

colours were adopted as the standards of the different factions; the original yellow standard of Islām was put away and remained ignored for many centuries. The green standard of the Hassanids, or Fatimids, for some time known in Egypt, was replaced, as we hear of Salah ed-Dīn appearing in yellow and with the yellow standard of the glorious days of Islām.

(To be continued.)

THE ELEPHANTINE PAPYRI AS ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

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ONE of the most wonderful achievements of modern research during the last half-century has been the exploration for, and recovery of, many thousands of ancient manuscripts—mostly papyri—from the sands of Egypt. Although they are always fragmentary, and frequently partly illegible for their decipherment, portions of many of the works of lost classic authors have been restored, and the whole domestic life and polity of Graeco-Roman and Byzantine Egypt has been revealed to us.

Throughout all the period in which papyri have been pouring into the museums of Europe and Egypt, Hebrew scholars have always hoped that, in addition to Egyptian, Greek, and Latin documents and books, some Hebrew ones might come to light. As students are aware, for many centuries there were numerous Jews in Egypt, and from time to time pieces of Aramaic-Hebrew writing have appeared, either upon papyri or pottery-fragments, and in a few cases these pieces were of sufficient size to be readable.

During the last ten years this hope of Semitic scholars has been amply fulfilled by the finding of a whole series of Aramaic records concerning Jewish residents in Egypt, and even in some cases referring to their compatriots in neighbouring Palestine. These discoveries, in one sense among the most important ever made in Egypt, because of the light which they throw upon the Old Testa-

ment, both as literature and history, and upon the career of the Hebrew race, have been seldom noticed in the British press, and yet the story of their finding and publication, it is hoped, will prove of much interest to us.

Passing over the minor sporadically found fragments which have been brought to light from time to time in the last half-century, the new and more prolific discoveries may well be divided into two series: a batch of some forty manuscripts acquired by various visitors and explorers in Egypt in the years 1901-1904, and another collection secured by the Germans in 1907. These two sets of documents were all found upon, or near to, the island of Elephantine at Aswān, thus proving the existence, at some period, of a Jewish community there. This is a historical fact of such interest that it will be well to pause for a few minutes to ascertain if this deduction from the evidences is correct.

The result of an impartial study of the new historical and theological material provided by these Aramaic papyri will prove that they so freshly illuminate the later Old Testament references concerning Jewish colonies in Egypt that only now, for the first time, can we appreciate the true import of their allusions.

The great temptation of the Jews, subsequent to their occupation of Palestine, under which they only too frequently fell, was to become polytheists, and worship, in addition to or even to the neglect of Jehovah, the local Syrian deities, whose cults were frequently of a most immoral nature. This crime had to be eliminated before the Jews became a people who, by their absolute allegiance to the one True God, could be the cradle for Christianity, the veritable monotheism adaptable for all humanity. The continued efforts of the Torah and the Prophets, the gradual destruction of the native pagans of Palestine, and the calamities and judgments which fell upon the Jews who practised or even connived at polytheism, at length purged away the taint from those living in Judaea. But for those Hebrews who went to reside in Egypt the temptation to fall back into the evil courses was wellnigh overwhelming: in many cases they inevitably succumbed. For this the Old Testament had naught but condemnation, both for the relapse into idolatry and for the error of living in Egypt at all, because of the moral danger arising thereby.

The Elephantine manuscripts not only confirm all the Biblical references to these matters, but enable us to assign to these allusions,

in a manner that was hitherto impossible, their full import and significance, which had been much under-estimated.

In these newly found papyri, every document which sets forth the site to which its contents refer mentions either one or two fortresses, *S-w-n* or *Y-b* (*Yeb*). The first of these is, undoubtedly, the old Egyptian name of the Aswān, or Assouan of to-day, and under practically the same name as in the papyri it is several times mentioned in the Old Testament. Therein it is called Swene, or Swane, and in two instances the references to it show that it was a frontier post. Thus Ezekiel writes¹: "I will make the land of Egypt desolate from Migdol to Swene, even unto the border of Cush."

The phrase "Migdol to Swene" was similar to saying from John O'Groats to Lands End; for the Migdol intended here was the most northerly, or north-eastern, fort in the Delta, upon the Syrian frontier, near to Pelusium, Migdol² being a Semitic word for a watch-tower adopted by the Egyptians; whilst Swene was the southern frontier fortress upon the Soudan boundary.³

Ezekiel knew that his Hebrew readers would clearly comprehend the all-embracing geographical term included within the most northern and most southern sites in which their countrymen dwelt in Egypt. Like our Princes of Wales in the Plantagenet period, in the West, the Crown Princes of Egypt, when they came of age, had to command the garrison upon the Ethiopian frontier, and upon assuming that office the title "Royal Son of Cush" was conferred upon them. Consequently, Ezekiel, when adding to the word Swene the descriptive comment that it was upon the Cush frontier, shows his accurate acquaintance with Egyptian topography of his age.

Yeb, a word meaning "Elephant," was the Egyptian name for Elephantine: hence the town and its district were called Elephantine by the Greeks.⁴

¹ Ezekiel xxix, 10. The LXX has ἀπὸ Μαγδαλοῦ καὶ Συήνης καὶ ἕως ὀρίων Αἰθιοπῶν.

² This of course is not the Migdol, near to Baal Zephon, mentioned in the Exodus story, which was a fort on the southern part of the Isthmus of Suez.

³ Compare also Ezekiel xxx, 6. The margin of the R.V. rightly indicates that we should read: "from Migdol to Syene shall they fall in it by the sword."

⁴ Prof. Newberry has found the elephant depicted as a Nome—or district—tribal Totem for one of the districts of ancient Egypt, doubtless for that of Elephantine.

The Aramaic papyri call both places a *birtu*, or castle, a word translated, rather imperfectly, "palace" in Esther and Ezra, books composed at about the same date as these newly-found manuscripts.¹

One of the places, therefore, was a fortified residence, or cantonment, commanding the Nile shore road, and the other served to guard the passage by water from Cush into Egypt. Another Old Testament corroboration of the identity of the Yeb of these papyri with the island of Elephantine, and confirmatory of their statement that at this site there was a shrine to the God of Israel, is a passage in Isaiah xix, 19: "In that day there shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof." We know there was an altar to Jehovah at Tahpanhes, but there probably was one at Memphis, for Hosea at his early date, about 785 B.C., speaks clearly of a permanent Jewish colony at Memphis.² In another passage Hosea seems specially to associate Ephraimites with these residents in Egypt, a matter which, as we shall see, is of much interest.³ Isaiah also tells us that in five cities of the land of Egypt the language of Canaan would be spoken, and that they would swear by the "Lord of Hosts," apparently meaning that Jehovah-worship would be held in them.⁴ The statement as to the altar of the Lord was clear, therefore, but the real meaning of Isaiah's phrase "a pillar upon the border thereof" remained incomprehensible until the papyri were read, for in the chief of these documents, special weight is laid upon the pillars in Jehovah's house which the Jews had erected at Yeb, or Swene.⁵

¹ *Birta* appears in a Nabatean inscription of a temple to Baal, in 40 B.C., as meaning the interior of the shrine בַּעַשְׁמִין בִּירְתָּהּ נִיתָתָהּ. The Hebrew בִּירָה is a word only used after the Exile, so possibly from Assyrian, *birtu*.

² Hosea ix, 6. "For they are gone away from destruction" (i.e., from the Assyrians) "yet Egypt shall gather them up. Memphis (מִנְפִּי) in the papyri shall bury them." The word used for altar in the papyri, אֲנֹרָה, is correct for a temple (not for a synagogue). It is the Assyrian *Ekurru*.

³ Hosea ix, 3, "But Ephraim shall return to Egypt."

⁴ Isaiah xix, 18. The prophet says one shall be called the City of Heres (or of destruction), or of the Sun. It was upon the strength of this prediction, reading the text in the last sense, that Onias, son of Onias the high priest, appealed to Ptolemy Philometer, for permission to erect a Jehovah temple in the prefecture of Heliopolis (City of the Sun) and obtained his consent. See Josephus, *Antiquities*, XIII, iii, 1.

⁵ Isaiah xlix, 12, is apparently a reference to Swene, or Syene, Sinim being almost certainly a textual corruption of one of these words.

The new papyri therefore concern Jewish colonists at Elephantine. This need cause no surprise: it is substantiated by other evidence both Biblical and classical. Thus we are informed in the Book of Kings that Pharaoh Necho took away Jehoahaz, and deported him to Egypt where he died.¹ Aristeas, in his pamphlet relating the circumstances of the Septuagint translation, says Necho's son Psammeticus was the Pharaoh in whose time the first Hebrew colony was established in Egypt.² Quite recently this statement has been substantiated by the great Peteesi Papyrus, at Manchester, which mentions a hitherto unrecorded campaign of Psammeticus in Palestine, and of his engaging Jewish soldiers for a war against Cush.³

That Jews had travelled south from Elephantine into Ethiopia, or Cush, is quite in agreement with the Old Testament. Zephaniah writes: "From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia (Cush) my suppliants, even the daughters of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering." Moreover, as Professor Sayce has pointed out, some Hebrews had ascended the Nile, even beyond the site of its junction with its Ethiopian tributaries, and provided Isaiah with a knowledge of the *sudd* region.⁴ This enabled him to describe so accurately its unique features. He writes of "the land beyond the rivers of Cush," that is to say, still further south than their junction with the Nile of its Ethiopian eastern tributaries—the Atbara, the Blue Nile, and the Sobat—as the "land of resounding wings that sends Ambassadors on the sea (the great overflowing White Nile) in vessels made of papyrus reeds upon the waters. Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation, tall and hairless, a people savage from their beginning hitherto, a nation of slaves whose lands the streams divide."⁵ He

¹ 1 Kings xxiii, 34; 2 Chron. xxxvi, 4; Ezek. xix, 4.

² The genuineness of Aristeas's work is confirmed by his use of certain words, such as *ραγμάρος*, only to be found in contemporary Ptolemaic-Greek papyri. "The Letter of Aristeas," H. St. John Thackeray, p. 8.

³ Zephaniah iii, 10. Zephaniah (ii, 12) mentions the Ethiopians being slain by the sword, perhaps in some attack upon, or sortie from, Elephantine. Deuteronomy xvii, 16, may mean that Jewish kings were in the habit of sending their subjects to serve as soldiers in Egypt in return for droves of horses provided by the Pharaoh. If so, Hebrew mercenaries were employed before Psammeticus' reign. Psammeticus II has recorded an Ethiopian war at Karnak.

⁴ Isaiah xviii, 1, 2.

⁵ See also Ezekiel xxx, 9: "In that day shall messengers go forth in ships to make the Ethiopians afraid."

thus sets forth precisely the swarms of insects, the smooth-skinned negroes—among the tallest of the human race—and the teeming aquatic vegetation, impassable except by narrow canals, like the lanes of water now well known to travellers.¹

As with all discoveries of previously lost historical events concerning nations contiguous to Palestine, we find the fact that numerous sites were inhabited by Jews in Egyptian territory quite in agreement with the Old Testament. Isaiah (xix, 18) speaks of five cities in the country as having citizens speaking Hebrew; Jeremiah specifies four of the places therein inhabited by Jews, three of them cities.²

Two of these, Migdol and Tahpanhes, were in the north, Noph—Memphis is in Middle Egypt, whilst Pathros is Southern Egypt. This Pathros is the Patures of Greek authors, the Ptores of later Egyptian writers. Further, it is the Paturisi of the inscriptions of Esarhaddon who divided his Egyptian suzerainty into three portions, Musri, or Central and Northern Egypt; Paturisi, the country from Thebes to Assouan; and Kusi, or Cush, the Ethiopia, or Sudan, of later geographers.³ The Assyrian thus uses the same words as Isaiah, who, at this era, speaks of the tripartite territory of Egypt, as Misr, Pathros, and Cush, and of Jews being resident in all the three.

It is now certain that the early dynasties of Egypt came down the Nile from the South, bringing their culture with them, and that they settled first above and about Thebes, in Pathros. This was Ezekiel's view of their history, or that of the inspirer of his prophecy, for, in speaking of God's restoring the scattered Egyptians to their home, he says (xxix, 14): "I will bring (back) again the Egyptian captives and will cause them to return to Pathros, the land of their birth" (or origin).

¹ Prof. A. H. Sayce (*Proc. Soc. of Biblical Archaeology*, 1914, pp. 179, 180), in an article upon "The Origin of the Meroitic Alphabet," which he partly ascribes to the Aramaic script introduced into Ethiopia by Jews.

² Jeremiah xlv, 1: "The word came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews that dwell in the land of Egypt, at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, at Noph, and in the country of Pathros." Hosea (ix, 6) asserts the presence of Jews at Noph. The fifth site intended by Isaiah has not been definitely located, but in 1913 a Greek inscription was found near Alexandria concerning a synagogue at Xenephyris in the Delta, which may be the fifth city of the prophet. An inscription in the Alexandria Museum speaks of a synagogue at Schedia.

³ Isaiah xi, 11. "The Lord shall recover the remnant of His people from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, and Cush."

It has been mentioned that in some of the papyri there are evidences of these Jews worshipping other deities together with Yahu. In the first found batch of documents, several of them concern a lady whose father swears by Yahu, but who herself takes an oath by Sati, who was the goddess of the cataracts. Also a roll of papyrus is sealed by a signet bearing the name of Amen Ra. These, however, are exceptional cases. But the manuscripts, edited by Dr. Sachau, in some instances go much further. We find Jews therein speaking of a goddess Anat-Bethel and another deity Ism (or Ashima)-Bethel. Mention is even made of some pillar or cult stele (Mesgid Stele); in honour of both Anat and Yahu.¹

There is also a record of a vow being taken before a god entitled Haram-Bethel. This was, however, done by one Malkiah, son of Joshibah who is expressly said to be an Aramean.² This may also be merely a deification of the Haram, the temple, or altar enclosure of the Hebrews at Yeb, the word Bethel being used as indicative of the House of God within the "temple" of Yahu.

M. René Dussaud, discussing some of Sachau's readings, finds a reference to a certain Hosea, son of Baal Gaddai.³ This is not perhaps more remarkable than that one of David's warriors should have been called Bealiah, *i.e.*, "Baal is Lord."

There was a chapel or shrine for Anat-Bethel. It is to be remembered that Manasseh had erected altars to another deity even in the court of Jehovah's house at Jerusalem.—2 Kings xxiii, 12.

² Bethel is used evidently as a deity's title in several proper names in the papyri, such as Bethel-Nathan son of a Jonathan, Bethel-Akab, and Bethel-shezib. These two last names may be those given to Jews when captives in Assyria: they have a sort of "Mesopotamian" appearance.

³ Although Gad does not appear to have been adored by these Elephantine Jews, there is reason to think that a deity of that name was not unknown to the Hebrews in Palestine, and the name of Gaddai confirms this, if it meant "Gift of Gad." So also Gaddiel, the Zebulunite (Numbers xiii, 10), may have been Hebrew only through his mother, her husband being Sodi (? "an acquaintance"); but his theophorous name "God's 'fortune' or 'Gad'" connects with Gad, the god or genius of (good) "fortune" of the non-Hebrew Palestine, and Syrio-Arabian people. Gadiou is a Nabatean personal name: that it is theophorous is proved by a Nabatean inscription at Kanathea reading "Badr and Sa'd'el, son of Withro, loving the Gad, salutation." As Gad, "fortune," parallel with the Greek Tyche, Gad was the god of other Arab tribes bordering on Judaea. The Awidh clan had their Gad Awidh. M. René Dussaud gives an inscription reading "O Gad Awidh hail to thee," and "Badr loving the Gad, salutation." Jacob of Serug, too, speaks of an Arabian deity Gad-Lat, really Gad Allat, Allat=Fortune. See R. Dussaud, *Les Arabes en Syrie avant l'Islam*.

Now is this polytheism, on the part of the Jews and Samaritans at this period, novel and contradictory to Scripture, or not? It is evident, that until we were able to peruse these new papyri, sufficient importance had not usually been attached to what Old Testament writers stated upon the subject. The Jews themselves, and not merely the Samaritans, worshipped a deity called Bethel as well as Jehovah, and did so in Palestine, for Jeremiah tells us that when in their better senses "the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel their confidence" (Jeremiah xlvi, 13). The heresy, however, appears to have commenced in Samaria, at Bethel, a place close to Beth Aven (Joshua vii, 2), and it was mixed up with Calf-worship, a relic of the Apis and Mnevis cult of Egypt.¹ This is clear from the words of Hosea to the people of Bethel: "thy calf has cast thee off" (viii, 5). He also adds the threat: "the children of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Beth Aven" (x, 5). Moreover, the altar of Bethel which Jeroboam erected, when he thus caused the Israelites to sin, was for sacrifices to Bethel, and not to Jehovah, and so Josiah very properly destroyed it (2 Kings xxiii, 15). That it was linked with animal cult is plain, because we are further informed that "Jeroboam placed a golden calf at Bethel," actually boasting "this was the deity who brought Israel out of the land of Egypt."²

¹ See Tobit i, 5. (The revolted tribes and the house of Naphtali my father, sacrificed to the heifer Baal.) Naphtali was near Dan. Dr. Peiser reads Bethel in Zechariah vii, 2, *בית אל שראצר*. It is noteworthy that none of the Hebrew names at Elephantine are compounds of El (אל), but nearly all of ה'. It looks as though the fact that El was used at Babylon for God, made them chary of using it. One personal name, El-nuri, occurs, but it seems to be more Babylonian than Hebrew.

² 1 Kings xii, 28; 2 Kings x, 29. "The calves" which were in Bethel and Dan. The coincidences connecting the Jews at Yeb with North Palestine rather than with Judah are cumulatively very convincing. For instance, the word used in the papyrus for an idolatrous priest is the same as that employed by Hosea x, 5, when speaking of the unorthodox ones at Beth Aven, near Bethel—Chemarim (? "Black robed"). It is also used by Zephaniah i, 4, and 2 Kings xxii, 5. The petition of the Hebrews of Yeb says that they applied to the sons of Sanballat, governor of Samaria. The reply came from Bagohi and *Delaiah*—Sanballat's son. This shows that the Jewish Yeb garrison had intimate relations with Samaria. As, at the Palestine Beth Aven, the Apis solar calf worship of On, or Egyptian Heliopolis, was evidently carried on, Aven may have been purposely the name adopted for the Jewish idolatrous shrine because it was one title of Heliopolis among Semites. Ezekiel (xxx, 17) calls Heliopolis Aven, and that he was correct in so doing is evident from Amos i, 5, where the prophet speaks of the daughter city of On—the Syrian Heliopolis,

The very precise manner in which the papyri agree with the historical statements of the prophetic books is aptly illustrated by the fact that Bethel, whose heretical worship was transferred to Yeb, was situated in Ephraim, and Hosea specially alludes to the Ephraimites settling in Egypt (ix, 3). This fact may account for the revering of Bethel we find so patently in the papyri.

The abhorrence of the true Jehovah worshippers for the idolatry at Bethel appears frequently in Amos, especially where its devotees were Jews: "in the day (when) I shall visit the Israelite transgressors,¹ I will visit Bethel's altars, and their horns shall be cut off and fall to the ground."²

The hierophant of the god Bethel, Amaziah, was not, it would appear, a legitimate priest according to Hebrew regulations, as certainly his cult was not authorized worship;³ for Amos asserts, apparently of him "I see no Nabhi, nor Ben Nabhi," *i.e.*, no prophet or disciple of a (true) prophet.⁴

i.e., Baalbek, whose deity (according to Macrobius) was installed by Egyptian priests—and in recognition of this origin calls it also Aven. The kings of Judah were even mixed up with Heliopolitan, or Beth-Shemesh cults, for they kept horses and cult-chariots of the Sun-god just outside the temple. 2 Kings xxiii, 11.

¹ Amos iii, 14. The Jews, according to Amos v, 26, appear to have adored two Assyrian deities: Sikkut, the Assyrian Sakkut, a name of Adar: and Kaiwan, the Assyrian for Saturn. The verse probably should read: "You have carried Sikkut your Melech, and Kaiwan your Salm"; several Arabian deities were called Salm—*salm* in Semitic means idol. In a tablet of the Babylonian Surpu incantations, Sakkut and Kaiwan are coupled together. The LXX reads Raiphan for Kaiwan, but this is merely a misreading.

² Compare the "Horns of Consecration" of Crete, especially a gem showing them above an altar: R. Dussaud, *Les Civilisations Préhelléniques*, p. 345 fig. 252. This would appear as though they were altars of Astarte Karnaim, the crescent Venus, queen of heaven.

³ See also Amos iv, 4 ("come to Bethel and transgress"); v, 5 ("Seek not Bethel, it [he] shall come to naught"); and vii, 14; note, however, that the name of Amaziah signifies "Great is Jehovah."

⁴ Jastrow, *American Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1909.

(To be concluded.)