

It is undoubtedly ancient, and very much worn; of very light red pottery, quite unlike anything made at the present time. The back part is 4 inches long and 3 inches wide; length of face $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches from forehead to chin; from the top of forehead to back of head 2 inches. Originally there was a hole at each side, showing that it must have been tied to something, but one is now broken.

I have since received another mask, very similar, but much more worn and badly broken.

I fully recognise the importance of sending squeezes instead of copies of inscriptions, and shall endeavour to do so, when practicable. Unfortunately, I was unable to do this at Busr-el-Hareer, and after many attempts I failed to secure good squeezes of the lamps.



THE HEBREW-PHOENICIAN INSCRIPTION OF TELL EL HESY.

I HAVE received the cast of the inscription of the fragment of Tell el Hesy, and I thank you very much for it.

Had I seen it sooner I should have proposed a reading and translation different from those suggested to me by the sight of the drawing, imperfect in certain respects, published in the *Quarterly Statement*, 1891, pp. 70, 240, and 250; different also from those previously proposed by Major Conder, Professor Sayce, and your anonymous correspondent.

I am now of opinion that the four readings : להנדך, לסמך, להמדך, and להשך must be equally rejected. An attentive examination of the cast now leads me to read להוסך. M. Renan, to whom I have submitted it, is of the same opinion, and I think that persons, competent in Semitic paleography, will easily agree to it.

The first and the last letter are unquestionably *lamed* and *caph*.
 $\begin{matrix} 4 & 3 & 2 & 1 \\ \text{ד} & \text{ל} & \text{ל} & \text{כ} \end{matrix}$. The second letter presents all the constitutive elements of a *he*: a nearly vertical stroke to which are joined, on the left, three

horizontal strokes—only under the regular letter, exists a little vertical stroke, unconnected with it, which has led several persons to conclude this letter was a *samech*; but, supposing this to be the case, one cannot account for the presence of the other vertical stroke, against which the horizontal strokes lean, and which certainly forms an integral and essential part of the character. The small lower vertical stroke, on the contrary, does not belong to it; it is *isolated* and without contact with it. I look upon it as a false incidental stroke, not to be taken into account. The third character is the most puzzling of all. It is composed of a vertical stroke, to the upper part of which a zigzag complex is joined on the left. It is impossible to consider it as a *mem*, as it has been proposed. Neither the head of the letter, nor the direction of its tail, corresponds to the description of the *mem*: the tail should be oblique from right to left (like that of the *caph* which follows); instead of which it is vertical and has even a slight tendency to lean from left to right. Moreover, it is not terminated at the lower part by a hook, as might be thought from the sketch published by Mr. Flinders Petrie; it breaks off abruptly; only the point used for the engraving has slipped upon the clay, and made a false stroke looking like a hook. This false stroke is engraved much more lightly than the rest of the inscription, and is again continued so as to immoderately prolong the vertical stem of the letter. I had at first thought that this stem might be a part of the preceding letter, and form with it a *heth*; but the cast clearly shows: 1st, that there is no actual connection between this stem and the upper horizontal stroke of the *he*; 2nd, that there is, on the contrary, an intimate contact between this stem and the complex engraved to the left, a complex that I was inclined to consider as isolated, and to recognize as a *chin*. It appears to me certain, henceforth, that we have to do with a character, which, divested of these parasitical elements, presents this form .

This character cannot be a *mem*, for the paleographical reasons previously explained. I look upon it as a *samech*, recalling the Aramean type.

The reading  being admitted, the physiognomy of the little epigraph changes completely, and the translation which obviously suggests itself is that of AD LIBANDUM.  is the perfectly regular infinitive of the verb  of the *hiphil* form: "To pour out, offer a libation." The formula , *lehassèk*, is even employed in full in the Bible, in a manner applying very properly to the destination of the vase of Tell el Hesy, and giving it a special interest; it is when Jeremiah (chap. xlv, verses 19 and 25) reproaches the Jews with their idolatrous practices, their worship of the "Queen of Heaven," and their libations (drink offerings) to her: (.

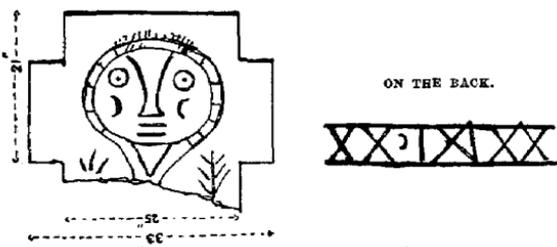
Were the libations, for which the vase of Tell el Hesy was in-

tended to be used, of a sacred or profane order? I leave the question in suspense. In any case one may easily understand the presence of an indication of this sort, rather than that of a proper name, considering the position of the inscription which, from the shape of the fragment, must originally have been engraved upon the body of the vase, a little below the lower part or base of the neck.

If we had to do with a proper name, one would rather expect to find it written in a less apparent place, for example, either upon the handle, or under the foot, as was customary. I would mention, to confirm this, the Hebrew Phœnician names, stamped upon the handles, found at Ophel, and a Phœnician name engraved under the foot of a vase of Sidon, still unedited, which I shall shortly publish.

In looking over Mr. Flinders Petrie's book on the Excavations at Lachish (Tell el Hesy), I notice another vase (Plate IX) No. 201 which appears to me to have an *aleph* of Phœnician form engraved upon it, but written backwards.

Further on, page 62, the author gives the reproduction of a fragment of a large mortar of black trachyte, seen by him at Aker (Ekron), with



handles pierced so as to turn it over on pivots to empty it. Upon one of its sides a curious subject is carved, impossible at first to define. Mr. F. Petrie is inclined to recognise in it "The Egyptian *tat*, with the sun and moon on each side, and palm branches above" (*Statement*, 1890, p. 245). I think he is under a delusion; for it suffices to reverse the engraving, to see that it is, in reality, a human head, of gorgonian appearance, viewed full face and very naively drawn. What Mr. F. Petrie takes for the well-known Egyptian symbol is nothing else than the nose with two strokes representing the mouth; the two "suns" are the two eyes, and the two "crescents" two curves marking the contour of the cheeks. The direction of the two little palms, accompanying it to the right and left, proves that it is certainly from this side that the figure must be viewed in order to be properly understood.