

# On Palestine and Assyria in the days of Joshua.

By *Morris Jastrow jr.*

Rabbinical traditions preserve a recollection of a Babylonian supremacy over Palestine in the days of Joshua. Incidental to the mention in Jos. 7, 21 of the אֶרֶת שִׁנְעָר which is explained as a cloak of בללאה בורפריא (var. כבליקון) "Babylonian purple", Shinar being in Rabbinical usage synonymous with Babylonia, the question is raised in the Midraš Rabbâ to Genesis § 85<sup>1)</sup> "What has Babylon to do here?" The cloak it will be remembered is a part of the spoil of Jericho and astonishment is expressed at the presence of an article of Babylonian manufacture in a Palestinian city? The answer given by Šimôn b. Jochai is: a king who has no governor (שֵׁלֶטוֹן) in the land of Israel does not consider himself of any importance, and accordingly the king of Babylonia had a vice-roy (אֶנְשֵׁי קִיסָר) whose seat was in Jericho. The latter was accustomed to send dates to the king in return for which the king sent gifts to his vice-roy. In this way, through an exchange of products and productions, Šimôn would account

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1) Parallel passage in Sefer Jalkut Joshua § 18; also in more or less altered or distorted form in the Midraš Tanchûmâ, Section Re'eh § 8; Šir ha-Širîm Rabbâ § 8, 11 etc. See also BERLINER, *Beitr. z. Geogr. u. Ethnogr. Babylonians im Talmud u. Midrasch*, p. 14. I am indebted to my father, Rev. Dr. M. JASTROW for having called my attention to these Midrashic passages.

for the "Babylonian cloak" in Palestine. The first part of the reply is merely a bitter political reflection, levelled particularly against the continuous Roman sway in Palestine. Living in Palestine in the days of the Hadrianic persecution, Šimôn b. Jochai suffered considerably for his well-known Anti-Roman sentiments (see the account of his martyrdom in HAMBURGER'S *Real-Encyclopädie für Bibel und Talmud* II pp. 1128—29), and a comparison between the political condition of the past and present would naturally suggest itself to his mind. But the second part of his reply unquestionably rests in some current tradition.

The question arises, what have we in cuneiform literature bearing on such a supposed supremacy at this period? It is to be born in mind that Sargon I. already claims to have conquered the *mât Aḫarri* (IV R 34 obv. 5—6; cf. SCHRADER KGF. p. 298) and somewhat later than Sargon, Kudurmabug appears to have included this district among his dominions (I R 2 No. III, 4). From other sources also we have reason to believe that at a much earlier date than is commonly supposed Mesopotamian powers intrenched upon the affairs of Palestine. But we have direct evidence of the occupation of Palestine by a foreign power at a period certainly not much later than Joshua — not indeed Babylonia but Assyria.<sup>1)</sup> I refer to the well-known notice in the inscription of Tiglathpileser I. at Sebeneh-Su (III R 4 No. 6), where he calls himself the "conqueror of the land of Aḫarri"<sup>2)</sup> (ll 7—8). In his long inscription

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1) A Babylonian supremacy in the days of Joshua is quite out of the question, since Babylonia herself was at that time entirely overshadowed and indeed her own independence threatened by the growing power of Assyria. Under Tiglathpileser I., Babylonia became practically subject to Assyria.

2) In the P.S.B.A. for March 1891 pp. 233—4 DELATTRE raises the interesting question whether in view of such spellings as *A-mu-ur-ra* and *A-mu-ri* by the side of *A--ri* in the el-Amarna tablets, we might not read the name of the "Western district" *Amurri* also in the Assyrian

(I R 9—16) Tiglathpileser does not speak of any campaign waged against this district, but in the summary of his possessions (col. VI, 40—44), *adi ibirtan Puratta mât Ḫatti u tamdi ilinīti ša šalamu Šamši*, he very probably wishes to include *mât Aḫarri*. The date of Tiglathpileser's reign, though not as yet accurately fixed, must begin about 1130, and since his prism inscription dates from the fifth year of his reign, we are certain of an Assyrian supremacy over Palestine at this period. This date brings us within about a hundred years of Joshua. But we may proceed a step further. Tiglathpileser it will be noted does not say that he was the first king to conquer the land of the Hittites, as he says that he was the first to overcome the people of Alzi and Purukuzzu (I R 9, 67—68). As a matter of fact we know that his father Asurrišišî was a mighty chief who carried his victorious arms to the west (Lullumi) as well as east (III R 3 No. 6, l. 7), and there are good reasons for believing that a king anterior to Tiglathpileser by at least 150 years, namely Shalmaneser I. conducted campaigns to western districts that either formed part of what Tiglathpileser includes under *mât Ḫatti* (Ašurn. I, 102—3) or bordered on it.<sup>1)</sup>

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inscriptions. There is much in favor of this supposition. The proposed reading would offer a far more satisfactory explanation of the term than the current one which supposes the mention of the name by the Babylonians or Assyrians. The extension of what was originally the name of a certain district, as Amurri appears to be throughout the el-Amarna tablets, to a larger territory is exactly what we would have reason to expect did take place. Still the theory requires further examination; if correct it would throw an interesting light upon the history and position of the Amorites in Syria and Palestine.

1) If the king referred to in III R 4 No. 1 is really Shalmaneser I. as HOMMEL (*Geschichte* etc. p. 505) holds and TIELE (*Geschichte* etc. p. 141 and 147) apparently also, there would be no reason to question the possibility of Shalmaneser having even reached as far west as the Mediterranean. But it must be admitted that the indications as to the conqueror of whom the inscription speaks are doubtful (see PEISER K.B. I p. 122 note 7), though

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The indications accordingly point to the substantial correctness of the Rabbinical tradition and we may, pending any evidence to the contrary, accept the statement that in the 13<sup>th</sup> century before this era, Assyria exercised a political control over Palestine. That in a dimmed tradition Assyria should be confounded with Babylon hardly calls for explanation, particularly if we bear in mind that long before the days of Šimôn b. Jochai, all recollection of an Assyrian power as distinct from the sister empire of southern Mesopotamia had faded away.

But while we may thus assume that at least a century before Tiglathpileser I., Assyria claimed Palestine among the lands subject to her rule, there is also a limit in this direction beyond which we may not go. From the tablets of el-Amarna, we now know that in the 15<sup>th</sup> century before this era, Egypt still had her governors stationed along the Phoenician coast, in the interior or Palestine proper and to the north up to the centre of the Hittite power. The letters of Abdiheba, the *ḥazânu* of Jerusalem<sup>1)</sup>, Rib-Addi stationed at Gubla, Aziru the governor of Amuri and others show conclusively that Egypt at this time, *i. e.* in the reigns of Amenophis III. and Amenophis IV. maintained her hold in her foreign possessions, but they also indicate that this hold was weakening. The Hittites in the north, internal dissensions in combination with quarrels and official intrigues in both north and south were giving the kings of Egypt considerable trouble. Still it is not until after the reign of Rameses II. of the XIX. Dynasty that political control of Egypt over Syria, Phoenicia and Palestine ceases entirely. We are therefore constrained to conclude that the advance of Assyria could not have begun before the days of Ameno-

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we may certainly admit with DELITZSCH (*Sprache der Kossäer* p. 11) that the obscured king must be one considerably anterior to Tiglathpileser I.

1) See ZIMMERN, *Die Keilschriftbriefe aus Jerusalem*, in this *Zeitschrift*, Vol. VI p. 245—64.

phis IV., and it is more likely that the limit is the reign of Rameses II. The so-called "Exodus", whatever may have been the historical circumstances connected with it, is certainly an indication of great political changes taking place in Palestine superinduced by the decline of the Egyptian power, and one would be inclined even apart from any evidence confirmatory of the conjecture, to bring the growth of the Assyrian power into some connection with such stirring times. It is significant that the reign of Shalmaneser I. is about contemporaneous with the period now assigned to the Exodus and it is no less significant that with Shalmaneser I., whose memory as the founder of the new capital of Assyria, the city of Kalhu, and as a conqueror is preserved by his successors so vividly, a new era in Assyrian history appears to begin. May we not therefore conclude that as Egypt lost ground in Palestine and Syria, Assyria stepped in to take the place that the Pharaohs once occupied? Viewed in this light, the reference that Šimôn b. Jochai makes to the vice-roy stationed by the king at Jericho would find a striking explanation. As the el-Amarna correspondence shows the Egyptian kings by way of emphasizing their control over their foreign dominions stationed governors at various points of Syria, Phoenicia and Palestine proper who as we also learn from their letters to their master superintended the collection of the tribute due to Egypt. What more natural than that the Assyrian successors to the Pharaohs should continue this custom? The sending of dates on the part of the אנשיקיסר embodies a recollection therefore of the chief function devolving upon the *ḥasānu* both during the days of the Egyptian and of the later Assyrian supremacy over Palestine.

Another question into which however I cannot enter here is with reference to the Babylonian tradition of a supremacy exercised by her in the very remote period of Sargon and Kudurmabug, but I should like to add one remark.

The Egyptian occupation of Palestine may approximately be dated from the reign of Thotmes III., about 1600 B.C., and since Kudurmabug is certainly anterior to this date, the supposition of an earlier Babylonian supremacy is not only perfectly admissible, but it seems to me offers a better explanation for the use of the Babylonian language in official circles throughout the *mât Aḥarri*, as results from the el-Amarna tablets, than the one ordinarily given which would accord to Babylonian the rank of a language of diplomatic interchange. Granting that through a long period the kings of South-Mesopotamian principalities contributed to a spread of the knowledge of cuneiform writing throughout Palestine and Syria, it would be quite natural for the officials of the Egyptian kings, most of whom if not all are shown by their names to have been Semites, and indeed natives, to address their new masters in the tongue and script to which they had become accustomed. As for the duration of this earlier Babylonian supremacy, while the *terminus a quo* must for the present remain fixed at the time of Sargon, we can pass somewhat beyond Kudurmabug for the *terminus ad quem* if the very plausible conjecture first propounded by HALÉVY (*Rev. des Etudes Juives* XV p. 168 ff.) and SCHRADER (*Die babyl. Königsliste*, pp. 22—27) and since adopted by ZIMMERN (*Die Assyriologie als Hilfswissenschaft für das Studium des A.T.* p. 10) be accepted which brings the events described in Genesis XIV in connection with the reign of Ḥam-murabi. This would bring us not far from the beginning of the great Egyptian campaigns in Asia and we may therefore join the period of Egyptian supremacy directly on to the Babylonian period, just as the Egyptian supremacy is followed immediately by the Assyrian control. As a matter of course, we must not imagine Palestine, — as little as Phoenicia and Syria — to have been in a state of complete subjection during these successive periods. No doubt, both Babylonian, Egyptian and Assyrian rulers

were quite content with receiving tribute from the land and with the general acknowledgment of their power on the part of the native governors who made themselves responsible to their masters.

It would appear then that the unfortunate position of Palestine as a wedge between the two great states of antiquity, which led in the later days of the Hebrew kingdom to its being constantly menaced by Egypt on the one side and Assyro-Babylonia on the other, produced a similar situation in much earlier days; and if the varying fortunes that befell the land after the downfall of both the Egyptian and Assyro-Babylonian powers be considered, controlled as it was in succession by the Persian, Macedonian and Roman powers, there would indeed be much force in the bitter reflection of Šimôn b. Jochai that every ruler seems to find it absolutely necessary to interfere in the affairs of Palestine.

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