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## Recent Biblical Archaeology.

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

A NOTICEABLE feature of the archæology of the Near East within the last two or three years has been the gradual extension backward of the origin of civilization. Since the opening up of Babylonia, Mesopotamia, and Palestine, due to exploration after the War, increasing proof has been forthcoming of the immense antiquity of Eastern culture. Pre-Aryan India has been revealed by Sir John Marshall as the seat of a high urban civilization before 3000 B.C. The royal tombs of Ur, opened up by Dr. Woolley, cannot be dated later than about 3500 B.C., by which time Ur was already a prosperous and perhaps a populous centre. Evidence of the existence of Kish as a city nearly two thousand years earlier than this has been established by Professor Langdon and his colleagues, who have been excavating the vast ruins for many years. When we find intimate everyday objects, such as toilet-sets, gaming-boards, and vases, not unlike their modern equivalents, being unearthed from these early sites, time seems to stand still. It is also being realized more and more that a widespread, organized system of commerce existed in the Near East six or seven thousand years ago. Intercourse over enormous areas is attested. The inhabitants of Mesopotamia, for instance, in earliest times, had implements and other objects made of copper, flint, obsidian, and limestone, and later on they used silver, gold, diorite, and lapis lazuli. Whence came such materials, for they were not the natural products of this country, which could boast of little more than shell, bitumen, and clay? They had to be obtained by intercourse with distant regions. The lapis lazuli came mostly from Persia and Beluchistan, the gold from Syria and Cappadocia, the silver from northern Cilicia, and the copper from the Caucasus mountains. Hence the development of any of these ancient races, including the Canaanites, cannot be regarded as an isolated phenomenon. Each was to some extent dependent on the others, however far back we carry our investigations. This widening view of the civilization of the Near East is one of the most important recent contributions to archæology. It shows us that the culture which the Israelites found in Palestine, and which they largely assimilated, was already ancient before they settled there, and included elements from Egypt, the land of the Hittites, Babylonia, Assyria, and other countries.

Important discoveries are being made in Mesopotamia which may place early Biblical events in a new perspective. At Dur-Sharrukin (modern *Khorsabad*), where Sargon II. had his palace, Mr. H. Frankfort has found in the ruins of the temple of Nebo a complete list of Assyrian kings for nearly three thousand years, ending with the eighth century B.C. As the list contains the dates and length of their reigns, without any gaps, the information will definitely settle certain chronological difficulties hitherto existing, especially in connexion with the first dynasty of Babylon and early Old Testament history. According to a letter just received from M. René Dussaud, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Maer or Mari (c. 3103 B.C.), which figures in the earliest Sumerian royal lists, has been discovered by Pastor H. Parrot, who is Dussaud's attaché at the Louvre, and who was sent out last November to explore the right bank of the Euphrates. Numerous statuettes, votive offerings, and inscriptions have come to light, most of these being in the style of the first dynasty of Ur, which was contemporary. Three generations ago the existence of the Sumerians was unknown to the scientific world. Their history and art died out nearly four thousand years ago. Now excavations are rescuing their civilization from oblivion. It was to this early race that the Semites were indebted for the narratives of the Creation and Flood, and the Sumerian codes are known to be the basis of the laws of Moses. From the Sumerians the Hebrews largely derived their ideals of social life and justice. If tablets should be found at Maer, as seems likely, they may furnish authentic information of a valuable nature. The city was the centre of a powerful kingdom as far back as the time of Sargon I. (c. 2752 B.C.).

The Ras Shamra tablets continue to throw a welcome light on many obscure passages of the Old Testament, and to afford confirmation of some of its oldest historical events. The latest poem translated by Virolleaud deals partly with a great conflict and battle which took place between the 'Cherethites' and the 'Terachites.' The former were Phœnicians, followers of Chereth, king of Sidon, and occupied the Negeb or southern district of Canaan (cf. 1 S 30<sup>14</sup>, 'The Negeb of the Cherethites'). The latter, who were evidently invaders into this region, were connected with Terach, a

lunar god. As Abraham is stated in the Old Testament to have been the son of Terach, who migrated from Ur to Harran (a centre of lunar worship), and thence to Canaan, it is believed by scholars that the 'Terachites' represent Abraham and the Hebrews. According to the poem, Chereth had been ordered by El, the supreme Phœnician god, to overthrow these enemies, who were already in possession of five large fortresses in Canaan. The combatants numbered 'three hundred times ten thousand, with copper *harpés* and bronze daggers,' and the battlefield was the 'plain of the Negeb,' by which may be meant the great plateau of *Jebel el-Magrah*, about seventy miles long and forty or fifty broad. The Phœnicians seem to have been defeated, with the result that the 'Terachites' overspread the land. In this historical poem, which is one of the best preserved of the whole series, we seem—if Virolleaud's and Dussaud's conjectures are correct—to have valuable contemporary confirmation of Abraham's followers (the 'Terachites') taking possession of Canaan (about the beginning of the second millennium). We know from the Old Testament that, while some of them reached Egypt, they established themselves for the most part in the Negeb—at Hebron, Beersheba, and other places (cf. Gn 12<sup>9</sup>, 'And Abraham journeyed, going on still toward the Negeb'; Gn 24<sup>62</sup>, 'And Isaac dwelt in the land of the Negeb'). There are certainly differences between the two traditions, but these ancient documents seem to give us decisive corroboration of the patriarchal narrative. They refer also to the city of Ashdod as being founded by 'Shibani,' the seventh son of Terach, and seem to show that Beersheba may be the 'Well of Shibani,' rather than the 'Well of Seven.' They mention ritual services and sacrifices almost identical with those in the Old Testament, thus showing that the Canaanite cults were to some extent adopted by the Israelites, and were transformed by them into a purer system. These cuneiform alphabetic tablets are in an ancient dialect of Phœnician, or some language closely allied to the latter, and show points of contact with Babylonian, Proto-Aramaic, Hebrew, and Hurrian. There is still a large number of them to be deciphered, but Professor Virolleaud of the Sorbonne, late Director of Antiquities in Syria, is working steadily and carefully on them.

In Palestine archæological work has been going on at numerous sites. At Megiddo, on the great plain of Esdraelon, where excavation started eight years ago under the Oriental Institute of Chicago, there is the largest and most complete scheme

of operation yet started at any site. The whole mound is being gradually removed, one stratum at a time, with perfect elaboration of method. Some time ago, it will be remembered, a number of Solomon's stables and an immense shaft and tunnel for the ancient water supply were uncovered. Now an enclosure has been found, about ninety-eight yards by sixty-five, which contains a stable of five units at one end, while the rest is floored with white lime and was apparently a parade ground. Adjoining the enclosure is a well-constructed building, which is believed to have been used either as a store or as quarters for the charioteers. It has been found that the earliest remains of the mound, including houses and caves, go back to the fourth millennium B.C., and belong at least to æneolithic (chalcolithic) times. At Beth-Shemesh (*'Ain Shems*), the chief city of Solomon's province of Dan, where the Haverford expedition under Dr. Elihu Grant and Mr. Alan Rowe has been working, many more streets, house-walls, and public buildings have been uncovered, as well as silos, ovens, wine-presses, and stone and clay receptacles. Among the most interesting of the smaller finds are a large scarab with ten inscribed lines referring to the wedding of Amenophis III. and Queen Tiy; a clay tablet on which is a drawing believed to be a map with memoranda in cuneiform; a stone gaming-board; many figurines, divine, human, and animal; and Mycænæan, Philistine, Cypriote, and local painted pottery. The excavations here are full of interest, when we remember that Beth-Shemesh was one of the strong places of the Shephelah. Owing to its strategic situation it seems to have been involved in the route taken by the defeated Amorites in Joshua's time (Jos 10<sup>10</sup>), and more particularly in the later struggles with the Philistines (cf. Jg 13<sup>25</sup>). Progress is being made at Lachish (*Tell Duweir*) under Mr. Starkey. This was one of the league of four cities organized to resist the Hebrew invasion under Joshua. It stood isolated, and for ages proved impregnable, being protected like ancient Jericho by a strong stone wall with sloping foundations which research has traced a considerable distance. The enclosed area has been estimated at ten or twelve acres, and the population would accordingly amount to some three thousand souls. Many objects of interest have come to light in the Israelite stratum. Recently a small seal with two inscribed registers was found, the upper one having the name Shebna and the lower that of Ahab. As Lachish belonged to the Kingdom of Judah, it is unlikely that the seal was connected with Ahab, king of Israel. The prob-

ability is that the Shebna mentioned was the major-domo or palace governor of King Hezekiah (c. 725 B.C.). He was the object of one of Isaiah's sternest utterances (Is 22<sup>15ff.</sup>), and appears to have been a man of wealth and high position in the State, and the owner of some superb chariots. In regard to Ahab, as this name was not uncommon—there was a false prophet Ahab in Jeremiah's time—it is probable that like Shebna he held some official position in Judah, perhaps that of royal secretary, which we know existed.

We mentioned in a previous review that excavation is taking place on the summit of Mount Nebo, from which Moses is stated to have viewed the Promised Land. It was at this spot, according to a Haggadic statement (2 Mac 2<sup>4-12</sup>), that Jeremiah hid 'the tabernacle and the ark with the altar of incense.' Christians of the fourth century erected a sanctuary here in honour of Moses, and the officiating monks were in the habit of showing the Law-giver's tomb to pilgrims! The ruins of the church have frequently been visited and described in the course of the last two centuries. The *Custodie de Terre Sainte* has now purchased the site, and has commenced excavations in conjunction with the Franciscan Fathers of Jerusalem. A campaign of several months is projected. Already mosaic floors, presenting a great variety of geometric motifs, have been discovered, along with Greek inscriptions. Among other objects unearthed are sculptured crosses, fragments of columns, marble capitals, chancel pillars, and pieces of glass, alabaster, and bituminous limestone. Some tombs have also been found at a depth of nine feet. The summit is not that traditionally known as *Neba*, but *Siâghah* one and a half miles farther west. The slopes fall steeply on all sides, and from here the whole of the Jordan Valley can be seen, along with Gilead, Hermon, Tabor, Ebal and Gerizim, Jericho, and the Dead Sea as far as Engedi. Trans-jordan is attracting the attention of excavators. It is being realized that some great walled cities once existed there. Recently Professor Albright has explored the site of *Ader* in Moab, as well as that of *Lejjûn* to the north-east on the edge of the desert. The former is known to have been occupied

as early as the end of the third millennium, and contains the ruins of a temple dating from about 2000 B.C. An examination of the objects discovered has proved that flint artifacts disappeared in this region between 2200 and 2000 B.C. owing to the advent of copper. It was at this time that copper mining was undertaken on a large scale in Edom, Midian, and Sinai. In Edom alone four ancient copper workings of importance have so far been located by Musil, Blake, and Horsfield. Hence it was that the beautiful double-edged flint knives so common in the Early Bronze period, and which have been found in abundance at *Tell Beit Mirsim* and other places, went out of use by the beginning of the second millennium.

At the surface station of Baqâ, Jerusalem, where one of the first prehistoric deposits in Palestine was discovered, a sounding has been made on the right slope of an ancient watercourse by excavators under the guidance of Professor Breuil, the famous French expert on prehistory. It has revealed very abundant Acheulean-Levalloisian flint industries *in situ*. Excavations made in the course of laying foundations for buildings in the neighbourhood show that at a lower level still there are layers containing typical Chellean industries. The latter deposit must represent the earliest human establishment so far brought to light in the Jerusalem region, and takes us back to Lower Palæolithic times, probably over 100,000 years ago. Compared with this remote age, the earliest Jerusalem known to us seems but of yesterday. For those interested in the prehistory of Palestine, the following are the usual stages or periods, in chronological order, beginning with the Lower Palæolithic and coming down to later times: Chellean, Acheulian, Mousterian, Aurignacian, Solutrean, Magdalenian, Epipalæolithic (Mesolithic), and Neolithic (New Stone Age).

The work on some Palestinian sites has now been completed. This is the case with Samaria and the caves at Athlit. The British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, which has been directing both these large enterprises, has now wound them up, and the results, which are being carefully examined, will be published in due course.

