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SOME FRESH BIBLE PARALLELS.[1]

In that monumental work *Kusejr Amra*, published in 1907 by the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Dr. Alois Musil gives a vivid account of his journeys in the country to the east of the Dead Sea, in which many of the immemorial customs of the desert Arabs are brought to light. Perhaps the most verbally exact parallel to the Old Testament is that which occurs on page 9. In what appears to be an absolutely waterless desert, water may be found by digging amongst the stones of the dry torrent bed. The stones are removed with the hands, though the process is described as digging. The chiefs rarely take part in the work, but the "well," when formed, is always said to have been dug by Sheikh So-and-so. While drawing the water at one such valley the Arabs sang this song :—

> Spring up, O well,
> Flow copiously.
> Drink and disdain not,
> With a staff have we dug it.

The words are almost identical with those sung by their Hebrew predecessors on, it may be, the same spot three and a half millennia before :—

> Spring up, O well, sing ye to it,
> The well the princes digged,
> The nobles of the people delved
> With a sceptre and with their staff.[2]

On p. 25, Dr. Musil thus describes the return to camp on a dark night: "From a distance the chieftain's tent was easily recognisable, because in front of it blazed a mighty fire, which is carefully fed until midnight is past. The mighty fiery column before the tent announces to the weary,

[1] In the volume of the EXPOSITOR for 1903 will be found a paper on "Some Fresh Bible Parallels from the History of Morocco." Those which follow are taken from Arabic sources from different countries.

[2] Numbers xxi. 17, 18.

hungry wanderer where he can seek hospitable reception." This fire in front of the chief's tent is, no doubt, the origin of the story of the pillar of fire by which the Israelites were led in their wanderings.[1]

In 2 Kings xiv. 8 and 11 we read that Amasiah, king of Judah, sent to Jehoash, king of Israel, saying, "Come and let us look one another in the face," and that these two kings looked one another in the face at Bethshemesh. This phrase, "to look one another in the face," is a military technical term, and the cognate root is used in the corresponding voice in Arabic of two opposing armies coming face to face. "When the two armies were drawn up in line of battle (*tarā'a*), the army of 'A'isha numbered 30,000 and that of 'Ali 20,000."[2]

The practice of self-mutilation for the sake of attaining some specific end is not unknown in the West. An example of it among the Arabs is the case of Kosair, who, having cut off his own nose, appeared at the court of Queen Zebba [Zenobia], pretending that the mutilation had been inflicted by his master the King of Al-'Irák. By this means he was received with such complete confidence that he was soon able to betray her into the hands of the king, whose uncle she had put to death. The mutilation of Kosair became a proverb amongst the Arabs, and as a general rule the injury inflicted would be of a much slighter and more transient description. After the battle of Aphek one prophet bade another wound him, in order that he might pretend to the king of Israel, Ahab, that he had been in the fight; and when the other refused, he cursed him, and bade another man smite him, which he did effectually.[3] It appears to have been deemed an obligation incumbent upon the per-

[1] Exodus xiii. 21, etc.; Nehemiah ix. 12.
[2] *Al-Fakhri*, ed. Derenbourg, p. 121.
[3] 1 Kings xx. 35 ff.

son asked, to do this behest. It is related of Amr Muzaikiya, who led the migration of the Arabs of the Yemen towards the north in the second or third century, that the cause of his determining to leave was that he observed a large rat burrowing in the dam which retained the water which irrigated their lands. Knowing that this presaged the bursting of the dam, but not choosing to aver his true motive, he ordered his youngest son, the next time he was scolded and chastised, to box his father's ears. The son did as he was bidden and the indignant father, declaring that he could not remain in a place in which the youngest of his children had struck him, took his departure.[1]

Youthful modesty and a respect for one's seniors has ever been a distinctive virtue of the Orient. A good example of this gentle disposition occurs in the account of the execution by Gideon of the two Midianite kings Zebah and Zalmunna.[2] He bade his son put them to death; "but the youth drew not his sword; for he feared, because he was yet a youth." A precisely parallel incident occurred at the punishment of Walīd ibn Okbah, the governor of Al-Kufa, for drunkenness. ʿAli bade his son inflict the punishment of eighty lashes, but the latter could not bring himself to do it, and ʿAli therefore executed sentence himself. In Lane's *Thousand and One Nights* (chapter xi., note 26) will be found a statement of the attitude of the youthful oriental to his elders, and of the servant to his master.[3]

To the inhabitant of a poorly-watered country like Palestine the river Euphrates must have symbolised all that was rich and pleasant and easy of acquirement, and the antithesis of everything hard and unremunerative and toilsome. To eastern fancy the Euphrates and the Nile became even greater than they actually were, and, indeed, as broad

[1] *Ibn Hisham*, ed. Wüstenfeld, p. 8. [2] Judges viii. 18 ff.
[3] See also Lord Cromer's *Modern Egypt*, vol. ii., p. 160.

and wide as the sea. Hence in both Hebrew and Arabic one word is used to designate both the sea and the Euphrates and the Nile. The Sea of Babylon (Jer. li. 36) is, of course, the Euphrates, and the sea of Egypt in Isaiah xix. 5 is the Nile. At the present day the names of the latter river above Khartoum, where it divides into two, are the White Sea and the Blue Sea. The Euphrates is a favourite simile with the author of the second part of the book of Isaiah to denote a happy and full life: "Then shall thy peace be like the Euphrates." [1] The English version has, "peace like a river," which is fine, but that is because we at once think of a great river full of water. But it is the Euphrates that is meant, and the Euphrates *in flood*: "And I will spread like the Euphrates peace to her, and the splendour of nations like a winter torrent breaking from its course." [2] A fine description of the Euphrates in flood occurs in the ode of the famous Arab poet En-Nabigha, in which he seeks to propitiate his offended master En-No'man, whose generosity he compares to the great river.

Not Euphrates, when his wave-tops boil, and his billows strew his banks on either side with foam,
When every valley, foaming, roaring, full of bruisêd reeds and broken boughs, swells his stream,
And the pilot, in spite of weariness and sweat of grief, through fear of him lets not go the helm,
Ever was more generous than he.

Of all the books of the Old Testament none make so universal an appeal as do those of Job and of Ecclesiastes.[3] The best minds of every age and of every race find their deepest feeling expressed in the words of these two books. Indeed, the verse in Job or in Ecclesiastes which has not its echo in one or other of the great eastern literatures must be the excep-

[1] Chap. xlviii. 18.
[2] Chap. lxvi. 12.
[3] The appeal is the same as that made by *Hamlet* in English literature: there is pessimism and mystery.

tion. Only a few striking verbal parallels need be mentioned here. In Ecclesiastes v. 7 we have, "High above the high is a Watcher, and there is a Higher than they"; in the Koran xii. 76, "Above every owner of knowledge is One who knows." Al-Mutanabbi, who is generally considered the greatest of all the poets who composed in Arabic, writes the following couplet:—

Thus men pass away: there is a coming together, then a separating: one is dead and another is born: one is hating, another loving.
My circumstances change, and the nights change with their circumstances; and I am become grey-headed, but time, the ever youthful, becomes not grey.

The thought and the language are those of the author of Ecclesiastes: "One generation passeth away and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever." "There is a time to be born and a time to die." "Their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished." "Time and chance happeneth to all." "The evil days . . . when the almond tree shall flourish."[1] The same poet says:—

I know that the longest-lived of men is appointed a date of which the furthest term is near.

And Ecclesiastes—

Though a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness.[2]

Perhaps no book has excited so much controversy or given rise to so many diverse opinions as the book of Ecclesiastes, and perhaps no name has received so many etymologies and interpretations as the name Koheleth. In these circumstances it can do little harm to suggest two more. The first is that the Hebrew *Koheleth* is the exact transliteration of the Arabic *ka'ilatun*, the feminine participle of the verb *Kala*, to say, and meaning, a sayer, a poetess, or,

[1] Eccles. i. 4; iii. 2; ix. 6; ix. 11; xii. 1, 5.
[2] Chap. xi. 8.

perhaps, a poet. The second is a new identification by means of the well-known Gematria. If the numerical values of the letters of the word *Koheleth* be added together, we obtain the number 535 (100 + 5 + 30 + 400). Moreover, Koheleth was a son of David and was king in Jerusalem (i. 1, 12). The only sons of David who were kings in Jerusalem were Solomon and Adonijah the son of Haggith (1 Kings i. 5 ff.). Adding the numerical values of the expression Adonijah ben Haggith, we obtain 543 (1 + 4 + 50 + 10 + 5 + 2 + 50 + 8 + 3 + 10 + 400), or, if we might omit the first consonant of Haggith, as it is omitted in Greek, 535.

The finest verses in the book of Ecclesiastes, verses which remind us of some of the most splendid passages in the book of Job, are those in the twelfth chapter, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth," and so on. It must have caused every one a shock of dismay akin to disgust, when he learned for the first time that these verses are a physiological description of the break up of the bodily frame, that the "strong men bowing themselves" are the stooping shoulders, that the "grinders" are the teeth, and "those who look out of the windows" the eyes, that the "golden bowl" is the brain, and the "silver cord" the spinal column. All this is so contrary to Western taste that anything that can help us to escape from such an interpretation must be more than welcome. If one reads a description of an Oriental town in time of plague, for example, that by Richard Tully,[1] the English consul at Tripoli in Africa, of the cholera in that city in the year 1785, it will probably excite in him precisely the same feelings which the reading of these verses, before he was aware of the physiological interpretation, excited. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the physiological explanation is quite in accordance with Oriental literary taste. In the Koran (xix. 3)

[1] *Narrative of a Ten Years' Residence at Tripoli in Africa*, p. 79 ff.

Zecharias speaks of his head being "fiery," meaning grey (cf. the almond tree of Ecclesiastes): "the two lookers" is a common term in Arabic for the pupils of the eyes (Al-Harīri, *Makāmah* xxxvii.); the pre-Islāmic poet Shanfara speaks of his feet as "the two plodders," and so on. A very quaint statement of the physiological or anatomical interpretation of these famous verses will be found in *A Discorrse of the Whole Art of Chyrvrgerie*, by Peter Lowe, founder of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, published in London in 1612.[1]

The fine verse in Job (xxxviii. 41), "Who provideth for the raven his prey, when his young ones cry unto God, when they lose their way for want of food?"[2] is found also in that literary El Dorado, Al-Harīri of Basrah (*Makāmah* xiii.):—

My chicks[3] cease not complaining their misery,[4] of which every day there is a flash.

When the pious soul cries in the night[5] to his Lord, they also cry with tears that flow,[6]

O thou that providest for the young raven in its nest, and settest the broken bone, twice broken.[7]

The expression "to swallow one's spittle (Job vii. 19) is a metaphor for taking time. It occurs in Al-Harīri (*Makāmah* xv.), where Abu Zaid says, "Let me swallow my spittle, for my road has wearied me," meaning, "Let me rest a little, before proceeding." It is related that Al-Zamakhshari (d. 1144) once said to a person, "Let me swallow my spittle." The other replied, "You may swallow the Tigris and Euphrates," meaning, Take as long as you like.[8]

[1] An account of the Life and Works of Maister Peter Lowe was published by the late Dr. James Finlayson in Glasgow, 1889. The writer's attention was directed to this work by Dr. Walter W. Coats, minister at Brechin.

[2] Also Ps. cxlvii. 9. [3] Cf. Ps. lxxxiv. 4. [4] Cf. Ps. cxlii. 2.

[5] Cf. Ps. xxii .2. [6] Cf. Job xvi. 20; Ps. vi. 6, etc.

[7] Cf. Ps. li. 8., etc.

[8] A student, Mr. A. S. Fulton, has pointed out to the writer a curious expression in Job and its Arabic equivalent. In Job xxi. 24 we read,

In the account of his journey into Arabia, read before the Royal Geographical Society, Mr. Douglas Carruthers mentions that the inferior tribe of Sherrarat are such good shots that one Sherrari is considered equal to three men of another tribe, and that they are left-handed.[1] They resemble in both respects the Israelite tribe of Benjamin (Judges iii. 15; xx. 16).

It is related that 'Ali the son of Abu Talib, shortly before his assassination used to say to his followers, "What prevents the basest of you dyeing this with this?" meaning his beard with the blood of his head. A similar phrase is, "O that this might be laid flat upon this" (meaning the heaven upon the earth) before such and such a (disagreeable) thing should occur. It was used by 'A'isha when she heard that 'Ali had been chosen Chalif, and by 'Abd el-Melik when it was proposed to besiege the holy city of Mecca.[2] This mode of expression does not occur in the Bible, but in *Hamlet*. Polonius says (pointing to his head and shoulder), "Take this from this, if this be otherwise."[3]

It is generally agreed amongst critics that the nineteenth Psalm consists of two independent hymns, "The heavens declare the glory of God" . . . (*vv.* 1–6), and "The law of the Lord is perfect . . . (*v.* 7 ff.). The Psalm is in truth one, and it is the oriental counterpart of the famous saying of Immanuel Kant that the two things which impressed him most were the starry heavens overhead and the moral law within.

"His bones are moistened with marrow," as a description of a fat and sleek person. On linguistic grounds it is necessary to read either, "he watereth with marrow his bones," or simply, "he watereth the marrow of his bones." The Arab satirical poet, Al-Farazdak (d. 729 A.D.) thus describes a person who had abused his hospitality and drunk too much wine:—

"Mukhtár passed by us, Mukhtár of Tayy: then he watered a marrow which was parched and thirsty."

[1] *The Geographical Journal*, 1910, March, pp. 235, 237.

[2] *Al-Fakhri* (ed. Derenbourg), pp. 119, 138, 167.

[3] Act ii., Scene ii., l. 156.

There are very many Biblical expressions, both from the Old and New Testaments, in the Korán and in the traditional sayings of Mohammed, but most of these are quotations and reminiscences rather than independent parallels.

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*LEXICAL NOTES FROM THE PAPYRI.**

XVIII.

οἰκονομέω, οἰκονομία.—The wide sense attaching to these words in late Greek is fully illustrated from Polybius by Dean Robinson on Eph. i. 10. We may add a few citations from the papyri. In EP 9[5] (iii/B.C.) an official summons a subordinate to appear before him bringing with him all his writings and official documents—*πάντα τὰ γράμματα καὶ [εἴ τι ἄλ]λο ὠικονόμηκ[ας] καὶ ὧν πεποίησαι διαγραφῶν τὰ ἀντίγραφα*, and the same general reference attaches to his subst. in EP II[7] (iii/B.C), *ὧν δ' ἂν πράξῃς γ' οἰκ[ονομιῶν], γράφε ἡμῖν ὑπόχειρα.* The important rescript of the Prefect, BM III. p. 125 (A.D. 104), which offers such a striking analogy to Luke ii. 1 ff., requires all persons residing out of their own homes to return to their homes *ἵνα καὶ τὴν συνήθη [οἰ]κονομίαν τῆ[ς ἀπο]γραφῆς πληρώσωσιν*, "that they may carry out the regular order of the census," while in PP II. 11(2)[21] (iii/B.C.=Witk., p. 4) the verb is used of the administration of a sacred office or priesthood, *γίνωσκε με τὴν ἱεροποΐαν ὠικονομημέ[νον]*, and in 38(c)[60 f.] of the management of details in some matter relating apparently to cowherds, *περὶ βούτων ὃν ἂν [τρό]πον οἰκονομήθηι.* In Rein P 7[34] (ii/B.C.) *οἰκονομία* refers to a legal process, *μηδεμίαν οἰκονομίαν κατ' ἐμοῦ ποιεῖσθαι.*

οἰνοπότης.—This N.T. compound, Matt. xi. 19, Luke vii.

* For abbreviations see the February and March (1908) Expositor, pp. 170, 262.