# OLD TESTAMENT AND SEMITIC STUDIES

IN MEMORY OF

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# PERSIAN WORDS AND THE DATE OF OLD TESTAMENT DOCUMENTS

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The Persian conquest under Cyrus the Great and his successors exerted an immediate influence upon the languages of the West. Persian civilization and political domination were quickly reflected in the speech of the peoples who were suddenly brought into close touch with the men from the eastern highlands. This fact is evident from contemporary literature. It is accordingly proposed in this paper to institute a comparison, and by citing the Persian words which up to the present time have been found in western documents dating from the end of the sixth century before Christ and from the fifth century, to determine, as far as possible, whether the Jewish narratives relating to this period stand on the same footing with the literature of other peoples of the time in respect to the use of Persian words, and thus to discover the date of composition with which the Persian coloring in these Jewish records is compatible.

For the purposes of this inquiry considerable material is available. There are the inscriptions in various languages prepared by command of the Persian monarchs to record the glories of their reigns, royal decrees proceeding from the same high source and the official correspondence of the provincial governors with the imperial court. From Babylonia come numerous business documents written in the Semitic dialect that was current in the busy marts of trade at the head of the Persian Gulf. Greece offers noble literary works; especially the historical writings of Herodotus and Thucydides, and poems by Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, and Aristophanes. The *Anabasis* of Xenophon also reflects the language of this age, although it was not written until the opening years of the fourth century.

I

The efforts of Ezra and Nehemiah in behalf of the struggling colony at Jerusalem, and the beautiful devotion which Queen Esther showed to her doomed fellow-countrymen, belong to the history of the fifth century B. C. They were events in the reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia and rulers of almost the whole civilized world from the year 486 to 425 B. C. The Jewish narratives of these deeds (Ezra, chaps. 7–10; Nehemiah; Esther) are written almost exclusively in Hebrew; but the copy of a letter of Artaxerxes accrediting Ezra is in Aramaic (Ezra 7:12–26), and other correspondence with Artaxerxes, recorded in Ezra 4:8–23, is likewise in Aramaic. The vocabulary which is employed contains about twelve words which are certainly of Persian origin, and about nine others the source of which is still under debate.

These Jewish writings contain three terms, relevant to the present inquiry, which are connected with a king in his more personal surroundings: kether, a crown (Esther 1:11; 2:17; 6:8), bîthān, a palace (Esther 1:5; 7:7), and pardēs, a forest or park (Neh. 2:8). Kether is believed by many scholars to be of Persian origin. Now it not only found employment in the Hebrew of Esther in reference to the Persian king, but it reached the Greeks also in the same century in the form κίταρις (Ctesias, Persika, 47). Bîthān is found in Hebrew in the description of the palace garden at Shushan, and there only. It is not certain that the word came from Persia; but, be that as it may, long before the days of Esther the word found employment in the Semitic language of Babylonia. It gained currency among the Babylonians soon after the Persian conquest of their country, as early as the days of Cambyses and Darius at least (Strassmaier, Cambyses 63:4; 133:3; Darius, 98:2; 179:7; see BA, III, 212). Another Persian word, like bîthān denoting a great building, and belonging to the vocabulary of imperial courts, is apadana, a palace or arsenal. It appears in Semitic Babylonian in an inscription of Artaxerxes II (405–361 B. C.), referring to a building of the sort erected by Darius the Great at Susa (Bezold, Achämenideninschriften, XII and 44; Schultze, ZDMG, XXXIX,

48–50; cf. Brown-Driver-Briggs, *Hebrew Lexicon, s. v.* bîthān;
see also Winckler, *Altorientalische Forschungen*, 3te Reihe, Band
I, 2; and Dan. 11:45). The word pardēs, borrowed from the
Persian, "might have reached Israel through Solomon's connec-
tion with the East" (Driver, *Introduction*[10], 449; see Eccles. 2:5;
Song of Sol. 4:13). It was known to the Jews of the fifth century
through the existence of the royal Persian forest or timber preserve
in the neighborhood of Jerusalem (Neh. 2:8). But long before
the time of Nehemiah the term had gained currency among the
Semites of Babylonia also, and it figures in a business document
of the reign of Cyrus in the form par-di-su (Strassmaier, *Cyrus*,
212:3). The word was introduced into Greek also as early at
least as the time of Cyrus the Younger's rule over the provinces
of Asia Minor, for he had "a great *paradeisos* full of wild beasts"
in Phrygia (Xenophon, *Anabasis*, i. 2. 7). Thus two of these
words used by the Jews were current among several peoples under
Persian domination even before the days of Ezra, Nehemiah, and
Esther; and the use of the third, and of yet another belonging to
the same sphere, is attested in the immediately succeeding years.

The Jewish narratives aforesaid contain three titles of Persian
officials. The name naturally traveled with the office. Nehemiah,
the governor of Judea, is called tiršāthā; the viceroys in the
provinces are entitled satraps, 'aḥašdarpᵉnîm (Ezra 8:36;
Esther 3:12); and the royal treasurer is called gizbār (Ezra
7:21). That the Persian titles crossed the border with the officials
who bore them, and at once found admission to the language of
the foreigners, has other abundant attestation. The name for
treasurer had likewise gotten into the speech of the Babylonians.
A fragment of it may be read on a mutilated document of Darius'
reign (521–486 B. C.), gan-za-b[ara] (Strassmaier, *Darius*,
296:2; compare Zimmern, *ZA*, X, 6, 63). Other Persian names
of the sort had also found entrance into the Semitic Babylonian:
for example, magus in the form ma-gu-šu (Behistun Inscrip-
tion of Darius, 18, 20, 23, 29, 90; see *ZDMG*, XXIII, 233);
also in the early part of the fifth century the Persian names of
office da-ta-ba-ra, 'judge,' pa-ti-pa-ba-ga, and us-tar-ba-ri
(Hilprecht, *Babylonian Expedition*, IX, 28). A similar introduc-

tion of Persian titles took place in the Greek language. Magus and the magi are often mentioned in the pages of Herodotus (e. g., i. 101), and Herodotus and Ctesias venture to use magos in composition with a Greek word (Herodotus, iii. 79; Ctesias, *Persika*, 15). Satraps, officials mentioned in the books of Ezra and Esther, appear frequently in the contemporary history of Herodotus (i. 192; iii. 128), and the word "satrapy" is used by Thucydides (i. 129). The Persian honor, and with it the Persian title, of being enrolled among the benefactors of the king, orosaggai, was bestowed upon a Greek of Asia Minor (Herodotus, viii. 85), and was also known in Athens (Sophocles, *Fragment* 193). So far, then, as Persian official titles are concerned, the Hebrew records of the fifth century before Christ are exactly like the contemporary writings of Babylonia and Greece.

The Jewish narratives have occasion to refer to the transaction of the public business of the Persian state, and in this connection use Persian words for treasury, gᵉnāz (Ezra 7:20; Esther 3:9); for various documents, pithgām, a decree (Esther 1:20); pathšegen and paršegen, copy of an archive (Esther 3:14; 4:8; 8:13; and Ezra 7:11; Kautzsch, *Aramäische Grammatik*, § 64; Gildemeister, *ZKM*, IV, 208; Lagarde, *Armenische Studien*, § 1838; Meyer, *Entstehung des Judenthums*, p. 22); ništᵉvān, a letter (Ezra 4:18, 23); for law, dāth (Ezra 8:36; Esther 2:12); and in reference to the postal service the technical terms ʾᵃhaštᵉrānîm, 'used in the king's service,' and rammākîm, 'studs' (Esther 8:10, 14). Of these seven or eight words two had long been current in the Semitic language of Babylonia. The term for law was used in the form da-ta in records of the reign of Darius (Strassmaier, *Darius*, 53:15). The word for treasury, gᵉnāz, was probably introduced by traders from Persia who visited the bazaars of Babylon, for it is used by the prophet Ezekiel, writing in Babylonia about 588 B. C. (cf. 26:1). He mentions "treasuries (i. e., chests) of rich apparel" (27:24). The word is found in Semitic Babylonian also, as early as the reign of Darius, in the compound gan-za-ba-ra, as noted above. To the Greek language the Persian postal arrangements gave in this century the word ἄγγαρος, whether its origin is Persian or

not, meaning a mounted courier, and ἀγγαρήιος, the postal system (Herodotus, iii. 126; especially, for both words, viii. 98). Even Aeschylus employs the word when he tells how beacon sent beacon by a courier of fire to bear the news (*Agamemnon*, 282; Meyer, *Entstehung des Judenthums*, p. 22). Again the vocabularies of the three languages, Greek, Hebrew, and Semitic Babylonian, are alike in respect to the adoption of Persian words.

Persian measures also came into use in the conquered provinces. The gold coin, daric, it is thought, was introduced in this manner into the commerce of the West. The name together with the money was current there in the fifth century. The word is found in the Hebrew of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles;[1] and in Greek was employed in Asia Minor (Herodotus, vii. 28), and at Sparta, in an inscription which is believed to antedate the year 416 B. C. (*ZA*, II, 51), and at Athens (Thucydides, viii. 28).[2] The Persian word a r t a b a, a measure of capacity equal to about twelve gallons, appears in Semitic Babylonian speech as early as the sixth year of the reign of Cambyses (Strassmaier, *Cambyses*, 316:1, 6, 9, 18), and is mentioned by Herodotus as in use in the province of Babylon (i. 192). The Persian f a r s a n g, equivalent to three miles and a half, was quite familiar to the Greeks in the form παρασάγγης, particularly because of its use to indicate distances on the great post-road between Sardis and Susa (Herodotus, v. 52; Xenophon, *Anabasis*, i. 4. 1 ff.), and from its being the standard imposed upon the Ionians in the assessment of their lands for the imperial taxation (Herodotus, vi. 42). From its association with the post-road, this measure of distance was used as far west as Attica during this period in the sense of a messenger (Sophocles, *Fragment* 127). Thus again in respect to Persian words these Jewish documents relating to the fifth century B. C. exhibit the linguistic phenomena of other non-Persian writings of the period.

Naturally many Persian implements and articles of dress were

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[1] In favor of distinguishing between ʾa d a r k ō n (I Chron. 29:7; Ezra 8:27) and d a r k a- m ō n (Ezra 2:69; Neh. 7:70–72), Meyer, *Entstehung des Judenthums*, pp. 196 f.

[2] A like word, d a r i k u, denoting a measure of capacity, is met with in the language of Babylonia even before the Persian conquest (Strassmaier, *Nabuchodonosor*, 432:7; *Nabonidus*, 623:8; *Cyrus*, 123:9; 316:10; see Zehnpfund, *BA*, I, 634; Ziemer, *BA*, III, 460).

made known to the West by the trader and the traveler. Some commodities went in advance of the Persian conquest, others came with the Persian occupation. In the group of Jewish writings now under consideration bûṣ, fine linen, and karpaś, a white stuff, are mentioned in connection with the hangings which adorned the palace of Xerxes (Esther 1:6). Bûṣ, if indeed it was brought from Persia, reached Babylonia before the Persian armies, for it is used by Ezekiel. It had found its way as far west as Greece by the time of Artaxerxes, being used in the form βύσσος by Empedocles in the middle of the fifth century. Still other words of this class gained access to Greece. The people of the West laughed at the anaxurides or wide trousers of the Persians and at their saraballa (Herodotus, i. 71; v. 49; see Bähr; also Dan. 3:21; Kautzsch, *Aramäische Grammatik*, §§ 62, 64; Marti, *Grammatik der biblischen-aramäischen Sprache*, Glossary); they remarked the turbans, kurbasia (Herodotus, v. 49; vii. 64; Aristophanes, *Birds*, 486), the thick rug, kaunakēs (Aristophanes, *Wasps*, 1137; see Andreas-Marti), the scimiter, akinakēs (Herodotus, iii. 118, 128; iv. 62; vii. 54), and the battle-axe, sagaris (Herodotus, i. 215; iv. 5, 70; vii. 64). All these words were borrowed from the East. In addition should be mentioned probably sandal, sandalon and sandalion (Herodotus, ii. 91), though this word had been naturalized in Greece of old (*Homeric Hymns*, "Mercurius," 79).

Thus, with the exception of two words which are reserved for the second part, and of which at any rate the Persian origin is disputed, all the indisputably Persian words and others with some appearance of Persian birth have been examined, that appear in the biblical narratives which tell of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, except Purim. Evidently the diction of these writings exhibits such traces of Persian influence as mark the language and literature of foreigners living within the bounds and on the border of the Persian empire in the fifth century before Christ.

## II

In the earlier part of the Book of Ezra, in the section devoted to events which took place between the first year of Cyrus and

the second year of Darius, i. e., between 538 and 515 B. C. (chaps.
1–6, except 4:6–23), there are eight words which scholars hold
with greater or less assurance to be of Persian origin. They are
gizbār, 1:8, tiršāthā, 2:63, and dark^emōn, 2:69, in the
Hebrew narrative of events in Cyrus' reign; and ništ^evān, 5:5,
g^enāz, 6:1, pithgām, 5:7, in the Aramaic account of certain
affairs of Darius' reign (the latter word occurring again in a
decree of Darius, 6:11, and still again, 5:11, in a written report
made by officials of the Persian government to Darius, in which
report also g^enāz, 5:17, already cited from 6:11, and 'āsparnā,
5:8, are found) and paršegen, 5:6, in the indorsement on
this report.

The narrative in its present form, as it is found in the Book of
Ezra, is not older than the reign of Artaxerxes (465–425 B. C.),
but it incorporates older records (Meyer, *Entstehung des Juden-
thums;* Boyd, *Presbyterian and Reformed Review,* XI (1900),
414–437). And the occasional presence of Persian words is a
proper phenomenon of such a writing, both in its narrative portion
and in the original sources. Only three of the Persian words, it
will be noticed, appear in the references to events of Cyrus'
reign. One is daric, the gold coin already discussed. The two
others, gizbār and tiršāthā, are Persian official titles. The
name went with the office. And one of them, gizbār, occurs in
a Babylonian document of the decade immediately after Cyrus
(see above, p. 275). The other Persian words, five in number,
are found in records, original or translated, that in part belong
and in part refer to the times of Darius. The propriety of a Per-
sian element in the diction is apparent from the nature of the
documents (compare the manner in which the Persian word
apadana, already cited, obtained employment in a record of
Xerxes written in the Semitic Babylonian); and is, moreover,
attested by the still larger number of Persian words which have
already been cited from documents written in the Semitic dialect
of Babylonia and dating from the reigns of Cyrus, Cambyses
and Darius (pardisu, artabi, magušu, gizbār, data, data-
bara, ustabari, patipabaga). It is evident that the Semitic
speech of Babylonia was already interlarded with Persian words.

There is some evidence also that the form of expression was being affected by Persian influence (Hilprecht, *Babylonian Expedition*, IX, 36).

Included among the Persian vocables in the former part of the Book of Ezra is one noun, 'āsparnā (compare Meyer, *Entstehung des Judenthums*, p. 10), and in the rescript of Artaxerxes (Ezra 4:6–23) are two more, which are rendered adverbially; namely, 'āsparnā, 'diligently,' 'adrazdā, 'exactly,' and 'aphtōm, 'in the end, finally.' The Persian origin of each of these three words has been called in question (Kautzsch, *Aramäische Grammatik*, § 64; Fried. Delitzsch, *Prolegomena*, 151 f., and in Baer's *Daniel*). However that may be, it is at any rate worthy of notice that these three words occur only in the Aramaic sections of the Book of Ezra; 'āsparnā, namely, in the report of the Persian governor to Darius (5:8), the rescript of Darius in reply (6:8, 12), the record of the execution of the royal command (6:13), and with 'aphtōm and 'adrazdā in the two rescripts of Artaxerxes (4:13, 'aphtōm; 7:17, 21, 26, 'āsparnā; 7:23, 'adrazdā). That is, in addition to the note recording the execution of the royal order, they are found only in letters of Persians to Persians, or in credentials given by Persians and intended for exhibition to Persian officials. They are found in ostensible copies or translations of Persian documents, and that, too, in the international language of the time.

This review has become a practically exhaustive citation of the Persian words which have been discovered up to this time in the Semitic inscriptions of Babylonia dating from the sixth and fifth centuries before Christ, and in Greek literature acknowledged to belong to the fifth century.[3] It is quite certain that many more Persian words will be revealed in the Babylonian speech as the tablets are brought to light. It has become clear, we think, that the diction of the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther exhibits such traces of the Persian influence as properly belong to contemporary documents written within the bounds of the Persian empire and concerning imperial affairs.

[3] Since this article was finished for publication, a number of Persian words have come to light in Egyptian documents of the fifth century before Christ. From them the foregoing exposition has already received enrichment.

## III

The third part of the present inquiry relates to the Book of Daniel. For reasons which will presently become apparent, the time is opportune for prolegomena only, for a preliminary survey, for the preparation of a programme to be followed in the investigation, for a determination of the problems to be solved. The Book of Daniel contains Persian words, in fact it contains more than do the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther combined. The book begins with an account of events which occurred in the earlier part of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Conceivably, of course, it may embody notes or other records made at the time when the occurrences or visions took place. But at any rate the material is arranged; and the book was certainly not thus organized until after the fall of the dynasty of Nebuchadnezzar and the accession of Cyrus to the Babylonian throne in the year 539 B. C. So much, critics of all schools admit; for the narrative of both history and vision is brought down into the reign of Cyrus (1:21; 6:28; 10:1). The earliest date, therefore, that can possibly be thought of for the composition of the Book of Daniel is the closing years of the prophet's life, during the leisure that came to him after his final retirement from public service, in the reign of Cyrus, shortly before the year 530 B. C.

This date is doubtless compatible with the use of the two, or possibly three or four, Persian words which occur in the Hebrew portion of the book: pathbāg, 'a portion of food doled out daily from the royal kitchen' (1:5), 'appeden, 'building' (11:45; see above p. 274), and perhaps part$^e$mîm, 'nobles' (1:3), and melṣār, 'steward' (1:11, 16); but Assyrian origin is ascribed to melṣār by Fried. Delitzsch in Baer's *Daniel*, p. xi, and to part$^e$mîm by Haupt, *American Journal of Philology*, XVII, 490. The propriety of these Persian words in a writing from the pen of the aged Daniel himself can scarcely be questioned. It is vouched for by the occurrence of other Persian words in Semitic literature of the time, written in Babylon and its vicinity; such as g$^e$nāz, 'treasury,' used by Ezekiel, pardisu, 'forest, or, park,' in an inscription of Cyrus' reign, artabe, a measure of capacity, and perhaps bîthān, 'palace,' in inscriptions of Cambyses' reign

(529–521 B. C.), and data, 'law,' and the official titles ganzabara, 'treasurer,' and databara, 'lawyer,' attested as current in Babylonia as early as 520 B. C.

The archaeological problem presented by the Persian words, and, it may be added, by the words of Greek origin, belongs to the Aramaic section of the book, chap. 2:4 to 7:28.   At the outset of the investigation, the fact that officials in the decree of Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian are enumerated under Persian titles admits of no other plausible explanation than that this record was penned after the Persian occupation of Babylonia, and a sufficient time after the conquest for these titles to have become familiar to the people of the lower Euphrates valley.   The references to Cyrus in the book and this linguistic phenomenon are so far in agreement.

The presence of these official titles and other Persian words in the Aramaic section is adequately accounted for, *First*, on the theory that the Book of Daniel was written originally in its present bilingual form and by an author who lived in the troubled Maccabean age.   It is equally intelligible, *secondly*, on the theory that the book was originally written in Hebrew, and that the Aramaic section is a fragment of a translation or of a Targum of the Hebrew (Lenormant, *La Divination* (1875), p. 174; *Chaldean Magic* (1877), p. 14; compare Wright, *Daniel and His Prophecies* (1906), p. xx, but apparently differently elsewhere, e. g., pp. 46, 53; Introduction, p. 193, both of whom ascribe the authorship of the book to Daniel; Bevan, *Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (1892), p. 27; Prince, *Critical Commentary* (1899), p. 13, both of whom regard the original as Maccabaean; Haupt in Kamphausen's *Book of Daniel*, critical edition (1896), p. 16; Winckler, *Altorientalische Forschungen*, 2te Reihe (1899), p. 211, note).   The book, it is held, was rendered into Aramaic with close literalness or in expository expansion.   In the course of time a large portion of the Hebrew document was lost, and the gap was restored from the Aramaic version.   The Persian words, and the traces of contact with the Greeks seen in the names of certain musical instruments mentioned in 3:5, may belong solely to the translation, and not have been found in the original

Hebrew. So far as the diction is concerned, the translation into Aramaic may have been made as early as the time of Alexander the Great (Lenormant), or even in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, as is abundantly evident from the brief survey of Persian influence upon the languages of the West in the fifth century before Christ. At that period too, the Aramaeans of the West held close intercourse with the Greeks. The peculiarities of diction are also accountable for, *thirdly*, on the theory that the Aramaic section, so much at least as is comprised in chaps. 2–6, is an independent composition, penned in Aramaic, and written one, two, or three centuries before the time of the Maccabees (Eichhorn, *Einleitung*[4] (1824), §§ 615c, II, 619, time of Ezra and Nehemiah; Herbst, *Einleitung* (1840), 104 f.; Strack, in Zöckler's *Handbuch der theologischen Wissenschaften* (1883), I, 165; and Meinhold, *Beiträge zur Erklärung des Buches Daniel* (1888), p. 70, before 300 B. C.; Wildeboer, *Litteratur des Alten Testamentes* (1895), pp. 436, 443. It is mainly in connection with the fourth theory that the linguistic phenomenon demands rigid investigation: namely, *fourth*, that the Book of Daniel was written, essentially in its present form, by the great man of God whose name it bears. In view of the diction can Daniel have been the author? Only an indirect method is available to answer this question. In default of Aramaic literature written in Babylonia during the early Persian period, recourse must be had exclusively to documents written in the Semitic Babylonian, but even in this indirect way scholarship is coming measurably nearer a final determination of this particular point.