

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

breath from the past, reminding us that ours is no mushroom "form of words," but that the forms we use to-day have proved their "soundness" by the services they have rendered to successive generations. Nevertheless, we cannot doubt that our Prayer-Book will gain in intelligibility, and so, let us hope, in attractiveness and usefulness for the many.



The Generations of Shem.

(GENESIS XI. 10-26.)

BY THE REV. W. T. PILTER.

NO one can honestly believe the New Testament and not believe also that Abraham was a strictly historical person ; nor can he fail to believe that the Deluge, in which Noah and his family were saved in the ark, really occurred ; and equally must he believe that the personal names preserved to us in Genesis xi. 10-26 are those of human beings who lived during the period and in the succession stated. But we dare not affirm—rather are we called upon to deny, for reasons here to be given—that that pedigree is, or is meant to be understood as, a complete one. For (1) overwhelming external evidence, and (2) the fullest agreement therewith of the analogy of Scripture (to which there is no clear counter-evidence), constrain us to believe that many links have been purposely omitted from the line of descent recorded in the passage before us for consideration.

It is conceded that, at first sight and before comparing other genealogical passages of the Bible with it, the second part of the eleventh chapter of Genesis does appear to give us a complete bridge over the period from the chosen son of Noah to Abraham, "the father of the faithful," although the whole sum of the enumerated years is less than 300. Thus it tells us that Arphaxad was born to Shem two years after the Flood,

then that Salah was born to Arphaxad thirty-five years later, and so on until Terah, at about the age of seventy, begat Abram; the total is 292 years.

THE EVIDENCE OF SECULAR RESEARCH.

Now, we venture to say that it is impossible for anyone acquainted with the broad facts of ancient history, of archæology, of the settlements of nations and the development of families of speech—such things as constitute the external evidence on the subject—to accept 300 years as at all adequate for the course of the world from the Deluge to Abraham, unless, indeed, he is prepared to invoke a series of miracles for the purpose. But that would be a procedure which, since the Bible itself makes no mention and gives no hint of such, were as unsound in theology as in criticism. The evidence for our conclusion, as we have intimated, is manifold and overwhelming, and it is unimpeachable. Two witnesses only will probably suffice to prove the point—the histories of ancient Egypt and of ancient Babylonia.

1. Egyptologists tell us that Abraham probably visited Egypt during the rule of Usertesen III. of that Dynasty XII. which has been termed “the real Golden Age of Egypt.” They also give us the length of time from Mena, the reputed founder of the first historic dynasty, to Dynasty XII. as 2,300 years. This may be much too long, because, for one thing, although we have considerable monumental evidence from Dynasties I., II., and III., it is quite inadequate to control the time of 700 years which Manetho assigns them, and which is at the basis of the estimate. Then there are other sections of the period for which the witnesses are insufficient and doubtful. Furthermore, Professor J. Garstang, in his recent work entitled the “Burial Customs of Ancient Egypt,” has made it tolerably clear that there is no gap in the continuity of local customs in Egypt between the close of Dynasty VI. and the period of Dynasties XI. and XII.; with these, therefore, Dynasties VII., VIII., IX., and X. may have been contemporary, and, if so, must be

omitted from the chronological sequence. For these reasons the 2,300 years, reckoned from the beginning of the historical dynasties to the time of Abraham, may have to be greatly reduced, but when full allowance is made therefor it is quite impossible to bring the period within the stated years of our genealogical list from the patriarch Abraham to the remoter days of the Deluge.

It is impossible, for these reasons among others: the four Kings who preceded Usertesén III. in his dynasty reigned—after allowing for the overlapping of co-regencies—quite 130 years, while Dynasties IV. (that of the builders of the great pyramids), V. and VI. together reigned apparently for wellnigh 700 years, a length of time in itself which is twice that of our whole genealogy. But besides the Dynastic Period there is to be reckoned the unknown but very long time which preceded it, for the history of the preceding populations of Egypt, for the progress of the Dynastic peoples from their original home, possibly in Babylonia, as well as of the other races then living on the earth, for the growth of their civilizations and development of their languages. No, the 300 years of our genealogy cannot represent the full time from the Noachian Deluge to the patriarch Abraham. It is very much too short.

2. The evidence of Assyriology fully justifies the same conclusion.

Ancient Babylonia possesses not merely a legendary antiquity, but it has of late years furnished our museums with contemporary monuments, inscribed with cuneiform characters, which were wrought long before the existence of the First Dynasty of united Babylonia. In those early times there were usually several governors ruling contemporaneously in different city states, of which now one and now another was paramount; it was a condition of affairs to some extent comparable to the different concurrent governments of England during the Heptarchy. In consequence of that, the very many Babylonian remains of the period referred to bear the inscriptions of a host of rulers, and until very recently (to be precise, till after the end of the spring

of 1907) no one could rightly have co-ordinated or have dated, even approximately, a large number of them. Since then the publication of important discoveries, decipherments, and the results of investigations in other directions, on the part especially of M. Thureau-Dangin, of the Louvre, Dr. H. V. Hilprecht, of the University of Pennsylvania, and Mr. L. W. King, of the British Museum, have made it possible to write the following lines.

It may be as well to premise that the very earliest civilization of Babylonia was that of Sumeria, which then lay specially in the southern part of the country; the Sumerian language was non-Semitic. Northern Babylonia, on the other hand, was known as Akkad (from the chief city Agade). Some of its earliest rulers were Semites; their native language was of course a variety of Semitic. They do not appear to have had any form of writing of their own, but they learnt and always employed the cuneiform script previously used and probably invented by the Sumerians.

The researches of Mr. King show that most, if not the whole, of the period of the Second Dynasty of Babylonia—368 years—is to be blotted out of the historical succession, because it synchronized with part of the First and part of the Third Dynasty. As the result of his researches on this point, Mr. King is thus able to write that “the earliest Sumerian remains that have been recovered may probably be assigned to the fourth millennium, B.C.” If by “fourth millennium” we may provisionally read 3,500 B.C., the date for the beginning of Babylonian written records is reduced by about 1,000 years from that previously accepted by the more moderate Assyriologists, and the present writer does not know of any Assyriologist of repute who would even now assign a lower date than that just suggested. What follows may seem to indicate that there is room for very considerable further reduction, but whether that is so or not does not now concern us; our present object is simply to show the *minimum* length of time which preceded the period of Abraham, as assuredly certified to us by Babylonian historical literature.

The King who ruled in "the land of Shinar" during the early years of Abram's sojourn in Canaan was, we learn from Genesis xiv., Amraphel, and Amraphel, it is now practically conceded by all experts, was identical with Hammurabi, the sixth ruler of the First Dynasty of united Babylonia. Abram cannot have lived a great while in Canaan before circumstances called him to hasten to the rescue of Lot from the hands of Chedorlaomer of Elam, with whom Amraphel and other Kings were associated; this we learn from the following Biblical *data*:¹ the patriarch, at the Divine call, had left Haran and come into Canaan in the seventy-fifth year of his age; he was eighty-six when Ishmael was born of Hagar; it was in the previous year, just ten years since their arrival in Canaan, that Sarai gave Hagar to Abram, and some time before that that Abram came into collision with Amraphel (Hammurabi), as narrated in Genesis xiv. How much before we are not told, but it can scarcely have been more than a year or two, because of the time required for Abram's sojournings in Canaan, his visit to Egypt, the growth of his flocks and herds, and Lot's departure from him and settlement in the vicinity of Sodom; all of which took place before the Chedorlaomer episode. It will be reasonable, therefore, to place the rescue from Amraphel, and those with whom he was associated, in the eighth year after Abram came to Canaan and in the eighty-third year of his age.

Then, for reasons which I have set forth elsewhere,² it would be quite early in his reign that Hammurabi joined Chedorlaomer in his expedition to Canaan; for the sake of having a fixed point we may place it provisionally in Hammurabi's fifth year. Now, exactly eight years earlier—*i.e.*, in the self-same year that Abram left Haran—Hammurabi's father and predecessor, Sin-muballit by name, fought a very important battle with the King of the city state of Isin, which lay in the south-east of Babylonia, a long way indeed from Haran, though

¹ The references are: Gen. xii. 4; xiv.; xv. 1; xvi. 3, 16.

² In a little book entitled "The Laws of Hammurabi and Moses," by Professor H. Grimme and the Rev. W. T. Piltner (London, 1907, pp. 82-84). Cf. also my article in *The Churchman* for January, 1907.

comparatively near to Ur. By that battle, which was fought in the seventeenth year of Sin-muballit, Isin was defeated and, what is of consequence for our purpose, the dynasty of Isin was destroyed.

The dynasty thus destroyed, as we learn from a tablet recently discovered and published by Dr. Hilprecht, was made up of sixteen Kings, who ruled for 225 years. The dynasty of Isin was immediately preceded by that of Ur, which consisted of five Kings (the second being the famous Dungi) and lasted 117 years. But the first ruler of Ur was contemporary also with a certain ruler of Lagash (or Shirpurla, now Telloh), which was the most lasting and most renowned of all the dynasties of early Babylonia; one which has supplied us with almost the very oldest of the cuneiform monuments which we possess (some of those from Nippur and a few others are probably older than they). Lagash thus affords us, as M. Thureau-Dangin says, "a sort of frame" in which to set the general history of early Babylonia; but within that frame we fear the memories of our readers must be burdened with some details. The ruler of Lagash, when the kingdom of Ur was founded, was named Ur-ningirsu, who came late on in his dynasty; his father, Gudea, was a great builder, many of whose wonderful monuments of inscribed sculpture have been brought to light by the French excavators. The thirteenth (or fifteenth) in the line of the rulers of Lagash was Lugal-ushum-gal, who acknowledged as his suzerain the mighty Sargon I., the father of Naram Sin, who enlarged his kingdom of Agade (Akkad) till it reached from Elam to the Mediterranean. We notice a breach in the annals of Lagash before Lugal-ushum-gal, for in the time of his last recorded predecessor (named Urukagina) Lugal-zaggisi, the patesi of the neighbouring city-kingdom to Gishhu (the modern Jotha) had invaded and subdued Lagash. Yet again in the time of the first ruler of Lagash of whom we have record (Urukagina being either the eleventh or the thirteenth), Lugal-shag-engur by name, as during most of the intervening period, Lagash and Gishhu were at strife. But in this first period

Mesilim, King of Kish, intervened, caused the two belligerent cities to make a treaty of peace between themselves, and Mesilim erected a monumental column to commemorate the event—how wonderfully modern all this seems! It should be added that Mesilim is the second King of Kish of whom we possess records.

We do not know what length of time the dynasty of Lagash bore sway, but if we reckon that each of its rulers had on the average the same regnal period as that which each of the rulers of the combined dynasties of Ur and Isin had—*i.e.*, $16\frac{6}{21}$ years, then the eighteen rulers of Lagash¹ who preceded the founding of the dynasty of Ur will have reigned over 293 years.

We thus get for the whole period from the first recorded ruler of Lagash until the destruction of the dynasty of Isin by Sin-muballit in his seventeenth year, a total of 635 years; to make the period complete, there has to be added to this sum the unknown but short interval in the annals of Lagash between Urukagina and Lugal-ushum-gal; also the years during which eleven other Kings ruled, of whom we know little more than their names. But the seventeenth year of Sin-muballit, as we have already calculated, coincided approximately with Abram's departure from Haran to Canaan when he was seventy-five years old. It follows, therefore, that the dynasty of Lagash in South Babylonia came into existence 560 years (plus the years of the eleven omitted rulers) before Abraham was born, whereas his pedigree, so far as it is preserved to us in Genesis xi. 10-26, allows only 292 years from the flood until his birth.

But in the period thus apparently covered by that registered pedigree there is to be really reckoned, not only the 560 years certified to us by the documents of early Babylonian history, but also that period of unknown length (from which some inscribed and other monuments have come down to us) during which Babylonia was inhabited before the founding of the dynasty of

¹ The number was certainly more than eighteen, it was probably twenty-nine, but as eleven other rulers' names, which have come down to us for this period, cannot be placed with certainty, we, for the moment, disregard them.

Lagash, and also that other period referred to in Genesis xi. 2, 9, during which the descendants of Noah were multiplying and journeying from where the ark settled unto the land of Shinar, which must have occupied some, perhaps many, generations.

It is thus, by the evidence adduced (reinforced by the further evidence suggested, which might be largely added to), demonstrably an error to assume that the recorded "generations of Shem" from the Deluge to Abraham make a complete register. The assumption that it is complete is no doubt very ancient and still widespread, because it is naturally made on a cursory reading of the genealogy, but it can scarcely be held in the light of Scripture analogy and Scripture usage when dealing with genealogies.



Sentimentality.

BY THE REV. J. WARREN, B.D.,

Trinity College, Dublin.

"Of all broken reeds, sentimentality is the most broken reed on which righteousness can lean."—ROOSEVELT, *at the Guildhall.*

WHAT is sentimentality? It is the disposition to judge and act in obedience to feeling rather than reason. It has been defined briefly as "feeling for feeling's sake."

By feeling is to be understood the series of delicate thrills or resonances, along the finer nerve-fibres, which are known to be generated by every idea conceived and entertained in the mind. These thrills are probably of an electrical nature, leading from the brain-centres, and are of very considerably varying intensity, many of them being, from the character of the ideas that originate them, far too faint to be apprehended in consciousness. Such as are cognizable, according to psychologists, range themselves under two grades—sentiment and emotion, the latter being the more intense form, capable of passing onward even to hysteria.