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A QUARTERLY JOURNAL IN THE INTERESTS OF SEMITIC STUDY

MANAGING EDITOR:

WILLIAM R. HARPER, PH. D.,

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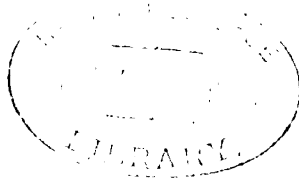
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THE COLLOQUY OF MOSES ON MOUNT SINAI.

BY ISAAC H. HALL,

Metropolitan Museum, New York City.

This colloquy is one of the compositions contained in a manuscript received by me in June, 1889, from Urmî, from which "The Story of Arsenius King of Egypt" has already appeared in HEBRAICA. The colloquy occupies the first fifteen pages of the manuscript, and, like the other portions, is pretty fairly written, with abundant points. The scribe has made a number of obvious clerical slips, and a great many mistakes in the pointing. The voyage dampened the mucilaginous ink in spots, causing the pages to stick together, and tear when separated, adding more pains in decipherment than one likes to spend over a modern copy; but not more than one word was thus rendered doubtful. The scribe's abbreviations I have generally spelled out, denoting the letters thus added by inclosing them in brackets. The pointing I have not thought worth while to retain, except in spots where, for one reason or another, it seemed desirable. The punctuation in our sense, however, I have retained, chiefly to show how necessary it is for the translator to disregard it. When punctuation (like our colon) follows letters supplied in brackets, it is a note of abbreviation merely, and I might perhaps better have omitted it.

Except the textual notes added to the text and translation, there seems no need of comment. Much might be added, however, to show that, whatever be the origin and transmission of the story, it has much in common with the Nestorian church services; some of it (for instance) coinciding verbally with passages in the order for the first Saturday of the Great Fast, or Lent.

But I shall not attempt to go into the origin of the story, nor of its age. I know of no other Syriac copy of the story, but a Karshun version appears to exist in the British Museum (7209 Rich, No. 16. See Rosen and Forshall's Cat., 109-

THE MOABITE STONE AND THE HEBREW RECORDS.

BY PROFESSOR JOHN D. DAVIS,

Princeton Theological Seminary.

According to the latest recensions of the text, the opening sentences of the Moabite stone, so far as they pertain to the present subject, are: "I am Mesha son of Chemosh-melek, king of Moab, the Dibonite. My father reigned over Moab thirty years and I reigned after my father. And I made this high place for Chemosh . . . because he saved me from all the kings and let me feast my eyes on all that hated me. Omri was king of Israel and he afflicted Moab for many days, because Chemosh was angry with his land. And his son succeeded him; and he also said: 'I will afflict Moab.' In my days he said thus; but I feasted my eyes on the humiliation of him and his house; and as for Israel, it perished with everlasting destruction. Now Omri had taken possession of the land of Medeba; and [Israel] dwelt in it during his days and half his son's [or sons'] days, forty years: but Chemosh restored it in my days."

The Hebrew records, it will be remembered, assign to the four kings of the house of Omri a combined reign of forty-four years; place the revolt of Mesha after the death of Omri's son Ahab, during the reign of Ahaziah; and ascribe the war of attempted resubjugation to Jehoram, Omri's grandson and last king of the line.

Prof. Driver, the last who has expressed an opinion and who but gives utterance to a wide-spread thought, says: "The revolt of Moab from Israel, noticed briefly in II Kgs. i. 1 = 3,5 . . . is there stated to have taken place after the death of Ahab; but from line 8 of the inscription it is evident that this date is too late, and that in fact it must have been completed by the middle of Ahab's reign:" and again, "Mesha's revolt took place in the middle of Ahab's reign, not after his death (as stated, II Kgs. i. 1)," (Notes on Text of Samuel).

Thus the stone of Moab and the Hebrew records are found contradictory. We presume, however, that the Oxford professor and all sharers of his view freely concede that a war (if not the war) for the re-conquest of Moab was conducted by Jehoram, as the Hebrew scriptures state; and hold that a correct history of the times should narrate the Moabite revolt about the middle of Ahab's reign, and a war of attempted re-conquest at the beginning of Jehoram's.

The first inquiry concerns the date of the stone. 1. It is a memorial stele; not commemorative merely of Moab's recovery of independence from Israel, but retrospective of the reign of Mesha. It records the capture of numerous Israel-

ish cities by Mesha, it is true : but it also recounts the war against Dedan which resulted in the recovery of Horonaim by Moab ; describes Mesha's works of peace, the repair of the ruins of war, the fortification of his capital, the erection therein of a royal palace and of reservoirs, and the construction of a highway by the river Arnon ; and the stone is dedicated by him to the god who had saved him, not from Omri's son merely, but from all the kings, and had let him feast his eyes on all that hated him. 2. Whatever may have been the date of the revolt from Israel, the monument was certainly not erected until after the death of Ahab ; for Mesha knows how long Ahab reigned, saying : "Omri took the land of Medeba and [Israel] dwelt therein during his days and half the days of his son." 3. The stone was erected after disaster had befallen the sons of Ahab also, perhaps even after the extinction of his family, which shortly followed his own death ; for Mesha says of Ahab : " I have feasted my eyes on him and on his house," i. e., have seen the utter humiliation of both. By the humbling of Ahab's family may be meant only the frustration of Jehoram's attempt at re-conquest ; but the reference would be even more appropriate to the work of Jehu, whereby the house of Omri was overthrown and all its members murdered. 4. There is perhaps confirmation for a time during the reign of Jehu. Mesha says : " And as for Israel, it perished with everlasting destruction." These may be words of oriental exaggeration : but there was a time, however, when they would have been fitly spoken ; for when, immediately after the fall of Omri's house, Moab saw Samaria subjected to the Assyrian yoke, and when a few years later Hazael ravaged Israel and wrested from Jehu the region east of the Jordan, Israel seemed to have indeed " perished with everlasting destruction." To judge, therefore, from Mesha's own words, the stele was erected late in his reign after the death of Ahab, after the humiliation of that house also ; and, not improbably, after the extinction of the line of Omri by Jehu and the entrance of Israel into its period of dire distress.

The second inquiry concerns the actual statements and authenticity of the Hebrew records. What do the Hebrews testify ? They say nothing about a Moabite revolt in the days of Ahab ; but they connect one with the death of Ahab, relate its outbreak in the course of the narrative of the next, i. e., Ahaziah's reign, record the war of attempted suppression in the days of his successor Jehoram, and seem to imply that tribute had been rendered down to the date of Ahab's fall. And this account may not be lightly set aside. For 1. The Hebrew date suits the circumstances connected with Ahab's death. Historically the time was eminently fitting for a revolt. During the reign of Ahab, intermarriages between the royal families of Israel and Judah, by terminating hostilities for a time, caused these kingdoms to again present a united front to their common enemy Moab. At the battle of Ramoth-gilead, however, not only was the powerful monarch at the head of the northern realm slain, whereby the reins of

government fell into the hands of the weak Ahaziah, but the united armies of both northern and southern kingdoms were defeated. The time was opportune for Moab to revolt. 2. Again a general revolt at that time is abundantly manifest from Hebrew history. A month or so after Jehoshaphat had returned to Jerusalem from the disastrous battle at Ramoth-gilead, his kingdom was threatened with invasion by the allied armies of Moab, Ammon and Edom. That danger having been warded off, Jehoshaphat was soon after summoned by his kinsman Jehoram to assist the Israelites to re-subjugate Moab. 3. The Hebrew record further dates the attempted re-conquest of Moab after the death of Ahab by the mention of persons. The war is conducted by Jehoram, who shortly followed Ahab on the throne; and the prophet Elisha, who succeeded Elijah after the death of Ahab, is mentioned as present. 4. The credibility of the Hebrew record for this period is abundantly and minutely confirmed by monumental evidence. The Assyrian measurement of the interval from Ahab to Jehu is apparently the same as the Hebrew. The Assyrian tablets and the Hebrew records alike make Ahab of Israel and Ben-hadad of Damascus contemporaries and allies, place the death of Ben-hadad in the same position relatively to concomitant events, define it to within three years of its occurrence, name Hazael of Damascus as successor of Ben-hadad, mention Hazael and Jehu as contemporaries and refer to each in the same year relatively to the death of Ben-hadad.

Such complete consistency among all the statements of the Hebrew record for this period, such minute agreement with the details of the Assyrian annals, lend to the Hebrew declarations an authority not lightly to be rejected. Were then choice between the credibility of the Hebrew and the Moabite stories necessary, preference might justly be claimed for the former on the ground that it is derived from annals of the kingdom presumably contemporary with the events, whereas Mesha had his stone inscribed a considerable time after the revolt; that the general authenticity of the Hebrew narrative is abundantly confirmed, while the credibility of Mesha is unknown; and especially on the ground that the Hebrew record deals with domestic affairs, while the Moabite king's note of time is a reference to the internal history of a realm foreign to Moab.

But we do not think that a choice between the Hebrew recital and Mesha's account is necessary. We are glad to believe in the historical accuracy of both. The statements of the two documents may be reconciled in one of two ways:

They may be combined much in the manner already suggested; the recovery of Medeba by the Moabites being assigned to the middle of Ahab's reign, and the general revolt of Moab, allied with Ammon and Seir, to the period after the death of Ahab. The course of events would then be as follows: Omri, before his accession, while commander of the armies of Israel, crushed the power of the Moabites and opened their country to the Israelites for settlement. Despite the vicissitudes which befell the northern kingdom, the Israelitish inhabitants of this

remote district, occupying as they did fortified towns, easily retained possession of the conquered domain and raised the imposed tribute. At length when Omri's successor Ahab was entangled in war with the Syrians, Mesha found himself sufficiently strong to oust the Israelites from the extreme eastern and isolated town of Medeba; but, like many a subject prince of mediæval history, while he did not hesitate, when the occasion offered, to dispossess his liege lord of a goodly castle, nevertheless remained a vassal. Other cities lost by his father, Mesha did not undertake to recover until the catastrophe at Ramoth-gilead made revolt possible. Looking back over many years and recounting the exploits of his long reign, Mesha, in no wise contradicting but only unintentionally supplementing the Hebrew account, truthfully says: "Omri had taken possession of Medeba, and Israel dwelt therein during his days and half his son's days, forty years; but Chemosh restored it in my days."

There is another and preferable explanation. It rests upon a well-grounded assumption and on two facts. The assumption is that the inscription of Mesha was engraved not simply as late as the reign of Jehoram, which is proven, but after the destruction of Omri's house by Jehu, which as already seen is more than consistent with the narrative, being probable. The facts are first that the name "son of Omri" was not restricted to Ahab, but was a common designation for any descendant of Omri on the throne of Israel. To name thus Omri's lineal successors was in accordance with that well-known custom of the times whereby members of a royal line were denominated sons of the founder thereof. Several examples from the Assyrian records are cited by Schrader (*KAT.* 190 Ann.**). So this stone mentions the occupant of Horonaim, not by his personal, but by his family name "son of Dedan" (l. 31). So too the stone, while it knows that name of terror Omri the conqueror, knows his royal successor only by the indefinite designation of "his son." So too another contemporary monument of stone gives to Jehu, who was not even of the lineage of Omri but only a successor, the title "son of Omri." "Son of Omri" was thus the common designation for any king of Omri's line. The second fact is that the three letters בנה can be a plural form, meaning "his sons." The Moabitish plural absolute is uniformly written defectively. Likewise plural nouns in union with a pronominal suffix generally show no ך. In line 8, the line in question, the words "his days" are represented by the three letters ימה. In line 20, where occurs the sentence, "I took of Moab 200 men, even all its chiefs," the words "its chiefs" are expressed by three letters רשה. In line 22, the pronominal suffix is appended to the feminine plural מנדלת naturally without an intervening ך. In but one case is ך used. Thus while the letters בנה may be a noun in the singular number, as in l. 6, they can with equal propriety represent the plural "his sons."

The course of the history was this: Omri, the commander of Israel's armies during the two years of the reign of Elah (I Kgs. xvi. 16), conquered and crushed

Moab and opened the territory to Israelitish settlement. The same or the following year he became king; and, though his authority was for a while disputed by a rival, the Moabites had no power left to rise against the Israelitish occupants of the walled towns. Apace with Moab's recovery of strength, grew the authority and power of Omri and Ahab. Their house moreover formed alliance by matrimony with the royal family of Judah. Not until the united forces of Judah and Israel were defeated at Ramoth-gilead and Ahab himself slain, were the Moabites spirited enough and courageous enough, with the help of the Ammonites and Edomites, to strike for freedom. They tried and succeeded. The revolt divided the reign of Omri's sons in twain, and gave to the latter half of their dominion a far different aspect in Moabitish eyes from the former. Looking back over many years, recounting events previous to as well as during his own reign, and being acquainted with the fateful history of Omri's dynasty, Mesha records: "Omri was king over Israel and afflicted Moab many days. . . . And his son succeeded him and he also said: 'I will afflict Moab.' He said thus in my days; but I feasted my eyes on him and on his house; and as for Israel, it perished with everlasting destruction." And then, after thus mentioning the fall of the first of the sons and of that son's house, knowing the lineal descendants of Omri simply as "his sons," Mesha resumes: "Now Omri had taken possession of Medeba and Israel dwelt therein during his days and half the days of his sons, forty years; but Chemosh restored it in my days."