

## Ashteroth Karnaim.

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### I.

THE name *Ashteroth Karnaim* ('Ashtarothe of the two horns') is one of considerable interest to the student of the Old Testament, as it raises the whole question of the character and attributes of the goddess Ashtoreth. The worship of this goddess was practically universal among the Semites<sup>1</sup>; her original home was Babylonia, probably the northern part of it; here she was worshipped under the name of Ishtar, and in her were centred the attributes of a number of earlier goddesses. In the Old Testament her name assumes the forms Ashtoreth, Ashteroth, and Ashtaroth (these plural forms signifying Ashtoreth in her different representations), and Ashteroth Karnaim.

It is most important for the study of the question before us, namely, the meaning of the *biblical* Ashteroth Karnaim, to realize the fact that this goddess was not only differently represented in different localities, but that her attributes, and therefore her form of worship, varied very considerably. It will, perhaps, be well to indicate quite briefly some of the more conspicuous characters assumed by the goddess. She figures very prominently as the goddess of Love, as may be seen from the following quotations. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the hero reproaches Ishtar on account of her many loves, thus—

To Tammuz, the husband of thy youth,  
From year to year thou causest bitter weeping.  
Thou lovedst the bright-coloured Allala bird, . . .  
Thou lovedst also a lion, perfect in strength . . .  
Thou lovedst also a horse, glorious in war . . .  
Thou lovedst also a shepherd of the flock . . .  
Thou lovedst also Isullanu . . .  
And as for me, thou wouldst love me and (make me)  
even as these!<sup>2</sup>

As the goddess of different localities her attributes, as one would expect, varied with the locality; thus, as goddess of Nineveh she was worshipped as the goddess of love, while as the Ishtar of

<sup>1</sup> That the name is Semitic is not questioned by the vast majority of scholars, cf. Jastrow, *Die Religion Bab. und Assy.*, p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> Pinches, *The O.T. in the light of the Hist. Records of Assy. and Bab.*, pp. 96, 97.

Arbele she was worshipped as the goddess of war<sup>3</sup>; as regards this latter attribute, the words of Hamurabi, in the epilogue to his *Code*, are to the point: 'With the mighty weapon wherewith Gamama and Ishtar gave me . . . did I root out the enemies above and below (in the north and in the south).'<sup>4</sup> As goddess both of love and battle, Ishtar must be compared with the Greek Aphrodite, whose attributes were similar. Ishtar also appears as the goddess of lust and of generation, though these characteristics are the natural accompaniments of love (see above, and *K.B.*, vi. 63). These various qualities in the goddess are to be explained by the fact that among the Babylonians the attributes of a number of earlier deities became centred in Ishtar. Her general attributes are well summarized thus: 'She was the lady, or mistress, of the locality in which she was worshipped; queen of the gods, and princess of heaven and earth; a warrior goddess; the goddess of generation and productivity; and she was identified with the planet Venus. These aspects of her nature are retained as her cult travels westwards, sometimes one being more prominent than the other, sometimes several being combined.'<sup>5</sup>

### II.

Turning now to Ashteroth Karnaim,<sup>6</sup> there are three theories held by different scholars as to what the 'two horns' in the name refer to.

i. In the first place, it is believed that the two horns refer to two mountains. On the analogy of some votive tablets to Baal Karnaim of Carthage, Professor Moore believes that the Karnaim of Gn 14<sup>5</sup> (see also 1 Mac 5<sup>26</sup>, 2 Mac 12<sup>21</sup>, cf. Am 6<sup>18</sup>) was a double-peaked mountain sacred to Ashtoreth.<sup>7</sup> Again, Schumacher, in discussing the site of

<sup>3</sup> Muss-Arnolt, *Dict.* 'Ishtar.'

<sup>4</sup> Winckler in *Der alte Orient*, 4 Jahrg., p. 135; cf. *K.B.*, iii. 13. See also for the attributes of Ishtar in general, Lagrange, *Études sur les Rel. Sem.*, pp. 136-139.

<sup>5</sup> Driver in Hastings' *B.D.*, i. 169.

<sup>6</sup> As to whether one or two cities are referred to in Gn 14<sup>5</sup>, see *Encycl. Bibl.*, i. col. 335; Gunkel *Genesis*, *in loc.*; Dillmann *Genesis*<sup>6</sup>, *in loc.*

<sup>7</sup> *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1897, p. 155. See also *Proceedings of the Soc. of Bibl. Arch.*, xxi. p. 173.

Ashteroth-Karnaim says that 'the double peak of the southern summit of Tell-el-Ashari, formed by the depression running from north to south, would make the appellation of Karnaim, or "double-horned," extremely appropriate' (*Across Jordan*, p. 208).<sup>1</sup> Further, in a discussion in the Talmud 'as to the constructions for the Feast of Booths, it is said that Ashteroth Karnaim was situated between two mountains which gave much shade.'<sup>2</sup>

ii. Secondly, it is maintained that the two horns were those of the crescent moon. There is much to be said in support of this. As we have already seen, the original home of Ashteroth was Babylonia; in the astro-theology of the Babylonians Ishtar, in her celestial character, 'represents the crescent moon, and is called the "Daughter of the moon-god." In this character she appears in the legend of the descent of Ishtar into the under-world in search of her lover Tammuz or Adonis; in this character, as queen of heaven, we find her worship practised by the Hebrew women, and rebuked by Jeremiah and Ezekiel'<sup>3</sup>: *Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead the dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven. . . .<sup>4</sup> . . . And behold, there sat the women weeping for Tammuz.*<sup>5</sup> 'It was in this celestial character that Ishtar appeared as the "two-horned Ashteroth" (cf. the name Ashteroth Karnaim in Gn 14<sup>5</sup>) with a crescent moon on her head like the Egyptian goddess Isis. The cakes offered to the queen of heaven are often mentioned in the Babylonian religious texts. She was also the goddess of the planet Venus.'<sup>6</sup> It is quite possible that there is a reference to the worship of Ishtar, in her celestial character, in Job 31<sup>26-28</sup>—

If I beheld the sun when it shined,  
Or the moon walking in brightness;  
And my heart hath been secretly enticed,  
And my mouth hath kissed my hand:  
This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judges:  
For I should have lied to God that is above.

The last line would perhaps be better rendered—

For I should have denied God that is above.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Encycl. Bibl.*, i. col. 336, note.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, i. col. 336, note.

<sup>3</sup> C. J. Ball, *Light from the East*, p. 153.

<sup>4</sup> Jer 7<sup>17, 18</sup>, see also 44<sup>17-28</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Ezek 8<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> C. J. Ball, *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

Furthermore, Ishtar is represented on coins with the horns of the crescent moon.<sup>7</sup>

iii. The third theory is that of the late Professor Robertson Smith; he writes: 'The place-name Ashteroth Karnaim is probably derived from the sanctuary of a horned Astarte. It may indeed be questioned whether this last is identical with the cow-Astarte of Sidon, or is rather a sheep-goddess; for in Dt 7<sup>13</sup> the produce of the flock is called the "Ashteroth of the sheep," an antique expression that must have a religious origin'<sup>8</sup>; and again: 'A phrase like this (*i.e.* "Ashteroth of the sheep"), which has descended from religion into ordinary life, and is preserved among the monotheistic Hebrews, is very old evidence for the association of Astarte with the sheep; and it is impossible to explain it except by frankly admitting that Astarte, in one of her types, had originally the form of a sheep, and was a sheep herself, just as in other types she was a dove or a fish.'<sup>9</sup>

To sum up, therefore: the 'two horns' of Ashteroth were regarded by the Hebrews as referring either to two mountain peaks which were sacred to the goddess, or to the two horns of the crescent moon, or else that her horns represented those of a cow or a sheep, according as to whether she was looked upon as a cow or a sheep goddess.

Some recent discoveries in Palestine throw instructive light upon the subject, and help materially towards determining which of these three theories is nearest the truth. Among the many objects of interest found during the excavations on the site of ancient Gezer<sup>10</sup> is one which unquestionably represents the goddess Ashteroth. It is a small bronze statuette, four and a half inches in height; the figure is that of a nude female; it is badly proportioned, for the head is too large and the arms too long; on the head is a small cylindrical head-dress. But the point of greatest interest about the figure is the presence of two horns coiling downwards; they spring from just above the ears, which are unduly large<sup>11</sup>; these horns look like those of a ram, but it is quite possible that they represent

<sup>7</sup> Schlottmann in Richm's *Handwörterbuch des bibl. Alterthums*, i. 111 ff.

<sup>8</sup> *Religion of the Semites*, new ed., p. 310.

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 477. There is no difficulty about a sheep-goddess having horns, as all wild sheep, and some domestic breeds, have horns, whether male or female.

<sup>10</sup> Undertaken by the Palestine Exploration Fund, operations were started in June 1902, and are still in progress.

<sup>11</sup> See the illustration in *P.E.F.Q.*, 1903, p. 226.

cows' horns; moreover, numbers of small heads and other parts of cattle, modelled in pottery, have been found during the work of excavating.<sup>1</sup>

It is well known how greatly the Israelites were influenced in their religious practices by the Canaanites among whom they settled; but the Canaanites worshipped Astarte under the symbol of a cow, just as they worshipped Baal under that of a bull; and that this worship was practised by the Israelites is abundantly clear from the Old Testament writings.<sup>2</sup> These facts, therefore,

<sup>1</sup> See *P.E.F.Q.*, 1902, p. 342; 1903, p. 228.

<sup>2</sup> Cf., besides the golden calf in the wilderness, 1 K 14<sup>16</sup> 15<sup>16</sup> 16<sup>26</sup>, Hos 8<sup>8</sup> 10<sup>7</sup>, etc.

incline one to feel pretty sure that Robertson Smith was right in his contention, as far as the Israelites were concerned. In later days there can be no doubt, in consideration of the quotation from Jeremiah given above, that Ashtoreth was worshipped as an astral deity, but this was owing to the influence of Babylonia; in the early days of their settlement in Canaan, when their worship became assimilated to that of the Canaanites, Ashtoreth must have been for them, as for their neighbours, a sheep- or cow-divinity, and in the name *Ashteroth Karnaim* they must have seen a reference to the horns of the sheep or cow.

## The Great Text Commentary.

### THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

#### ACTS XX. 28.

**'Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.'**—R.V.

#### EXPOSITION.

**'Take heed unto yourselves.'**—This is not contrary to, but a part of, the highest altruism, for, as Calvin says, 'No one can successfully care for the salvation of others, who neglects his own; since he himself is a part of the flock.' Cf. 1 Ti 4<sup>16</sup>.—PELOUBET.

**'And to all the flock.'**—Note the word *all*, to the poorest, the weakest, the erring, the neglected, the disagreeable; and especially to the lambs of the flock.—PELOUBET.

THIS verse is the utterance of St. Paul's—and the only one—which corresponds to the great pastoral passages in St. John, chaps. 10<sup>1-18</sup> and 21<sup>16-17</sup>, and in the First Epistle of St. Peter chap. 5<sup>1-4</sup>, which are the N.T. parallels to Ps 23, Is 40<sup>10-11</sup>, Ez 34.—RACKHAM.

**'In the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops.'**—The appointment, as referred to the Holy Ghost, implies, probably—(1) the inward call; (2) the attestation of that call by the voices of the prophets, cf. chap. 13<sup>2</sup>; (3) the bestowal of gifts fitting them for the work.—ELLCOTT.

THE Greek term *episcopos* denoted a superintendent in the widest sense of the word. It cannot here denote an ecclesiastical title as it did a few years later in Ph 1<sup>1</sup>; for the context is referring not to the title of an office, but to the duties incumbent on the elders. But this passage makes a considerable step towards the ecclesiastical usage by applying the term to the spiritual functions with which the Spirit had invested these elders.—RENDALL.

**'To feed the church of God.'**—In this most important

doctrinal statement a grave variation in the reading in the original Greek of the most ancient authorities exists. For 'the church of God' some MSS of great weight read 'the church of the Lord.' This would water down the immense importance of the doctrinal assertion here. The words of Dr. Scrivener on this point are most weighty. 'The reading of the Received Text,' he says, 'though different from that of the majority of copies, is pretty sure to be correct. It is upheld by the Sinaitic and Vatican MSS, Codices *N* and *B*, by all the known MSS and editors of the Vulgate, except the Complutensian.'—HOWSON.

**'Which He purchased with His own blood.'**—*I.e.* the blood of Jesus. The conception of the death of Christ as a price paid by the Father is in strict accordance with St. Paul's own language (Ro 5<sup>8</sup> 8<sup>32</sup>).—PAGE.

AND now the work of the three Persons is described in one sentence—the church is God's, purchased by the blood of Christ, ruled by the Holy Spirit.—RACKHAM.

#### THE SERMON.

#### Our Own Sins.

*By the Rev. Canon B. W. Randolph, D.D.*

The order of our text is correct. It bids us 'take heed to ourselves' first, and then to all the flock. Our own lives must be our first care, and then the lives of our flock. What is it that we have to take heed of? what is it which prevents a close communion with God? It is sin. There is only one thing in the world which it is lawful to hate, and that is sin; in the words of Jeremy Taylor, 'anger against sin is a holy zeal.' If we