

## The True Date of Abraham and Moses.

By FRITZ HOMMEL, PH.D., LL.D., PROFESSOR OF SEMITIC LANGUAGES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH.

IN my *Ancient Hebrew Tradition* I devoted a special chapter to the 'Chronology of the Time of Abraham' (chap. iv. pp. 119-146). My main object was to prove that the Babylonian List of Kings erroneously added (instead of treating them as contemporaneous) dynasties A and B, and that dynasty B bears in general a very apocryphal character. Upon this assumption the sixth king of dynasty A, Hammurabi (Amraphel of Gn 14), the contemporary of Abraham, would have reigned not c. 2200 B.C., but rather c. 1900 B.C., which appeared to be in the best of harmony with the date of the Exodus under Merentpah (1277 B.C.). Renewed examination of all the data, occasioned, above all, by Paul Rost's *Untersuchungen zur altorient. Geschichte* (Berlin, 1897) and C. F. Lehmann's *Zwei Hauptprobleme der altorient. Chronologie* (Leipzig, 1898), has led me, however, to modify in some essential points my former view. I have subjected all the materials to a thorough test, and have thereby discovered quite remarkable harmonies between the traditional biblical chronology (the Exodus, 480 years before the fourth year of Solomon, and Abraham thus of course c. 2100 instead of c. 1900 B.C.) and the Babylonian tradition (Hammurabi 700 years before Burnaburias, and beginning of the Hammurabi dynasty, according to Berosus, 2231 B.C., etc.). Consequently, one has seriously to face the question whether, after all, the opinion shared by many (including, till recently, myself) that Ramses II. was the Pharaoh of the Oppression, must not be finally abandoned in favour of a much earlier date for the Exodus.

We may begin with a few remarks on the trustworthiness of the Babylonian List of Kings, as far as the first two dynasties (and not merely the second) are concerned. The last number of the *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets* (vi. pl. 9, 10), published by the British Museum, contains a list, drawn up under Ammi-zaduga, the great-grandson of Samsu-iluna, of the dates from Sumu-abu to Samsu-iluna, according to which the

lengths of reign of these first seven kings of Babylon were as follows:—

Sumu-abu	. 14 years	(Kings' List, 15 years).
Sumu-la-ilu	. 36 "	( " 35 " ).
Zabu	. 14 "	( " 14 " ).
Apil-Sin	. 18 "	( " 18 " ).
Sin-mubalit	. 20 "	( " 30 " ).
Hammurabi	. 43 "	( " 55 " ).
Samsu-iluna	. 38 "	( " 35 " ).

Since the data in the first column are almost contemporary with the reigns referred to, they naturally deserve preference to those in the Kings' List. Unfortunately we cannot check the figures for the rest of the dynasty:—

Abishua	. 25 years	(Kings' List).
Ammi-satana	. 25 "	( " ).
Ammi-zaduga	. 22 "	( " ).
Samsu-satana	. 31 "	( " ).

But, even assuming that the List is here exact, in the case of the first seven kings there is a difference between the two authorities, as shown above, of nineteen years, so that the total of the years of dynasty A would amount only to 286 instead of 305 years. There is thus all the more justification for the doubt whether the period of the eleven kings of the following second dynasty really amounted to 368 years. On the other hand, our confidence in the correctness of the *names* in the Kings' List is all the more heightened when we observe that the same names and in the same order recur also in the contemporary (Ammi-zaduga's) list.

As to the starting-point of the list of dynasties, Rost and Lehmann have independently of one another recognized that the terminus of Berosus' 1920 years, verified by Gutschmid, coincides with the beginning of the Seleucid era (312 B.C.). But while the year so obtained, namely, 2232 B.C., was erroneously referred by Lehmann to Hammurabi's conquest of all Babylonia, Rost<sup>1</sup> rightly saw in

<sup>1</sup> Or rather Peiser, who already in 1891 proposed as terminus 331 B.C. (accession of Alexander the Great, instead of Gutschmid's Nabonassar, 747 B.C.), and thus obtained

this figure the beginning of the whole dynasty, so that Hammurabi would have reigned *c.* 2130-2087. But, according to the statement of Nabu-nahid, Hammurabi lived 700 years before Burnaburias, and, as the latter is most probably the Burnaburias of the Tel el-Amarna letters (*c.* 1400-1375 B.C.), the coincidence (2087-700=1387) is hardly accidental. But even if the reference is to Burnaburias I., who reigned only some fifty years before Burnaburias II., the 700 years taken as a round number would still tally quite well.

According to the acute investigations of Lehmann the third (or Kassite) dynasty reigned from *c.* 1688-1113 B.C.,<sup>1</sup> so that for the second dynasty the period from 1946-1688 is left, *i.e.* some 258 years (instead of the 368 of the Kings' List). The sixth king of the second dynasty, Gul-ki-sar, or Muabbit-kissati, is witnessed to by a later document, under the slightly altered name Gir-ki-sar, as having lived 700 years before Bel-nadin-akhi (*c.* 1025 B.C.), which brings us to the year 1724 B.C. The last five kings of the second dynasty reigned, according to the Kings' List, 132 years (so according to Lehmann's collation), the first six, 236 years. Perhaps only the first six, and possibly also the last king (Ea-gamil, 20 years), should be retained, and the seventh to the tenth inclusive wholly rejected; in which case Ea-gamil will have reigned from 1708-1688 and Gul-ki-sar from 1763-1709, so that the above-named year 1724 would actually fall within his reign. Certainly the second dynasty of the Kings' List retains a half apocryphal character, but what appears certain in it tallies exactly with an indication of time derived from another source (namely, Bel-nadin-akhi).

But now, however it may be with the second dynasty, it is in every way important that there was a doubly<sup>2</sup> attested Babylonian national tradi-

2251 (1920 + 331 = 2251) as the beginning of dynasty A (cf. *Anc. Heb. Trad.* pp. 133-138. On p. 137 I assumed that the authority from which Berosus derived his information gave for dynasty B only 248 years, instead of the 368 of the Kings' List, only I still held dynasties A and B to be contemporaneous).

<sup>1</sup> Lehmann's main proof is founded on the circumstance that the fourth dynasty reigned from 1112-981 and did not begin some seventy years earlier, as has been commonly assumed, on the strength of the (false) date of the Bavian inscription (Marduk-nadin-akhi, 418 years before 689).

<sup>2</sup> Nay, even thrice attested, in case the note of Simplicius (cf. my *Semiten*, pp. 342 f. and 484), as appears very probable, also belongs here, the note, I mean, regarding the age of the written astronomical observations of the Babylonians (1903 years before 331 B.C., *i.e.* 2234).

tion, according to which the same dynasty whose sixth king was Abraham's contemporary, Hammurabi, took the helm, *c.* 2232 B.C., so that Hammurabi himself, and with him Abraham, must be placed  $\pm$  2100 B.C.

With this agrees in a quite surprising fashion the figure one obtains from the Bible for Abraham's migration from Harran. The data are as follows:—

From the Exodus to the fourth year of Solomon (958 B.C.)	480 <sup>3</sup> years.
The sojourn in Egypt	430 <sup>4</sup> „
From Abraham's migration from Harran to Jacob's arrival in Egypt	215 <sup>5</sup> „
Total	1125 years.

If we now add these 1125 years to 958, we obtain for the date of Abraham's leaving Harran, 2083 B.C.; cf. above, Hammurabi 2130-2087, for which number I have purposely set down  $\pm$  2100, because in the 1920 years of Berosus an error amounting to a few decades is quite possible.<sup>6</sup> According to the indications given in the Bible, the Exodus would fall *c.* 1438 B.C., the beginning of the conquest of Canaan under Joshua, *c.* 1398, the migration of Jacob to Egypt, *c.* 1868 (*i.e.* some 300 years before the expulsion of the Hyksos under Amosis, *c.* 1570 B.C.). Of these three dates the first two especially are of the greatest significance, for, according to the most probable estimates, the Pharaoh to whom the Syro-Palestinian Tel el-Amarna letters are addressed, namely, Amenophis III., reigned from 1427-1392.<sup>7</sup> But then the Pharaoh of the Exodus would be not Merenptah but Amenophis II. (*c.* 1461-1436, according to Lehmann), as indeed according to Manetho (*ap.* Josephus), an Amenophis was

<sup>3</sup> 1 K 6<sup>1</sup>. The date 958 (instead of the traditional 1013) is attested not only by the Assyrian synchronisms with the Israelitish monarchical period (Ahab, Jehu), but also by the statements of the Greek chronographers (Hiram, 969-936; building of the temple begun in his eleventh year).

<sup>4</sup> Ex 12<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Namely, 25 years till the birth of Isaac, 60 years till the birth of Jacob, and finally 130 years till Jacob's settling in Egypt (*i.e.* 25 + 60 + 130 = 215).

<sup>6</sup> Particularly in regard to the first two dynasties; *e.g.* in the case of the first seven kings of the first dynasty, where it happens that we can check the figures, the discrepancy between the Kings' List and the actual number amounts to nineteen years.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. now Lehmann (*op. cit.* p. 160, and the discussions preceding).

designated as such by the later Egyptian tradition.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, I commend this short preliminary discussion to the earnest consideration of all who have given themselves closely to the study of ancient Oriental history; but I myself have already the firmest persuasion that here also the much-despised biblical tradition will once more come off victorious, as it has recently done in so many controversies.

*P.S.*—The chief reason for placing the Exodus under Merenptah, the successor of Ramses II. (the latter, according to Lehmann, 'at the earliest, 1324-1258,' in opposition to Mahler's 1348-1281), was found, as is well known, in the mention of the city Ramses (רעמסס, *Egypt. Ra'-mes-su*) in Gn 47<sup>11</sup> (here by anticipation, under Joseph, *i.e.* still in the Hyksos period), and Ex 1<sup>11</sup>. The name *Moses* (מֹשֶׁה), which is probably Egyptian (*cf.* Jah-mose, Dehut-mose—thus 'mose' clearly being a *nomen hypocoristicum*, or so-called pet-name), has the same sibilant as *Ra'-mes-su* (*Egypt. mes*, 'beget,' 'bear'); since now רעמסס, for

<sup>1</sup> If, on the other hand, the Septuagint, with its 440 years (between the Exodus and the building of the temple), is right, the Exodus would fall in 1398 B.C., and the conquest by Joshua in 1358. This, however, in view of Abraham's being contemporary with Hammurabi, is less probable.

which (*cf.* מִשֶּׁה) one would expect רעמסס, is written with *samekh* (ס), there must be here a later gloss. Besides, not only is Gn 47<sup>11</sup> 'in the province of Ramses,' plainly only a nearer definition of 'in the best part of the land (Goshen)', but also in Ex 1<sup>11</sup> there stood originally in the text 'Pithom of (the province of) Ramses' (namely, in distinction from other places called Pithom) (*cf.* P. de Lagarde, *Mitt.* iv. pp. 149 f.); so that here, too, Ramses is an explanatory addition. Against viewing Merenptah as the Pharaoh of the Exodus there is, further and above all, the circumstance that this allows far too short a duration for the period of the Judges (*cf.*, in addition to the above-named 480 years, the important note in Jg 11<sup>26</sup>, 300 years from the end of the wilderness wanderings to the time of Jephthah), as well as the circumstance that Israel as a tribe between Jenó'am (east of Tyre, in the territory of Asher) and Hor (South Palestine), is named in the recently discovered Merenptah inscription (*Anc. Heb. Trad.* p. 266), and that Asher, north of Carmel, is mentioned in the time of Seti and Ramses II. (W. Max Müller, *Asien u. Europa*, pp. 236 f.). On other interesting consequences which flow from the earlier dating of the Exodus and of Joshua, I hope to have more to say presently in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES or elsewhere.

## At the Literary Table.

### THE BOOKS OF THE MONTH.

JERUSALEM THE HOLY. BY EDWIN SHERMAN WALLACE. (*Olipphant.* 8vo, pp. 359, with Maps and Illustrations. 7s. 6d.)

We need a Handbook to Jerusalem now. We need a Handbook to its history, for Mrs. Oliphant's volume was too sumptuous and too easily written. But, more urgently than that, we need an Introduction to the modern city. Whether we visit Jerusalem or stay at home, we all need it equally. For if Christ is the centre of the Bible spiritually, Jerusalem is the centre locally; and if we are content without an accurate understanding of the city of the Great King, it will go hard with us to comprehend the glory of the Great King Himself.

Mr. Wallace has lived for five years in Jerusalem as U.S. Consul. He is mildly interested in its history, and offers a brief and impartial account of that. He is deeply interested in its present state, and that he describes minutely and masterfully. Without fear he has entered the secret places of all the ecclesiastical sects and laid bare the poverty of their pretensions, while appreciative of any spiritual reality there. He has followed Bliss in his explorations and Dickie in his measurements. And since every step of his narrative is accompanied by a photographic illustration, we have ourselves the means of testing as well as understanding his descriptions.

Mr. Wallace's book records an advance in the