Signet with Old-Hebrew Inscription

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To a person unacquainted with old Egyptian and Semitic psychology, it may appear strange that part of a Migdol should form a shrine for two deities. To those early peoples, however, it would be peculiarly appropriate, and the god or goddess selected shows their thoughtful preparation to secure divine protection.

The tower formed the look-out post and at the same time the refuge for the frontier people, some of whom adored Hathor and Horus-Sutek. Others adored the latter as Sutek only, and Hathor as Anta or Anat. Any attack upon this border would probably be made by worshippers of the Semitic doubles of these deities, therefore the occupants of the place put themselves under the care of these duplicate members of the pantheon of both races. But it was an Egyptian "strong tower," and its little garrison would be that country's frontiersmen, so its name was "Pa-Hathor."

Beneath the floor of the adytum were found two skeletons, probably a proof of the murder, for magical protective purposes, of two unfortunates who took part in the construction of the building. Such a means of preserving a bridge by the burial of a person was performed in Macedonia as late as the twelfth century; see also 1 Kings xvi, 34, and for similar barbarities in Ancient Egypt, Lefébure's *Rites Égyptiens—Construction et Protection des Edifices*.

SIGNET WITH OLD-HEBREW INSCRIPTION.

By E. J. PILCHER.

IN the ruins of a house at Jerusalem an ancient seal has recently been discovered, and Signor S. Raffaelli has sent an impression of it for publication in the *Quarterly Statement*. The material of the seal is a hard green stone. It is of the usual scaraboid form, although in this case the face is almost circular. It is about three quarters of an inch long, and a hole is drilled from end to end to contain the rod of metal upon which it revolved when mounted in a finger ring. The face is cracked across one corner.

Unfortunately, the wax impression will not bear photographing, and therefore the following enlarged drawing has been made:—

לשׁלם
בן אדניה
חפר

l' Shalum
ben Adoni-Yah
Khepher.

Of Shallum
Son of Adonijah
Hepher.

It must be remembered that the above drawing has been made from a wax impression, and the writer has not had the opportunity of seeing the original. Signor Raffaeli, the possessor of the seal, reads it differently, and makes it to be :—

להלם
בן אדניה
גר

l' Khelem
ben Adoni-Yah
u · Ger.

Of Helem
Son of Adonijah
a sojourner.

For Helem, see Zech. vi, 14. This name is usually explained as “Dream.” In verse 10, by an apparent scribal error, it is replaced by the enigmatical חלדאי Heldai, with which compare 1 Chron. xxvii, 15, and Heled, 1 Chron. xi, 30. On the other hand, 2 Sam. xxiii, 29, would seem to show that all these names are corruptions of חלב Heleb, “fat”: plumpness being the oriental standard of beauty. In view of all these considerations it would be very important to possess an inscription actually containing the name of Helem, as it would confirm the Hebrew text of Zechariah.

Signor Raffaeli points out that in these Hebrew seals the theophoric name almost always ends in יהו *Yahu*; and the termination יה *Yah*, is exceedingly rare. We should therefore expect to find *Adoni-Yahu*, not *Adoni-Yah*; and, consequently, the first character of the third line should be *Vau* in his opinion.

Furthermore, the two final letters are carefully marked off with points and must be a complete word. פ and ג are very much alike in the Old Hebrew and Phoenician alphabets, and Signor Raffaeli reads גר = "sojourner" or "guest"; his contention being that the owner of the seal was a Jew of the Dispersion who had undertaken the pilgrimage to Jerusalem with the intention of making a temporary stay there, and assisting in the building of the Temple; as in Zech. vi, 15, "They that are afar off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord."

It will thus be seen that Signor Raffaeli's interpretation offers points of the highest interest and importance; and, as he bases his readings upon inspection of the actual gem itself, his views must be put on record. The present writer can only regret that he has merely the wax impression before him. To his eye the impression bears the lettering shown on the above drawing, and he is therefore reluctantly obliged to discuss the inscription independently of Signor Raffaeli.

It will be noted that the inscription is in three registers, divided from one another by double lines. The epigraphy belongs to a somewhat late period in the history of the Jewish alphabet; and calls for little remark, except that, by an oversight of the engraver, the middle bar has been omitted from the *He* at the end of the second line.

The owner was *Shallum*, a name already known.¹

Adonijah has not previously been observed upon these signets.

The third register, however, offers some problems of its own. As a general rule, we only meet with the name of the owner and his father upon these little relics; but in the present case we have "Shallum the son of Adonijah" followed by the three letters חפר. The first thing that strikes the observer is the two points: one after ח and the other at the end of the line. Such points usually serve as word-dividers in inscriptions, and, accordingly, Signor Raffaeli is inclined to read the last two letters as one word גר *ger*. In the English Bible *ger* is translated "stranger" as in the familiar phrase "thy stranger within thy gates," Exod. xx, 10; though it would be more correct to render it by "guest" or "client." It is not used in Hebrew theophoric proper names; but is fairly frequent

¹ A seal bearing the names לְשָׁלֻם יְרֵמְיָהוּ, "of Shallum (son of) Jeremiah," has been published by Prof. Clermont-Ganneau, *Receuil*, IV, 257; cf. Lidzbarski's *Ephemeris*, I, 275.—S. A. C.

in Phoenician, where we have *Ger-Melkarth*, *Ger-Sakon*, *Ger-Ashtart*, etc., i.e., Client of Melkarth, Client of Sakon, Client of Astarte, etc. Thus, according to Signor Raffaeli, the seal would be the property of "Helem son of Adonijah, a Client" (or resident alien). In Talmudic Hebrew *ger* means "proselyte," and thus we might say "Adonijah a proselyte" though it may be questioned whether the word had acquired that meaning at the period to which the present signet belongs.

The objection is that the second letter of the third line is more like פ than ג, and Signor Raffaeli's reading does not account for the preceding ה. In fact, we cannot give any satisfactory explanation for this ה if it is to be treated as an independent word; and ה פר would have no ascertainable meaning. Consequently, we seem bound to disregard the two points, and treat the third line as a single word חפר, *Khepher*, or *Kheper*.

As a matter of curiosity it may be remarked that *Kheper*, חפר, is found on the Egyptian monuments as the name of the well-known sacred beetle or scarabaeus. In his *Receuil* I, 167, Prof. Clermont-Ganneau illustrates a seal bearing the figure of a scarabaeus, and the inscription לעבריהדד "of Obed-Hadad." It will also be recalled that a number of jar-handles have been discovered in the various excavations of the Palestine Exploration Fund; and they bear two devices, one being the Persian *ferouher*, as shown on a coin of Datames (*Q.S.*, 1910, p. 79), while the other is an Egyptian scarabaeus; both devices being accompanied by the inscription למלך, *la-Melek* = "of the King" followed by the name of a town. Nevertheless, although the *figure* of a scarabaeus may have conveyed a meaning to the inhabitants of Palestine, it does not follow that the *name* of the *Kheper* would have been equally intelligible. Moreover חפר is quite capable of a satisfactory Hebrew etymology.

In Hebrew the root חפר signifies to dig, or burrow, or excavate; and the word occurs as a noun in Eccl. x, 8, in the form *Hopher* = a well-sinker. Besides this, *Hepher* is found as a name of a place in Josh. xii, 17; and as a proper name in Numb. xxvi, 32. We are thus confronted with the problem whether the third line of our seal is to be taken as a description of the trade or profession of the owner, or his birth-place, or his family (or tribal) name.

If the חפר is to be read as *Hopher* = "well-sinker" we should expect it to be preceded by the definite article *ha* and read "Shallum son of Adonijah, the well-sinker." The ה being absent, we can scarcely accept this explanation.

In the Massoretic text the name **הפר** is vocalised Hephher; but this was not always the case, for in the Septuagint it is *Ὁφὲρ*. Hephher occurs as a place-name in Josh. xii, 17, and 1 Kings iv, 10. Elsewhere it is Gath-Hephher (LXX, Γεθχοφὲρ) mentioned in 2 Kings xiv, 25, as the birth-place of the prophet "Jonah, son of Amittai, who was of Gath-Hephher." If, however, it is to be treated on our seal as a place-name, we should expect it to be preceded by *Mem*, or followed by *Yod*, as in 2 Kings xxiv, 18, "Jeremiah of Libnah," **מלבנה** *me-Libnah* (literally, from Libnah) or Judges x, 3, "Jair the Gileadite," **הגלעדי** *ha-Gile'adi*. As, therefore, our seal does not read either "from Hephher" or "the Hephherite," it is doubtful whether we should be justified in taking it as the name of a locality—not to mention that no seal yet known appears to bear any such Gentilic formula.

On the other hand, Hephher figures in the Old Testament as the name of a sept of the Gileadites, and, according to Numb. xxvi, 28-34; xxvii, 1-11; and Josh. xvii, 1-6, the Levirate law arose from the circumstance that the patriarch Hephher had a family of daughters, and no sons to carry on the tribal line. In 1 Chron. xi, 36, a Hephher was one of David's mighty men, although in the parallel passage 2 Sam. xxiii, 24-39, his name has dropped out. We might take the **הפר** on our seal to be a tribal name, but in that case there is still the difficulty that it ought to end with a *Yod* as in Numb. xxvi, 32, **החפרי** *ha-Hepheri* = the Hephherite.

All the preceding hypotheses seem unsatisfactory, and there is only one alternative, and that is to assume that the word Hephher is the grandfather of the owner of our seal. It is quite a common feature in these antiquities to omit the word *ben*, "son," between two names; and although the *ben* does occur once in this inscription, and there is plenty of room to have inserted it the second time, yet the best reading we can give is "of Shallum son of Adonijah (son of) Hephher." This affords an intelligible rendering, and does not give rise to any of the difficulties we have found in the other cases.