

## The Israelites in Egypt.

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The question has often been asked: Is there any reference to the Israelites and to the Exodus in the monuments of Egypt? and Egyptologists have been compelled to answer, No. In fact, the probabilities were strongly against the discovery of such a reference. Very few of the Egyptian inscriptions are historical, and those that are so record the successes and victories of the Pharaohs, not their disasters and defeats. Moreover, to the Egyptian of the age of the nineteenth dynasty the Israelites were but a troublesome Bedouin tribe which had settled on the outskirts of the Delta, and been reduced to the condition of public serfs. It would no more occur to him to make mention of them on the great monuments of Egypt than it would to ourselves to speak of a tribe of gypsies in some public inscription.

But the probabilities notwithstanding, the name of the Israelites has at last been met with in a royal inscription erected in a Theban temple, and it is even possible that there is a reference in the text to the Exodus as well. The fortunate discoverer is Prof. Flinders Petrie, to whom archaeologists are already so deeply indebted. Last winter he was excavating at Thebes, once the capital of Egypt, and there on the western bank, to the south of the Ramesseum, he laid bare the foundations of more than one temple. Among them were the ruins of a sanctuary hitherto believed to be that of Amenophis III., of the eighteenth dynasty. It has turned out, however, that it was really erected by Menepthah, of the nineteenth, who had plundered an older temple of Amenophis III. in order to build his own, using the stones of which it had been constructed for his own later work. One of these stones is a great slab or stela of granite, more than ten feet in length, upon which Amenophis had engraved a record of his architectural achievements. Menepthah built the inscribed part of the stela into the wall of his temple, and upon the uninscribed side caused another inscription to be written. It is in this latter inscription that the name of the Israelites has been found.

Menepthah was the son and successor of Ramesses whom Egyptologists have long recognized as the Pharaoh of the Oppression. The excavations of Dr. Naville, at Pa-Tum, the Pithom of the Old Testament, proved that Ramesses was the builder of that city, and it was natural to regard the discovery as verifying their conclusion. That Menepthah was the Pharaoh of the Exodus is further indicated by the Egyptian legend of the expulsion of Israelites, preserved by the Egyptian historian Manetho, which places that event in the reign of that prince.

The earlier part of his reign was full of disaster. The Libyans invaded Egypt and overran the Delta. Cities and temples were destroyed, and the people were massacred or obliged to fly. But in Menepthah's fifth year a great victory was gained over the invading hordes. Numbers of them fell on the field of battle or were made prisoners by the Egyptians; the rest were driven out of the country, and Egypt was saved. A hymn of triumph for the victory was composed by one of the poets of the court. It is this hymn which is engraved on the stela discovered by Prof. Petrie.

Toward the end of the poem comes the reference to the Israelites. The poem sums up all the other glorious deeds of the Pharaoh, the result of which had been to inaugurate an era of peace. Even his father's successes are set down to the credit of the son, the Hittites, for example, being said to have been tranquillized," though this was the work, not of Menepthah, but of his father, Ramesses II., many years before. A translation of the passage in question has been already published by Prof. Petrie, but it was made from an imperfect copy of the original text, and, therefore is not always correct. The stela is now at the Gizeh Museum, at Cairo, where it can be studied accurately and at leisure. This is what we read upon it:

"Vanquished (?) is the land of the Libyans; tranquillized is the land of the Hittites; captured is the land of Pa-Kana'na (Canaan) with (?) all violence; carried away is the land of Ashkelon; overpowered is the land of Gezer; the land of Innuam (north of Palestine) is brought to naught; the Israelites (I-s-i-r-a-e-l-u) are diminished (?) so that they have no seed; the land of Khar is become like the widows of Egypt. All lands are at peace." Khar was Southern Palestine; and the name is identified by Prof. Maspero with that of the Horites of the Old Testament.

The word translated "seed" is elsewhere used in the sense of "offspring"; that rendered "diminished" (?) has not been met with before. But the determinative of "smallness" or "badness" is attached to it, so that it must have some such meaning as that assigned to it above.

It will be noticed that while all the other proper names mentioned in the text are followed by the determinative of "country," that of the "Israelites" alone is without any determinative of the

kind. The Israelites, consequently, must at the time have had no fixed habitation, no definite district to which the Egyptian scribe could assign them, or else have been settled in Egypt itself. At any rate they had no country or city which they could call their own. They were a mere tribe and nothing more. Even their relative geographical position is uncertain; the Egyptian poet passes from south to north, and from north to south without any order or method, and mixes up Libyans and Hittites, Canaanites and Horites in one general description.

It may be, therefore, that the Israelites were still settled in Egypt at the time the poem was composed. But it is equally possible that the Exodus had already occurred and that the Israelites were already lost in the desert which bordered on the land of Khar. In the latter case we must see in the reference to them the Pharaoh's version of the Exodus. It will thus be parallel to Sennacherib's version of his campaign against Hezekiah. As Sennacherib passes over in silence the disaster which obliged him to retreat from Palestine, and records only his victory over the Egyptians, the spoil which he took from the cities of Judah, and the presents made to him at Lachish by Hezekiah, so, too, Menepthah speaks only of the measures that had been taken to destroy the male seed of the Israelites. Whether or not the God of Israel had already exacted vengeance for that destruction in the death of the first-born of the Egyptians, it is at present impossible to say. But the probabilities are in favor of it.

At all events, we cannot but be struck by the extraordinary parallelism between the words of the inscription and the statements which we find in the Book of Exodus (i. 10-21). There too, we read that the Pharaoh dealt "wisely" with the Israelites "lest they should multiply"; that the midwives were ordered to kill all the male children, and that "Pharaoh charged all the people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river." The passage on the stela might have been copied from the Scriptural record. It is true that the Pharaoh of Scripture is the Pharaoh of the Oppression rather than Menepthah, but, as we have seen, the poet of the stela felt no scruples about transferring the achievements of Ramesses II. to his son, and we are not told that edict for diminishing the male population of Israel was ever cancelled. The Egyptian poet and the Biblical writer alike agree in declaring that the "seed" of Israel was cut off.

OXFORD, ENG.

## "John Ross of Brucefield."

HIS VIEW OF THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

In some such words as the following Mr. Ross gave his view of the second coming to a young friend who was inquiring.

"Many years ago my mind was much taken up with the subject. I examined every passage I could find in Old Testament or New that bore upon it, and made them up into two lists ranged one against the other those seeming to favor the pre-millennial view and those that told on the other side. The two lists seemed pretty well balanced. Yet in view of the whole, my judgment inclined strongly against the pre-millennial idea as it is usually set forth, though there is one text in its favor that I was not then, and am not now, prepared to explain (The writer extremely regrets that the special passage has slipped her memory.)

"But as the years go, a theory of my own is developing differing materially from both the ordinary views. Let me give it to you in this way. Christ's second coming—that coming that precedes the millennium, the coming for which we are enjoined to be on the watch—is given in vision in the 19th of Rev. "And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war." Study the passage and you will see plainly that it describes the riding forth of Christ out of Heaven into the earth on purpose to subdue the whole earth to Himself. It describes the conflict and victory immediately preceding the millennium. Upon its close the Old Serpent is bound with a chain and cast into prison for a thousand years, and the blessed dead begin to live and reign with Christ for a thousand years. This vision describes the pre-millennial coming of Jesus Christ. Watch the passage closely and you will feel that it is not a literal, visible coming that is there announced. It is Christ's coming pre-eminently as *The Word of God*. The weapon He uses is the sharp sword that proceedeth out of His mouth. The day is coming, and it is not far off, when to those who are watching for Him He shall so shine into His own word, and His glory shall so shine out of it that that Word shall be to them as though their visible Lord was walking at their side—Yea more than that. It only needs that a very small percentage of His professed followers should be awakened to the fact that the word of God is the Word of God, that every command in it is a command of God, every promise a promise of our infinitely faithful God, every threat a threat of the God that cannot lie and