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ARTICLE VIII.

# NEW LIGHT FROM EGYPT ON THE SACRIFICES.

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## I.

MARKS of Egyptian influence upon the early history of Israel, upon her civil and religious institutions, and upon the literature of the Pentateuch have been recognized until quite recent times by all classes of Bible students. Excepting for the moment those later critics and commentators that have favored the late date of the Pentateuch, the whole body of modern comment and criticism and biblical encyclopedia may be cited in support of this statement. Speaking more particularly, Semitic and Egyptian specialists have been fond of tracing correspondences and resemblances between Israel and Egypt in evidence of Egyptian influence upon Israel, and Israelite influence upon Egypt. Among Egyptologists, Chabas, De Rougé, Brugsch, Renouf, Naville, Lieblein, and Sayce, among Old Testament specialists, Hävernick, Hengstenberg, Delitzsch, and Oehler, and many others of both classes of scholars, have traced these correspondences with great care. If some of these, of rationalizing tendencies, have sought in Egypt the sources of Israel's most sacred institutions, on the other hand, most have recognized a limit to the sphere of influence and correspondences in the social and civil life, in the customs and language of the people, and in the externalities of the religious life,—the architecture, art, vestments and material, and the universal and necessary actions in worship, especially

in sacrifice; while the origin of the meaning of Israel's religious institutions, their typical character, and the significance of the ceremonial is wholly assigned to Divine revelation.

Latterly the theory of the late date of the Pentateuch, espoused by many, and thrust forward with great earnestness, has attracted much attention, and around about it the discussion of Israel's institutions has raged. Those accepting this theory have, by the very necessities of the case, been forced to belittle or ignore any apparent Egyptian influence in the Pentateuch, or account for it by indirect or secondary causes; and the necessity of meeting new opponents on new ground has somewhat turned all others away from the consideration of such influences, until the growing importance of Archæology in critical discussion has again brought them forward. And they have been urged with such force and persistence that at last, in self-defense, some efforts have been made by the evolutionary school of historical critics to claim the new and rising science of Biblical Archæology in support of their cause. A most notable instance is Dr. Driver's essay in "Authority and Archæology," which most accurately indicates the attitude in most recent literature of the radical school of critics toward archæological evidence. It is an attitude not of appreciation, but of annoyance or, at best, of "benevolent assimilation."

II.

There are indications that it will not now be long until again the critical microscopes of those who think that everything may be found by the microscope, if only the microscope be strong enough, will be fixed upon the religion of old Egypt to discover there all the ideas embodied in Israel's ceremonial system, not excepting those that a reasonable faith has regarded as of Divine revelation.

The theory of a late date for the Pentateuch is becoming untenable. That is not to say that the defenders have given up the fortress; but neither did the Russians give up Port Arthur during the long months of the siege as the Japanese destroyed defense after defense. Nevertheless, the fortress was becoming untenable all the while, and at last even its brave defenders surrendered. And so, little by little, the archæologists, the sappers and miners of the biblical conflict, have blown up one stronghold after another of the defenders of this theory, rendering it more and more untenable. No one may predict the day of capitulation, but the doom of that theory is approaching, else all signs fail.

Dr. Murch's discovery of the Tell-el-Amarna tablets forever destroyed the theory of the ignorance of patriarchal times, which De Rougé's discovery of the Egyptian origin of the alphabet had already so badly shaken. This theory of the ignorance of patriarchal times was, a few years ago, the chief frontier defense of the theory of the late date of the Pentateuch, and the loss of it was like the Russian loss of the fort at the peninsula which drove them back upon the forts of Port Arthur, and shut them up there. Professor Petrie's discovery of the Israelite tablet in 1895 destroyed another defense,—the theory of the early insignificance, or even non-existence, of Israel,—by lifting the nation at last into such importance as to have a place in a boastful monumental inscription of Merenptah, who is very widely accepted by Egyptologists as the Pharaoh of the Exodus; i. e. those Egyptologists who believe there was any Exodus. Thus another place in the line of defense was greatly weakened.

Then, in 1900, De Morgan's discovery of the Code of Hammurabi let in a flood of light upon the advancement of Semitic peoples in the codification of written laws, confirmed and

explained the conduct of the patriarch Abraham in Palestine, and thus weakened another point in the defense of the late date of the Pentateuch, i. e. that it represented a too highly wrought civilization for patriarchal times.

And now the Rev. W. Shaw Caldecott, by his investigations in Semitic metrology, has shown the early proficiency of Israel in architecture, breaking down still further the rear defenses of those who seek a later date for the origin of Israel's history.

Last of all, James William Thirtle, by his wonderful rescue of the titles of the Psalms from their oblivion of obscurity, shows conclusively that the Psalter was in its present form so long before the days of the Exile, that the meanings of those titles were already completely lost at that time, which of itself carries the Psalter back almost, if not quite, to the days of the temple of Solomon, and goes far toward establishing for that time, on purely rationalistic grounds, the whole ritualistic system which the Psalter requires. For, how is it possible that the meanings of the titles of the Psalms could have been completely lost between Josiah and the Exile? What time is there when they could have been lost except in the days of the great apostasy before Josiah and his reformation? And what then becomes of that view of the Pentateuch which brings down the Temple ritual to the days of Josiah or later?

Thus place after place in the line of defense of the late date of the Pentateuch is being breached. This is what I mean by saying that the theory is becoming untenable. Already sorties are being made by the defenders in an effort to get out. So great a leader as Professor Delitzsch, of the University of Berlin, has abruptly led the way to the Babylon of Hammurabi for the source of the *laws* of the Pentateuch. And Dr. Winckler has suggested his theory of "two Egypts," a

desperate expedient to get a more convenient and less important Egypt for the patriarchial *history*.

All of this furnishes the warrant for the suggestion with which this section of the discussion sets out, that at any time of a new discovery in Egypt, or without such, the defenders of the beleaguered theory of the late date of the authorship of the Pentateuch may make a sortie toward the Nile for safety. And when that day comes, that for which Egypt seems at a superficial glance to offer the greatest hope to rationalism is the third and remaining portion of the Pentateuch, Israel's *ceremonial system*.

III.

For some years I have been engaged in a study of the Egyptian offerings, to discover, if possible, all that is shown in the pictured representations thereof by either the painter or the sculptor. The investigation has not been limited to the pictures, to the exclusion of the inscriptions, the classic writers, and the more recent literature of the subject, but most attention has been given to the pictured representations; for the reason, on the one hand, that description of an unfamiliar ritual in a difficult tongue is peculiarly liable to be misunderstood, while, on the other hand, sacrifice is essentially a spectacle, by the sight of which the beholder was to be impressed, and so by the pictured representations of which the student may be informed. In a series of articles on "The Religion of Israel in its Relation to the Religions of Contiguous Peoples," in the *Bible Student* of 1902 and 1903, in considering, among other subjects, "Israel's sacrifices," I forecast conclusions then reached practically; but since that time, in order to make the scientific discussion of the subject complete, I have searched the British Museum and the Gower Street collection in London; the Egyptian Museum, Leyden; the New Museum in

Berlin, and the Louvre in Paris; and pursued the investigation at the Koenigliche Bibliothek, the Bibliotheque Nationale, the British Museum Library, and, by the great kindness of Professor Petrie, at his most valuable private collection at Gower Street College, London. I profited also by the most valuable suggestions made for the researches in the literature of the subject by Professor Naville at Geneva and Professor Maspero in Paris. I most cordially acknowledge this assistance, but am myself alone responsible for my conclusions.[1]

I confess to something of reluctance, mingled with the pleasure of presenting to the public the results of this investigation and the conclusions to which it leads. He who ventures, upon however good grounds, to contravene long-accepted opinions, is sure to meet at the outset much incredulity and some opposition, and he who enters into a new field of investigation is more likely to have a multitude look at him curiously than follow immediately after him. Strange as it may seem, this investigation has never before been made, or, if made, not published; indeed, the general subject of sacrifice has been almost entirely ignored by Egyptologists even when discussing Egyptian religion. The three great histories of Egypt from the monuments—by Brugsch, Petrie, and Budge—scarcely refer to the subject; and the lectures on Egyptian religion—Renouf in the Hibbert lectures, Sayce in the Gifford lectures of 1902, and Steindorf in his American lectures of 1904—pass over the sacrifices in almost absolute silence. Maspero, at Paris about 1897, treated the subject at length, but, it is much to be regretted, has never published the lectures.[2]

[1] Full and detailed account of the technical minutiae of this investigation would be out of place in this article. It will be found, together with museum and library references, in a study published in Recueil de Travaux of August, 1905, to which the reader who desires to follow the investigation critically is referred.

[2] See also Revue de l'Histoire des Religions 1897, an article on

## IV.

It is astonishing to find that, while so little investigation has been made concerning the Egyptian sacrifices, and so little written upon the subject by Egyptologists, yet they, in common with others not professedly familiar with the technicalities of Egyptology, have so constantly referred to the "Egyptian sacrifices," "the sacrificial system of Egypt," "the sacrifices to the gods," "the growth of the sacrificial idea," and "the resemblances between the sacrifices of Egypt and those of other Oriental countries." Such language assumes that appearances in the offerings of Egypt were similar to appearances in the sacrifices of other Oriental places, and that realities in Egypt corresponded not only to those appearances, but to the meaning of those appearances elsewhere. In short, assumption has imposed upon Egypt the sacrificial idea required in each case by the convenience of the writer.

Where the assumption was correct, no harm was done, but very seldom has any one stopped to ask whether the droves of animals, the flocks of geese, the "thousands" of things, were offerings actually or only symbolically; whether the offerings were in any true sense sacrifices or only supplies for the dead or for the gods; whether there was any ceremonial transfer of sin to the offering or any real substitution of the victim for the offerer; or whether some wholly different idea was embodied in the actions and the offerings; whether the altars were for the burning of the sacrifices or only for their presentation; and finally, whether the sacrifices not burned were left at the place of offering, were in part used in a ceremonial feast, or were wholly devoted to the ordinary domestic or commercial advantage of the offerer or the priest. By this whole

"La Table d'Offrandes des Tombeaux Egyptiens," by Professor Maspero.

system of assumptions, a complete sacrificial system has been given to the ancient Egyptians. And assumptions have not stopped here, nor indeed could they stop here. Once admitted that the countless offerings were real sacrifices to the gods, and the conclusion was certain, if not irresistible, that such abundance of sacrifices held a very important place in the national life of the people; and once admitted that the offerings in any sense took the place of the offerer or appeased the gods, and the other assumption was most natural, that the offerings had a most important bearing upon the worshiper's hope of acceptance with the gods.

V.

Now let us make a note of what the monuments actually contained concerning the sacrifices, and of some important things that they did not contain. Tens of thousands of scenes do represent offerings of some sort, and, judging by the frequency with which the offering scenes occur, it must be concluded that the offerings were among the most common and universal events of Egyptian life. Concerning these offerings, it is important to know, first of all, two things: Were they offerings *for* or offerings *to?* i.e. were they supplies or were they sacrifices? The correct answer here lets in the first great light on the subject.

The larger portion of the offerings were offerings *for,* i.e. supplies; in part for the gods, in larger part for the dead, and in either case, in part at least, recovered for the benefit of the offerer or the priest. By far the largest part of the so-called Egyptian sacrifices were supplies for the dead, in which there was no true sacrificial idea whatever, except it be by a sort of indirection in the New Empire, when, through the influence of the Osirian myth, every man was in some sense deified and called an Osiris. In the case of the offerings for the gods,

there was some sacrificial idea; but, as there is no trace of a truly sacrificial meal, there seems to have been no true idea of fellowship with the gods by means of the sacrifice.[1] Thus, at the very outset of the investigation, it appears that the largest portion of the offerings of Egypt, being only supplies for the gods or, more especially, for the dead, are removed entirely from the domain of the sacrificial question.

It is with the smaller remaining portion of the offerings, those which were offerings *to* the gods, true sacrifice, that we are most concerned. There are seen beeves, sheep, goats, gazelles, geese, birds, singly or in droves or herds, being brought to the place of sacrifice, being slain by the priests, the larger animals dismembered and the smaller animals and the fowls presented whole, together with bread, fruit, flowers, incense, and various vessels containing, as the inscriptions inform us, beer, wine, and oil. Aside from the literature of the subject, what does the portrayal of the offerings on the monuments reveal concerning these? What was the relation of the offerer to the offering, and what was done with the offering?

The relation of the offering to the offerer is one of great obscurity. What it is known not to have been is more, and more important also, than what it is known to have been. That the offering was an offering from the offerer, and not merely supplies or a species of tribute due to the god, while not absolutely proven, seems sufficiently attested by the worshipful attitude of the offerer, instead of the business-like conduct that would otherwise be expected. That the offering was *instead of* the offerer, there is no evidence. Herodotus says it was so, and he may have seen the laying on of hands for the transfer of the guilt of the offerer to the offering, which he describes, or he may have supplied it from his knowledge of sacrifice in gen-

[1] Cf. E. Lefébure, Rites Egyptiens, pp. 4, 19–20.

eral. If he actually saw what he describes, it may have been that Greek or other foreign influence produced it, or what he saw may have been an exceptional case. Certain it is that the innumerable pictures of Egyptian sacrifice do not support his statement. The practice could not have been a common one among the Egyptians, otherwise it could not have escaped entirely the pencil and the chisel of the artist; yet, of the ten-thousand sacrificial scenes I have examined, I do not know of a single instance where the laying on of hands is depicted. The transfer of the sins of the offerer to the victim, and the substitution of the victim for the offerer, has no support whatever in the offering scenes.

One question yet remains concerning the sacrifices to the gods: what was done with them? The answer is threefold: they were presented before the god, sometimes waved in the hand, or most frequently laid upon the offering table, and more rarely placed upon an altar. It is a reasonable presumption that they were not wasted, but that, after being presented, they were taken away for the benefit of the offerer or the priest, though this is not certainly known. There is no evidence of any ceremonial feast, and it is certain that the sacrifices were not burned. No preparation was made for the burning of the sacrifice, no brazier of fire is ever seen about the altar, except the censer or incense dish, no inflammable material is ever seen on the altar, or in waiting round about it, or being brought to it; and the arrangement of the sacrifices on the altar precludes the possibility of burning. Whole carcasses of animals or fowls and the quarters of beeves, together with fruit and other offerings, are seen arranged on the altar to the very edge, and built up in a heap with perpendicular sides to a great height. Even if inflammable material were placed underneath, as it never was, the burning would have been impossible; for, no

sooner would the flames begin to melt the fat a little, than the whole heap would slip off in every direction on the floor of the temple.

The altars themselves were not intended for the burning of sacrifices, being too small for such large sacrifices as are seen, perfectly flat on the top, without flange or gutter to retain the fire and ashes on the top. Moreover, the altars found have never had sacrifices burned upon them. Last of all, it must be considered that where sacrifice is burned the burning is the last and most spectacular scene in the whole ghastly tragedy. If it were a customary part of the Egyptian sacrifice, it is incredible that, in all the countless sacrificial scenes, the artist should always miss the most striking part of the spectacle, more especially as Egyptian art, whatever its shortcomings, excels in giving the characteristic touch to every object and every action. Yet the burning of sacrifice in the Egyptian religion is never depicted.

Two apparent exceptions to this last statement, when carefully examined, only serve to confirm the assertion it makes. There is one instance among the sculptures of Tell-el-Amarna where the priest stands officiating before the god Aten, the sun's disk, whose beams, each ending in a hand, are reaching down upon him, while the flames actually leap up from the altar to greet the sun. But the reigning monarch Amon Hotep IV., Khu-en-Aten, was the great heretic king of Egypt, who introduced a foreign, probably a Semitic, religion. His heresy was bitterly opposed by the Egyptian priesthood during his life, and at his death they rose in revolt, put one of their own number upon the throne, banished the strange god and his cult, reinstated the Egyptian religion, and took the mummy of Khu-en-Aten from the grave, tore it into fragments, and scattered it to the four winds. Could anything testify more

strongly to the abhorrence of the Egyptians for a worship which gives the only instance in all the sacrificial scenes of the burning of sacrifice?[1]

The other apparent exception to the statement that the monuments reveal no evidence that the Egyptian religion made use of the burning of sacrifice, is the uncovering, at Tanis, by Professor Petrie, of foundation remains mingled with ashes and pieces of bones. Probably this may be properly accepted as evidence of the burning of sacrifice. But this instance furnishes no evidence on the subject of Egyptian sacrifices, for the reason that Tanis in the ancient time was never a truly Egyptian city, but always one of those places set apart by the Egyptians, who hated foreigners, for the segregation of aliens who wished to dwell in Egypt. While it was called Tahpahnes, it was the home of Semitic people; when it became Daphnae, it was under the influence of the presence of great numbers of Greeks. That evidence of the burning of sacrifices among the Semitic and the Greek peoples of Tanis should be found is not surprising, but it tells us nothing of Egyptian sacrifices, except as it adds another to the instances that go to show that the only evidences of the burning of sacrifices in Egypt were furnished by foreign and hated religions. It might be that occasional sacrifices were burned in Egypt, but to the present time there is not a particle of evidence that such was ever the case. And if, in the future, evidence of such occasional burning should be found among the devotees of the Egyptian religion, it would have no more bearing upon the question of Egypt's religion than do those sporadic cases of sacrifices among Christians in different parts of the world, of which one occasionally hears, have upon the body of Christian doctrine.

[1] Professor Maspero, in Histoire Ancienne, page 122, says, "en brullait une partie à la face de l'idole," etc.

## VI.

The ascertained facts concerning Egyptian sacrifices which are established by this investigation, may be summarized as follows:—

A prodigious number of offerings were made by the Egyptian people throughout a large portion of their history, chiefly supplies for the gods, and, more especially, for the dead, in which offerings the sacrificial idea was of the vaguest and least significant character. The remainder of the offerings were sacrifices to the gods, which, after having been slain and otherwise prepared, according to the necessities of the case, but with no ceremony of substitution, were presented before the god, sometimes held in the hand, usually heaped upon offering tables, less frequently placed upon the altar. How long they were permitted to remain or what was done with them thereafter, nothing is positively known, except that some offerings for the dead were not removed at all. They were not burned; there was no true sacrificial meal;[1] presumably they were removed in time to prevent their loss.

The bearings of these facts upon theological and critical questions are so apparent that a few words will suffice to point them out. Supplies for the dead testify to the expectation of the life after death, and the character of the supplies for both the dead and the gods evinces the crude and materialistic ideas the Egyptians entertained of life in the other world. As there was no proper substitution of the victim for the offerer, there was, likewise, in their religious views, no idea of satisfaction for sin through the sacrifices, as is clearly corroborated by the Book of the Dead, where the hope of becoming the "justified" is grounded constantly upon good works, and never upon the

[1] **Maspero, Histoire Ancienne, p. 122; also E. Lefébure, Rites Egyptiens.**

sacrifices which have been offered. As there was no burning of the sacrifice, the idea of complete dedication of the offerer through the offering, which is expressed by the burning, was wanting in Egyptian theology. And since there was no proper sacrificial meal, there was equally wanting to the Egyptian sacrificial worship the idea of fellowship with the Divine.

When we turn to critical questions concerning the sources of the Hebrew sacrificial system, the vast and essential element of revelation in that system shines out the moment we see Moses the lawgiver standing in presence of the Egyptian sacrificial ceremonies. The materials of sacrifice were about the same, almost the only materials available, but not a single one of the great underlying ideas of the Hebrew system of sacrifices is found in the Egyptian system. The only apparent exception, the shedding of blood, is only apparently an exception; for, while the shedding of blood and the sprinkling of blood was so important and so conspicuous in the Hebrew system, in the Egyptian sacrifices it seems to have been only an incident in the preparation, and little or no account whatever was taken of the blood. When, again, the critical discussion shall turn backward to Sinai to discover the sources of the ceremonial law, it cannot return again to Egypt; it will stand face to face with GOD.