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THE HEBREWS IN EGYPT.

I.

IN a previous article I dealt with the question whether the Hebrews were originally nomads. I concluded from the narratives in Genesis that the patriarchs were farmers (*halb-fellahin*). Attention was drawn to the importance of this conclusion for the history of Israel. According to the inscription of Merenptah the fields of Israel were devastated by the Egyptian army in the fifth year of his reign. Until the discovery of this inscription in 1896 the view was generally accepted that Ramses II. was the Pharaoh of the oppression, and his successor, Merenptah, was supposed to be the Pharaoh of the Exodus. But how could the fields of Israel have been devastated by Merenptah in the beginning of his reign if he was the Pharaoh of the Exodus? There is not sufficient space of time for the travelling of the tribes through the desert and the settling down in Canaan. Therefore Fotheringham¹ assumes that the fields of Israel were the fields cultivated by them in Goshen. He supposed that the Exodus occurred in the fifth year of Merenptah's reign. "The crops of the Israelites, of course, are those planted in the land of Goshen and left behind unharvested in their hurried flight." This solution, however, is made impossible by the text of the inscription,² "Askalon is led away, Gezer is taken, Yenuam

¹ D. R. Fotheringham, *The Chronology of the Old Testament*, Cambridge, 1906, pp. 96, 97.

² Cf. W. Spiegelberg, *Der Siegeshymnus des Merenptah*. *Zeitschr. f. ägypt. Sprache*, 1896. W. M. Flinders Petrie, *A History of Egypt*, iii. p. 114.

is brought to nought, Israel is devastated, they do not have crops. Kharu (Palestine) has become as a widow. (Khr) by Egypt." Here Israel is evidently part of the population of Kharu.

Some scholars suppose that the Exodus must have occurred at a much earlier date than the reign of Merenptah. Miketta assumes that Thutmes III. was the Pharaoh of the oppression, and Amenophis II. (1442-1423) the Pharaoh of the Exodus.¹ Ed. Meyer² identifies the Beduins, who were beaten by Sety I., with the Hebrews. He thinks that the Exodus took place before Sety I. (about 1326-1300).

Other scholars assume that the Israelites mentioned in the inscription of Merenptah were different from the Israelites who dwelt in Goshen. They suppose that only a part of the Israelites went down to Egypt. A considerable number of Hebrews remained in Palestine. These tribes were beaten by Merenptah. The tribes that dwelt in Goshen left Egypt at the end of the reign of Merenptah, and joined their brethren in Canaan. This is the opinion of W. M. Flinders Petrie³ and W. Spiegelberg.⁴

It is obvious that both suppositions meet with great difficulties. If we admit that the Exodus occurred before Sety I., we do not understand how the book of Exodus can tell us that the Israelites were compelled to build for Pharaoh the store cities Pithom and Ramses (Exod. i. 11), for they cannot have built a city called Ramses before a Pharaoh of that name mounted the throne of Egypt. The short reign of Ramses I., the predecessor of Sety I. (only two years), is insufficient for the events referred to in Exodus i.-xii. So we can only understand Exodus

¹ K. Miketta, *Der Pharao des Auszuges*. Freib. i. B., 1903.

² *Die Israeliten*. Halle, 1906, p. 222 seq.

³ *A History of Egypt*, iii. p. 114 seq.

⁴ *Der Aufenthalt Israels in Aegypten*. Strassburg, 1904.

i. 11 if we assume that Ramses II. is the Pharaoh of the oppression. But then there seems to be no possible date for the Exodus, as it is impossible that the Hebrews should have left Egypt during the reign of the mighty Ramses II., and they were already in Palestine in the fifth year of his successor.

On the other hand, it is impossible for us to assume, with Flinders Petrie and Spiegelberg, that only a part of the Israelites went to Egypt. Every people likes to glorify its history. The Egyptian period in the Israelitic history is not a time of glory but of shame. The Old Testament does not refer with a single word to the unbroken independence of a considerable part of the Israelitic tribes. Old Testament tradition only knows that all the tribes, from which the nation of Israel originated, were oppressed as slaves in Egypt. We cannot explain how the offspring of the independent tribes should have forgotten their own more glorious tradition, and have assumed as their own the traditions, full of humiliation, that were preserved by the tribes that came from Goshen and joined them in Palestine.

If we survey the history of Egypt, we see that it is very improbable that the Exodus can have occurred in the centuries covered by the xviiith and xixth Egyptian dynasty. Thutmes I. made a campaign in Palestine and Syria, and erected, near the Euphrates, a stele in memory of his victories. His successors, Thutmes II., the mighty Thutmes III., Amenoths II. and Thutmes IV., maintained the dominion of Egypt over these countries, and made several campaigns to Naharina (Mesopotamia). The Pharaohs of the Amarna letters, Amenoths III. and IV. were still respected by the numerous governors in the cities of Palestine and Syria. Their successor, Thutanchamen, received the tribute of Syrian princes, and the last

king of the xviiith dynasty made campaigns to Cyprus and the country of the Hittites. During the powerful reign of the first kings of the xixth dynasty circumstances were still less favourable for the Exodus; Sety I. and Ramses II. were mighty warriors, whose influence was strongly felt by the population of Syria and Palestine. In these times no Exodus was possible. So every hypothesis meets with difficulties, and the question of the Exodus seems to be a riddle that cannot be solved.

I think that our remarks about the patriarchs in Genesis may open a new way. Scholars were convinced that the Israelitic tribes were nomads before they entered into Egypt. Therefore they could not but suppose that the Israelites, whose fields were devastated by Merenptah, were different from the Israelitic families of the narratives in Genesis. This conception of the Patriarchs being a mistake, it is quite possible that the Israelitic families of Genesis are to be identified with the Israelites of the stele of Merenptah. They were plundered by the army of Merenptah before they entered into Egypt.

But here another difficulty seems to arise. How could the Hebrews build the city of Ramses if they were in Palestine during the reign of Ramses II. ? It is true that we have no direct evidence that Ramses II. ordered the town Ramses to be built, but it seems to be certain that the town Ramses must have been built by a king called Ramses. Naville has shown that Pitum was built by Ramses II., his name being found on the oldest monuments discovered in the ruins of this city.¹ Thus it is certain that Exodus i. 11 refers to the reign of Ramses II.

If we examine the Egyptian texts, we see that they contain very valuable information about the Hebrews,

¹ E. Naville, *The Store City of Pithom*. London, 1885.

by which the mystery may be solved. Strangely enough, this information is at present generally overlooked.

II.

We have long known that certain Egyptian texts mention people called "‘Apriw." Chabas drew attention to these texts as early as 1862 (in the *Mélanges égyptologiques*, ser. i. pp. 42-55). According to Chabas these texts referred to the Hebrews. Brugsch, Wiedemann and Ed. Meyer, however, would not admit this. They maintained that the meaning of ‘apr, pl. ‘apriw, was "labourer," or "sailor," and supposed that the word was derived from the verb ‘pr, to provide.

These ‘apriw are already mentioned in a text dating from the xiiith dynasty, as no Hebrews could possibly have entered into Egypt. The ‘apriw of the texts Chabas had referred to, were also explained as "labourers," and so these texts were considered to be of no importance for the history of the Hebrews. Lately, however, it was shown by H. J. Heyes,¹ that this explanation was a mistake. The determinative sign used in the hieroglyphic sign-group ‘apriw appearing in the texts of Chabas, differs from the determinative sign in the text dating from the xiiith dynasty. In the latter case the determinative sign is the same as is used in writing the verb ‘pr; in the former cases, however, the determinative signs point with great certainty to a foreign population, the signs being those that are regularly used in order to designate foreigners (man, wife and curved stick). It is remarkable that Chabas foresaw that the confusion between the two sign-groups ‘apr could easily lead to mistakes. He has drawn attention to the difference between the hieroglyphs and warned us not to confuse them. Nevertheless at this moment

¹ *Bibel und Aegypten*. Münster, 1904, pp. 146, sqq.

it is generally received that no Egyptian texts refer to the Hebrews, the texts of Chabas being discarded with the remark that they deal with "labourers." It is a footnote in Ed. Meyer's *History of Egypt*, p. 297, that is to be held particularly responsible for this erroneous opinion of Old Testament scholars.

The texts Chabas referred to are as follows. One of the generals of Thutmes III. besieged Joppa. The story of this siege is told in Papyrus Harris 500 (ed. G. Maspero, *Études égypt.* i. 1879, pp. 49-72; *Contes populaires*, 2 ed. pp. 147-160). In the disguise of a stranger the general Thwti penetrated into Joppa. He succeeded in opening one of the gates for people that were supposed to be his porters. Every man carried a big jar on his back. Inside the jars were soldiers. As they jumped from the jars the general gave orders to send word to the Egyptian army outside the town, and said, "One of the 'Apirw must go with speed."

Then there are two reports from the time of Ramses II. (Leyden Papyri, i. 348, 349), which run in the translation of Heyes as follows: "The heart of my lord may rejoice. I obeyed the commandment of my lord, saying: Give corn to the soldiers and also to the 'Apirw, who are carrying stones for the fortifying of the town of Ramses Meri Amun, who loves the truth, and who are commanded by the captain of the Masai Amun-m-An. Every month I have given them their corn, according to the supreme commandments of my lord." The report is written by Kawiser and addressed to Bk-n-Ptah.

The second report is from Keni-Amun to the stable-master Hwi: "I obeyed the commandment of my lord; give provisions to the soldiers and to the 'Apirw, who carry stones for Re, viz., for Re of Ramses Meri Amun in the southern quarter of Memphis."

The first king of the xxth dynasty, Ramses III., reports that he has given to the temple of his father, the noble god Tum, a great number of people. Among them are numerous strangers: "officers of the chariots, Libyan officers, Asiatic noblemen, 'Apriw, a foreign colony living in the place, 2,073 people."

His successor, Ramses IV., sent an expedition to the quarries of Hammamat in southern Egypt. The number of the people that were sent down was 8,368; among them were "800 'Apriw of the Asiatic tribe 'Anwtiw." This is the last time the 'Apriw appear in the Egyptian inscriptions.

Chabas and Heyes have shown that the word 'Apriw may be the Egyptian transcription of עַבְרִים. The Semitic origin of these 'Apriw is obvious from the only tribe that is mentioned, 'Anwtiw, corresponding to the Semitic name עַבְרִית. The reports from the officials of Ramses II. remind us of Exodus i.-v. So there is no reason to deny that these texts are of importance for the history of the Hebrews. They inform us that a Hebrew population lived in Egypt from the reign of Thutmes III. (about 1503-1449 B.C.), until the reign of Ramses IV. (about 1171-1165). They formed small colonies, and were compelled to carry stones for the fortifications and temples that were built by the Pharaohs.

This Hebrew population is not to be identified with the Israelites. They had not yet entered Egypt when Merenptah made his Palestinian campaign and devastated the fields of Israel. The inscription of Merenptah shows that the Israelites were a semi-nomadic population, when they were overrun by the Egyptian soldiers. The determinative sign, "town" or "country," that is used in writing down the names of Askalon, Gezer, Yenuam, is not used when Israel is mentioned. It is only determined by the

sign "people." From this it is evident that they were not considered to be a "state." It is also probable that they did not live in towns, otherwise the sign town or country would have been used. We understand this if the Israelites lived in Canaan as foreigners, but we cannot explain it if we assume that the Israelitic tribes had already conquered a great deal of Canaan, when they were beaten by the army of Merenptah.

When the Israelites entered Egypt there was already a Hebrew population there. If we admit this, we understand Genesis xlvi. 28-xlvii. 5. Joseph urged his brethren to tell Pharaoh that they are shepherds, for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians. It is evident that they wished to deceive Pharaoh for some reason. Otherwise Joseph would not have laid so much stress upon the information he wanted his brethren to give to Pharaoh concerning their occupation. Now, certainly it is a very strange thing that people, who wish to be admitted to dwell in the territory of the Egyptian king pretend to be something that is an abomination to the inhabitants of that country. The only plausible reason for this is that they fear something. We understand this fully by the Egyptian texts, mentioned above. The Israelites evidently were afraid to be compelled to labour, as the other Hebrew colonists were. They tried to escape this fate by pretending to be shepherds. The book of Exodus teaches us that their tale had only a temporary success. Very soon they found themselves in the same condition as the other Hebrews.

Our supposition is confirmed by the annals of Ramses III. contained in the great papyrus Harris. From these annals we learn that circumstances were very favourable for the Semites in the years preceding his reign. The events he is alluding to do so perfectly agree with the

narrative about Joseph in the book of Genesis that it can hardly be doubted that the Israelites must have entered Egypt not long before his accession to the throne.

The Pharaohs who succeeded Merenptah were men of little importance. Sety II. was already an elderly man of nearly sixty years of age when he succeeded Merenptah. "Not a single important event can be put down to his reign" (Flinders Petrie, l.c. iii. p. 123). He reigned about five years. His successor and son, Amun-moses, died in the first year of his reign. Then Septah, the consort of the princess Tausert, a daughter of Sety II., obtained the throne. He must have been a very weak ruler. During the five years of his reign there was a great confusion. The real ruler was a man of Semitic origin. His name was Yersew ('Irsu). He was of Palestinian origin, a man from Kharu. His influence was important under the reigns of Septah and Setnekht. The latter reigned only for one year. The first king of the xxth dynasty knew how to restore order. "He purified the great throne of Egypt."

All we know, about this time, of Yersew we owe to Ramses III. The few lines of the papyrus Harris which refer to this time of confusion are in perfect harmony with the history of Joseph in Genesis. The passage is translated by Flinders Petrie (l.c. iii. 134) as follows: "The land of Egypt was overthrown. Every man was his own guide; they had no superiors. *From the abundant years of the past we had come to other times.* The land of Egypt was in chiefships and in principedoms; each killed the other among noble and mean. *Other times came to pass after that; in years of scarcity Yersew, a man from Palestine,¹ was to them as chieftain. He made the whole land tributary*

¹ Flinders Petrie transcribes Arisu, a Syrian. The Egyptian form is 'irsu, from Kharu.

to himself alone. He joined his companions with him, and seized their property. And they treated the gods in the same manner as they treated the people; offerings were not presented in the shrines of the temples. When the gods turned again to peace, rule was restored to earth in its proper manner." The coincidence with the history of Joseph is so striking, that it can hardly be denied that Genesis and Ramses III. are referring to the same occurrences. Even the name of the man from Palestine has some likeness to Joseph. He is not called a king, nevertheless he made the land tributary to himself. This is the Egyptian conception of what is told (Gen. xlvii. 14-27) from an Israelitic point of view.

As the name Yersew is slightly different from Joseph, it is not quite certain whether we may identify the two names. Perhaps the Egyptian transcription may have corrupted Joseph into Yersew. In any case it is certain that Genesis tells the same things about Joseph as Ramses III. does about Yersew. So it is highly probable that the entrance of the Israelites into Egypt is connected with the history of Yersew. We know that the Semitic influence was very important in those days. Semitic gods were introduced into the Egyptian Pantheon, and the Egyptian language was influenced by the Semitic speech, as is shown by the numerous Semitic loan-words of this period.

The entrance of the Israelites into Egypt must have occurred about 1205 B.C., under the reign of Septah. If we assume this, we also understand the double tradition of the Old Testament about the time the Hebrews sojourned in Egypt. According to Genesis xv. 16 the fourth generation left Egypt. In oriental life people marry at a very early age, and we cannot reckon a generation to be more than twenty years. So the Egyptian period covers eighty years. According to Genesis xv. 13, however, they

sojourned in Egypt 400 years. This number cannot be explained by the supposition that it is connected with a chronological system. For there is another estimation of the Egyptian period at 430 years in Exodus xii. 40, and it is this number that is connected with the chronological system. We cannot understand why Genesis xv. 13 should mention 400 years instead of 430, if this number also originated from the chronological system.

We have already remarked that the Hebrews are not mentioned in the Egyptian texts after Ramses IV. So it is very probable that the Hebrews of the Exodus were not only the Israelites but also the Hebrews, whose families had sojourned much longer time in Egypt. It is interesting to read in Exodus xii. 38, that "a mixed multitude went up with the Israelites." This mixed multitude cannot have been of Egyptian origin. Evidently the Hebrews of non-Israelitic origin accompanied the Israelitic tribes. They had intermarried with the dark-coloured half Semitic or wholly Semitic tribes, living at the southern frontier of the Egyptian empire, that were used by the Egyptians as slaves and soldiers. Even Moses had married a Kushite woman (Numbers xii. 1). The name of Aaron's grandson Phinehas is pure Egyptian, and means "the negro" (pnḥsi). It is, for instance, the name of the viceroy of Kush during the reign of Ramses XII., 1129-1102 B.C. Phinehas has always been a beloved name in Israel. The wife of Eleazar was a daughter of Putiel, whose name is also of Egyptian origin. The tradition of the mixed multitude knew about a sojourn in Egypt of four centuries; the Israelites, who entered at a much later date, only knew about four generations. So the Israelitic records, which were written when the Hebrews and Israelites were united into one nation, embody the double tradition of Genesis xv. 13 and Genesis xv. 16.

The Exodus must have occurred during the reign of

one of the later Ramessides about 1125 B.C., when Ramses XII. was reigning. The later Ramessides were politically of no importance. They were priests, who did not understand how to rule an empire. "The increase of priestly rule was accompanied by the decay of administration" (Flinders Petrie, l.c. iii. p. 180). The kings and public affairs seem mute and insignificant" (ibid. p. 187). So it can be easily understood that the Hebrews and Israelites could leave Egypt and settle down in Canaan, that country then being wholly independent of Egypt.

III.

There is one point we still have to deal with, before concluding this article, viz., the Khabiri in the Amarna letters. The Khabiri are by several scholars identified with the Hebrews. If they are right, there existed a Hebrew population in Canaan as early as the Pharaohs Amenothos III. and IV. (1414-1365 B.C., according to the chronology of Flinders Petrie). It is obvious that the conclusions we arrived at in the foregoing pages would not be shaken by this explanation of the Amarna letters. The Hebrews that dwelt in Egypt under Thutmes III. and Ramses II. do not necessarily exhaust the number of Hebrew tribes then existing. According to Genesis xiii., Abram and Lot returned from Egypt. Some of the Hebrew tribes represented by Abram and Lot may have remained in Egypt, others may have wandered back to Palestine.

But I do not think that our conclusions need the support of this supposition, as I feel convinced that the Khabiri of the Amarna letters have nothing to do either with the Hebrews or with the Israelites.

The enemies of the Egyptian governors in the Palestinian towns and in Syria are called "robbers" (SA-GAS). A few letters, written in Jerusalem, call them Kha-bi-ri.

From the letters clxxx. 30, 31, compared with cxcii., 7, we see that SA-GAS and Kha-bi-ri are to be identified. Both letters allude to the same fact—the treacherous behaviour of the sons of Lapaja. In the first letter they are accused of delivering the country to the Kha-bi-ri; the second letter uses, instead of this name, “robbers” (SA-GAS). These people are everywhere, high up in the north and in the southern part of the country, in the regions eastward of Jordan and in the west. They cover a greater surface of land than the Hebrews ever did. Further, they are not always enemies of the Egyptians. Several towns appear to have had a garrison of “robbers,” which are commanded by the Egyptian governor. Beirut (Letter lxvii. 20 seq.) and Sumurra (lxxxiii. 62, lxxxiv. 8) are defended by SA-GAS. Abd-Aširtu asked the king to send an officer in order to protect him (xxxix. 8 seq.). Nevertheless he was a chief of the SA-GAS. Namjawasa fights the king’s enemies by the aid of “robbers” (cxliv. 24 seq.). It is generally received that the “robbers” are Beduins, who invade the country. There is not a single text by which this is proved. Beduins are governed by sheikhs, they rob and disappear. We do not hear anything about the names of their sheikhs or their tribes. It strikes us that in some instances the Egyptian officer is on better terms with them than with the governor of the city (clxxix. 26 ff.). We understand all this if we assume that they are the native population of Palestine and Syria. The Egyptian dominion over this country was maintained by very small garrisons in the little towns. It appears that a garrison of 10, 20, 30 or 50 men is sufficient to protect a town (cxxx. 32, cl. 18). This does not point to an invasion of foreigners, which poured into the country in such considerable numbers that they were at the same time everywhere, in north and south and east and west.

It proves that the "robbers" are the natives, who are always ready to rebellion, and who are used by the governors in their little mutual quarrels, of which they send exaggerated reports to the Egyptian court.

The name Kha-bi-ri fully agrees with this explanation of the Amarna letters. If the name is to represent the Babylonian form of 'Ibrim, we do not expect the vowel *a* in the first syllable, but *i*. It has been supposed that the word is to be identified with *haber*, friend, but the Babylonian form of *haber* is *ibru*, and this word is used in the letters. We see at once the meaning of the name if we observe that the syllable *bi* may also correspond to *w* and not only to *b*. In two instances *b* corresponds in these letters to *w*. The land "Su-ri" is written also "Su-ba-ri" (cf. lxxxiii. 17 and ci. 7). The name of the Egyptian "courier" is ra-bi-ṣu. The word not being of Egyptian origin, it must be of Semitic etymology. The root *rbg*, to lie down, does not give a possible sense, but the verb *רָרַר*, to run, explains the title perfectly. The *raṣu* is the *rawiṣ*, the courier. In the same way the Kha-bi-ri are to be explained as the Khawiri—the Khoirites, the inhabitants of the land Kharu, the Egyptian name for Palestine. The Greek transcription of the Nomen gentile was (π)χαίριος (quoted by W. M. Müller, *Asien und Europa*, p. 193). This proves that Kha-wi-ri corresponds to the Egyptian pronunciation of the word for "native of Kharu." Therefore it seems to me very improbable that an argument can be deduced from the Amarna letters in favour of placing the Exodus in the fifteenth or fourteenth century B.C.

Some objection from the Book of Judges may be raised against accepting this date for the Exodus. This book seems to cover more than four centuries, and according

to its chronology the time that elapsed between the Exodus and King David must be estimated at about 600 years; while according to our theory David is only separated from the Exodus by 125 years.

I do not, however, think it necessary here to deal elaborately with the chronology of the Book of Judges. It is generally admitted among scholars that its chronology is of no historical value. Local heroes and local wars are conceived of as national heroes and national wars. So things that happened at the same time are narrated as events which took place successively. Therefore, 125 years may well be sufficient for the period of the wandering to Canaan and the occupation of the hills of that country.

B. D. EERDMANS.

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST?

I HAVE several times of late been asked what the meaning of a phrase like "the blood of Christ" could be in such ethical terms as appeal to an age like the present.

1.

It would not have mattered a whit if no drop of blood had been spilt, if Jesus had come to His end by the hemlock or by the gallows. The imagery under which we speak of the situation would have been changed—that is all.

2.

Nor would it have mattered if, instead of losing but some of His blood, He had bled to death. Whether no blood was shed, or every drop, was immaterial. That could only concern us if the virtue was in the blood as a substance, as it might be kept and applied in a reliquary. Had that been so, the sacrifice would not have been complete if a