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THE REVIEW AND EXPOSITOR

Vol. VI. October, 1909 No. 4

THE INFLUENCE OF THE SUDAN UPON JEWISH HISTORY.

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We have been apt to regard Africa, apart from Egypt and the northern coast, as a land without history. And if we are to listen to Herodotus, "the father of history," Egypt itself would have been no exception, since the Greek historian makes it Asiatic rather than African. Nevertheless, long before the days of Herodotus there were Greeks who had heard that even Africa possessed a civilisation of its own. Far away up the Nile, beyond the Egyptian borders, lived "the blameless Ethiopians" who had cities and kings, wealth and fertile lands. As time went on, more accurate details reached the Greeks about this far-away land of Ethiopia. It was known that Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, had endeavoured to invade it, but that his army had been destroyed in the waterless desert which protected the Ethiopian territories on the north, and eventually Greek travellers explored the country which Cambyses had vainly wished to reach, and even resided in the capital Meroë. Here, between the Atbara and the Blue Nile, they found a prosperous and well-cultivated country, as well as fortified cities and stately temples. Egyptian culture, in fact, had long since been carried thus far up the Nile, trading routes had been es-

tablished with ports on the Red Sea, and the old Greek stories of Ethiopian civilisation turned out after all not to be a fable.

There is evidence in the Old Testament that Ethiopia and its civilisation were known to the people of Palestine even before anything was known about them in Greece. We are apt to regard the Sudan as given to negro savagery from time immemorial, and as making its first appearance in history when overrun by Mohammed Ali of Egypt less than a hundred years ago, or perhaps when rescued from the Jervishes by English arms still more recently. Its other history is almost a blank, and until the middle of the nineteenth century the upper course of the Nile was unknown. The knowledge of the geographer and map-maker ended but a little south of Khartum, at the junction of the Blue and the White Niles.

Nevertheless, there was all this time a passage in the Old Testament that not only showed that the Sudan was making history in the age of Isaiah and Hezekiah, but also that the course of the Nile was already known almost up to its sources. Isaiah was better informed about central Africa than were our immediate fathers or grandfathers, and the ruler of the Sudan was exercising a very real influence upon Jewish politics. In the struggle which the world in which Isaiah lived had to carry on against the power of Assyria, it was to the Ethiopian King that the Jewish politicians looked for help.

"Ho," says Isaiah, according to an amended translation of the Hebrew text, "ho to the land of resounding wings which is beyond the rivers of Cash-(Cush) that sendeth ambassadors by the Nile, even in vessels of reeds upon the waters, saying: Go, ye swift messengers to a nation tall and hairless, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation enslaved and trodden down, whose land the rivers divide" (Isa. xviii. 1, 2). It is necessary to have travelled up the White Nile to the so-called region of the Sudd, in order to realise how exactly this description corresponds to fact. As we approach the dreary region of the Sudd, with its endless swamps of papyrus and sword-grass, the air becomes filled with the interminable resonance of insect-wings, with millions of mosquitoes that disturb the traveller's

rest by day and night, and the buzz of poisonous flies that swarm in the damp heat. It is a land, too, which in very truth is divided by rivers. The Sudd is intersected by blind channels which give it the appearance of a network of streams. The few inhabitants—negroes belonging to the Dinka, Shilluk and Bari tribes—are among the most depraved of mankind. They are, nevertheless, an exceptionally tall race, and their want of beard would naturally have struck the full-bearded Jew. The vessels of reeds in which the ambassadors of Cush made their way to this land of resounding wings are still to be seen. They are canoes made of ambach which grows in the Sudd along with the papyrus and sword-grass, and is covered with yellow flowers. As for the "terribleness" of the nation to whom the ambassadors were sent, the negroes of the Upper Nile are still famous for their fierceness and military spirit, in spite of which they have been hunted by the slave-drivers for unnumbered centuries.

It is thus the region of the Sudd and its inhabitants that are described with the accuracy of an eye-witness by the Hebrew prophet. The fact is of historical interest, since it proves that in the eighth century before our era the course of the Nile was already known to the people of Palestine as far, at any rate, as the region where it lost itself in the great swamp. It also proves that the Ethiopian kings claimed authority over the wild negro tribes of the Upper Nile, tho' doubtless the authority was at times as difficult to assert as the authority of the Sudanese government is difficult to assert among some of the same tribes of today. These negro tribes of the southern Sudan, however, are still the recruiting-ground of the Sudanese army; the best and bravest soldiers in its ranks are drafted from among them, and we may gather from the words of Isaiah that the same was the case in his time. Before they would venture to march against the formidable troops of Assyria, the Cushite kings had to send their recruiting-sergeants far up the White Nile, and even to the region of the Sudd, to secure men for the Ethiopian army who were "terrible from their beginning hitherto." Like the Sudanese army of this twentieth century, it is clear that

the Ethiopian army, in the age of Hezekiah, depended for its fighting material on the negroes of the southern Sudan.

Cush or Ethiopia was at this period the dominant power in the valley of the Nile. Who the Ethiopians were is still a matter of dispute; the only point on which scholars are agreed is that they were not negroes. The name of Cush came from the Ethiopians, who gave it to the country north of the Blue Nile. It was from the Ethiopians that the civilisation of Cush was originally derived. The great conquerors of the eighteenth dynasty, before the age of Moses, had extended the southern limits of the Egyptian empire to the eastern banks of the Blue Nile, and had here hunted the lion which still abounds in the neighbourhood. From here, moreover, they had brought the ebony wood which was largely used in the furniture of the period. Cush was placed under the control of a viceroy, and the title of "Prince of Cush" became a sort of equivalent of the English title of "Prince of Wales." In the age of the Pharaoh of the Exodus one of the viceroys of Cush was a Mossu or Moses, but evil days soon afterwards fell upon Egypt and its authority in the Sudan grew more and more nominal. Finally, when Shishak, the leader of the Libyan mercenaries and contemporary of Rehoboam, desired the Egyptian crown, the high-priests of Thebes, who claimed descent from the ancient Pharaohs, retired into the Sudan and there established a theocratic state. There was, indeed, a king or queen, but they were elected by the priesthood, which had no scruple in deposing them if they showed signs of independence. The culture of the state was naturally Egyptian; whatever might have been the race to which the bulk of the people belonged, the ruling caste was an Egyptian aristocracy.

Cush or Ethiopia—as the Greeks called it—had two capitals, Napata in the north, at the foot of "the sacred mountain" Gebel Barkal, and Meroë in the south, midway between the Atbara and the Blue Nile. Napata was probably founded by the kings of the Egyptian twelfth dynasty; at all events it was already a capital in the time of the eighteenth dynasty. Meroë was of later foundation, but after the establishment of the Ethio-

pian Kingdom became the chief seat of government. Here was the great temple of the ram-headed Amon, built in imitation of his temple at Thebes, the remains of which I was fortunate enough to discover last winter. With the decline of the dynasty of Shishak came the opportunity of the Ethiopian priesthood to recover its power and possessions in Egypt. The Pharaohs had ceased to be able to defend their dominions, and the Ethiopian kings were accordingly enjoined to march down the valley of the Nile and reassert the claim of the priests of Amon to be supreme there. Piankhi was the first to do so, and on a stela he erected at Napata he narrates how city upon city in Egypt opened its gates to him, and how the Pharaoh himself acknowledged his supremacy. He returned to Napata laden with tribute and spoil, and the consciousness that henceforth Egypt lay at the feet of the invader from Ethiopia. Other Ethiopian kings followed in his steps, and eventually Shabaka or Sabaco, who is usually identified with the So of the Old Testament (2 Kings xvii. 4), made himself master of the whole country and founded the twenty-fifth dynasty. In the name of Amon the Ethiopian king came back to his own, and it would seem that in Upper Egypt, at least, his claim to be the legitimate lord of Egypt was recognized. The anarchy and misgovernment which had brought the country to the verge of destruction was suppressed, while the danger of foreign invasion was averted for a time by the introduction into it of the Sudanese troops, who took the place of the unwarlike fellahin.

Troops which could defend Egypt from attack had indeed reached it none too soon. The arms of Assyria, like those of some huge polyp, had now extended to the south of Palestine and the borders of Egypt itself. The old monarchy in the valley of the Nile was marked out for attack; its wealth was the coveted prise of the Assyrian leaders, and the intrigues of the Assyrian vassals in Palestine, with its government, furnished a good pretext for invasion. At the very beginning of his reign Sargon of Assyria came into conflict with the Egyptians. "Hanno, king of Gaza," says Sargon, "marched against me

with Sibê, the commander of the Egyptian troops, at the city of Raphia, (but) I overthrew them."

Sibê is the So of the Books of Kings. Whether he is also the Shabaka of the Egyptian monuments has been disputed; personally, I agree with Professor Petrie in believing this to be so. But whether or not the identification is correct, we know that the Ethiopian princes were now in Egypt, directing its policy, fighting its battles and marrying into its royal house. Sargon prudently avoided attacking them, and contented himself with consolidating his authority in Palestine. Babylonia, with Elam behind it, was still unsubdued, and the Assyrian monarch rightly thought that, when there was no longer any danger to be apprehended from Babylonia, it would be time to begin his Egyptian campaign.

He died, however, before he could venture to attack a land which was now defended by the negro troops of the Ethiopian king. It was left for his son and successor, Sennacherib, to commence a struggle which was ultimately to end in the conquest of Egypt. Shabaka, after restoring Egypt to something like its ancient prosperity, had died, and had been followed by two other Ethiopian kings, Shabatoka and Taharka, the Tirkakah of the Old Testament. Taharka was an able prince, and his first act was to strengthen himself against the growing power of Assyria. Envoys were sent to the native princes of Palestine, who were encouraged to revolt from Assyria by promises of Ethiopian aid. Hezekiah of Judah readily listened to the Ethiopian king. Sennacherib did not possess the military prestige of his father; the walls of Jerusalem were strong, and there was a party in the state which believed the city to be impregnable; above all, its Ethiopian allies were nearer at hand than Assyria. Party-feeling, it is true, ran high in Jerusalem, and there were those who held it to be safer policy to side with Assyria rather than with Egypt and Ethiopia; but the anti-Assyrian party, to which the king belonged, naturally prevailed, and Hezekiah threw in his lot with the other princes in the south of Palestine, who thought the favorable moment had come for shaking off the Assyrian yoke. The tribute demanded by Assyria was refused,

and preparations were begun for resistance to the attempt that was certain to be made to punish the rebels.

For four years Sennacherib was too busy elsewhere to be able to turn his attention to the West. Then an overwhelming army was collected together, which left Nineveh with the king at its head on the march to Palestine. The revolted cities of Phoenicia were subdued, and the minor states hastened to testify their repentance and acknowledge the authority of "the great king." Hezekiah, the prime mover in the rebellion, with his Philistine vassals, alone held out. He believed that behind the walls of Jerusalem he could defend himself from the invader until his Ethiopian ally had come to his help. Takarka, indeed, was already on the march. The Ethopian forces had already entered the Jewish territory and were making their way toward Jerusalem. Sennacherib was employed in besieging and sacking the fortified cities in the south of Judah, and a detachment of his army had been sent against the Jewish capital to summon it to surrender when he heard the news. At once he flung himself across the high-road that ran between Egypt and Palestine and endeavoured to block the forward march of the Ethopian king. The two armies met at the little Jewish village of Eltekeh, and Sennacherib claims the victory. Whether it was so complete as he would have us believe may, however, be questioned, since he did not pursue the retreating Ethiopian forces, which were allowed to retire back to Egypt in peace. But the very fact that they retreated proves that whatever advantage was gained in the battle was on the side of Assyria. Hezekiah was left to face his offended sovereign alone; Egypt had once more proved a bruised reed upon which no dependence could be placed.

The battle of Eltekeh had, however, weakened the Assyrian forces. It had also drawn them away from the fortresses they had been besieging and the work of devastation in which they had been engaged. The season was beginning to be late: the dangerous time for epidemics had arrived. Suddenly the plague, brought in perhaps from Egypt, broke out in the Assyrian camp, and the angel of the Lord smote the invading army.

It melted away like snow in the sun, and Sennacherib withdrew the remains of it to Nineveh. Hezekiah was left unsubdued, and Jerusalem untaken; and the Assyrian invader had to be content with the spoil he had captured in the country and the bribe with which the Jewish king had vainly attempted to buy him off.

Several years had to pass before Taharka again found himself in actual conflict with the Assyrians. This time his opponent was a far abler and more formidable opponent than the vain-glorious and inefficient Sennacherib. Sennacherib had been wounded and succeeded by his son Esar-haddon, who was an able administrator at home, and an even better general abroad. Egypt, under its Ethiopian Pharaohs, was still intriguing with his vassals in Palestine, and threatening the trade monopolies which the merchants of Nineveh wished to keep in their own hands. In B. C. 670, accordingly, Esar-haddon crossed the desert which divides Palestine from Egypt, and drove Taharka before him back to Memphis, which soon afterwards surrendered to the Assyrian army. Taharka fled up the Nile, and all Egypt lay at the feet of the Assyrian conquerer.

Esar-haddon erected a monument at Sinjerli, in northern Syria, to commemorate his conquest of Egypt and its Sudanese king. On this Taharka is represented as a prisoner and a negro, and it has, therefore, been assumed that he was of negro origin. But the assumption is more than doubtful. On the monuments of both Egypt and the Sudan he is always depicted with Egyptian, never with negro, features. On the other hand, Taharka was never a prisoner in Assyrian hands. The Assyrian sculptor could never have seen him or known what he was like. The only captives the artists could have seen were the Sudanese soldiers of Taharka, and these, it is true, were of negro race. To conclude that their general also was a negro was perhaps natural, but there is no more reason for believing it to be correct than there is for believing that the English or Egyptian officers of the modern Sudanese regiments must also be of negro blood. All that the Assyrian sculpture proves is that

the soldiers of Taharka were drawn from the negro tribes of the White Nile.

Taharka, so far from being a captive in Assyria, had retreated in safety to his ancestral capital at Napata, and here he was visited by the ambassadors of Esar-haddon, who found themselves for the first time in the heart of Africa. We need not wonder that Esar-haddon should have been proud of the event, and have emphasized the fact that none of his ancestors had done the like "on account of the distance and difficulty of the road."

Nothwithstanding the embassy, however, Taharka returned to Egypt, which had broken into revolt as soon as the backs of the Assyrians were turned. It was, therefore, necessary to reconquer the country, which was divided into twenty satrapies under Assyrian governors. But this policy, too, was a failure; the satraps made common cause with Taharka, and the Assyrian garrisons were driven out. While on the march against his revolted province Esar-haddon died (B. C. 667), and the continuance of the struggle was left to the generals of his son and successor, Assur-Bani-pal. In the end the Assyrians prevailed, but Egypt—the battle-ground between the soliders of Asia and the negroes of the Sudan—suffered too severely in the contest to be of much profit to its conqueror. Time after time the Ethiopian kings were driven back into the fastnesses of their own kingdom beyond the Cataracts, only to return to massacre or expel the Asiatic garrisons, and to build or restore temples on the walls of which they posed as Egyptian Pharaohs. Taharka died and was succeeded by Tanda-Amon, but the struggle between Asia and Africa still went on.

Assyria itself suffered more than Ethiopia. The Egyptian wars were the beginning of that process of exhaustion which, when followed by the wars with Elam and the Scythians, rapidly broke the strength of Assyria and brought about its downfall. Upper Egypt also never recovered from their effects. When Egypt regained its independence it was under dynasties which belonged to the north, and whose power rested on Greek mercenaries. The Ethiopian kings were the last representatives of

the Pharaohs who had made Thebes the capital of the civilised world, the last descendants of the Theban princes and high-priests.

Thebes itself had perished in the struggle. About B. C. 665 it was taken by storm by the general of the Assyrian king, its temples demolished and its stately edifices burned to the ground. For days the work of destruction went on; spoil and captives innumerable were carried to Nineveh, together with two obelisks, the trophies of victory, whose weight amounted to more than seventy tons. The utter destruction of the ancient city made a deep impression on the oriental world; "Art thou better than No-Amon"—the city of Amon,—says Nahum (III. 8, 9), "that was situated among the rivers, that had waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea? Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite." The house wherein Amon had dwelt for such long centuries lay in ruins, and the god himself was forced to find a refuge beyond the reach of the Assyrians in distant Ethiopia. Here at Napata and Meroë temples were raised in his honour, and the temple of Amon at Meroë became almost as famous as his ancestral shrine at Karnak.

But when this happened Ethiopia had already ceased to be a world-power. Other empires had arisen in the lands of the Mediterranean, where the history of civilisation was destined to be carried on. It had played its part in that history at a critical moment, and had helped to turn the course both of culture and of religion into a new channel. For a time it held Assyria in check, and prevented it from absorbing the ancient monarchy of Egypt early enough for the vitality of the latter to be destroyed and its recovery made impossible. Still more important was the influence of Ethiopia upon the history of the Jews. Humanly speaking, it was Taharka and his army of negroes from the mosquito-haunted lands of the Sudd who saved Hezekiah and Jerusalem from falling into the hands of Sennacherib, and the Jewish people from sharing the fate of the north Israelitish tribes. Had it not been for the march of the Ethiopian army into Palestine the Assyrian forces would have been

free to besiege Jerusalem at a time when their strength was still undiminished by the battle at Eltekeh, and the pestilence which eventually destroyed them was still far away. And the fall of Jerusalem in the age of Hezekiah would have meant not only the destruction of the Jewish state, but the obliteration of the Jewish people. They would have been transported to another part of the Assyrian empire, there to mingle with the native population and to be lost among them like the tribes of the northern kingdom. There was as yet no remnant prepared to carry down to after ages the message delivered to Israel; more than a century had yet to elapse before that became possible. The reformation of Josiah had not as yet taken place; the first of the great Jewish prophets had but just appeared. We owe it to Taharka and his Ethiopians that the fate which befell Samaria did not also befall Jerusalem, and that the Jewish monarchy was preserved to a time when Jewish religion had learnt to be independent of temple and kingdom and to separate itself from the polytheism and superstitions of the oriental world.