

The Jewish Papyri of Elephantinê.

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WE have long been awaiting with impatience the publication of the early Jewish papyri discovered by the German excavators at Elephantinê, and the work has just appeared in a form worthy both of the importance of the subject and of the scholarship and reputation of its editor.¹ It could not have been put into more competent hands than those of Professor Sachau, and the time and labour expended upon its preparation have been well spent.

The discovery of the Mond Papyri, edited by Dr. Cowley and myself, excited the German and French Governments to explore the remains of the Jewish settlement in the island of Elephantinê, opposite Assuan, the existence of which had been disclosed by them. The Germans were the first in the field, and Dr. Rubensohn soon laid bare the ruins of the old Jewish quarter, and discovered in three of the houses a number of papyri belonging to the age of Ezra and Nehemiah. The most important of these have already been given to the world by Professor Sachau. They consist of copies of a petition presented to Bagoas, the Persian governor of Judæa, and the two sons of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, in the year 407 B.C., relative to the destruction of the temple of Yeho (Yahu) at Elephantinê by the revolted Egyptians, together with the reply of Bagoas. We learn from them that the temple had been built in the days of the Pharaohs, and had been spared by Cambyses when 'he destroyed all the temples of the gods of Egypt,' and that it was constructed on a large and magnificent scale. The beds of some of the sandstone columns, indeed, on which the roof was supported, I have been so fortunate as to find in the quarry from which they were extracted, and they show that the columns were as large as those of the principal Egyptian sanctuaries. The petition further makes it clear that the ritual of the temple was carried out in accordance with the Levitical law; in other words, that the prescriptions of the so-called Priestly Code were clearly observed when the temple was built.

¹ *Aramäische Papyrus und Ostraka aus einer Jüdischen Militär-Kolonie zu Elephantine.* Edited by Eduard Sachau. 2 vols. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1911.

The additional papyri, more or less mutilated, which are now edited by Professor Sachau, consist of official and private letters, of lists of names of persons, with the amount of silver—2 shekels per man—each had to pay 'to the god Yeho,' of business documents, of ostraca and similar texts, and of two literary compositions of the highest interest and value. One of these is an Aramaic copy of the Behistun inscription of Darius I., in which the Persian monarch gives an account of his reign; the other is nothing less than the romance of Ahikar, the wise man of the East (called Achiacharus in the Book of Tobit), which is thus shown to have been a work of far older date than has hitherto been supposed. Enough of the papyrus remains to show that the whole story was contained in it, including the two series of proverbs, parables, and fables associated with Ahikar's name. It bears witness to the existence of a considerable literature in Aramaic, partly romantic, partly didactic in character, which the Jews would have read by the side of their religious literature.

One of the most curious facts that have resulted from the discovery and decipherment of the papyri is that the Jewish settlement at Elephantinê and Assuan was a military colony. The Jews formed the Persian garrison which guarded the southern frontier of Egypt and kept watch over the native Egyptians, just as the Greeks did in the Delta; hence their influence and importance, as well as the favour they enjoyed at the Persian Court. Like the Greeks, also, they had already occupied the same position under the twenty-sixth Egyptian dynasty, and the long discredited letter of Aristæus is thus proved to be correct in the statement that the Jews 'had been sent as allies to assist Psammetichus in fighting against the king of the Ethiopians.'

Professor Sachau does not venture to push back the foundation of the colony beyond the reign of Psammetichus II. But, as I have pointed out in the *Expositor*, the king in question must have been Psammetichus I. He alone was familiarly known to the Greeks as Psammetichus; Psammetichus II. was Psammis. Zephaniah, moreover, is decisive

as showing that the Jews were not only already serving against the Ethiopians in Southern Egypt, but had even made their way into the Sudan south of the Sobat in the age of Josiah (Zeph 2¹² 3¹⁰), while in the same age Necho, the predecessor of Psammetichus II., claimed to be suzerain of Judah (2 K 23^{20, 34}). It may be noted that expert opinion is now returning to the old view that the Greek and Phœnician inscriptions at Abu-Simbel belong to the reign of the first Psammetichus.

The attitude of the Jews in Elephantinê towards what we may call foreign deities is that of some of the Psalms. The national God, to whom their temple was erected, and with whose name their own names were compounded, was 'God of the gods,' 'a great king above all gods,' whose like did not exist among the other gods. But the puritanic intolerance of a Jeremiah was neither understood nor apparently even dreamed of; Anat-Bethel and Ashem-Bethel received their tribute as well as Yeho, and Professor Sachau may be right in thinking that shrines or altars of these deities stood in the neighbourhood of the temple. If so, it would only be in accordance with pre-exilic custom at Jerusalem as described by Ezekiel

(ch. 8). The post-exilic exclusiveness of Yahweh-worship was due to a combination of the prophetic teaching with the influence of Zoroastrianism and opposition to Babylonian polytheism, and certain of the post-exilic Psalms are evidence that even in post-exilic Jerusalem it was long in becoming a matter of orthodoxy.

It is clear that a considerable literature is likely to grow up around the publication of the Berlin papyri from Elephantinê, and that many fashionable theories about the books of the Old Testament will have to be revised. One thing at all events is certain; the Jews at Elephantinê saw nothing inconsistent with the law of Deuteronomy in having a temple of their own in Egypt, where the ritual and sacrifices were the same as those at Jerusalem. The temple of Onias had a precedent and a predecessor in a temple which for about a century was the only Jewish temple in the world and might therefore have been regarded as the religious centre and gathering-place of the nation. What is remarkable is that though the Jewish garrison in Elephantinê bore Hebrew names it wrote and read in Aramaic. As Professor Sachau says, 'the fact is strange.'

Contributions and Comments.

The God Ashima of Hamath.

IN 2 K 17³⁰ אַשִּׁמָּה (perhaps merely an inaccurate *scriptio plena* for אַשְׁמָה) is mentioned as a god of Hamath before the twin-gods of the Avvites (Nibhaz and Tartak) and of the Sepharvites (Adram-melek and 'Anam-melek [cf. Bab. Almu and Allamu?]). In all Aramaic-speaking countries a vocalization of the dental nasal into the simple *spiritus lenis* is very common (e.g. *Sin* into *Sî'i*, *iddin* into *iddi*, Haran in Media (To 11¹ into הַרָא (1 Ch 5²⁶), Akhamatânu = Ekbatana into אַחְמָתָא), so that, in connexion with אַשְׁמָה, it is natural to think of the well-known god Eshmun.

There would then be a feminine form אַשְׁמָתָא (Ashmatt from Ashmant, or Eshmutt from Eshmunt) in Am 8¹⁴, 'They that swear by the *Ashmat* of Samaria, and say, As thy God, O Dan, liveth,' where the context urgently demands the name of a god (instead of 'They that swear by the

sin of Samaria'). With the connexion between Israel and Hamath in religious matters compare Sargon's Hamathaic contemporary *Ilu-bi'di*. His name has a variant *Ia'u-bi'di*; therefore he must have been an Israelite. FRITZ HOMMEL.

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'Peter and John.'

THERE is a notable change between Mk 5³⁷ ('John the brother of James') and Ac 12² ('he killed James the brother of John'). The first phrase reflects early conditions, when St. James, presumably the elder brother, was the leading figure. (From what other 'John' was it needful to distinguish James' brother? Was it from him 'whose surname was Mark?') The second phrase reflects a later time when James the son of Zebedee was nearly forgotten. He must have been an