Recent Biblical Archaeology.

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That the lion and the bear inhabited Palestine is inferred from the references to them in the Bible. But in far-off antiquity even the elephant and other giant animals roamed these regions. The geological section of the Wellcome-Marston Research Expedition, under Miss E. W. Gardner, which has been working at Bethlehem and other places, has discovered remains of elephants, panthers, antelopes, giraffes, rhinoceroses, hippopotami, hipparia (ancestors of the horse), and other wild animals. One of the most interesting finds at Bethlehem has been innumerable pieces of the shell of an enormous tortoise, which were found lying close together on a red pebbly bed. In the Huleh district, on the left side of the Jordan, where scientists from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem have been digging, there is evidence of the existence of elephants and other huge animals in the large number of tusks, bones, and molars discovered in the stratification (these were accompanied by flint implements of the Acheulean type). It is certain that elephants were known to the old inhabitants of Egypt, Palestine, and Assyria, by whom they were sometimes hunted for the sake of their ivory and their hides, and an elephant figures on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III. (which reports the homage paid to Assyria by Jehu, King of Israel, and others in 841 B.C.). But it has not been known hitherto that other gigantic animals also stalked the land in far-off times. In Job 40^{15-24} we have a description of 'behemoth' (an intensive Hebrew plural, meaning a 'colossal beast'), and in the next chapter of 'leviathan.' The former is generally supposed to be the hippopotamus, and the latter the crocodile, but the poetical writer seems to have added some traits from other monsters, or perhaps (as some scholars think) from the ancient Babylonian Creation myths.

Archæological discoveries in Mesopotamia within recent years have proved the existence of a whole millennium of civilization there before the historical era began (*c.* 3000 B.C.). In southern Mesopotamia this prehistoric epoch divides itself into three well-defined periods, which it is well to remember (we leave out the Tell Halaf Period which antedates them): (1) The *al-'Ubaid Period* (so named from a site near Ur), lasting about six hundred years (from about 4000 to 3400 B.C.). It is characterized by painted pottery, much of it monochrome (pale greenish), and by stone implements, but engraving on seals was as yet unknown. (2) The *Urûk Period* (Urûk or Biblical Erech is modern Warka, a site excavated by the Germans). This period, dating from about 3400 to 3200 B.C., is characterized by three signs of progress—the invention of writing, the beginning of architecture (including the ziggurat and the column), and the use of seals. Painted pottery was abandoned in favour largely of a lustrous brick-red type, sometimes incised, and with long everted spouts and high handles. Instead of the ordinary seal, we later on find the cylinder, which was a short roller-like body, generally of stone or some hard composition, on the circumference of which some artistic object, usually some animal, was engraved. When the cylinder was rolled on the fresh clay of tablets, which the Mesopotamians used for writing, the object was neatly produced in relief. (3) The *Jemdet-Naṣr Period* (named from a site near Kish, south of Baghdad). This period, lasting from about 3200 to 3050 B.C., is distinguished by a return to painted pottery, of a polychrome nature. The ware is sometimes marked with horizontal lines near the top, and the decoration includes two red colours (vermilion and plum) as well as black and white, while the buff foundation colour makes a fifth. The shapes are those of the preceding period, but more elaborate, and the cylinders have representations not only of animals, but of geometric designs. The three periods referred to carry Mesopotamian prehistory up to what is known as the Early Dynastic Period. The Hebrews of the Old Testament do not appear on the scene till a thousand years later (*c.* 2100 B.C.), when Abraham and his Hebrew followers journeyed northward to Haran, and thence to Canaan.

While there is undoubtedly historic fact at the basis of the Biblical story of the Flood, some people seem to misunderstand the nature of the archæological discoveries at Ur and Kish, which go to support it. They do not appear to realize that the character and level of the diluvial deposit found at these two places differ considerably. The diluvial layer at Ur, which belongs to the al-'Ubaid Period, is anterior by several centuries, perhaps by a thousand years, to that at Kish, and there is no sign, moreover, of any diluvial stratum at Warka (ancient Erech), Telloh (ancient Lagash),

and other centres where it might be expected. At these places nothing interrupts the evolution commencing in the most ancient phase of the al-'Ubaid Period, and continuing right on to the beginning of the Isin and Larsa dynasties, towards the twenty-third century before our era. It was probably, therefore, some local overflow of the Euphrates, or some change for a time in the river bed, that produced the diluvial strata at Ur and Kish. These successive, and no doubt overwhelming inundations, seem to have become magnified by tradition into a single and much wider catastrophe. Though fairly frequent in the course of the centuries (there are signs of three smaller Flood layers below the main one at Kish), they were doubtless of short duration, for the civilization above the clayey deposit at Ur is almost identical with that beneath.

Some further remarkable discoveries have been made in the last season's excavations at Mari (modern *Tell el-Ḥarîri*) on the middle Euphrates, where a powerful Semitic dynasty ruled in the third millennium B.C. In the palace there a huge painted panel (over eight feet long by nearly six high) containing two registers, an upper and a lower, gives in the upper one a picture of the king's investiture at the hands of the goddess Ishtar, and in the lower one a superb artistic picture of two goddesses (wearing three bracelets on each wrist) standing face to face, and each holding in her hand a 'flowing vase' containing a leafy plant. From each vase four streams of 'living water' gush forth, with fishes ascending and descending. The picture is clearly intended to signify the vitalizing powers conferred by divine beings. It has been thought by some to express the tradition of the four rivers issuing from Eden (Gn 2^{10}), but more probably it is a representation of 'living,' *i.e.* 'flowing' water, which stands so frequently in the Bible for the vivifying influences of God's grace (cf. Jer 2^{13}, Zec 14^{8}, Jn 4^{10}, etc.). We find similar representations on steles discovered at Gudea, Susa, and elsewhere, as well as on the cylinder of Ur-dun, and it is evident that this conception of life-giving mystic powers issuing from a divine source is a very ancient one. It is undoubtedly Semitic, though the adornments in the Mari palace, including the paintings and the frescoes with their spirals in imitation of marble, are clearly the work of Minoan artists. The same penetration of Cretan influence, indeed, has been found at Acbana and other places in Syria by Sir Leonard Woolley. The world was one, even in those far-off days.

In a previous article (December 1936) we gave an account of the explorations that were being undertaken at Tyre beneath the sea, to determine the nature and extent of the ancient harbours there. Further reports have now been made by A. Poidebard, the Director, acting under the Académie des Inscriptions. It is known that, long before the time of Joshua, Tyre was one of the most flourishing maritime centres of the ancient world, carrying on commerce with the distant regions of Babylonia, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and other parts. One of its kings, Hiram, entered into a league with Solomon for commercial and other purposes. The two kings joined in an enterprise to send ships to Ophir, and perhaps also united in a coasting trade within the Mediterranean (cf. 1 K 10^{22}), in which case Tyre must have been the home port of some of the Hebrew king's vessels. The city, built on an island (now a headland), had two harbours, a northern and a southern. The latter, which was the chief one, appears to have been immense, and carefully protected by breakwaters, but little has been known about it till recently. Poidebard has employed every scientific assistance, including divers provided with cameras and with implements for submarine trench work, photography of the depths from aeroplanes, observation from the surface by means of a suitable telescope ('lunette de calfat') which could pierce to a depth of twenty metres, excavation on the shore where the ancient quays were, and other reliable means of investigation. The results go to support the view that the ancient southern harbour must have been one of the largest in the world. It was bounded by a mole, which touched the land at both ends, and had a narrow entrance in the middle. The mole was 850 metres long, and from seven to ten broad, constructed with great limestone blocks squarely cut and laid in courses beneath the water, and with rubble concrete on top (faced with similar blocks) above the usual sea-level. The harbour had two docks on the left side of the entrance, one polygonal and the other rectangular, and two on the right side, one polygonal and the other a dry-dock, laid with slabs, where vessels could be repaired. The quays were contiguous to the ancient town and were made of rubble concrete, with huge stone facings and with flagstone paving on top, but most of the remains of these have long since disappeared, having been utilized for building purposes in neighbouring towns, particularly Beirut. Outside the harbour, there was an immense roadstead where ships could ride safely

at anchor, and which was formed by a breakwater jutting out two thousand metres into the open and built of stone blocks along a line of reefs, which are now in a state of disintegration. Parts of the breakwater were still visible as late as 1697, when they were noticed by the English traveller, Maundrell. The whole plan indicates that the ancient mariners of Tyre had taken every precaution against the winds and storms of the Mediterranean, and we need not wonder at their world-wide commercial success.

Some scholars have identified Kadesh-Barnea, where the Hebrews encamped before entering Canaan, with Petra rather than with *'Ain Ḳedeis* (usually translated 'Holy Spring') in the Negeb, about fifty miles south of Beersheba. Many travellers have visited the latter place and written largely on it. Père R. de Vaux, of the École Biblique at Jerusalem, who has recently explored the whole region, would not confine Kadesh-Barnea to *'Ain Ḳedeis*, where there is considerable sterility and aridness, but would include the region to the north-west, especially *'Ain Ḳedeirât* and its fertile valley. He states that much of the water that rises in this latter place (Lawrence found three large springs, each as thick as an arm) is being used in agricultural operations by means of canals and reservoirs, as there are numerous gardens, orchards, and cornfields in the vicinity. He found, however, one powerful spring untouched, which gushes through the solid rock on the level of the soil. There is an ancient fortress here, which may be one of the *migdols* erected in the Negeb by King Uzziah (2 Ch 26^{10}), though it is known to have been constructed on the ruins of a previous stronghold in existence (some scholars believe) in early Israelite times. It is not unlikely that such a defence was required to guard the springs, especially as one of the ancient caravan routes from Gaza and Beersheba to the Red Sea passed down this way. Hiram and Solomon probably used this trade route to the Gulf, regarding it as a right-of-way from time immemorial, and one, moreover, that avoided the political frontier of Egypt. Père de Vaux found the *wādis* or valleys between *Ḳedeirât* and *Ḳedeis* partly cultivated, and it is interesting to note, in view of statements that the Israelites could not have subsisted here, that the tribes inhabiting the district are able to produce sufficient cereals for all their needs.

The Lachish Letters throw a useful light on the method of signalling between cities in Judah in time of siege or invasion. In Letter No. IV., sent (as all the letters appear to have been) from some observation post a few miles from Lachish, the writer states that he and his party were watching for the signals of this city, as they could not see those of Azekah. The word which he uses for 'signals' (*masēth*) is the same as we find in Jer 6^{1} ('raise up a signal on Beth-haccherem'). Such signals, seen many miles away, probably consisted of fire or smoke. Cf. Jg 20^{38}, 'Now the appointed sign between the men of Israel and the liers in wait was, that they should make a signal (*masēth*) of smoke rise up out of the city.' Pieces of wood, wrapped with some absorbent material and saturated in oil, were placed in a brazier or fire-pan on the city wall, and set aflame. In this way, by means of such flames, the fortified cities of Judah could communicate with Jerusalem and with each other in times of danger, just as beacons on successive hill-tops can carry a message through a whole land. At the time of the letters, the armies of Nebuchadrezzar were besieging Jerusalem, Lachish, and Azekah (587 B.C.).

The question as to where the outpost was from which the letters came is an interesting one. The terms of Letter IV. seem to show that it was nearer to Lachish than to Azekah. The position seems to correspond with ancient Mareshah, now known as *Tell Sandahannah*, which lies about three and a half miles north-east of Lachish, and eight miles south of Azekah (*Tell Zakariyeh*), and occupied a strategic position, adjoining the main route from Jerusalem to Eglon, and thence to Gaza and Egypt. It was a suitable place for a military observation post, as a party could easily be hidden in one of the extensive caves or rock-chambers with which the hill is riddled. If Mareshah be the same as Moresheth-Gath, as is generally believed among scholars, it was the home of the prophet Micah, and this would account for its pro-Jeremiah tendencies, so manifest in the letters, for Micah also proclaimed that Zion 'shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps' (Jer 26^{18}). Professor Torczyner holding, as he does, that several of the letters concern Uriah, would locate the post at Kirjath-Jearim, this prophet's native town, but if this place be *Enab* or *Abu Ghōsh*, as seems likely, it is twenty-five miles distant from Lachish, and it would be impossible to distinguish signals so far away. Albright would place the post at *Tell Beit Mirsim* (Debir), but this location is ruled out by the fact that, according to Letter XVIII., the post was somewhere on the regular route from Lachish to Jerusalem.