

DATE OF THE SILOAM TEXT.

By Lieut.-Colonel C. R. CONDER, LL.D., R.E.

MR. E. J. PILCHER has contributed to the Proceedings of the Biblical Archæological Society a paper on the date of the Siloam text (May 4th, 1897), in which he argues that it should be placed as late as the time of Herod the Great. The reasons are interesting, but I venture to think that they are not sufficient to upset the generally received opinion, first given by Dr. Isaac Taylor, and now apparently accepted by Professor Sayce, though in 1883 he ascribed this text to the time of Solomon. The argument is based on the well-known peculiarities of form in certain letters (especially the *Aleph* and *Tsade*), which distinguish the Siloam text from those of Phœnicia and Syria, and which occur later in Samaritan, and on Jewish coins. He also compares the forms found on the seal of Haggai ben Shebniah, which he attributes to the time of Herod because found at the base of the Temple wall. This seal, however, does not give us any of the most characteristic Siloam letters except the *Nun*.

In speaking of the forms of the Siloam letters I do not depend on published copies, or even on the cast which Dr. Schick made for me, but on my own study of the original inscription. In speaking of the Samala texts I depend on the excellent photographs published in Germany, and for Phœnician letters on casts, photographs, and squeezes. I venture, therefore, in the first place, to say that I do not think Mr. Pilcher's representation of the *Koph* of the Siloam text is absolutely correct, while his table gives no idea of the peculiar elongated forms of the later Phœnician or of some of the forms at Samala; but with these exceptions it is correct and valuable.

Exception must also be taken to his conjectural additions to the column for the seal of Haggai, since these somewhat prejudice the comparison, and again to the column of coins of Barcochebas, and to the attribution of coins of "Eleazar the Priest" to the same age. The so-called coins of Barcochebas, bearing the name Simon and struck on Roman denarii, were regarded by Renan as forgeries, and the evidence appears to me to favour this view. It is not known that Barcochebas was named Simon, nor does the name Barcochebas occur on these coins at all.

As regards Eleazar, that name was common among high priests, and the only reason for placing these coins so late appears to be that they represent a palm tree, supposed to be "copied" from coins of Procurators. It is quite as likely that the Procurators copied this ancient and widely-used form from earlier Jewish coins. We must, therefore, discard the evidence of these coins, and also that of the Hebrew signets, since there are no means of dating the latter, and, although they are in the alphabet of the Siloam text, none of them contain the crucial letters *Aleph* and *Tsade*.

The materials remaining for comparison with the Siloam text, on which we can rely for date, are, therefore :—

1st.	The Moabite Stone	....	....	....	about 900 B.C.
2nd.	Baal Libnan Text	....	....	....	” 800 ”
3rd.	Samala Text I	....	....	....	” 800 ”
4th.	” ” II	....	....	....	” 730 ”
5th.	The Lion Weights from Nineveh	....	....	....	745-681 ”
6th.	Gebal (Yekhu Melek)	....	....	....	600-400 ”
7th.	Eshmunazar's Text	....	....	....	300-250 ”
8th.	Coins of Hyrcanus and Aristobulus	....	....	....	135-78 ”
9th.	” Jannæus	....	....	....	78-40 ”
10th.	” Antigonus	....	....	....	40-37 ”

The date of the silver shekels is so uncertain that it can only guide us approximately, as not earlier than 430 B.C. The earliest Samaritan text at Shechem is very late, belonging to the sixth century A.D., and the forms, though recognisable, are so much modified that they have little bearing on the question.

Of the above sources the first two are not given in Mr. Pilcher's tables. For convenience of reference a table is here added of the alphabets in question. It seems to me that anyone comparing the columns would say that the Siloam text stands in its right place, about 700 B.C., and can hardly be much earlier or much later. Omitting letters which are very constant and not distinctive we find—

Aleph. Is the germ whence the late Hasmonean letter arose, and the more exaggerated Samaritan.

Vau. The Jerusalem form occurs as early as the eighth century on the lion weights, but not earlier.

Zain. Probably preserves a very early form, and resembles the Moabite—not the later Phœnician.

Capf. Has a very early form, and not that of later times.

Lam. Has an early form, not that of later times.

Mim. Resembles that on the Hebrew seal of Azayu ben Yokim.

Nun. The same. The later forms approach nearer to square Hebrew.

Ain. Is found not completely round as early as the Baal Lebanon text.

Pe. Is nearest to the Moabite Stone.

Tsade. Is certainly the germ of the form found on the Shekels, but it could not be considered later than these. The Samaritan is much modified.

Koph. Presents an earlier form than that of Samala in 730 B.C., or than the later Phœnician letter.

Shin. Has the original form, not that of later times.

Tau. Resembles the Moabite Stone and not the later forms.

It is therefore only in the cases of *Aleph*, *Vau*, *Mim*, *Nun*, *Ain*, and *Tsade*, that the Siloam text differs from the oldest forms of the Moabite Stone, and in these cases we are able to trace the Siloam forms (excepting *Aleph* and *Tsade*)—

<i>Vau</i> ....	....	....	to 8th century B.C.
<i>Mim</i> ....	....	....	7th or 5th " "
<i>Nun</i> ....	....	....	7th or 5th " "
<i>Ain</i> ....	....	....	.... 9th " "

The *Aleph* and *Tsade* are certainly older than the forms of the Shekel coinage, or of Antigonus's coins. It is but natural that the late Jewish letters should resemble the old alphabet of Israel, but if the forms of *Caph*, *Lam*, and *Nun*, on the coins of Antigonus, be compared with the Siloam letters, the superior antiquity of the latter will be seen, whereas Mr. Pilcher supposes the Siloam text to have been written some 60 years later.

Several other points may be noted in this interesting paper. The Siloam tunnel is ascribed to Hezekiah, not solely because in 2 Kings xx, 20, he is said to have "made a conduit," but because in 2 Chron. xxxii, 30, the tunnel is described as leading from Gihon in the *Nakhal*, or Kidron ravine. It has never been proved that there was a second tunnel to Gihon; and, as I have before pointed out, the levels of the aqueduct found by Mr. Schick do not agree with such a supposition.

It is not probable that a civil memorial in Herod's time would have been written in classical Hebrew. The later Aramaic was then the spoken language, and even in Ezra's time Hebrew was not commonly understood.

Mr. Pilcher attributes the square Hebrew text of the Beni Hezir tomb to the fourth century A.D., but the monument is not in the architectural style of tombs or buildings of that age. This text is generally referred to the Herodian age, and shows us a very different alphabet to that of Siloam, but one earlier than that of Palmyra in 200 A.D. He does not refer to the inscribed coffin of Queen Sarah (Helena of Adiabene), belonging also to the Herodian period, but inscribed in much later forms than those of the Siloam inscription.

The capital found at 'Amwás, and which, both in character and from the form of the Greek letters, cannot be dated earlier than about the fourth century A.D., has on it a Hebrew text, which M. Clermont-Ganneau is said to regard as being in the "old Hebrew character." He probably only means that it is not square Hebrew. If we compare its letters with those at Siloam, and with later forms (supposing the copy to be exact) it will hardly, I think, be concluded that they cast much light on the date of the Siloam text:—

	Siloam.	Amwas.	Coins.	Early Samaritan.
Beth	9	9	9	9
Vau	7	7	7	7
Caph	7	7	7	* 7
Lam	7	7	7	7
Mim	7	7	7	7
Ain	0	0		∇
Resh	9	9	9	9
Shin	ω	ω	ω	ω

The conclusion which appears to me clear from this comparison is, that the 'Amwās capital is written in a very late character, probably by a Samaritan of the fourth century A.D., but that it is earlier than the Samaritan of the sixth century A.D., in the right hand column.

It has already been suggested by Mr. Davis, I think, that the form of the Siloam *Aleph* (like that of the Samalā *Koph*) was due to the difficulty of cutting the older form. The transition was apparently as below—

† † † † †

shown between the tenth century B.C., and the sixth century A.D. The Jerusalem letter stands early in the history of this modification.

It has also been pointed out that the form of the Siloam *Zain* is probably very archaic, and certainly older than the Z form which is traced in North Syria to 730 B.C.

The origin of the Siloam *Tsade* is less easy to understand, but it is possibly a variation of an original form of which we have no example, but whence the Phœnician and the Israelite letters branched off.

Mr. Pilcher supposes that the upper part of the tablet at Siloam was intended for a bilingual text. As, however, this was never written it affords us no evidence. If such was the intention it might have been written in Cuneiform, and not in Greek.

These considerations appear to me to militate against the new proposal and to confirm the usual date for the Siloam text, about 700 B.C.

The seal just found on Ophel by Dr. Bliss cannot be used for comparison, being undated, but appears to me to date about 450 B.C., or from the time of Ezra.

NOTE ON PIERRE BELON'S TRAVELS.

By Lieut.-Colonel CONDER, LL.D., R.E.

MR. WILLOUGHBY GARDNER having kindly lent me a book which I have never seen noticed elsewhere, an abstract is here given of the part referring to Palestine. Pierre Belon du Mans travelled in 1553, with the French Ambassador to Turkey—M. de Furet, in Egypt, Sinai, Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor. His account comes between that of Breydenbach in 1483, and that of Quaresmius in 1616. Palestine was under the Turks, who conquered it in 1518, and the writer was a remarkably zealous observer of manners and customs, natural history, and other subjects not treated by the ordinary pilgrim. The volume of 422 pages, printed at Paris in 1555, contains numerous rough woodcuts of animals, plants, costumes, with a bird's eye view of Sinai.

Starting from Cairo the party encamped at the Twelve Bitter Springs of Moses (*Ayân Mûsa*) and followed the usual route to Pharagon (*Wâdy Feirân*) where they found three or four huts of palm branches, and thence by a rocky ascent with steps, reached the foot of Sinai. There were sixty monks, who entertained travellers both Christian and Moslem, and a small mosque is said to have existed inside the monastery, east of the Chapel of St. Catherine. The mountain is said to have three peaks: Horeb, on the top of which is a Chapel of St. Catherine; Sinai, with the rock stricken by Moses; and the Mount of Moses to the east. On the west was a site called Quaranta Padri (Forty Fathers). At the village of Tor on the coast was a small fort with four towers, and near it were forty palms. Jews and Christians—Greek, Arab, and Armenian—lived here, and the Christians are said to have lent one another crosses and vestments for mass. At Suez were forty galleys, sent from Constantinople and taken in pieces for transport from Cairo. Belon was shown embalmed bodies of flying serpents with two legs and wings (probably manufactured) said to live in the desert.

Gaza was reached early in November, and is described as having an old square castle, but no walls. Figs, olives, jujubes, and apples, pomegranates, vines, and a few palms grew here, and sugar canes were cultivated. At Ramleh the ruins, vaults, and cisterns are noticed, and the land was tilled for corn, barley, and vegetables, with a few vines. The terracing of the hills is ascribed to the ancient Jews.

Jerusalem was reached on November 8th, ten days after leaving Cairo. On the way from Ramleh a ruined church with Latin pictures is noticed (probably at *Kuriet el 'Anab*). On Sion were some thirty