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ARTICLE III.

THE INSCRIPTION OF MESHA, KING OF MOAB.

BY REV. WILLIAM HAYES WARD, NEW YORK.

M. CH. CLERMONT-GANNEAU, interpreter to the French Consulate at Jerusalem, first brought to the knowledge of the world, in a letter dated Jan. 16th, 1870, the existence of a historical inscription by Mesha, king of Moab, who flourished nearly nine centuries before Christ. He has published two *fac-similes* of the inscription, each accompanied by a translation. Himself but an amateur, his work has been taken up by De Vogüé, the learned palaeographer of France, by Derenbourg, a well-known French student of Phenician antiquities, by Schlottmann, the ablest German commentator on Phenician remains, and in England by Deutsch, in a most tantalizing, fragmentary way. Neubauer has published English and German translations; and notes by Renan, Rawlinson, Senior Sachs, Harkavy, and other writers, have fallen under our notice. As the inscription is in itself of so great interest and value, and has attracted so much attention, and as the original form of it is inaccessible to the American public, while no transcription into the ordinary Hebrew type has been made in this country, except in one or two Jewish newspapers of narrow circulation, a careful discussion of this manuscript in the light of the best European authorities that have come within our reach, is, we think, called for.

A Prussian, by the name of Klein, was the first to learn, in 1868, that this monument existed in the ancient Dibon. So far as we can learn, he tried to secure it, and perhaps in time might have done so. Captain Warren, of the Palestine Exploration Survey, represents that he was himself restrained from attempting to secure it by his respect to the prior claim of the Prussian. M. Clermont-Ganneau, who had become

aware of its existence, whether independently or through Klein, does not appear, felt no such scruples. The Bedouins of whom he inquired reported the existence in Dhibân, the ancient Dibon, on the east side of the Dead Sea, of a large block of black rock covered with characters. From the descriptions he received he suspected them to be Phœnician; and when a rough copy of part of it was brought by an Arab, proving that such was the case, he resolved to obtain an impression at any price. Accordingly, he sent to Dibon a very intelligent young Arab, Yaqoub Caravacca, accompanied by a couple of horsemen. With some difficulty he obtained leave from the tribe who held possession of it, to take an impression. During the operation, one of those quarrels occurred, so frequent among the Bedouins. Yaqoub was struck with a lance, and the three men, with difficulty, escaped on their horses. But, with an admirable presence of mind, one of poor Yaqoub's companions stripped off the wet paper from the stone, and carried off the torn fragments. M. Ganneau received the impression, but in a miserable condition. The paper was torn and crumpled in drying, and it was only by holding the fragments between the eye and a candle, or the rays of the sun, that he was able to detect the characters. M. Ganneau then treated with the sheikh of the powerful tribe of Beni-Sakher to secure for him the stone, paying him in advance two hundred medjidies, and running a great risk of never seeing stone or money or Arab again. In two weeks the honest sheikh brought back the money, saying that it was impossible to get the stone, as the owners of it had broken it up, having got the impression that the Turkish government was somehow making it a pretext to interfere with their liberty. More probably they found that the stone was of value, and thought that if broken up they could obtain more for a score of rocks than for one. Fire and water had done the vandal work. Some time later M. Ganneau received from another sheikh excellent impressions of the two larger fragments, and several small fragments of the stone itself with the actual characters on them.

Captain Warren also received from an Arab whom he employed impressions and fragments. These impressions of M. Ganneau he has published in two *fac-similes*, both of which are before us, and the last of which, in the April number of the *Revue Archæologique*, is the basis of our own, as of other translations. We have carefully compared with this text the photographs of Captain Warren's "squeezes" which we have received. These are all the original sources now available, although there is said to exist a copy of several lines made by Klein. Of the original monument about two thirds, including six hundred letters, are now in Jerusalem, having been secured mainly by M. Ganneau. But they can add very little to what we already have.

† The stone was about thirty-nine inches high, twenty inches wide, and twenty inches thick. The engraved face was of about the shape of an ordinary gravestone, rounded at the top, and is indicated quite exactly by the outline of the transcription given on another page. The stone is a very heavy, compact black basalt. Its extreme hardness is the reason why the letters are engraved quite superficially. It is a point of great interest that the words are separated by points, and the sentences by perpendicular lines. This seems to have been, then, an antique way of writing in the Phœnician character. It is of the greatest aid in translation.

In the accompanying transcription from the Moabite or antique Phœnician character, those letters which are doubtful are indicated by lines above them. Letters in brackets are conjectural readings to fill *lacunæ*. The length of the vacant spaces indicates quite accurately the *lacunæ* in Ganneau's *fac-simile*; and in this respect the present copy is superior to any transcription that has been published in Europe.

אֶךְ מִשֵּׁנִי בֶן כְּמִשׁוֹנְרָב]. מֶלֶךְ מֹאָב [חֲדָר]	1
יִבְנִי אֲבִי מֶלֶךְ עַל מֹאָב. לְלִצְנָן טָהָ וְאֶךְ מֶלֶךְ	2
הִי אַחֲרֵי אֲבִי וְאֶשֶׁת הַבַּמֶּת זֹאת לְכַמֶּשׁ. בְּקִרְחָתוֹב[ת זוֹהִי]	3
שֵׁשׁ כִּי חֲשַׁנְי מִכַּל הַשְּׁלֶכֶן. וְכִי הָרָאִי. בְּכָל מִנְאִי עֵמֶ[ר]	4
יִ מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיַעֲזֵנוּ אֹתוֹ. מֹאָב יִמָּן רִבֵּן כִּיחֲאֶמֶת. כְּמִשׁ בְּאֶ[ר]	5
צַח וַיַּחֲלַפְח בְּנֵה דָאֵמֶר גַּם הָא אֶעֱזֵנוּ אֹתוֹ. מֹאָב כִּימִי אִמְרִי. כִּי[ר]	6
וְאִרְאֵה בַח וּבְחַח וְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבִר אֲבִיר. עַלֶם. וְיִדְשׁ עִמְרִי אֹתוֹ. אִרְ[ר]	7
ף מְחֻדָּבֵא. וְיִשְׁבֵה בַח	8
בַּח. כְּמִשׁ. כִּימִי וְאֲבִי. אֹתוֹ. בְּעַל מִעֵן. וְאֶשֶׁת. בַּח. וְאִ	9
אֹתוֹ. קִרְיָהֶן. וְאֶשֶׁת. גֵּר. [יִשְׁבֵה] בְּאֶרְץ. [קִרְיָהֶן] מִעַלֶם. וְיִבְנֵה. לַת מֶלֶךְ[רִי]	10
שְׂרָאֵל. אֹת [קִרְיָהֶן] וְאֶלְחַחֶם. בְּקִרְיָהֶן. וְאֶחֻזַּח וְאֶחֻזַּח. אֹת כָּל הַ[יִשְׁבֵה]	11
[ב]קִרְיָהֶן. רִיחַ לְכַמֶּשׁ. וְלִמְאָב וְאֶשֶׁת. מִשְׁמֵאֵל	12
ח. לִפְנֵי. כְּמִשׁ. כְּקִרְיָהֶן וְאֶשֶׁת. בַּח. אֹתוֹ. אֶשֶׁת. שְׂרָה. וְאִתְ[ש]	13
שְׂחַרְחָה וְיִמְרֵה. לִי. כְּמִשׁ. לָךְ. אֶחֻזַּח. אֹתוֹ. גְּבַח. עַלֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל	14
הַלָּךְ. בְּלִילָה וְאֶלְחַחֶם. בַּח. מִרְקַע חֲשַׁחְרָהֶן. עִיר. צַחֶרֶם וְאֶחֻזַּח וְאִ	15
[חֲרִישׁ]תוֹ. וְאֶחֻזַּח. כָּלֵה. שְׁבַעַת. אֶלְפָן	16
מֵהָ כִי לֹאשְׁחֵר. כְּמִשׁ. חֲחִרְמִי[חִיחֶם] וְאֶקַּח מִשְׁמֵ [אִתְ]	17
[ב]לָה חִיחִת. וְאֶקְרַבְחֶם. לִפְנֵי כְּמִשׁ וְמֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל. בְּלָ[ח]	18
[אִתְ] יִחְזֵק. וְיִשְׁבֵה בַח. בַּהֲלַחְחֵהֶן. כִּי וְיִגְרַשׁתוֹ. כְּמִשׁ מִפְּנֵי[ר]	19
[ו]אֶקַּח. מִמְּאָב מֵאֶרֶץ אֶשֶׁת. כָּל רִשָּׁתָהּ וְאֶשֶׁת. בִּרְיָהֶן. וְאֶחֻזַּח	20
לִשְׁפָתָהּ. עַלֶם. דִּיבְנֵן אֶךְ. בְּנִחֵה. קִרְחָתוֹ. חֲמַת. הִיעֲרָה. וְחַמְ[ת]	21
חֲפַל. וְאֶךְ בְּנִחֵה טַעֲרָתוֹ. וְאֶךְ בְּנִחֵה. מִגְדַּלְחָה וְאִ	22
קִ. בְּנִחֵה. בַּח. מֶלֶךְ. וְאֶךְ עֲשָׂתִי. כָּלֵה. חֲאֶשׁ[רַת מִ]ן. בְּקִרְבִּי[ב]	23
[ח]קִרְיָהֶן וְבִיר. אֶךְ. בְּקִרְבֵה. חֲקֵה. בְּקִרְחָתוֹ. וְאִמְרִי. לְכָל חֲכָם. עֲשֹׂו	24
[ל]בִּי אֶשֶׁת. בִּיר. בְּבִיתָהּ וְאֶךְ. כִּרְחֵה. תִּמְכַּרְחָה. לְקִרְחָתוֹ. בְּאֶ[רְח]	25
יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶךְ. בְּנִחֵה [ע]רְפֵר וְאֶךְ. עֲשָׂתִי. חֲמַסְלַת. בְּאֶרֶץ	26
[אֶב]רְחָה בְּנִחֵה. בַּח. כִּי חֲרַסְתָּהּ אֶךְ. בְּנִחֵה בְּצִיר. כִּי עֲזָבְתָּהּ חֲא	27
שֵׁ. דִיבְנֵן. חֲמַשְׁתֵּן. כִּי. כָּל. דִּיבְנֵן. בְּשִׁמְצָה וְאֶךְ מֶלֶךְ	28
שִׁאֲתוֹ. בְּקִרְיָהֶן. אֶשֶׁת. יִסְפָּחֵה. כָּל. הָאֶרֶץ וְאֶךְ בְּנִחֵה[ר]	29
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ן הָאֶרֶץ וְחִירְקֵה. יִשְׁבֵה. בַּח בִּיר	31
[ו]יִמְרֵה. לִי. כְּמִשׁ. רִדֵה. הֲלַחְחֶם. בְּחִירְקֵה וְאִ	32
ח כְּמִשׁ כִּימִי וְעַל ח ש	33
ש ק וְאִ	34

- 1 I am Mesha son of Chemosh [nadab] King of Moab, [the D-]
 2 ibonite. | My father reigned over Moab thirty years and I reigned
 3 after my father. | And I made this high place to Chemosh in Karhah [and
 4 this House of Sal-
 5 vation because he has saved me from all the attacks and because he has
 6 caused me to look on all my enemies. | O [m r] i
 7 was King of Israel, and he afflicted Moab many days, because Chemosh was
 8 angry with his [land]. |
 9 And his son succeeded him, and he also said, "I will afflict Moab." | In my
 10 days he spake thus,
 11 And I looked on him and on his house, | and Israel kept continually perish-
 12 ing. And Omri held possession of the land (?) of
 13 Medeba. And there dwelt in it [Omri and his son and his grand] son forty
 14 years. [But]
 15 Chemosh [restored] it in my days. | And I built Baal-Meon and I made in it
 16 ———— And I [besieged] (?)
 17 Kirjathaim. | And the men of Gad had dwelt of old in the land [of Kirja-
 18 thaim]. And the King of Israel built
 19 for him [Kirjathaim] | And I fought against the city and took it. | And I
 20 slew all the [men of]
 21 the city, a spectacle to Chemosh and to Moab. | And I brought back from
 22 thence the [altar of Jehovah, and put]
 23 it before Chemosh in Kerioth. | And I caused to dwell therein the men of
 24 Shiran; and the men of —
 25 Sharath. | And Chemosh said to me, "Go and take Nebo from Israel." |
 26 [And I —]
 27 went in the night and I fought against it from the overspreading of the dawn,
 28 till noon. | And I [took it, and I]
 29 [utterly destroyed] it, and I slew all of it seven thousand —
 30 — for to Ashtor Chemosh had [I] devoted [them] and I took from thence
 31 the
 32 vessels of Jehovah, and I presented them before Chemosh. | And the King
 33 of Israel [built]
 34 Jahaz and dwelt in it while he was fighting against me. | And Chemosh drove
 35 him from [before me; and]
 36 I took from Moab 200 men, all told; | and I attacked (?) Jahaz and took it,
 37 joining it to Dibon. | I built Karhah, the wall of the forests and the wall of
 38 the hill [Ophel]. | And I built its gates and I built its towers. | and
 39 I made a royal palace, and I made reservoirs for the collection of the waters
 40 in the midst
 41 of the city. | And there was no cistern in the midst of the city in Karhah;
 42 and I said to all the people, "Make
 43 for you each man a cistern in his house." And I dug ditches (?) for Karhah
 44 [in the road
 45 to] Israel. | I built [A]roer, and I made the high way to Arnon.
 46 I built Beth-Bamoth, for it was ruined, | and I built Bozrah, for it was
 47 deserted (?).
 48 And I set in Dibon garrisons (?); for all Dibon was submissive. | And I
 49 filled (?)
 50 — in the cities which I added to the land. | And I built
 51 — and the temple of Diblathaim, | and the temple of Baal-Moon, and I raised
 52 up there —
 53 — the land. | And there dwelt in Horonaim —
 54 Chemosh said to me, "Go, fight against Horonaim." | And I —
 55 — Chemosh in my days
 56 * * * * *

COMMENTARY ON THE INSCRIPTION.

Fortunately the general sense of the inscription is clear. The language is simple and quite Hebraic, and with the exception of a few difficult words, the task of the translator is mainly to exercise his ingenuity in filling out the gaps.

L. 1. M. Ganneau, as we understand, did not find on his impressions even a trace of the last part of the name Chemosh [nadab]. This “-nadab” is but a guess, suggested by a Chemosh-nadab of Moab, whose name occurs on a prism of Sennacherib. The suggestion of supplying [נָדָב] at the end of the line is due to Noldeke, and is no doubt right. The kings of Edom in Gen. xxxvi. 31-39 are each characterized by the name of their native cities; as Belah of Dinhabah, Jobab of Bozrah, etc. Schlottmann, Derenbourg, and Neubauer had all read “[son of] Ibni.”

L. 3. The word קִרְחָה in biblical Hebrew means *baldness*. In that sense it is used by Isaiah and Jeremiah in their almost identical prophecy concerning Moab. Here it must mean Dibon, or, more probably, a quarter of Dibon,—some bald hill or acropolis that formed part of the town. Thus we have קִרְחָה used in the sense of a bald, bare, Moabite hill, in Num. xxiii. 3, the only case in which the word is used in prose, from קִרְחָה, *to scrape, to rub smooth*. We need a clearer view of the geography of Dibon to understand it fully. The meaning *Esplanade*, given by Gauneau, is quite inadmissible; and it does not suit the context to identify Karhah with Kirheres, as some have done. The missing words at the end of the line are read in various ways. All the students thus far have placed the perpendicular line that separates the clauses after בקִרְחָה, beginning the next clause with the letter ב. We are persuaded that this is wrong, because the perpendicular line in question, which we make a part of a letter, rather than a mark of division, is preceded by the point which separates words; and in no other case in the inscription is a point used with a line. Besides, no suggested filling of the space makes the beginning of a new sentence, except Ganneau's, who says, “[I am called Me]sha, because, etc.” But we cannot conceive how this could be put into the right Hebrew letters to fill the space. Schlottmann and Derenbourg read ב[בִּרְיָה]שָׁה, “a high place of salvation,” (cf. Ebenezer, a stone of help), and Neubauer, who does not think this good Hebrew, suggests ב[גִּלְלֵי הַיָּהוָה]שָׁה, “because of the salvation.” Both of these are strained, and put the dividing line

where there is scarce a comma needed. Nöldeke gives it up as insoluble. The straight line must be part of a letter, because preceded by a dot. It may either be ג, י, ר, or ק. There is no room for other letters which contain this element. The reading we have suggested makes good sense, and there is just room for it. The only other possible reading we can conjecture, is יב[גדתי י]שג, "and I clothed myself with salvation," cf. Ps. cxxxii. 16, a reading which requires a Moabite use of כָּנַר in its original sense of "to cover," for which Hebrew uses לָבַשׁ. We have several parallel instances of the differences between Hebrew and Moabite usage.

L. 4. The word הַשִּׁלְכָן is very blind; we have translated, "the attacks." Perhaps it is a participle, attackers. The reading is doubtful, but we can suggest nothing better, unless the reading needs correction to הַשִּׁלְכָן, *the kings*, or הַשִּׁלְשָׁן, *the rulers*. At the close of this line all commentators fill up the blank so as to read "Omri." But as this makes the construction a little awkward, Nöldeke suggests that the two doubtful letters may read קט as well as עט, and that there is barely room for קט[עמר]ר, "Omri arose."

L. 5. כִּירְחֹנָה is a very awkward word. The sense is plain enough. It would seem that it ought to read כִּי רְחֹנָה. Perhaps the stone-cutter dropped a ה, or perhaps a י, although we should not expect the imperfect. It is hardly probable that two Yodhs could have been contracted into one, and כִּי־רְחֹנָה is almost equally improbable.

L. 6. Our reading of כַּן at the end of the line is quite problematical, but, we think, quite as good as that of Schlottmann, who inserts כַּמֶּשׁ, "In my day Chemosh said, and I will look on him and on his house." Neubauer's אַחֲלֵךְ could hardly exist beside the contracted imperative לֵךְ, l. 14, and, besides, is too long, as is probably כַּמֶּשׁ; and we may add, that the shape of the first imperfect letter of the word forbids its being א. In favor of the construction with כַּן, cf. 1 Kings xxii. 8, אֵל יֵאָמֵר חֲמֵלֶךָ כֵּן.

L. 7. It would really seem, if our translation, which is the only easy one, be correct, that we ought to have a full stop after עלט. Derenbourg avoids the difficulty by making עלט here and in l. 10 the name of a town, Almon, cf. Num. xxxi. 46; but this is harsh. The phrase אַבְדָּתָ עִם כְּמוֹשׁ reminds us of אַבְדָּר יִשְׂרָאֵל אַבְדָּר אַבְדָּר.

"Woe unto thee, O Moab!

Thou art perishing, O people of Chemosh!"

found in the old song recorded in Num. xxi. 29. We should expect

“the land,” or “plain” of Medeba to fill the gap at the end of the line. The doubtful פ or ק at the beginning of the next line suggests פק, “valley,” if the geography would allow, or more plausibly בקה for the Hebrew בְּקָעָה, “a plain.” But as Captain Warren’s photograph shows no sign of פ, but does suggest the last stroke of צ, very likely the reading should be simply ארץ, “the land.”

L. 8. This long gap of about twelve letters is the most unfortunate of any in the whole inscription, as it would have aided us in its chronology. It may be [צמרי ואחרי אהאב], “Omri and after him Ahab his son,” as Nöldeke suggests, or it may be [הוא ובנה ובן], he and his son and his grandson,” as Senior Sachs reads in the *Revue Israelite*, April 21. In this line שח (from שָׁנָה) is certainly “years.” It is used in this sense in the second Sidonian Royal Inscription and in the first *Umm-el-Awâmid* Phœnician Inscription, and yet Neubauer says, in the *Academy* for April, that “in this sense it is neither Hebrew, Phœnician, Arabic, nor Chaldee.” For the singular שח instead of the plural, cf. שְׁלֹשִׁים יום, Num. xx. 29. The passably good suggestion at the end of the line בוח[יירש] “restored it,” is from Nöldeke. Schlottmann reads [יירא], which takes almost too much room; and Neubauer’s six letters are quite inadmissible.

L. 9. How the lacuna at the end of this line should be filled we cannot tell. Schlottmann conjectures [ואשמר] in the sense of “be-leaguered.” There is too much space for [ואבן].

L. 11. The gap in this line Schlottmann fills with חקר which is too short for the space. Neubauer inserts יעזר, “Jaazer,” a pure guess. We prefer to repeat קרייתך, both here and in l. 10.

L. 12. ריח is a contraction for רִיחָה, “a spectacle,” a word which we find in the Kethibh of Eccl. v. 10. Derenbourg makes it a similar contraction from the verb ריח = רצח, “to please,” and refers to the fact that the name of the Moabitess Ruth is written ריח in Aramaic. The haphazard continuation of this line given in the translation roughly indicates the general sense.

L. 13. The unfortunate break at the end of this line makes it impossible to tell whether שרף means captains, or is the name of a tribe. Nöldeke translates it “Saron(?)” and supposes that the name of the second town or tribe whose people were removed to the captured city, ended in “hereth,” which begins the next line. Derenbourg ingeniously suggests that “Shiran” is a name given in the Jerusalem Talmud to Sibmah, and that in Josh. xiii. 19, a *Zareth-shahar* (שחרה, cf. l. 14) is mentioned next to Sibmah.

L. 15. רָקַע means "overspreading," from רָקַע , "to expand," to spread out," from which sense we have רָקִיעַ , "firmament." But we are inclined to accept the suggestion of a writer in the *Jewish Messenger*, and read בִּבְקַע by the change of one stroke, and translate, "from the breaking forth of the dawn"; cf. Is. lviii. 8, $\text{אֲזוּ יִבְקַע אֲוֶרָה}$, "then shall thy light break forth like the dawn."

L. 17. The letters בַּח , perhaps בַּש , at the beginning of the line are recovered from Captain Warren's photograph, and are not given by Ganneau. The gap at the end of l. 16 and the beginning of l. 17 is too great to supply except by a wild guess. Possibly there was recorded an offering of these slaughtered captives on the "high place," בַּח [ב], or simply to Ashtor "Chemosh," בַּש [ב]. The combination of the male and female names Ashtor Chemosh is new and remarkable. Whether it represents merely Ashtor of Chemosh, or a deity combining the male and female attributes, is doubtful. The gap in the middle of the line we fill [חַחֲרֵב-חַרְחָם] , differently from other commentators.

L. 18. Ganneau entertains no doubt of the important word "Jehovah," which Captain Warren fails to recognize on his squeezes. But a careful comparison of his photographs convinces us that it is actually there. The first word, וַאֲקַרְבָּהֶם , of which Ganneau gives but two letters, we complete from the photographs. Captain Warren has misread the letters.

L. 20. We translate רִבְּוֹ "all told"; רִאשׁ being used in enumeration in several Shemitic tongues. So Ganneau and Schlottmann, though Derenbourg, Nöldeke, and Neubauer translate it "captains." Schlottmann reads the next word וַאֲשָׂאָהוּ , but it is probably וַאֲשָׂאָהוּ , literally, "and I lifted it." i.e. "I suddenly put this little body of soldiers into the city." For the singular suffixes cf. עָלֵי , Exod. xiv. 7.

L. 21. Warren's photographs seem to make the first word, לְקַטְוֹ , as suggested by Schlottmann, but the reading is yet in doubt. The grammatical connection is not clear, and we suspect that the gap at the end of the previous line is larger than is represented, and that the apparent verse division is part of an illegible letter.

L. 22. The first word, חַחֲרֵב , seems to us plain enough on Warren's last photograph. Ganneau does not give it, and Warren reads it wrong. It is strangely illustrated by the "Wall of Ophel," $\text{חַחֲרֵב הַיְהוּדָה}$, cf. 2 Chron. xxvii. 3.

L. 23. The last part of this line is incomplete and very difficult. There is a blank near the end of the line, large enough to contain

two or three letters, which seems to be caused by a flaw in the stone. Perhaps, as in the Inscription of Estmunezer, an original flaw in the stone was skipped by the scribe, so that there is no real gap in the inscription. The word כלאי may mean "prisons," from כלא, "to restrain"; and so Derenbourg reads, "prisons of the men." We make it, אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ בְּאֵין, "reservoirs for the outpourings of the waters." We know that אֲבָדָה and אֲבָדָה are used in this sense in the Bible, and only in connection with Moabite country. Perhaps אֲשֶׁר הָחֻלִים, cf. Num. xxi. 15, a fragment of an old local song, will suggest אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ [בְּ]אֵין as an even better reading; cf. שְׂקֵמֹת חַשְׁמִים, Gen. xxx. 38, and בְּיַבֵּל חַמְדָּה, 2 Sam. xvii. 20.

L. 25. The photograph shows us a ם before אש, where everybody expected כל. We therefore read לָכֵּן. Probably the ל should go to the previous line. The word מְבַרְחָה or בְּבַרְחָה is one of the hardest to explain in the whole inscription. It seems as if it must be derived from ברה, "to cut," which makes the previous word בְּרַחֵי, "I cut," and not בְּרַחֵי, "I dug"; and yet in despair we have translated the phrase, "I dug the ditches in [the road to] Israel. We think that אֲרָה should be read at the end of the line. The three perpendicular strokes that are indicated in the *fac-simile* cannot well read anything else than דה. Neubauer's [א]נְשֵׁי cannot fit those strokes, nor is it idiomatic. Schlottmann's conjecture is ingenious אֲ[חֵיה] גַּם הַ שְׂרָאֵל, and he renders, "I decreed the prohibition of the fraternity with the people of Israel." This he illustrates by the fraternity, the "hudhr" which now exists in Kerek, the modern large town of Moab, between the Mohammedan and Christian quarters of the place.

L. 26. The מַסְלַת בְּאֵין is the מַסְלַת בְּבַרְחָה of Isa. xvi. 2.

L. 27. Who must read כִּי הָרַס הָא, although the possible בְּרַחֵיה in l. 5, suggests בְּרַחֵיה. Warren's photograph relieves the text of doubt. At the end of the line Ganneau reads [צ] with room for two more letters. This צ may equally well be ז or י. Derenbourg reads [א]נו, "for it was deserted." The only difficulty about this is, that it makes the next line rather void of pertinence. He reads it, [א]ר, "and the chiefs of Dibon were fifty, for all Dibon was obedient." Schlottmann suggests for the gap in these two lines כִּי עַצְרוּ בָּה א, "for the men of Dibon, fifty in number, subdued it," which gives a more connected sense, though רש, "chiefs," might be preferred to אש. In the Syrian campaigns which occurred at this time, not only the king of Syria is mentioned, but the number of subordinate leaders on either side, as Ahab's 232 "captains of the

provinces," שָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינֹת, and Benhadad's 32 מְלָכִים, or מְדִינֹת, or שָׂרֵי הַרְקָב.

L. 28. As we have seen, Derenbourg and Schlottmann translate חמסן as a numeral, so also does Nöldeke. Neubauer fills the gap at the beginning of the line with וַאֲחַמַּשׁ, and translates, "and I garrisoned Dibon with garrisons, for all Dibon was subdued." This assumes the meaning "armed," which nearly all ancient versions give to חמסין.

L. 29. The first three legible letters in this line are טאח, possibly טאח. No sort of dot is after ט, so that אח can hardly be the Accusativo sign. As Ganneau did not give the first letter, אח has been so regarded by most. Nöldeke translates בקרן, "cattle," a reading which requires us to translate יטפתי, "collected," as if it were אטפתי; but cf. l. 21 for its meaning. Schlottmann reads וַאֲנִי בָקִין אֶחָד, "I filled with inhabitants Bikran," etc. But we know of no "Bikran," and this ought to be a prominent town. Besides, in accordance with Moabite idiom, we should read ישבן rather than יטבב; but the text requires either ט or ש, and does not close the word with this letter. Neubauer's reading needs no refutation. We are inclined to translate בקרן, etc., "in the cities which I added to the land," comparing l. 21, where a city probably is "added to Dibon." How the gap should be filled we are in doubt. It may record the imposition of tribute, [ט]טאח.

L. 31. Horonaim is used absolutely. It is a great pity that this gap occurs, as we would have learned whether this city was in the north or the south of Moab. If in the north, this is a continuation of the war against Israel; if in the south, it introduces a campaign against Edom. The readings, [ב]ני רא[י]ן[בן], or יטב בח [ב]ני רא[י]ן[בן], have been suggested, but there is hardly room for either.

L. 32. The remainder of the inscription is mainly illegible. It recounts the command of Chemosh to attack Horonaim, and, doubtless, the successful campaign against it.

RELATION OF MESHA'S PILLAR TO BIBLICAL HISTORY.

Our inscription reads like a leaf taken out of a lost Book of Chronicles. The expressions are the same. The tone of reverence toward the national God is the same. The names of gods, of kings, and of towns are the same. The historical books of the Bible give us the Jewish side of the centuries

of conflict with Moab. Here we have a chapter from the Moabite account of the same long feud.

As history first discovers the Moabites, they possessed the entire eastern side of the Dead Sea, reaching back some twenty miles to the territory of the kindred tribe of Ammon, which occupied the wilder hill country. The stream of Arnon, flowing westerly into the Dead Sea, divides Moab into two nearly equal portions. Just before the invasion of Canaan by the Israelites, the Amorites had seized the entire Moabite country north of the Arnon, and it was from the Amorites that the Israelites took it. The Arnon valley is deep and broad, and an excellent line of defence, and, so far as we know, was never crossed by Amorites or Israelites in their wars against Moab, unless David did so, in the campaign so briefly recorded in 2 Sam. viii. 2. No doubt a large Moabite population was found by Moses in these cities of Northern Moab, which had just been taken by Sihon from "the former king of Moab," probably Zippor, the father of Balak; at least, we may judge so from the fragment of the very early song preserved in Num. xxi. 27-30, of which the twenty-ninth verse reads:

"Woe unto thee, Moab!
Thou art undone, O people of Chemosh!
He hath given his sons that escaped
And his daughters into captivity
To Sihon, king of the Amorites."

But the Moabites never forgot that this was their ancestral country. Three hundred years later, when the king of Ammon seems to have headed a confederacy of the sons of Lot, he demanded this northern region of the Israelites; but Jephthah insisted that not Jabbok, but "Arnon, is the border of Moab" (Judg. xiii. 18).

The Moabites were a more peaceable, pastoral people than the Ammonites, and the story of Naomi and Ruth indicates a neighborly feeling between them and the Israelites. It may be a continuance of this relation, as well as David's own descent from Ruth the Moabitess, that led him to place

his parents in this country (1 Sam. xxii. 3, 4). The fact that the king of Moab now lived in Mizpeh, the place of Jephthah's residence, shows that the Moabites had succeeded in regaining their ancestral domain. But David reconquered the country in a very sanguinary war, which the history treats with remarkable brevity. Very likely, as Ganneau suggests, it was no special offence, but state policy, which compelled David to give back to the tribes of Reuben and Gad the territory which they had lost north of the Arnon; although Jewish tradition refers it to a breach of faith on the part of the king of Moab, who had killed David's parents.

On the division of the twelve tribes, Edom, on the south of the Dead Sea, fell to Judah, while Moab and Ammon fell to Israel. Ammon soon became independent, and probably Moab not long after. The Reubenites do not seem to have been a warlike tribe, and no doubt were forced soon to yield the sovereignty of their country to Moab. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel," was Jacob's description of the tribe, and Deborah complains that, in the war against Jabin, Reuben abode "among the sheep-folds," and that "for the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart." Our inscription mentions only the "men of Gad," and by stating that Omri took possession of this region, it leaves us to infer that before this time the Moabites had recovered their control. It is probable that contiguous towns often had almost exclusively a Moabite or an Israelite population; while in others, perhaps, there was an Israelite and a Moabite quarter.

Omri was a man of more mark than most readers would suppose. He seems to have been the commander-in-chief of Baasha's army in his extensive campaigns, the murder of whose son Elah, but little more than a year after Baasha's death, found Omri commanding at Gibbethon in a long war against the Philistines. He could hardly have been fighting in this region south of the territory of Judah, except with the consent and aid of King Asa of Judah, and perhaps as general of the two armies. At any rate, we hear nothing

of any war against Judah after the death of Baasha; and Omri, who seems to have been a statesman, as well as soldier, always lived on friendly terms with Judah, and bequeathed this new policy to his descendants so long as they occupied the throne. It would not be strange if Asa's help may have secured him his success in his four years' contest for the throne with Zimri and Tibni. It was Omri that moved the capital from Tirzah to the city of Samaria, which he built; and, though known in the Bible as Samaria, his capital was known to the Assyrians, and is mentioned in their annals, as *Bit Omri*, the House of Omri. He is the only king of Israel before the warlike dynasty of Jehu whose might, גְּבִירָתוֹ, is spoken of (cf. 1 Kings xvi. 27). His expedition against Moab is not mentioned in the biblical account; but we learn from our inscription that "he afflicted Moab many days."

We learn from the Bible that this dominion lasted through the reign of Ahab, and that Mesha paid an annual tribute of one hundred thousand lambs and one hundred thousand fleeced rams; a number almost incredible, especially as compared with the seven thousand seven hundred rams and seven thousand seven hundred he-goats given as tribute by the Arabians to Jehoshaphat (cf. 2 Chron. xvii. 11). With this number may also be compared the spoil taken by Moses from the Midianites in the war in which Balaam was slain, and in which it would seem that Midian and Moab were confederate, as they were in the sin of Peor. In this war, in which nearly all Midian was ravaged, if we may judge from the fact that thirty-two thousand unmarried girls were captured, the entire number of sheep captured was six hundred and seventy-five thousand (cf. Num. xxxiv. 32), but a little more than three times Mesha's annual tribute. On the death of Ahab, Mesha refused to pay this tribute (cf. 1 Kings i. 1), giving rise to the war for which Ahaziah may have made preparations during his brief reign, but which was not begun till the reign of Jehoram his brother, or, at least, was not carried on till that time with any vigor on the part of Israel.

Here we meet with a chronological difficulty. Our inscription says (l. 7, 8) that "Omri took possession of the plain (?) of Medeba, and dwelt in it his son forty years." The missing dozen letters may be simply *Omri and Ahab* "his son," or, perhaps, *He, and Ahab his son, and Jehoram the son of "his son."* At any rate, forty years of subjection are recorded; and we should expect, not round numbers, but accurate dates, on such a monument as this. But by no stretch of computation is it possible to make the campaign of Jehoram and Jehoshaphat against Moab, recorded in 2 Kings iii., or the battle of Jehoshaphat against the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites, recorded in 2 Chron. xx., fall more than some thirty-five years after the accession of Omri.

Whether these two campaigns belong to one war it is impossible to say with certainty, though they appear to be separated by the interval of several years. It seems to be represented (2 Chron. xx. 35) that Jehoshaphat's battle against the Ammonites, Moabites, and Mount Seir took place during the reign of Ahab, and so before the rebellion of Mesha. One battle took place at Tekoah, but a dozen miles south of Jerusalem; while that recorded in 2 Kings occurred after the army had gone around the southern border of the Dead Sea. At least one year, and probably several, intervened between the two battles. In both a complete victory is claimed, and yet in neither is it represented that the territory of Moab was permanently occupied. In the campaign recorded in 2 Kings, Jehoram, king of Israel, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and the viceroy of Edom (there was no king of Edom in the reign of Jehoshaphat), instead of attacking the rebellious Mesha by the shortest route from the north, went through Edom to the southern border of Moab, going round the Dead Sea. Whether this was to avoid the necessity of taking the wild Edomites through Judea, or for the purpose of relieving by this diversion the towns in the land of Gad and Reuben that may have been attacked by Mesha, we cannot say. After suffering severely from lack of water

in the wilderness, they completely ravaged the land of Moab as far north as Kir-hasereth, ten miles south of the Arnon. Here Mesha was besieged, and, in his extremity, sacrificed his son and heir to Chemosh in the sight of the besiegers. This must have frightened the superstitious Ammonites, and had a scarcely less effect on the armies of Jehoram and Jehoshaphat, which raised the siege, and returned home, probably by the same route that they came, though it is quite possible that they went northward, traversing all Moab. The question is, whether it was before or after this disastrous campaign that Mesha gained the victories which he celebrates.

Schlottmann makes a curious calculation, by which he allows forty years from the accession of Omri to that of Jehoram. He says the four years of Omri while fighting Tibni, the twelve of his undisputed reign, with the twenty-two of Ahab, and the two of Ahaziah, make the forty required by our inscription. But there are two errors in this computation. First, every fraction is counted in the Bible as a whole year, so that Ahaziah, who began his reign in the seventeenth, and ended it in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat, is said to have reigned two years; and, secondly, a comparison of the dates of the death of Elah (in the twenty-seventh year of Asa) and of the death of Omri (in the thirty-eighth year of Asa) would have shown that the latter must have reigned even less than twelve years, instead of sixteen.

Accepting the biblical chronology as correct, the forty years during which our inscription asserts that the kings of Israel afflicted Moab must have extended from the reign of Omri through that of Ahab and that of Ahaziah, and nearly through that of Jehoram. It is possible that Omri's subjugation of Moab may have occurred while he was general of the army of his warlike predecessor, Baasha; but if it occurred during his own reign, it is difficult to see how he could have found leisure for such a campaign during his three or four years' struggle with Tibni. This leaves not more than eight years (he reigned less than twelve), sup-

posing him to have taken no time to organize his government and recuperate his strength. Allowing, then, four years for his contest for the throne, and remembering that his predecessor died in the twenty-seventh of Asa's reign of between forty and forty-one years, and that Jehoram ascended the throne in the eighteenth year of his successor, Jehoshaphat (the date given 1 Kings i. 17 is an evident mistake, cf. 2 Kings iii. 1), and we have but twenty-eight years intervening before the accession of Jehoram over Israel. Both Derenbourg and Nöldeke suppose the victories recorded by Mesha to have taken place in the short reign of Ahaziah, and quote in proof (2 Kings i. 1) that Moab rebelled after the death of Ahab. If he then refused to pay any further impost, nothing would have been more natural than for him to cross the Arnon, and attempt to recover his ancestral territory. If such were the case, it would give an explanation of the fact that the allied kings attacked Moab by the difficult route from the south, instead of by the easier and shorter route from the north; for, if Mesha already held the Reubenite territory and the fords of the Jordan, it would have been difficult to cross it in his face, and it might be desirable, by attacking him from the south, to draw him off from the region which he had overrun. But this could have been scarce thirty years after Omri began his undisputed reign. If the figures given by Mesha and the dates of the Bible are all correct, it will be necessary either to suppose Omri to have conquered Moab while general of Baasha's army, as Joab conquered Ammon while David remained at Jerusalem, and thus bring the period of Mesha's victories within the reign of Ahaziah, or the first of Jehoram's reign; or else to suppose that our "forty years" began in a victory of Omri during the last of his reign, and then to carry the end of the period into the last of Jehoram's reign, or the first of Jehu's. There is some probability of the latter, as we are told that in Jehu's time God began to diminish the territory of Israel (2 Kings x. 32), and that then the Syrians smote the region east of Jordan "from Aroer, which is by

the river of Arnon, and Gilead and Bashan." It would be strange to have such language used if the region of Aroer and Arnon had for ten years been Moabite territory; and we may be confident that when Hāzael with his Syrian army was ravaging the north of this region, the king of Moab would have been his willing ally in the south. The main objections to this view are, that no reference is made in our inscription to the campaigns recorded in scripture, and that Mesha's reign is thus considerably prolonged. But as his oldest son was but a boy, as we must believe, when he was sacrificed, during the first part of Jehoram's reign, this may give us no difficulty. We are inclined to agree with Senior Sachs (*Revue Israelite*, Apr. 21) in this arrangement of the chronology, which refers our monument to the very close of Omri's dynasty, or the beginning of that of his successor. If we are told that it was a "son" of Omri who, according to our inscription (l. 8) continued to afflict Moab until the end of the "forty years," we may reply that even Jehu is mentioned in the records of the Assyrian wars as a "son of Omri," so strongly did that king leave his impress on the nation.

LINGUISTIC PECULIARITIES.

It has been said of the Phœnician inscriptions that their language differs so little from Hebrew as to deserve the name rather of a dialect than of a separate language. Much more is this true of the tongue of Moab, as here exhibited. So closely does it resemble biblical Hebrew, that there is scarce the least difficulty in translation, where the reading is clear; and even the idioms are the same. In the conjugation of הִלֵּךְ and of לָקַח we have the same contractions as in Hebrew; the Hiphil conjugation occurs repeatedly, not replaced by an Arabic Aphel or a Phœnician Iphil; the verbs "ע, נ, א" are contracted as in Hebrew; the article is freely employed; and such idioms as "he has caused me to look on all my enemies" (l. 4) sound very familiar.

In verbs we find two very interesting variations from He-

brew, one of which is the Hiptaal conjugation **הִלְחִיחַ**. This corresponds to the eighth conjugation of Arabic, and is one of a series of *t* conjugations which we find fully developed in the Ethiopic and the Assyrian, though they do not appear in Hebrew in their normal form of the *t* following the first radical of the simple conjugation, except in verbs beginning with a sibilant.

Another peculiarity which the Moabite dialect shows, in common with the Arabic and Coptic, is one that has not been suggested, so far as we have seen, except in private correspondence by Professor C. M. Mead, of Andover, but in reference to which we entertain no doubt. It is the retention of the original form of the verbs **לָוַ**, which have in Hebrew been softened to **לָוַה**. Nöldeke explains the final **ו** in such forms as **וִיִּבְנוּ** (l. 5), and **אֲבָנוּ** (l. 6), as the suffix of the third person singular; the regular object being anticipated by the suffix, as is the practice in Syriac, and thus expressed doubly. But the Moabite language shows in no other respect an assimilation to Aramaic peculiarities, but rather to those of the southern Shemitic family; and it is much more probable that the original root has here been preserved.

The plural is formed in **ן**, probably **ן־**; and the dual in **ך**, probably **ך־**. The dual **צַחֲרִים**, (l. 15), should probably be read **צַחֲרִיךְ**, as **ם** and **ן** are easily confounded.

The suffix of the third person sing., mas., is **ה**, probably **ה־**, as is not uncommon in Hebrew; cf. **קָבֵה**, Num. xxiii. 8, though the prophecy of Balaam in most cases now gives us the modern Hebrew **וֹ**. Thus also we have in l. 14, **נָבֵה** for the Hebrew **נָבִי**, corresponding to the familiar **שֵׁלֵה** and **שֵׁלֵבֵה**. The feminine termination of nouns seems to be generally **ה**, though we clearly have **בַּחַה** for **בַּחַה**. The Moabite **שֵׁה** corresponding to Hebrew **שֵׁה**, is from **שֵׁהָה**, like Hebrew **מַה** from **מַהָה**.

The orthography is more contracted than in Hebrew, but less so than in Phœnician. We have the full form from **קִלְכָּהִי**, where the Phœnician has only **קִלְכָּה**, and **פִּנִּי**, where Phœnician

has **סָנ**. And yet we have, as in Phœnician **אִנְךְ** for **אִנְכִי**, probably because the final **י**, which we know really existed in Phœnician as in Hebrew, was unaccented. In the middle of a word the contracted form is the rule; as **חָא** for **חֵא**, **רָשָׁא** for **רֵאשׁוּ**, **יָמֶן** for **יָמִים**, **מְגִדְלִיָּה** for **מְגִדְלִיָּהּ**, **אִשׁ** for **אִשׁוּ**, **בִּיר** for **בֵּיר**, **בֵּת** for **בֵּיתָהּ**, etc. In the case of **לִיָּהּ**, and **חִירָךְ**, the **י** or **י** had consonantal, or at least diphthongal power. In **וֵאֵת** we seem to have a clear case of a quiescent letter, as also in **בְּבִיחָהּ**, l. 25, cf. **יְבִחָהּ**, l. 7, and **בֵּת**, *passim*.

In the syntax we find no deviation from the Hebrew, except it be the failure to repeat the article in **הַבְּמֵתָ וֵאֵת**, l. 3; and this is not without Hebrew analogy, cf. **חִירָךְ וּ**, Ps. xii. 8. In Phœnician the article is seldom repeated; e.g. **חִירָךְ וּ**, *this door*, Umm. 1, 3.

THE FORMS OF THE LETTERS.

From an inscription like this of Mesha, dating back to the first half, and probably the first quarter, of the ninth century before Christ — the oldest purely alphabetical monument in existence¹ — we might expect to learn something of the history of the old Hebrew or Phœnician alphabet — an alphabet of the greatest interest to us, not simply because in it were first recorded the most of our sacred scriptures, but because through Cadmus it has been adopted, with modifications, by ancient and modern civilizations. From it, through Palmyrene or a kindred script, with some modifications from the Assyrian arrow-heads, came the modern Hebrew letters; and the Ionian Greeks, and through them the world accepted the same alphabet bodily, shapes and names, for their own writing.

The importance of Mesha's monument in this respect has been somewhat overrated. We already knew the shapes of

¹ Unless we except an antique agate seal, bearing simply the letters **לְשָׁלִים**, belonging to *Shallum*, of which de Vogüé gives a figure (*Revue Archæologique* for 1868, pl. 14). The oldest of the Greek inscriptions of Thera, written in pure Phœnician letters, and like Phœnician from right to left, are doubtfully referred to the same century as Mesha's monument.

the letters as far back as the seventh century B.C., and some seals and weights may be even earlier. The conclusion of Count de Vögué was generally accepted, that previous to the seventh century B.C. one general alphabet was common to all the region, from Egypt to the Bosphorus, and from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, and that these letters in their archaic type were characterized by sharp angles and zigzag lines. Our monument proves this for a new race, the Moabites. Their alphabet and language were identical with those of the Hebrews and Phenicians. No doubt the same was true of their brother tribe of Edom, and of all the races which the Mosaic genealogy connects with Abraham, as also of the eleven Hamitic-Canaanite tribes of Gen. x. 15-17. If we could only find similar monuments of the Philistines and of the Rephaim, it would clear up the most perplexing points in Palestinian ethnography.

Taking as a standard the oldest existing alphabetic monuments, such as the Greek inscriptions from the island of Thera, and one at Eremopolis in Crete (which F. Hitzig explained as Phenician!), and the Phenician inscriptions found on some gems and seals, on a bronze lion of Khorsabad, and on the stone of Nora, we find the following variations worthy of attention.

We meet for the first time with the truly archaic ∇ as a simple triangle, exactly the Greek Δ . In most inscriptions ∇ and ∇ are nearly or quite indistinguishable. In his "Die Phönizische Sprache," Schröder gives no separate characters for ∇ , those for ∇ being enough. In some of the older inscriptions, as those from *Umm-el-âwâmid*, we find the stroke at the left of ∇ considerably shorter than in ∇ , and suggesting the form in Mesha's inscription. It is very interesting to find the oldest Phenician, or rather Canaanite ∇ identical with the Greek Δ , and thus indicating the period when the Greek alphabet was borrowed from the East.¹

The form of ∇ , a half-circle from the centre of which falls a straight line (∇), is not absolutely new, but interesting.

¹ Cadmus, ∇ , the East.

Deutsch has connected it with the Greek Υ , but this is doubtful. We have the same form several times, though not uniformly, in the Marseilles inscription, and a γ found on a Babylonian seal, and published by Rawlinson,¹ gives even more exactly the Greek Υ .

The π is our H, with two cross lines instead of one.

The δ is almost precisely a figure 6.

The σ is new, and evidently an older form than hitherto found. As ordinarily found in inscriptions, this letter has been likened to a church spire struck by lightning; but here we have the zigzag bolt resolved into three horizontal lines, which are crossed by a perpendicular stroke which represents the church spire. This form strikingly suggests the Greek capital Σ , though the latter lacks the perpendicular line. But all Greek inscriptions from the fortieth to the seventieth Olympiad retain the perpendicular stroke, so exactly resembling our *Samekh*.

The ρ is slightly different from old forms, being exactly like the Greek koppa (φ), though the perpendicular stroke often entirely crosses the circle.

A few of the letters show rounded outlines, and so, perhaps, vary from the most antique forms. Thus σ is a simple circle, and ρ , γ , δ have a circle or a half-circle as an element of their form. The first stroke of ζ and of ν is considerably curved, and that of ψ , ν , and δ is slightly so. The seal of Shallum, referred to in a previous note, has its letters of the most antique form, even more so than our monument, and the δ is on this agate of Shallum precisely our capital L, instead of having the lower stroke rounded, as cut by Mesha's scribe. Comparing Mesha's alphabet with the archaic Phœnician given by Lenormant,² we find a variation in ζ , γ , δ , ρ , π , δ , and σ . The curved lines of ζ and δ show that Mesha's forms are less antique than those given by Lenormant. Our γ is older than Lenormant's form, and in reference to the others it is difficult to form a judgment.

The only letter wanting in our monument is ν .

¹ Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society. See plate, p. 228, no. xvi.

² Revue Archæologique, 1867.