

The Latest Results of Old Testament Archaeology.

BY PROFESSOR A. H. SAYCE, D.LITT., LL.D., OXFORD.

DURING the last thirty years excavators have been busy in the Near East, where discovery has crowded upon discovery. Many of these have a more or less direct bearing upon the Old Testament, its history, its credibility, its theology, and its composition.

The discovery of the Tel el-Amarna tablets in 1887 placed the Pentateuchal problems in a new light. They proved the antiquity of the literary use of writing as well as the wide-spread character of education and the means of intercommunication in the pre-Mosaic age. They further revealed the fact that the literary script and language of Western Asia before the Davidic era was Assyrian.

Then came the discovery of the legal Code of Hammurabi, which testified to the early existence of a highly developed code of laws which were enforced not only in Babylonia, but also in the Babylonian provinces of Syria and Palestine. Traces of these laws, it was soon pointed out, are discoverable in the Book of Genesis.

The next discovery of importance which bore upon Old Testament criticism was that of the cuneiform records of Boghaz-Keui, the Cappadocian capital of the Hittite empire. These were excavated by Winckler in 1907, and some of the chief historical results were published by him in a provisional report in the *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft*, 35, December 1907. At the same time the German Oriental Society was also undertaking exhaustive excavations at Kalat Sher-gat, the ancient Assur, where the royal library was found, a predecessor of that afterwards brought together by Assur-bani-pal at Nineveh.

In Palestine the excavations of Dr. Bliss on the site of Lachish, and of Professor Macalister at Gezer, furnished us for the first time with the results of scientific exploration in that country, and were supplemented by the German excavations at Megiddo and those of Dr. Sellin at Jericho. These were followed in 1913-14 by the excavations of Capt. Weill at Jerusalem, at the expense of Baron de Rothschild, which have given us at last a scientific basis for the reconstruction of the earlier history of the Jewish capital.

The outbreak of the war, however, put a sudden

stop to the activities of the European archaeologists and the international intercourse which alone made any utilization of their results possible. It was not until 1919, therefore, that scholars generally came to know what had been found in the years immediately preceding the war, or that a time came for a renewal of the publication of cuneiform and other texts. We are only now beginning to learn something about the contents of the texts from Boghaz-Keui and Assur.

In the first place, new light is beginning to be thrown upon the Hebrew language of the Old Testament. It is becoming increasingly manifest that it was a literary and to a certain extent artificial language, like the official Hittite of Boghaz-Keui which was there termed 'the Language of the Scribes,' or the official language of Assyria, which would more correctly be called Babylonian rather than Assyrian. Literary Hebrew was based and modelled on Babylonian, which, until the Davidic era, was the literary language of all Western Asia, and it is consequently full of Babylonian words and idioms. Until these have been set apart and thoroughly investigated, our knowledge of Hebrew philology must remain as empirical as it has been in the past. Professor Naville has even been contending from the Egyptological point of view that what we call Hebrew was never a colloquial language, the colloquial language being an Aramaic dialect which is called 'Jewish' in 2 K 18²⁶.¹ But this ignores the fact that in Is 19¹⁸ Hebrew is identified with 'the language of Canaan,' that is to say, Phœnician, and in Gn 31⁴⁷ the line of division between spoken Aramaic and spoken 'Hebrew' is drawn at Mizpah.

Closely connected with this question is that of the composition and dating of the Old Testament books. Here the Elephantine papyri, which have incidentally settled the date of Sanballat, have shown that the laws relating to the institution of the Passover must go back to the pre-Exilic age.²

¹ *L'Évolution de la Langue égyptienne et les Langues Sémitiques*, 1920.

² *Expositor*, August 1911, pp. 98 sqq.; Daiches in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, Jan. 1912, pp. 17 sqq.

More recently Professor Langdon has discovered the origin and signification of the technical musical terms found in the titles of the Psalms; they came from Babylonia and are of great antiquity. As the meaning of them had been forgotten in the Maccabean epoch, if not earlier, it is plain that the Psalms, in the titles of which they occur, cannot be later than the Exilic period.¹

Considerable portions of what Professor Langdon calls 'the Babylonian Job' have also been discovered, and he is now employed in editing them. They show that an old Babylonian work lies behind our canonical Book of Job. They also show that the prologue and epilogue belong to the original work, and so cast grave doubt on the value of a critical method which pronounces them to be later additions.

On the historical side we now know that the Hittites exercised a profound influence upon Palestine in the Mosaic Age, if not earlier, and that consequently there was good reason for Heth being named next in succession to Sidon 'the first-born' of Canaan in Gn 10¹⁵. Hittite soldiers and mercenaries garrisoned the country or were allies of the Amorites, and their leaders became the governors and kinglets of the Canaanite cities. The king of Jerusalem was of Hittite origin, and his enemies, the Khabiri, were the bodyguard of the Hittite king.² Words like *kohen*, 'priest,' were borrowed from the Hittite languages, and it is probable that the phonetic change of *u* (*w*) into *i* (*y*) is to be traced to the same source. I have pointed out³ that the name given to the Jebusite Hittite Araunah, which the Hebrew scribes found such a difficulty in spelling, is the Hittite *arauantis*, 'a nobleman,' which explains the gloss in 2 S 24²³ (המלך). On the religious side the *asyla*, or 'cities of refuge,' were an old institution of Asia Minor, closely connected with Asianic forms of religion, and it is possible that the original conception of the Scape-goat belongs to Asia Minor rather than to Babylonia. At all events it was an institution of old standing in the country.⁴

The dominant religious influence, however, among the Western Semites, or Amorites as the Babylonians entitled them, was naturally Baby-

¹ *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, April 1921, pp. 169 *sqq.*

² 'Hittite Texts from Tablets in the British Museum,' 6. 18, 37. 4, 5.

³ *Journal of Theological Studies*, April 1921, p. 267.

⁴ THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, March 1920, p. 283.

lonian. Even the name of Yahveh can no longer be confined to the Israelites. We find it among the Amorite settlers in Babylonia in the Abrahamic age and earlier, and its origin and meaning had already been forgotten. Strictly speaking, Yahveh, written *Yāwa* in the cuneiform, was the feminine of *Yahu*, *Yau*; when the feminine deity was absorbed by the masculine, as was also the case with Assur in Assyria and Chemosh in Moab, the masculine form survived only in proper names, while the feminine form was retained in the literary language. Various attempts were made by the Babylonian scribes to explain the name, the favourite one being that which identified *Yau* or *Yahu* with the Babylonian *yau*, 'myself.' Sometimes, however, the lexicographers were content with making it the equivalent of 'god' and 'lord.'⁵

The French excavations at Jerusalem have finally cleared up the difficulties connected with the early topography of the city and brought to light the primitive Zion or City of David. This was the Jebusite city, standing on the hill immediately to the south of the Temple-Mount and now generally known as Ophel. Here were the Jebusite citadel and the palace of David, whose tomb along with those of his successors was on its western slope. On the Temple-Mount was another city, Salem, called *Uru-Salim*, 'the City of Salem,' in the Tel el-Amarna tablets, which had been built by the Babylonians to protect the road running from the naphtha springs of the Dead Sea. Outside the walls of Salem was the ancient sanctuary of the neolithic population of Palestine, which consisted of a double cave as on other sites which have been excavated. In the reign of Solomon the two cities were enclosed by a single line of fortification, the space between them being filled up by what was termed the *Millo*, or 'Filling.' The water from the Virgin's Spring—the only source of water-supply in the immediate neighbourhood—was brought into the city by an aqueduct, partly subterranean, cut in the rock; in the time of Hezekiah this was superseded by the more effective 'Siloam tunnel,' which was the high-water mark of Jewish engineering.⁶

⁵ So in *C.T.* xviii. 8. 9 *sqq.* *Yāu* and *Yahu* are stated to be synonyms of *danadu*, *rabu*, *rabanu*, *biru*, *nēru*, *mamlu*, and 'among the Amorites' of *bahulu*, which is interpreted *rubi*, 'prince.'

⁶ See Weill, *La Cité de David*, 1920, and my article in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

On the borderland of the Old Testament we have a very remarkable Babylonian text from the library of Assur, which has been published by Professor Zimmern, with translation and notes.¹ It contains the stage directions for a 'miracle play' which was performed in the temple of Bel-Merodach at Babylon every New Year's Day. Bel, we are told, was bound and brought before the tribunal which awaits mankind at the river of Death. After being 'wounded,' he was condemned and led away to execution. Along with him a malefactor was executed, while a second malefactor, if Professor Zimmern's translation is correct, was released in accordance, it would seem, with custom. After the descent of the god into the prison-house of death, his clothes were laid before Istar, and the city of Babylon was plunged in confusion and darkness. Then a goddess washed away the blood which had flowed from a wound in

¹ 'Zum babylonischen Neujahrsfest,' ii., in *Berichte über die Verhandlungen d. Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, Heft 5, 1918. Reviewed by me in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, July 1921, p. 440.

the side of the dead god. His tomb was now watched by a 'son of Assur,' while his priests lamented for him, and a goddess sought his grave. Eventually he rose again from the dead, and so became the saviour who 'raises the dead to life.'

In reviewing Zimmern's monograph, I drew attention to a fragmentary text from Nineveh which had been published by Dr. Pinches in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* in 1908. Owing to the fragmentary condition of the tablet it was impossible to explain it at the time; the Assur text now shows that it gives us the wording of the miracle play. We are told in it how Bel-Merodach 'descended into hell' and there 'the spirits who were in prison' 'rejoiced to see him,' while he addressed or preached to the rulers of Hades. It is evident that we have here the Babylonian original of the apocryphal writing quoted in 1 P 3¹⁹, which seems to have been a very literal rendering of its prototype. Even the reference to Noah is explained by the fact that the *abubu*, or 'deluge,' was the weapon of Merodach.

Contributions and Comments.

Genesis xxxvii. 28.

IN the *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* for 1918, vol. lxxii. pp. 87-110, there is an article by Professor E. König, called 'Neueste Fragen der Pentateuchkritik' (Latest Problems of Pentateuch Criticism). It is almost exclusively occupied with an endeavour to show that the story of Joseph is a compilation from more than one source. On p. 99, § 5, he sums up. He claims to have shown that there are two series of statements:

(a) 37^{22b} Reuben wished to take Joseph back to his father: v.^{28a} αβ Midianites drew Joseph out of the pit; v.²⁹ Reuben alone expressed grief over Joseph's disappearance; v.³⁶ Midianites sold Joseph to Potiphar; 40¹⁵ Joseph was *stolen* out of the land of the Hebrews; 42^{22a} αβγ Reuben has warned the brethren. None of these passages say anything of Joseph being sold by the brethren.

(b) 37²⁵⁻²⁷ Judah proposes to sell Joseph to Ishmaelites; v.^{28a} γb the brethren (except Reuben)

sold Joseph to Ishmaelites, and these brought Joseph to Egypt; 39¹ Ishmaelites sold Joseph to Potiphar; 42²¹ the brethren (except Reuben) felt guilty of Joseph's disappearance; 45⁴ the brethren sold Joseph.

If this were a fair specimen of the Higher Criticism, we should be justified in rejecting the latter without hesitation; for the result is obtained by wilful misrepresentation of the text.

Ch. 37²⁸ runs (R.V.), after the presence of the Ishmaelites has been mentioned: *And there passed by Midianites, merchantmen; and they drew and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver.* Professor König arbitrarily interpolates, after the words "the pit, and," *the brethren except Reuben!*

The statements that, according to 40¹⁵, Joseph was stolen and, according to 45⁴, the brethren sold Joseph are inaccurate. There was a sound canon of Homeric criticism: "not everything said in Homer is said by Homer." The assertions are not by the author but by Joseph, in one case