

NOTES ON PALESTINIAN ARCHÆOLOGY.

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I.—THE TOMB OF APOLLOPHANES.

I VENTURE to suggest that a text of such length would not have been carved in a tomb, after the death of the unhappy lady, merely to record an illicit affection for a lover ; and also that the meaning has been obscured by the mistake in carving the last word but one. The translation may perhaps be :—

“There is nothing I would not suffer or do to please thee. I, who loved thee dearly, lie by another.”

“But, by Aphrodite, I am very glad of this—that thy cloak lies safe.”

“But I am gone far from thee, and I leave much room. Do what you think right.”

“Do not hew the walls to make a noise. Yet beyond the doors she lies with ghosts.”

I understand *neumasi* to be mis-spelt for *pneumasi*.

Whatever the allusion to the cloak may mean, it seems that this lady was not buried beside her first husband, but probably in the tomb of the second, and that she may have married the latter to please the former. The last two lines Mr. Macalister regards as distinct from those that precede. To me they seem to be intended to satisfy the humble request that she might not be disturbed by any further burials in the tomb.

This perhaps suggests the custom of the Levirate, or marrying the next of kin to the dead. It may be objected that the tomb is not Jewish but pagan ; but the Levirate custom is not peculiar to Jews, being very widely found in Asia, and even in Africa and Polynesia, among various races. It is possible that this also explains the allusion to the cloak, for (see Ruth iii, 9) spreading the cloak over the widow seems to have been the symbol of accepting the Levirate duty, just as loosing the shoe was the symbol of its rejection. The poor lady thus rejoices to think she had done her duty—probably bearing a child, to be reckoned as that of the first husband. To Jews and Greeks alike, it was of the greatest importance that a son should be born to look after the father's tomb.

"You must do what is right" was answered, by whoever carved the text or the last two lines, and she was thus left in peace. But the writer expresses his belief that her spirit is not in the tomb, but with other spirits beyond the doors of the sepulchre, or beyond the Gate of Death.¹

II.—THE LACHISH TABLET.

In the First Volume of the *Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania*, Part II, No. 147, Prof. H. V. Hilprecht gives an excellent copy of the original of the Lachish Tablet, now at Constantinople. He gives no translation, and does not mention any as having been made from his copy. Two whole words appear on one edge, and the ends of others on the other edge, and various strokes, not clearly visible on the cast, are shown. This—on account of the cuneiform writing—makes great difference in parts of the text, and a continuous and probable meaning can be easily obtained. The following appears to me to be the result:—

Obverse.

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. (Amil) Rab-ba tsaba-tam | 1. Chieftain of host |
| 2. (ana) Rab-saku | 2. To Chief head man |
| 3. a-na Sep-i-ca am-cu-ut | 3. At thy feet I bow |
| 4. lu-u ti-i-di i-nu-ma | 4. Do not you know now |
| 5. tu-ra-tu-na Dan-Adda | 5. our decision? Dan Hadad |
| 6. & Zi-im-ri-da | 6. and Zimrida (are) |
| 7. Bu-khi-ri uru & | 7. Chosen ones of the city, and |
| 8. Nas-can ku-mi | 8. Is set up instead |
| 9. Dan-Adda a-na Zi-im-ri-da | 9. Dan Hadad for Zimrida |
| 10. Sa-ku uru-ya sipru mi | 10. Head man of my city. What message? |
| 11. (ti)-par mi a-na ya-a-si | 11. What sent you to me |
| 12. a-na ili-mi | 12. (for information?) |

Reverse.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. Sani-e Abd & III sana-tim | 1. The other is a slave, and in three years |
| 2. & III ti-annu a-sup-par | 2. also thrice I have sent word. |
| 3. Maru-ma mi A-na-cu | 3. What fellow is this? I |
| 4. uš-šir-na eli Mat | 4. command for us about the land |
| 5. sa Sarri & a-na ya-si | 5. of the king, and to me |
| 6. Beli-mi u-sa-par (a-me-tim?) | 6. our lord has sent orders. |
| 7. & a-di-mi u-ti-ru-u-nu | 7. and when will they restore |
| 8. sa zikar enu-ca | 8. what thy master has decreed |

¹ [See below, *Notes and Queries*, p. 158.]

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 9. <i>sa u-ra-ad uru-ca</i> | 9. That thy city must obey |
| 10. <i>ana Pa-a-kid à us-sir-su</i> | 10. as to the ruler? And he has ordered him |
| 11. <i>a-na pa-ni-ya à</i> | 11. to my presence, and |
| 12. <i>Rab-sa-ku AN-Sam-e-si</i> | 12. The chief head man of the Sun God |
| 13. <i>ana e-bal-su</i> | 13. to convey to him. |

Edge.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| 14. <i>A-me-ti an-ni-ti</i> | 14. These orders. |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|

The characters and language alike are similar to those of the Tell Amarna texts. It appears that the "Sun God" is the King of Egypt, as in other cases, and the writer perhaps was an Egyptian. But, as in all the other letters, the names show that the minor officials were native Canaanites. The style (compared with other letters) shows a superior addressing an inferior official. When a superior is addressed the writer says, "I bow seven times at thy feet," or "I am the dust of thy feet."

It appears that the city of Lachish was rebellious, and for three years had set up a head man called Dan-Hadad, instead of the Egyptian nominee Zimrida (whose name is also Canaanite, like the Sabeian *Dhimri-yadà*); but it was unfortunate for Zimrida to be thus reinstated, because we know, from his own letters and those of the King of Jerusalem, that he was attacked in Lachish, and finally killed by his own servants—that is to say, by the party in Lachish which had previously dispossessed him, according to the present text.

III.—THE ARAMEAN ALPHABET.

AMONG various points of interest which arise from the publication of the texts discovered during the American explorations of Nippur, in the valuable work by Prof. H. V. Hilprecht, is the evidence afforded, by dated texts, of the history of the Aramean alphabet, whence the modern square Hebrew is derived.

The two great branches of the alphabet—the Western or Phœnician, and the Eastern or Aramean—had hardly begun to diverge by 700 B.C., but by 425 B.C. they were very distinct. To the first class belong the later Phœnician, the Alphabet of Israel, and the Samaritan; to the second the Hebrew, the Palmyrene, the Nabathean, and the North Arab scripts. In the Talmud (T. J. and T. B. Sanhedrin) the first is called the *Labonai* or Lebanon writing, and the latter the *Ashuri*, Assyrian or "square." The sacred books were written in the latter, while the former was the civil character west of the Euphrates. The *Ashuri* was said to

have been brought from Babylonia by Ezra, and the characters there used, in his time, were approximately similar to those whence square Hebrew has developed. It would seem that they were employed by merchants, and the decay of form was due partly to hurried writing, and partly to the use of paper and ink. Thus on monuments, and seals, and coins, the old western alphabet may have continued in use long after the Ashuri or Aramean was the character for scrolls.

The tablets of the reigns of Artaxerxes I and Darius II, found at Nippur, are written in cuneiform, by scribes who were evidently hurried, and whose characters are often incorrect or slovenly. The documents refer to various agreements, and receipts, connected with the business of the sons of Murashu. In several cases dockets in the Aramean language and character have been written with ink on the tablet, and in two instances (Nos. 66A and 71) this docket was traced on the clay, and remains fairly distinct, though scrawled hurriedly, with letters often badly defined. The attached alphabets will serve to show the changes that occurred, between 680 and 425 B.C., in this character: the various forms of one letter in its recurrences; and the close connection between this Aramean script and the later square Hebrew and Palmyrene alphabets. The number of our dated inscriptions is still so small that the new evidence is of value.

Similar Aramean dockets were known before the Nippur excavations on yet earlier cuneiform tablets. In the British Museum the contract of a certain *Menahem*, for the sale of three slaves, is docketed למנחם. Another, concerning the loan of 10 shekels at 25 per cent. to Mannuki Arbela, bears on the edge the docket למנכארבל. A third dates from 680 B.C., and refers to the sale of a slave *Hoshea* and his wives. The docket on the edge is read—

מתן אנש . . . זי אדם דנת הושע

“The gift of the man Hoshea, two wives, seven persons,”

including the two daughters, and apparently two sons mentioned in the cuneiform text.

A fourth contract table, about 643 B.C., concerns the sale of a slave named *Arbail Sarrat*. The docket reads דנת ארבבלסר. A fifth is said to be as late as 364 B.C., and concerns the sale of the slave *Ishtar-durkaki*. The docket contains this name, דנת אשתדורקל. The practice was therefore older than the period of the Persian kings.

The two clear cases found at Nippur contain very roughly-written dockets, on the same principle. They have not as yet been read with certainty. The first (No. 66A) is a contract of the 39th year of

ARAMEAN.	
700 B.C.	425 B.C.
א	𐤀 𐤁 𐤂
ב	𐤃 𐤄
ג	
ד	𐤅 𐤆
ה	
ו	𐤇
ז	
ח	𐤈 ?
ט	𐤉 𐤊
י	𐤋 𐤌
כ	𐤍 𐤎
ל	𐤏
מ	𐤐
נ	𐤑 𐤒 𐤓
ס	𐤔 𐤕
ע	
פ	𐤖 𐤗
צ	𐤘 𐤙 𐤚 𐤛
ק	𐤜 𐤝
ר	𐤞 𐤟 𐤠

HEBREW.	PALMYRENE.
100 A.D.	200 A.D.
א	𐤀
ב	𐤁
ג	𐤂
ד	𐤃
ה	𐤄
ו	𐤅
ז	𐤆
ח	𐤇
ט	𐤈
י	𐤉
כ	𐤊
ל	𐤋
מ	𐤌
נ	𐤍
ס	𐤎
ע	𐤏
פ	𐤐
צ	𐤑
ק	𐤒
ר	𐤓
ש	𐤔
ת	𐤕

Artaxerxes I (425-4 B.C.), being a receipt by the slave of a certain *Eriba* for the produce of half a field. It appears to me to read as follows:—

ששן לאין אריבין
אריבין בן ארדבלת

חן אשן
:חן:

ששן סאת ארקה זי
אריבין בן ארדבלת
(ש)נת לט ארתחשסתא

“Account of a *seah* of land, of Aribi son of Aradbelit.
Year 39 Artaxerxes.”

It may be remarked that an Aribi or Eriba, mentioned in another tablet of the same period, is called (No. 53) Son of *Ardi-NINIB*, and among the renderings of this god's name are the Assyrian sounds *Belu* and *Belit*, so that he may be the same person. In the cuneiform text the name of Eriba's father is not given.

The other text (No. 71) is also very roughly written, especially towards the end. The cuneiform tablet refers to the 38th and 39th years (of Artaxerxes I), and to the lease of a field by *Nabu-Ittanu* to *Bel-nadin-sumu*. The docket appears to me to read—

ששן ארקה זי
אריבין בן ארדבלת

ששן סאת ארקה
זי נבואתן (ב)לנדנשם

“Account of a *seah* of land of Neboithan. Bel Nadansum.”

It is remarkable that the Babylonians adhered to the cumbrous cuneiform when the alphabet was available; but the latter was a foreign invention, and apparently not allowed for use in legal documents even in the Greek and Roman ages.