

gave cause for pride. While they give us much valuable information, it is all from a biased viewpoint and must be interpreted with caution.

This leads to the second reason why the proportion of the Egyptian material that bears on Biblical statements is much smaller than might be expected. A very large amount of our material from any part of Egypt consists of memorials, made by a king or by one of his nobles. From such material no complete picture can be expected. At the tomb of Napoleon in Paris special monuments record the greatness of many of that warrior's battles, but, naturally enough, the memorial contains no celebration of Waterloo! Since the outstanding reference to Egypt in the Bible deals with a deliverance of the Israelites from the power of the Pharaoh, it would hardly be expected that a great Egyptian monument would bear witness to it. There was little in the relation of Egypt to the Israelites which would give the Egyptians cause for boasting. One exception is the raid of Shishak through Palestine, described in I Kings 14:25, 26; and this we find celebrated on the wall of the temple of Karnak in Upper Egypt by a great inscription listing the conquered Palestinian cities.

Later on we shall mention a few other contacts between Egypt and the Bible under appropriate heads. Although the total number of such contacts is far smaller than one might wish, Egypt will always possess great interest for the Bible student, for one can never tell when some previously unsuspected portion of the great amount of available Egyptian material will be seen to bear an important relationship to something in the Bible, or when a new discovery from Egypt may be of superlative interest in this regard. Although the direct contacts of Egypt with the Bible are far less than those of Mesopotamia, Egypt was always a vital factor in the background of Palestinian life and culture.

Mesopotamia

This leads us to the second great region from which archaeological material bearing on the Bible has come. Many passages in the books of Kings and Chronicles, and in the prophetic books of the Old Testament, refer to the series of westward campaigns which culminated in the conquest of Israel by the Assyrians, and of Judah by the Babylonians. These campaigns present just the sort of thing which we might expect the heathen rulers to celebrate by the erection of monuments, and our expectation is not disappointed. Although the great cities of Mesopotamia were farther from Palestine than was Egypt, the contacts between the two regions were just as frequent as those with Egypt, and, in addition, there was much more in the relationship which could be expected to leave definite evidence in the monuments. In a whole series of records by the Assyrian kings we find references to Israelite kings, and the number of incidental cultural contacts between Mesopotamian records and Biblical statements is very large.

A century and a half ago even less was known about ancient Mesopotamia than about ancient Egypt for here was found no great series of stone monuments and buildings to fire the imagination of the world. Here were no great pyramids. Nothing stood above the ground in Mesopotamia to compare with the Sphinx of Egypt. Greek sources bore witness that a great civilization had existed in that land but little was visible to thrill the traveller as in Egypt. This was due in large measure to the difference in building materials, for Egypt possessed a great quantity of fine building stone, but in Mesopotamia even important buildings were made of sun-dried bricks, whose outer surfaces tend in time to wash away or crumble. What large stone monuments had been erected lay mostly buried under heaps of debris or decayed bricks.