schumacher gives an imperfect sketch of the same (*Quarterly Statement*, October, 1889, p. 189), but does not mention the inscription. In the "Memoirs" it is described as a Christian tomb.

I think there is little doubt that Mr. J. P. Van Kasteren ("Geboorteplaatz der Boanerges," Amsterdam, 1890), has correctly restored the text which agrees with my MS. copy, and is as follows:—

Κ'ΕΧΡΕΒ
ΟΗΘΙCΑΑ

LEFT OF DOOR.

... ΕΛΕ
ΗCΟΝ ΜΕ
(ΚΑΙ) ΤΕΚΝ(ΟΝ)

RIGHT OF DOOR.

Κ(υρι)ε Χρ(ιστ)ε βοηθ(ε)ι Σαλ . . . Ελεησον με (και) τεκνον.

"Lord Christ, help Sal. . . . Have mercy on me and on my offspring."

This agrees with the ascription of the tomb to Christian times, being the family tomb of a certain Sal. . . . (Saleh or Salmon), whose name is evidently that of a native of Palestine.

VIII.

NOTES ON THE "QUARTERLY STATEMENT."

P. 220. *'Amarin*.—Mr. Flinders Petrie connects this name (as did Professor Palmer) with the Amorites. But it is written with the Guttural ϵ while the Hebrew word is written with \aleph . It only means, apparently, "Omar's tribe."

P. 221. *Modern Pottery*.—The fact (mentioned in the "Memoirs") of the black pottery being still made at Gaza shows—as do many others—how difficult it is to date pottery, as the old methods continue to survive even now.

P. 232. *Horns of the Altar*.—The account given by Maimonides should not be ignored. It does not agree with the new theory.

P. 242.—There seems no reason for regarding the Beit el Khulil masonry as Pre-Herodian. I have inspected the dressing several times, and it is much the same used by the Romans, 2nd to 6th century, A.D. The place, as described in the "Memoirs," was a market-place in the Christian age. The seats are still visible, and the remains of a chapel. This agrees with the date of the inscription, which I sought in vain, and which Mr. Flinders Petrie has at length found and attributed to 3rd century, A.D.

P. 245.—The tinkers whom he saw near Jaffa were no doubt gypsies. The Palestine gypsies are mentioned in "Tent Work in Palestine."

P. 332.—The reason why the Malula words resemble Hindi is clear. Hindi is a very mixed language, and contains a number of Arabic and Aramaic words which came into it through the Persian. Persian itself

is full of such words, as is also modern Turkish. But every word compared is a true Semitic word, and it would be vain to attempt to build a theory on this basis as to Hindi, which is a degraded mixture of several languages on an Aryan basis. The sounds of the Malula vowels are probably indefinite, like those of Fellaḥ dialects, and to apply to them the rules of book Arabic would be hypercritical.

NOTES BY DR. SELAH MERRILL.

PITS IN THE SHITTIM PLAIN.

As public attention has recently been called anew to these singular remains, I will quote my original description of them from the "Fourth Statement of the Palestine Exploration Society," 1877, pp. 97-99 (*see also* "East of the Jordan," pp. 225-227).

"About one hour north of Wady Nimrin, there is a series of pits running in a straight line across the plain from east to west. This series meets another running from north-east to south-west, the line of which is not exactly straight. The pit where these two lines intersect is larger than any of the others. At the extreme eastern end of the longest line, and just behind the end pit, there is a single pit which is very curious on account of its position. Each pit is 30 feet in diameter and perfectly round; while at present the depth of the pits varies from 3 to 6 feet. The distance from one pit to another is in general about equal to the diameter, although in exceptional cases it is increased to 50 or 60 feet. There are 31 pits in the longest line, and 20 in the other. The line probably extended somewhat further towards the Jordan, but the pits in that direction have been obliterated in some way. . . . Further south, and near what is now the bank of Wady Nimrin, there are the remains of another series of pits of which I counted about a dozen."

In the *Quarterly Statement* for April, 1890, p. 130, Mr. Neil describes these pits "as three rows of basin-like circular mounds, about 5 or 6 feet high and some 30 feet in diameter. . . . In the longest row there are no less than 31 of these hollow basins. . . . They are generally 30 feet apart, but in some instances 50 to 60 feet."

I have read Mr. Neil's "Palestine Re-peopled" and "Palestine Explored," the only works of his accessible to me, and I find no mention