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SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES ON THE NEW ARAMAIC PAPYRI.

THE Jewish colony, which was settled on the southern border of Egypt, partly at Syene and partly at Elephantine, which lies opposite to it, gained a new importance when Professor Sachau's three Aramaic papyri threw such unexpected light upon the temple and its history. The discovery is so recent that it would be wrong to suppose that its bearing upon biblical studies can be decided offhand, and one of the objects of the present supplementary remarks is to indicate rather more carefully than in my preliminary account some considerations which have to be borne in mind in approaching the new evidence.

In addition to the articles by Professor Margoliouth and Mr. Griffith (EXPOSITOR, pp. 481–496) a carefully annotated translation was contributed by Professor Driver to the *Guardian* of November 6.[1] Professor Clermont-Ganneau has published a number of notes in his own *Recueil d'Archéologie Orientale* (vol. viii. § 21), and some useful suggestions have been made by Dr. Fraenkel in a review of the texts in the *Theolog. Literaturzeitung*, no. 24, November 23. It may be useful, therefore, to start with a few remarks on points of detail affecting the *translation*.[2]

Professor Ganneau's translation of the words at the end of line 8 (viz. crowbars or the like) is in practical agreement with that suggested by Professor Margoliouth (p. 484 n. 5). The puzzling epithets applied to the commander Widrang

[1] I regret that his valuable article did not come under my notice until after my own account had been despatched for press.

[2] I may mention incidentally that in my translation of the opening words ("to our lord Bagoḥi the governor of Judah," p. 499), I preferred to maintain the distinction between *Jĕhūd* and the ethnic Judaeans or Jews, and that I rendered the same word by "lord" or "Lord" whereas Prof. Margoliouth has preferred to use "master" for the former.

or Waidrang—whose name is not so uncertain as I supposed —have not been conclusively explained (see above, pp. 484 n. 4, 485 n. 7).

In support of Professor Sachau's suggestion that they indicate his origin (viz. a man of Lehi, of Caleb), one can point to a long-known papyrus from Elephantine where reference appears to be made to Jedoniah the Geshurite (cf. Josh. xiii. 2). On the other hand, it had been tempting at the outset to recognize a touch of contempt, and I had been inclined to render the phrases "this miserable (or wicked) W.," "this hound W." Since this has also suggested itself independently to Professor Ganneau, it may be put forward with more confidence. But it is not to be accepted hastily, because the third papyrus, which is a memorandum of the instructions of Bagoas and Delaiah, refers to the altar-house "which this miserable (?) W. had destroyed." Here the question is at once raised whether this wording would express the opinion of the governor of Judah or the writer's own feelings, and it will be perceived that this point bears upon the internal character of the official communications quoted or referred to in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

In regard to the destruction of the temple, the papyri describe the breaking of the stone pillars and the destruction of the seven (so the duplicate) stone portals. The words that follow—"they set up their heads"—yield no sense (p. 485 n. 3), and Professor Ganneau has proposed the very suitable reading "they removed their doors." His rendering of the verb finds support in colloquial Arabic, and his reading of the noun, both here and in the following line (instead of "marbles"), is not only thoroughly defensible but had been proposed independently by Mr. Cowley (in Professor Driver's article) and also by Dr. Fraenkel.

The fate of the hinges (Fraenkel refers to 2 Chron. iv.

9), the cedar-wood roofing (?) and all the rest (?) of the building is not so obvious. It is certain that the Egyptians carried away the precious vessels, and Professor Ganneau suggests that they also "removed" the bronze hinges and cedar-wood which were surely too useful to be wantonly destroyed. According to this, it was only after everything had been broken or looted that the palace was given over to the flames; and although it is not clear whether "the stucco (?) of the wall (?)" belongs to the things carried away, or whether the rest (?) of the building (?)"—so the alternative suggestion—was burned together with "whatever else was there," Professor Ganneau's remarks are, as usual, both clever and suggestive.

Widrang's fate still remains obscure—"they brought forth the ring (or his rings, so the duplicate) from his feet," but for "ring," anklets, fetters and even ankle-bones have been suggested, and it is just possible that "feet" is to be connected with the *crux* in the papyri edited by Professor Sayce and Mr. Cowley.

As regards the failure of the writers to receive a reply from Jerusalem, it may be noticed that the papyri do not state distinctly the subject to the verb, "[they] sent no letter unto us." The Judaean nobles may be meant; at all events, while some contrast is clearly intended, the necessary English word "but" is too emphatic, the original simply having "and."

Finally, the enormous grant which the writers were apparently ready to offer can hardly fail to arouse comment (pp. 487, 496); the terms are not very explicitly stated, and another explanation may be forthcoming.

To turn now from these details to the larger questions involved by the new discovery, it is important to remember at the outset that even the most objective and tangible of evidence is none the less liable to unsound or erroneous

interpretation, and when the interpretation is to be fitted into an historical frame the risk of error is greater, and the most comprehensive examination is more urgently needed. For example, it was at once evident that the reference in the Berlin papyri to the treatment of the Egyptian temples by Cambyses was somewhat perplexing. The Jews mention the incident in order to strengthen their appeal to the Persian Governor, but we have, on the authority of the Egyptian officer, Uza-hor, good evidence which throws another light upon the attitude of Persia to Egyptian religion under both Cambyses and Darius. It is not easy to see at once how the evidence is to be reconciled.[1]

The true bearing of the papyri upon the history of Ezra and Nehemiah, too, can scarcely be estimated until the different groups of evidence have been re-investigated. Professor Margoliouth's more detailed remarks (pp. 487 seq.) will have shown both the very close relation between the sources which bear upon Bagoas, Sanballat and the Samaritans, and the very complicated chronological questions which arise. It is extremely unlikely that Nehemiah xiii. and Josephus are referring to two distinct events in the history of Judah and Samaria. Great obscurity hung over the whole of the Persian age, and it is very easy to see now how confusion could have arisen from incorrect identification of kings, governors and high-priests bearing identical names (cf. p. 492). It is quite unnecessary, at all events, to reduce "several detailed chapters of Josephus to fiction," because even the most untrustworthy record must have some basis, and this historian gives certain details which strongly suggest that his worst offence, per-

[1] See Mr. Griffith's remarks on p. 494, and his account of Uza-hor in Hogarth's *Authority and Archaeology*, p. 179 seq.; it will be necessary to know more of the madness of Cambyses and his unsuccessful expedition against the Ethiopians before any opinion can be ventured.

haps, was to misunderstand or confuse extant traditions or sources.

Besides, it is noteworthy that Josephus treats the history of Ezra and Nehemiah in a manner which suggests that he did not have the biblical books before him in their present form. Upon these problems of historical and literary criticism Professor Margoliouth has touched only incidentally, observing: "Whether the historical character of the book of Ezra—which has been more seriously doubted than that of Nehemiah—will gain by the discovery seems doubtful (p. 493)." Although any detailed remarks upon the biblical sources would be more appropriately presented in a technical study, it is not out of place to emphasize the conclusion that the compiler of the books Ezra and Nehemiah—which at one stage formed part of Chronicles—was either ignorant of or indifferent to the true chronology of the period.[1] The time indications in Nehemiah xiii. are not clear, and would indicate that the Dedication of the Walls by Nehemiah (obviously connected closely with the account of their erection) belonged to his second visit twelve years after his first arrival! Even in the very middle of the building of the walls in fifty-two days there is an account of Nehemiah's reforms in which he refers to his past conduct as governor during twelve years, and proposes to set the nobles an example in refraining from lending on usury (v. 10, 14 seq.). These fifty-two days of building, when reckoned back (ii. 11 and vi. 15), bring us to the date of Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem, which turns out to be practically the anniversary of that of Ezra about twelve years previously.[2] In view of the close relation between these two, this feature appears to be no mere coincidence.

[1] Reference may be made to Prof. G. A. Smith's careful statement of evidence in the EXPOSITOR, July, 1906, pp. 1–18.

[2] According to Josephus it took no less than two years and four months to complete the walls (*Ant.* xi. v. 8).

But although the completion of the walls on the twenty-fifth of the sixth month is doubtless intended to be the prelude to the events in the seventh month, when Ezra suddenly appears (Neh. vii. 73, viii.), there is very good reason to suppose that the substance of Nehemiah xi. originally followed immediately upon vii. 4. That is to say, underneath an apparently united and consecutive narrative there are details which show that in the book of Nehemiah, as in that of Ezra, we are very much in the hands of compilers who had specific views of the sequence of events, and that these views must be carefully examined.

Without more complete external evidence, however, it seems impossible to find any hypothesis which shall give an adequate explanation of all the narratives. It would, at least, be hazardous to build or rebuild any historical reconstruction upon the Berlin papyri. They do not confirm the remarkable powers bestowed by Artaxerxes upon Ezra (vii. 11-26), although they do suggest how an authentic document could form the basis of a more patriotic and less objective representation of a royal mandate (cf. also Ezra vi. 3–5 with i. 1 sqq.). Even if the papyri betray no knowledge of hostility between Jerusalem and Samaria, they do not provide conclusive or controlling evidence to permit an immediate decision as to which of a number of possible explanations is really the best. Moreover, it would be quite unsafe to venture behind them and attempt to draw all kinds of inferences as to the precise character of the religious ideas which prevailed among the writers.

It had previously been recognized from the texts edited by Professor Sayce and Mr. Cowley that there was no objection to pronouncing the *nomen ineffabile* in ordinary life, and that an oath could be taken by a Jewess before the heathen goddess Sati (see p. 499).[1] It had already been

[1] I. Lévi (*Revue des Etudes Juives*, 1907, p. 44, n. 4) appropriately

apparent that the community did not feel itself bound by the law of the single sanctuary at Jerusalem, and it was a Jewish scholar who was impressed by "the surprising phenomena which the Syene papyri reveal with regard to certain religious conditions." [1] With the new evidence before us for the practice of sacrificial and other religious rites it would be illegitimate to make any far-reaching deductions. So striking are the data that Dr. Redpath, remarking upon the lapse of the community "into a very lax form of religion," and thinking it incredible that they were pure-bred Jews, favours the view that the community was of Samaritan origin (*The Guardian*, Nov. 13). Mr. G. A. Hollis (*ibid.* Nov. 27), on the other hand, suggests that Jehoahaz and doubtless some of his nobles had been removed by Pharaoh Necoh to the distant fortress in the south of Egypt, and he reminds us that when Psammetichus invaded Ethiopia Jewish soldiers accompaned his army. This writer's suggestive remarks merit fuller consideration, and he conjectures that the death of the reforming king Josiah was followed by a violent reaction and that Jehoahaz and his associates may have returned to the freedom of worship of earlier days.

These questions are involved with the history of the last kings of the Judæan monarchy and the independent evidence furnished by the prophecies of Jeremiah. Professor Sachau notes that the Jewish refugees in Egypt do not appear to have felt that longing to return to their country which the prophet anticipated (Jer. xliv. 14). Jeremiah denounces

cites the Talmud *Sanhed.* 63*b*, where the possibility of being obliged to take an oath in the name of another god is a reason for not associating with any one who was not a Jew.

[1] Prof. W. Bacher, *Jew. Quart. Rev.*, 1907, p. 444. See also Father Lagrange, *Rev. Biblique*, July, 1907, p. 270 ("Il est probable qu'ils ne se croyaient pas tenus trop strictement à l'unité du culte"); Prof. Nöldeke, *Zeit. f. Assyriol.*, August, 1907, p. 131 ("die forderung des einheitlichen Mittelpunkts für den Kultus galt somit bei diesen Juden noch nicht oder nicht mehr").

them for persisting in the idolatries of their forefathers and even foretells their destruction. It is difficult, therefore, to see on what grounds a distinction could be drawn between the religious conditions of Jews in Upper Egypt in contrast to those settled in the northern part, and the papyri do not furnish any conclusive evidence as to the changes which may have ensued from the days of Jeremiah to the time when the temple of Elephantine was destroyed.[1]

In all such cases as these it is to be remembered that religious conceptions, ritual, moral, or ethical ideas, etc., do not necessarily advance hand-in-hand. Every one knows what is commonly associated with the cult of the Babylonian goddess Ishtar, few perhaps know that one of the most striking of ancient religious passages outside the Old Testament is addressed to her in her character as the goddess of war.[2] In Palestine itself it is now possible to institute direct comparison in the realm of religion, culture and thought in the fifteenth to the fourteenth century B.C., when the cuneiform tablets illustrate the literary expression of the age. From the purely diplomatic letters addressed to the divine Pharaoh it is possible to form some idea of the general character which contemporary religious literature could take, and the result when viewed together with the more private tablets found at Taanach is interesting. It is only on turning to the actual results of excavation at Gezer, Taanach, Megiddo and elsewhere that one vividly realizes the profound difference between the religion of that age and the sublime ethical monotheism which became Israel's glory. But the conditions—which were not a sudden

[1] I see no reason for the argument of Mr. Hollis that Pathros ("Land of the South") was in the Delta; such difficulties as the biblical texts contain must find another solution.

[2] L. W. King, *The Seven Tablets of Creation*, vol. i., App. v., pp. 222 sqq. (he describes it as "one of the finest Babylonian religious compositions that has yet been recovered").

growth but the development of earlier forms—continued to persist, and excavation shows independently how very slow and gradual was the subsequent development, and how inveterate were the underlying features.[1]

Confronted with this development which recent archaeological research is enabling us to visualize, the problem of the precise religious condition of the Jewish community in Upper Egypt will depend very largely upon the circumstances of its origin. It would be fruitless, of course, to speculate upon the difference between Yahweh and Yahu. Whether it arose on religious grounds cannot be said; it is to be noticed (incidentally) that the papyri do not furnish any proper names compounded with El, and in this respect stand in contrast to the evidence from Nippur (see p. 498). The modern accepted pronunciation of the name Yahweh (also found on the Moabite stone of Mesha) is based upon a number of technical arguments and finds support in the form *Iabe* which is ascribed by Theodoret to the Samaritans and by Epiphanius to a Christian sect, and in the *Ἰαουέ* or *Ἰαουί* of Clement of Alexandria. Yāhū (for which Professor Ganneau would prefer Yāhō) is familiar enough from Hebrew theophorous names, and may be compared with the *Iao* of the Gnostics. Even Egyptian magical papyri furnish the spelling *Iabe* and in their *Ιαωουηε* one is tempted to see a conflation of the two forms *Iao* and *Ιαουε* (cp. above).[2]

[1] The bearing of excavation in Palestine upon Old Testament religion can now be read in the admirable work by Father Hugues Vincent of the Frères Prêcheurs, Jerusalem, *Canaan d'après l'Exploration Récente* (for his remarks on the evidence see pp. 19 seq., 148 seq., 161, 183, 199 seq., 204, 345, 463 seq., with p. 461 and note 3).

[2] The evidence is from *Encyc. Bib.* col. 3321, n. 4. Through some curious misconceptions Colonel Conder (*Critics and the Law*, p. 33 seq.) appears to believe that the vocalization "Yahweh" is based upon the Hebrew vowel-points, which, as a matter of fact, are those of the ordinary word for "lord" (regularly read in place of the sacred name). It is as difficult to understand his treatment of the question as to allow his very

To sum up, the papyri afford welcome and quite unexpected information of the most interesting character; their positive value is both great and lasting. But this is not to overlook the new problems they bring, and the new light in which older problems now appear. They distinctly forbid any far-reaching inferences, since they represent a new standpoint which is as interesting as it is suggestive. If the biblical writings in their final form represent what may be called the standpoint of Judah and Jerusalem, the possibility of other standpoints can never be ignored. We may be sure that Samaria, for example, looked on its history in another light than does our book of Kings; and however closely the papyri bring us to the history of Nehemiah's time, the absence of that spirit which is associated with both Nehemiah and Ezra should scarcely cause surprise when the last chapters of the Book of Isaiah already show that there was divergence of opinion in regard to certain aspects of Judaism. It can be safely asserted that should any portion of the sacred writings of the Jews of Elephantine be brought to light, the internal phenomena in the Old Testament upon which there is a consensus of opinion will still continue to need an adequate explanation; and should such writings differ from the Canon to the same extent as did the Nash papyrus from Egypt—that little fragment (probably second century A.D.) containing the Decalogue and the Shema—the biblical problems will only be enormously increased.

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remarkable theory that the Moabite stone itself is nearer to Aramaic than Hebrew. His arguments here, even if valid, would equally prove that the Elephantine papyri were written in Hebrew. He is of course correct in regarding biblical research as a progressive study, but it is unfortunate that he should have devoted so little attention in his book to the evidence upon which critical views are based and to the archaeological and other facts by which they are supported.