

Recent Biblical Archaeology.

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The Letters and Inscriptions of Khammurabi, King of Babylon. By L. W. King. Vol. i. London: Luzac & Co. 1898.

MR. KING has produced an interesting and valuable work, though, until the second volume is published with the translations of the cuneiform texts contained in it, it will be, except for Assyriologists, a sealed book. In the introduction, however, the author has drawn attention to what the biblical student will doubtless consider the most important result of his researches. And the mere fact that copies are given in it of the autograph letters of a contemporary of Abraham lends to it a unique interest.

Among the recent acquisitions of the British Museum which have come from Babylonia are a number of letters written by Khammurabi,—or Ammurapi, as Mr. Pinches has shown the name was also pronounced,—whose date was about 2300 B.C., if we are to believe the native chronologists. Mr. King reduces the date by a century, upon what grounds he does not tell us, but even so it is difficult to reconcile the Babylonian chronology with that of the Old Testament. Khammurabi is the Amraphel of Genesis, the deliverer of his country from the yoke of Elamite supremacy, and the most illustrious representative of the so-called first dynasty of Babylon. Under him Babylon was made the capital of a united Babylonia, a position which it never subsequently lost. As I showed years ago in my Hibbert Lectures, his reign was marked by a great literary revival, and may therefore be considered to represent an era in Babylonian history.

Dr. Scheil was the first to discover the existence of letters of Khammurabi. He found three in the Museum of Constantinople, which he has since published and translated. Another in the Louvre has been published and translated by M. Thureau Danguin (whose name Mr. King uniformly misspells Danj'in); and now Mr. King himself has found forty-four others in the British Museum. To these must be added a few more unpublished ones belonging to Lord Amherst of Hackney, to which I have referred in my *Early History of the Hebrews*.

Mr. King's copies are executed with great care

and accuracy, and he has avoided the fashionable mistake of printing them on so small a scale as to be almost illegible. He has also made his collection complete by adding to it the Louvre and one of the Constantinople texts, as well as the other known inscriptions of Khammurabi, together with copies of letters from three of the successors of that prince. It is hardly necessary to say that all the letters are upon clay, the usual writing material of the Babylonians. The Babylonian postal service had been established at an early date; it was already in full working in the age of Sargon and Naram-Sin (3800 B.C.), and the clay seals with the names of those monarchs, which took the place of stamps, are now in the Louvre.

Mr. King's introduction is mainly occupied with Dr. Scheil's alleged discovery of the name of Chedor-laomer in one of the letters of Khammurabi. He has made it unnecessarily polemical by dragging in Mr. Pinches' discovery of the names of Chedor-laomer and Tidal, which has nothing to do with Dr. Scheil's readings, and is in no way affected by them. His attempt to deprive his colleague at the Museum of the honour of this discovery proves only that he has still much to learn in Assyriology, and the statement with which he concludes—that 'no such discovery' as that of the name of Chedor-laomer 'has been made,' is contrary to fact.

That Dr. Scheil's Chedor-laomer, however, is the product of erroneous copying, Mr. King has clearly shown. The name read, *Ku-dur-la-akh-gamar*, ought to be *(sa)-su I-nu-ukh-sa-mar*, which is distinctly written on one of the British Museum tablets. The photograph of the Constantinople tablet, published by Mr. King, gives *su* instead of *ku*, though the next character might be *dur* (or rather *tur*) as well as *i*, and the two last characters are not visible in it. Inukh-samar was one of Khammurabi's officials.

Along with the name of Kudur-lakhgamar the theory falls to the ground that the Sin-idinam, to whom Khammurabi writes his letters, was the

king of Larsa of that name, who had been driven from his throne by the Elamites. Nowhere is there any trace of such having been the case; on the contrary, Sin-idinam is once called *gal Martu* (not *Martu-ki*, as Mr. King's translation seems to suppose), 'the chief of the Amorites.' He appears to have been the governor of one of the Canaanite settlements in Babylonia. 'Martu,' by the way, is not a synonym of the Elamite district of Emudbal, as Mr. King suggests after a discarded conjecture of Tiele and Winckler, and the 'country of Martu,' or rather 'Amurrû,' denoted Syria. This fact gives interest to the inscription just published by Dr. Winckler, and numbered 66 by Mr. King, in which Khammurabi is called simply 'king of Amur[rû].' The inscription is dedicated to the Canaanitish goddess [As]ratu or Asherah, and is difficult to translate, owing, apparently, to a non-Babylonian use of the Sumerian ideographs.¹ It is accompanied by a very remarkable figure in relief, a photograph of which will be found in Tomkins' *Abraham and*

¹ In the third line a word Aduma (or Arama) occurs, which may be intended for Edom (or Aram?).

his Age, plate ii. The dedicator of the monument Ibirum-Amur[rû], 'the governor of the river . . .,' must have been of Canaanitish parentage, but even so his giving Khammurabi no other title than that of 'king of the Amorite land' is noteworthy.

From a historical point of view, the letters of Khammurabi are disappointing. Perhaps the most important reference contained in them is the notice of '240 soldiers,' 'who had deserted (*iptu[ru]*) from Assyria (not "to" as Mr. King renders it), the country of Situllum.' But their value does not lie in the new historical facts which they may bring to light. It consists rather in the light which they throw on the culture and civilization of Babylonia and Western Asia in the Abrahamic age, and on the daily life of its kings and peoples. What would not the classical scholar give for the autograph letters of Plato or Aristotle? and yet here we have preserved to us, uncontaminated by the hands of later scribes, the actual correspondence of a king against whom Abraham waged battle, and who is mentioned in the Book of Genesis.

Sermonettes on the Golden Texts.

BY THE REV. J. S. MAVER, M.A., ABERDEEN.

I.

'If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.'—JOHN viii. 36.

THERE is no question that the freedom of Christ, above all freedom, is worthy of the name. And yet, perhaps there is more said in the Bible about bonds and limitations in connexion with Christ, than about freedom. A yoke is spoken of, and a burden, and a bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. What are we to make of the seeming contradiction?

There used to be a story in the school-books about a ship-captain, who, when at home, would tell his children about the strange places he had visited, and the manners and customs of the various peoples he had been among. One night, however, he played a trick upon them, and began to tell, unknowingly to them, of their own country,—how he had lived among a people who were

fond of using a certain kind of grease along with their food, and who wore clothing taken from an animal's back, and made fire of something dug out of the ground; till, by and by, a bright little one saw through the trick, and exclaimed, 'Why, father, that is not a foreign country, it is our own land you are telling us about.'

And so, though the Bible speaks of obedience and bonds and limitations, it is possible for us to make a great discovery, and, by entering into that obedience, and under the yoke spoken of, to see things in a gloriously new light, such as might well make us exclaim, 'In the name of all that's good, this is not captivity, this is freedom in the grandest acceptation of the word.'

Suppose we take an example. Take the case of the Apostle Peter. In early days, in the happy irresponsible period of childhood, he went whither he would, he went out and in, he 'ran about the braes, and pu'd the gowans fine,' or whatever