

## THE EPIGRAPHY OF JEWISH COINAGE.

By SAMUEL RAFFAELI.

ON many occasions I have endeavoured to refute, on historical grounds, the theory adopted by some eminent scholars as to the ascription of the silver Maccabaeen shekels to the later period of the Jewish War with the Romans (A.D. 66-70), commonly called the First Jewish Revolt.<sup>1</sup> In the present article I propose to show that there is no evidence that Jewish coins give indication of any essential development during the period under review, a length of over 260 years, commencing with the Maccabaeen epoch (141 B.C.) and terminating with Bar-Kochba (A.D. 124 or 134).

The earliest Jewish letters of which we are cognisant, and which are in our possession, are undoubtedly those of the famous Moabite stone inscription of the ninth century and the Siloam inscription of about the seventh century B.C. Between these periods come the Gezer tablet (fully deciphered and explained in the *Q.S.*, 1909), the seals and gems, the stone and bronze weights, the jar-handles of pottery work, with Hebrew inscriptions. These have well-known letters, without doubt prior to the Jewish coinage era, and by making a careful study of the epigraphy of these coins known to the numismatic world we must come to the conclusion that the alterations in lettering are chiefly adjustment due to the whim of the craftsman during the process of engraving on stone or metal, as the case might be, more than to any radical change of characters.

As mentioned previously, the Moabite stone can be approximately dated in the middle of the ninth century, and the Siloam inscription at about 700 B.C., but even after disputing this early age, the critics have to admit this antiquity to be between the Moabite stone inscription era and the early Jewish coins.

The seals, gems, weight stones and bronze, as also the pottery jar-handles, are usually dated between 800 B.C. and 500 B.C.<sup>2</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, Jerusalem, 1921.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley A. Cook, *Q.S.*, October, 1909.

carefully comparing the symbols of these inscriptions and comparing them to the epigraphy of the known Jewish coins we find a great resemblance to each other.

The *Aleph* is modified from the Moabite and Siloam to the form equal to the *Aleph* of the Samaritan, which appears on all the Jewish coins; both forms are found on many seals and gems (*cf.*, e.g., Levy's *Siegel und Gemmen*, Breslau, 1869) and in later publications from the late Mr. Clarke's collection, and the form of the coins is found on some seals in my own collection (*Q.S.*, April, 1918, October, 1919). By a freak of craftsmanship, the letter became reversed on the bronze Maccabean coin of the Fourth Year: "Year four of the redemption of Zion." This form is surely not a type, as its like is not to be found elsewhere.

The *Beth* and *Gimel* are not altered to a great extent. The head of the *Beth* is a trifle changed from the Moabite and the Siloam into the triangular form of the shekels, and the *Gimel* is alike on all inscriptions and coins, with the exception of some seals where it is turned into the form of the *Pe*.

The *Daleth* is in triangular form on the Moabite inscription, whereas it is modified on the Siloam with a slight leg, and this form is adopted on all coins, but both forms appear on seals. It is the triangular form on the seal of Chemosh-Zedek (S. A. Cook, *Q.S.*, 1909, p. 296), but even on the Phoenician inscriptions we may find the two forms; the Baal-Lebanon inscription has the triangular form and the Ipsambul and Abydus have the Siloam form.

The *He* on Moabite and Siloam is with three bars, but on some seals only two bars are adopted, as, for instance, the Moabite seal (Pilcher, *Q.S.*, 1915, p. 42), and my "Adonijah" seal (*Q.S.*, 1919, p. 178). This letter is reversed on the large Mattathiah-Antigonus bronze coins, but on the small Hasmonaean coins the modified *He* exhibits the triple-bar form.

The *Vav* has undergone many transformations under the hand of the craftsman, but the rare form, which is found on the seal of Yehucal, and still better on the bilingual inscription of "Amwas," is also to be found on the Maccabean Fourth Year bronze coins, and on many of the small Hasmonaean coins and on the unique half-silver Bar-Kochba shekel in possession of a private collector.

The modification of the *Zayin* from the Moabite can be traced down to the "Eleazar" coins of the Bar-Kochba period.

The *Kheth*, which has two bars on the Moabite and on most of the seals, has only one bar on coins, unlike, however, the "Nerab" and Aramaean type, which is open on the coins, the edges of the letter on the coins being closed.

The *Yod* and *Koph* are not changed at all.

The *Lamed* has two forms, one with a round base and the other angular: see the seal Nazarel (*Q.S.*, 1915, p. 42), and the seal Ishmael (*Q.S.*, 1918, p. 93). This form is adopted on all Jewish coins. On some of the Bar-Kochba coins the letter is reversed by the craftsman's freak.

On the *Mem* is to be found traces of modification, also on the "Pim" weight, and this form is to be found on all coins.

There are no alterations on the *Nun* or on the *Ain*.

The *Zade* of the "Susa Bowl," dated 600 B.C. (*Q.S.*, 1909, p. 303), is adopted on the Jewish coins, on the half-silver shekels and "Zion" bronze coins. *Koph* and *Resh* are not much altered.

*Shin* has two forms, the zigzag form like the Roman W, and the round form. Both are to be found on seals, and on coins we find both forms in the same year. The Fourth Year bronze Maccabaeon "Zion" coins have both forms, and on some Bar-Kochba coins on the reverse may be seen the zigzag form, while on the obverse appears the round form.<sup>1</sup>

There are no modifications in the *Tav*.

I have, I hope, thus given ample proof that the alteration in form of the epigraphy of the Jewish coinage of the whole period, commencing with the Maccabaeon and concluding with the Bar-Kochba period, is due mainly to the fancies and whims of the engravers and craftsmen, more than to any other cause, and that all arguments in favour of the theory which attributes these coins to a later period, simply on account of the form of some letters being somewhat similar in character to those of later-dated coins, are therefore without any solid foundation whatever.

Jerusalem, *March*, 1922.

<sup>1</sup> See my book, *מטבעות היהודים*, Figs. 177, 181, 186, 192, 193.

## NOTES ON EXCAVATIONS AND DISCOVERIES.

THE British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, founded three years ago, and engaged in active work for the last two years, has now issued its first Bulletin. The Director, Professor Garstang, in the course of a foreword, gives some account of the aims and principles of the School, pointing out how the position of Palestine, a focus upon which varied civilizations converged, has made it a centre for tracing important historical problems. "Students of Greece and Crete, of Asia Minor and Mesopotamia, of Arabia and of Egypt, will each and all find a field of interesting study in Jerusalem, where their help will be equally indispensable to the interpretation of results."

The Bulletin also contains a short monograph by Mr. W. J. Phythian-Adams on "Hittite and Trojan Allies, 1290-1190 B.C." To put it briefly, "The author points out that a group of Hittite allies who fought in Syria with the Great King of Kheta against the Pharaoh Ramses II. reappear as Trojan allies a hundred years later." The fact is simple, the conclusion obvious: "only Greece and Egypt are each beyond the other's horizon, and both areas must come within the purview of the student of Palestine who brings the fact to light."

From the Bulletin we learn that early Egyptian objects continue to be found at Byblos. At Kedesh, where a monument of Seti I. was found last year, early pottery is reported. "At Tyre massive masonry foundations have been uncovered on the approach to the former island, and there are abundant traces of activity of the period of Alexander and thereafter."

The British School itself is making preparations to examine, in the autumn, Tell Harbaj and Tell Amr, the possible sites of Harosheth of the Gentiles.

"The Arabic pottery found on the site of the great mosque which overlay Herod's cloisters at Askalon proves to include a number of rare and early fabrics comparable with those of Fustat, and especially akin to specimens which M. de Lorey has recently recovered at Damascus."

The excavations at Tell el-Ful, three miles north of Jerusalem (Gibeah of Benjamin?), are proceeding under Dr. Albright, the Director of the American School. "The few soundings that have

already been made have, however, seemed to give the main outlines of the archaeology of the hill. The top hillock was, as everybody expected, found to be entirely artificial, comprising the remains of some three, at least, Hebrew and Jewish fortresses. The topmost one is post-Exilic, judging from the pottery discovered; the second is supposed, on account of the stonework and 'pebble-pottery,' to be Solomonic (we learn from 1 Kings that Asa, about 900 B.C., built in haste a fortress at Geba of Benjamin); while the third is attributable to the period of Saul" (*The Near East*, May 11).

Mr. Guy, Inspector of Antiquities, has examined 40 ancient mounds to the south of Beth-shan (Beisan), 17 of them unrecorded. In several of them very early pottery was found.

*The Palestine Weekly* (April 28, May 12) gives an account of the excavations at Beisan by Dr. Fisher on behalf of the University of Pennsylvania (quoting the Journal of the University Museum). From it we cull the following:—

"The lowest level reached contained a large circular structure approximately dated to 2000 B.C. Below this the debris continued with no signs as yet of the natural rock, thus proving the antiquity of the hill to be even greater than we had anticipated. At this level were several jars of thick rough gritty ware with a wash of hematite coarsely applied. On one was scratched a crude drawing of some long horned animal resembling an ibex. At a slightly higher level were two burials. The skeleton of the finer of the two was that of a young woman laid on her side, partly contracted in an enclosure formed by a single row of stones. In this were placed a number of earthenware vessels, the larger against the wall, the smaller behind the skeleton. The types are well-known in Palestine as belonging to 1800–1600 B.C., contemporaneous with the expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt. At the neck were a number of beads, two being of glazed quartzite. . . .

"At the close of the season the terrace had been cleared down through three levels. The topmost series of walls belong to the town built by the Arabs after their first conquest in 632 A.D. They were erected partly on the foundations, and largely with the material taken from preceding Byzantine and Early Christian buildings. The old columns, of black granite, were used mainly to strengthen the new walls, and were often found inverted or broken in half for convenience in handling. The heavier masonry on the left of the photograph is the lower terrace or inner enclosing wall connecting

with the gate. Just inside this, re-used in a room, evidently a kitchen, we found a large marble stele. This bore a Greek inscription commemorating the restoration of the city wall at the instance of Flavius Arsenius during the local magistracy of Flavius Leon. Some years ago another similar slab was unearthed at Beisan, and is now in the house of the District Officer there. This refers to the same work of restoration, but gives in addition the name of the Emperor Flavius Anastasius, which establishes its date as probably 509-510 A.D. A certain Flavius Arsenius is known to have possessed great influence at the Court of Byzantine about 530 A.D., which he is said to have exercised in the interest of Scythopolis, probably because it was his birth-place. The dates in the two inscriptions are a year apart. As the restoration of the city wall was a work of considerable magnitude extending over several years, probably a tablet was inserted in the face of each completed portion. In the debris we found a number of bronze lamp frames, vessels, and fragments of fine mosaic, undoubtedly belonging to a Christian Church on the summit. . . .

“During the excavations on the summit a vertical shaft was sunk near the south-western side, where no pavements or walls were *in situ*. At a depth of two and a half metres from the surface we found a large basalt stele with an Egyptian inscription of Seti I., 1313-1292 B.C. This lay on its side with one edge broken away, and the inscribed face badly weathered. It was not in its original position and had been re-used, as the upper portion containing part of a relief panel had been cut off. The stele bears twenty lines of hieroglyphs, in which mention is made of the Syrians. So far as it has been deciphered the inscription is made up mainly of the usual laudatory attributes of the king. . . .

“At Beisan Mr. Fisher, for the University Museum of Philadelphia, has resumed excavations, and proposes to continue the season until the end of October.

“The entire eastern terrace of the hill has been cleared, exposing the latest Arabic stratum with other walls of earlier date.

“Work has been divided between this part of the site and the long series of low hills along the stream north of the main Tel, where was the city cemetery. Already several interesting tombs have been found ranging in the date 1000 B.C. to Christian times. All of these tombs had been rifled, but some fine glass and jewellery had been overlooked in the hurried search made by the plunderers.

"The whole of the cemetery is to be cleared strip by strip from the level of the stream to the crest of the ridge along which ran the northern city wall. At the same time work will be continued on the summit of the central hill to open up completely the Arabic settlement within the enclosing walls. After this the dissection of the Tel stratum by stratum will continue as last year. The next level to be uncovered is expected to be that of the Roman period, considerable traces of a large structure of this age having been found near the close of work last season."

A very interesting Greco-Roman villa was reported by Major Champion, Governor of Hebron and South-East Palestine, at Beit Jibrin. It has been examined by members of the British and French Schools, and a preliminary account is given in the *Revue Biblique*, April, by Father Vincent. The villa contains an exceedingly fine mosaic, illustrations of which are given by the French Professor, and it is noteworthy that animals play as large a part in it as in the remarkable tombs discovered earlier at Marissa, and published by the P.E.F. The mosaic, however, is later; it is argued that we have a villa erected towards the end of the second century A.D., and transformed into a Christian residence in the course of the fifth or sixth century.

In the July issue of the *Revue Biblique* Father Vincent contributes an elaborate and well-illustrated discussion of Nebi Samwil.

The Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research (January, 1922) contains an interesting report by the Director, Dr. Albright. He draws attention to the necessity of collecting native customs and legends before modern changes destroy all traces of them, and states that he has succeeded in attracting promising Syrian scholars and amateurs to this field. Commenting on the Fund's work at Askalon, he observes: "the discoveries of painted potsherds, systematically studied by Mr. Phythian-Adams, permit a certain ceramic index of Canaanite and Philistine civilization to be set up, doing away with guess-work in this field. Even after the work of Petrie, Bliss, Macalister and Mackenzie, there was room for doubt as to the exact relation between the changes in ceramic style and the political changes in the land. At Askalon, however, a burned area, on which new foundations of crude brick are laid, separates the stratum containing Philistine sherds from that with only Canaanite and Cypriote."