

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

THE WHITE RACE OF ANCIENT PALESTINE.

OSBURN, an accurate observer in such matters, stated some years ago that the Amorites were depicted by the Egyptian artists with "the eyes blue, the eyebrows and beard red." The statement is important, since exposure and the ravages of man are fast destroying the colours which once covered the great monuments of Thebes. When, the winter before last, Mr. Flinders Petrie undertook to take photographs and casts of the various races represented upon the walls of the tombs and temples, he could no longer find any direct confirmation of Osburn's statement. At the Ramesseum the Hittites are painted orange, at Medinet Abu their skin is of a "dark brownish yellow"; and it is only in the tomb of Rekh-mâ-ra that we can still see that their eyes were brown, while their hair was black. They thus stand in contrast to the people of Keft or Phœnicia, whose eyes are black and their hair light brown. A still greater contrast is presented by the chief of Kadesh on the Orontes, the southern capital of the Hittite tribes. His skin is white, while his eyes and hair are alike of a light red-brown, and he therefore belongs specifically to what is known as the white race.

Now Kadesh, though occupied by the Hittites, is described as being "in the land of the Amâur," or Amorites. Since its chief, according to the artists of Rekh-mâ-ra, was not distinguished by the ethnical peculiarities of the Hittites, we must consider him to have sprung from the older Amorite population of the land. Apart from the colour of their skin and hair, the features of these Amorites are well known to us from Egyptian representations. The Amorite was dolicho-cephalic, his nose was large and prominent, and his chin ended in a short, pointed beard. If we add to this the blue eyes described by Osburn, we

have a figure which reminds us of the Kabyles of northern Africa.

These Kabyles offer a striking appearance to the traveller who sees them for the first time. Their clear white skins, covered with freckles, their blue eyes and light hair, their tall and shapely stature, make him believe himself once more in some English or Irish village. We need not wonder that at one time they were regarded as descendants of the Vandal conquerors of the Roman provinces in Africa. But however satisfactory this explanation seemed at first sight to be, it was soon found to be untenable. The skull and skeleton of the modern Kabyle resemble those of the prehistoric inhabitants of the country whose remains are buried in the cromlechs of the later stone and earlier bronze ages. Moreover the Egyptian monuments have revealed to us the fact that the Lebu, or Libyans, who fought against the Pharaohs centuries before the Vandal invasion were a white-skinned, fair-haired population. It is therefore evident that the Kabyles are the descendants of the early inhabitants of northern Africa, and that their physical characteristics are not due to the importation of foreign elements from the north of Europe, but are the inheritance they have received from their remote forefathers. As far back as our monumental evidence extends, the northern coast of Africa was peopled by a portion of the white race.

The traveller in Palestine meets with the same indications of the presence of a white race as does the traveller in northern Africa. The first time I visited the country I was struck by the fact that blue-eyed, fair-haired children are to be found, alike in the plains and in the mountains, in the crowded cities and in the most remote villages. At the time I ascribed their physical characteristics to the influence of the crusades, and imagined them to be the descendants of immigrants from Europe. It was but re-

peating in another form the explanation which saw in the Kabyles the children of the Vandals.

Last winter I made a journey overland from Jerusalem to Egypt by the ancient "way of the Philistines." Between Gaza and El-Arish, the frontier town of Egypt, it was impossible not to notice the numerous examples of fair-complexioned, red-haired men with whom I met. More particularly I had an opportunity of examining the present sheikh of El-Arish. Like myself, he was on his way to Egypt, and for two successive nights he joined our camel-drivers as they sat round their camp-fire. Time after time I watched the profile of his face, and time after time I thought that the Amorite chief depicted by an Egyptian artist of Ramses III. on the walls of Medinet Abu had once more awakened to life. The slightly retreating forehead, the peculiar nose, the pointed beard at the end of the chin were all there in the living sheikh of El-Arish as they were in the Egyptian portrait of the chief of the Amorites.¹ The sheikh might have been the model whom the Egyptian artist portrayed.

The characteristics of race, when once fixed, are extraordinarily permanent, and it is no more surprising to find the features of the ancient Amorites still surviving in the population of modern Palestine than it is to find that six thousand years have made no perceptible difference between the Egyptian *fellah* of to-day and the famous wooden statue of one of his forefathers which adorns the Boulaq Museum. If there is still a white race in Palestine, it is because there was a white race there before the days of the Exodus.

The united testimony of the Old Testament and the

¹ For copies of two portraits of him, the excellent work of Mr. Tomkins, *The Times of Abraham*, pl. vi., should be consulted. I ought to add that Mr. Flinders Petrie's casts and photographs show that as late as the time of Shishak and Rehoboam the dominant ethnic type in the cities of Judah seems to have still been Amorite.

Egyptian monuments shows that this race was known by the name of Amorite, and like the Kabyles of Africa inhabited the mountainous regions (Num. xiii. 29; Deut. i. 20). It was the aboriginal race which had been destroyed before the Israelites, though their "height was like the height of the cedar" (Amos ii. 9). In the neighbourhood of the old sacred city of Hebron they were known as the sons of Anak (Deut. i. 27, 28; so Josh. xi. 21, 22, compared with x. 5, 38); in Moab they were called the Emim (Deut. ii. 10), and in Edom the Horites (Deut. ii. 12). The later inhabitants of the country remembered them on account of their height and size—that distinguishing characteristic of the white dolicho-cephalic race; and down to the time of David the gigantic descendants of the Anakim were still pointed out in the cities of the Philistines (Josh. xi. 22; 2 Sam. xxi. 16–22). The iron couch or sarcophagus of Og, the Amorite king of Basan, was preserved at Rabbath, afterwards the capital of Ammon, where its size excited the wonder of subsequent generations (Deut. iii. 3); and the word Rephaim, by which the Amorites came to be known, became synonymous with "giants."¹ Not only had the Amorites held possession of the mountains before their expulsion by Israelites, Moabites, Edomites, and Ammonites, they had also been distinguished by their great stature, so that the Semitic tribes by the side of them seemed to be but "grasshoppers" (Num. xiii. 33).

We can trace a continuous line of Amorite settlements almost from the Egyptian frontier as far as the north of Damascus. When Chedor-laomer and his allies had smitten the Amalekites or Bedouin tribes in the neighbourhood of Kadesh-barnea, which Dr. Trumbull has succeeded in fixing in the block of mountains to the south-east of El-Arish,²

¹ Dr. Neubauer has shown that the Rephaim originally signified "the shades of the dead," and only later became equivalent to our term "prehistoric people." The Assyrian *rappu*, "weak," also means "the shade of the dead."

² *Kadesh-barnea*. (1884.)

they fell upon the Amorites in Hazezon-tamar or En-gedi (Gen. xiv. 7; 2 Chron. xx. 2). The desert sanctuary of Kadesh-barnea itself was in "the mountain of the Amorites" (Deut. i. 19, 20), whose territory stretched away northwards to Hebron and Jerusalem. Ezekiel tells us (xvi. 3, 45) that the mother of Jerusalem was a Hittite and its father an Amorite, and if we might press the statement in Numbers xiii. 29, it would seem that the Amorites shared with the Hittites and the Jebusites the whole of the mountainous district which ran through the centre of Palestine, "from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, as men come to Hamath." At all events the Amorites successfully resisted "the house of Joseph" "in mount Heres," in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim" (Jud. i. 34-36), and Shechem is declared by Jacob (Gen. xlviii. 22) to have been taken "out of the hand of the Amorite"; while the Egyptian monuments expressly state that Kadesh on the Orontes, between Damascus and Hamath, was in "the land of Amâur." But it was on the eastern side of the Jordan that the Amorites maintained themselves in their fullest strength. Here were the kingdoms of Sihon of Heshbon and Og of Bashan, which extended from the Dead Sea to the boundaries of Damascus, and included the later kingdom of Ammon as well as the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. We may say, in fact, that the Amorites formed the dominant population of the mountainous region on both sides of the Jordan, from the borders of Egypt as far as "the entering in of Hamath." That they extended still farther northwards is indicated by the Egyptian inscriptions.

Throughout this region, and more especially on the eastern side of the Jordan, where the Amorites seem to have been especially strong, cromlechs have been found closely resembling those of northern Africa. These latter again form part of a series which extends through Spain and

France into the British Isles as far north as the Orkneys. They are marked by certain peculiar characteristics, which have led archæologists to believe that they are the creation of a particular race.¹ The skulls and objects discovered in them have led to the further belief that this race was the long-headed white race still so largely represented in Europe. Against this belief the existence of the cromlechs of Palestine and Moab has been invoked, but invoked, as we now see, erroneously. In Palestine and on the eastern side of the Jordan, as well as in northern Africa and western Europe, the cromlechs were accompanied by a tall white race.

I believe that allusion is actually made to the whiteness of skin which characterized this race in the records of the Old Testament. We are told in Deuteronomy ii. 12, that the Edomites or "Red-men" had been preceded in their occupation of the mountains of Seir by the prehistoric Horites. It is customary to derive the name of the latter from *khôr*, "a hole," and explain it as meaning "troglydites"; but when we remember that Caleb was the son of Hur (1 Chron. ii. 50), and that Ash-hur, "the man of Khor," was the brother of Caleb (according to 1 Chron. ii. 24), it is obvious that we must look for another etymology of the word. The district peopled by the descendants of Caleb was in the territory of the Amorites, where no traces of cave-dwellers can be found. I should therefore explain *Khori*, "the Horite," as derived like *khori*, "white bread," from a root signifying "whiteness," and see in the contrast between the Horite and the Edomite the contrast between the earlier white race and the red-skinned Semites who succeeded them.

¹ Cromlechs of a somewhat similar construction have recently been found in the Toherkess country. This is the more remarkable, since no cromlechs at all may, broadly speaking, be said to exist in Europe east of a line drawn through Dresden.

The prehistoric Emim of Moab and the Zamzummim of Ammon (Deut. ii. 11, 20) are compared with the Anakim and Avim who were "destroyed" by the Philistines of Caphtor. These "Avim" or rather Avvim, are stated to have been Anakim in Joshua xi. 22, and the word simply means "the people of the 'iyyim," or "ruined heaps," of which there were so many in the country. Sometimes these ruined heaps represented one of the cities overthrown by the children of Israel, like Ai near Beth-el; sometimes they merely denoted the cromlechs in which the elder population had buried its dead. All that we can learn from the name is that prehistoric ruins existed not only in the mountains of the interior, but also in the rich lowlands of the Philistine coast.

It will have been noticed that the Amorites are associated with the Hittites, both as occupying "the mountains," and as helping to found Jerusalem. Hebron moreover was not only an Amorite sanctuary, it was also Hittite, and the three Amorite confederates of Abraham,—Mamre, Eshcol, and Aner—are not only parallel to the three sons of Anak, —Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai—but are apparently included among "the children of Heth," from whom Abraham purchased the cave of Machpelah "which was before Mamre" (comp. Gen. xiii. 18, xiv. 13, xxiii. 17-20).¹ To use a suggestive expression of Mr. Tomkins, the Amorites and Hittites are constantly "interlocked" together.

This is not only the case, according to the Old Testament, in the south of Palestine, the Egyptian monuments show that it was also the case in the north. Kadesh of the

¹ Whether we adopt "the documental hypothesis" of the composition of Genesis or not, does not matter for the purposes of the argument. The writer, at any rate, to whom we owe the book of Genesis in its present form saw no incompatibility in making Hebron at once Hittite and Amorite. Sheshai and Talmai, it may be observed, are shown by their terminations to be tribal names, and Sheshai seems to represent "the Shasu," or nomad Semites "of Canaan," who, according to Seti I., lived a little to the south of Hebron.

Hittites was in the land of the Amorite, and among the Hittite cities in the direction of Carchemish we find Amâr-seki, Mâurr-khnas, and Mâur-mâr.¹ Several years ago I suggested that the strange title of Gar-emeris, given by the Assyrian kings to the district of Damascus, was of Hittite origin, and meant "the country (?) of the Amorites." At all events the second part of the title is expressed by the cuneiform character which denoted an ass (Assyrian *emeru*), reminding us that the name of "the Amorite" out of whose hands Israel took Shechem (Gen. xlviii. 22) has, in the account of Genesis, been contemptuously changed into Hamor, "an ass."

However this may be, Hebron is associated in Numbers xiii. 22 with Zoan, the capital of the Hyksos conquerors of Egypt, which is stated to have been built by them seven years later than Hebron. It is curious that Manetho, the Egyptian historian, declared that Jerusalem had been founded by these same Hyksos after their expulsion from Egypt, and it is possible that Mariette may have been right in thinking that some at least of the Hyksos leaders belonged to the Hittite race. Anthropologists at all events have discovered a resemblance between the Hittite faces represented on their own and the Egyptian monuments and the strange and impressive features of the Hyksos sphinxes of Sân.

It may be therefore that the Hyksos invasion of Egypt was occasioned by the southern movement of the Hittite tribes from the Taurus, who not only furnished leaders to the nomad Semitic tribes on the frontiers of Egypt, but also led in their train bands of Amorite mountaineers. They would have given solidity and permanence to the invasion,

¹ We may compare the name of the Hittite king, Mâur-sir, where the analogy of the names Kheta-sir ("Hittite-sir"), and Khilip-sir ("Aleppo-sir") goes to show that Mâur denotes a locality. Dr. Neubauer suggests that in "the terebinth of Moreh" (Gen. xii. 6) and "the land of Moriah" (Gen. xxii. 2), we have the name of the Amorite in an abbreviated form,

and we should have an explanation not only of "the interlocking" of the Hittites and the Amorites—reminding us of the similar interlocking of the "black" and "red" Kelts,—but also of the presence of the Hittites in southern Judah. There would be no longer any need of supposing that the Hittites of Genesis are due to the misconceptions of late tradition. They would represent a fragment left behind by the first movement of the northern tribes which resulted in the Hyksos conquest of Egypt.

A relic of Amorite literature has been preserved in the Book of Numbers. Just as Isaiah borrowed a prophecy pronounced upon Moab "long before," and adapted it to the circumstances of his own time, so an old Amorite song of triumph over the Moabites was taken by the Israelites and applied to their own victories over the Amorites themselves. Heshbon, we are told (Num. xxi. 26, *seq.*), "was the city of Sihon the king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and taken all his land out of his hand, even unto Arnon. Wherefore the poets say, Come unto Heshbon; the city of Sihon is built and established. Yea, a fire is gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon: it has consumed Ar of Moab, (and) the lords of the high places of Arnon. Woe to thee, Moab! Thou art undone, O people of Chemosh: his sons that escaped (the battle) and his daughters have been given in captivity unto the Amorite king Sihon. And we have shot at them: Heshbon is perished even unto Dibon, and we have laid them waste even unto Nophah." It is evident that this song could not in the first instance have been composed to commemorate the conquest of Heshbon and the Amorites by the Israelites, but on the contrary must primarily have referred to the Amorite conquest of Moab. The numerous quotations from it in the Old Testament go to show that it was handed down to the Hebrew writers in a literary form. Balaam seems to allude to it in Numbers

xxiv. 17, 19, and Amos in the second chapter (v. 2) of his prophecies, while Jeremiah modifies some of its verses (xlviii. 45, 46) so as to make them suit the events which were shortly about to take place.

It will thus be seen that the Old Testament and the Egyptian monuments alike bear witness to the existence of tribes known as Amorites, who inhabited the mountainous region from the extreme south of Palestine to the neighbourhood of Hamath, and were closely associated there with the yellow-skinned Hittites; that these tribes are depicted by the Egyptian artists with white skins, blue eyes, and blond hair, while the Bible dwells upon their size and stature; and finally that the districts they occupied are thickly strewn with cromlechs similar to those of northern Africa and western Europe. The cromlechs of northern Africa were the burial places of the tall, fair-complexioned, dolicho-cephalic race usually termed Kabyle by the French, and it is reasonable to suppose that the Amorites of Palestine belonged physiologically to the same stock. Descendants of the white race of Palestine may still be met with there quite as much as in the mountains of the African coast, and a reference to their white skin is probably to be found in the Biblical name of Horite. It is even possible that the legend reported by Procopius, which transformed the Moors into Canaanites who had fled from "the robber Joshua," was based upon the resemblance they bore to a portion of the aboriginal population of Palestine. What relation is borne by the white dolicho-cephalic race of Africa to the white dolicho-cephalic race of northern Europe is still unknown; all we can affirm is that the same race of cromlech-builders once extended from the British Isles, through western France and Spain, into Africa, and from thence along its northern shores into Palestine and Syria.¹

A. H. SAYCE.

¹ It is possible that Osburn derived his description of the physical character-