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(p. 205)

Rev. DUNBAR I. HEATH exhibited a mural inscription in large Samaritan characters sent to him from Gaza, by Mr. Charles Hamilton, where it had been lately found by Mr. Pickard, a resident Englishman. The inscription is from Deuteronomy iv, 29, 31, and shows interesting variations from the authorised version. It being an evident fact that both in the New Testament and in the Septuagint, the use of the word Jehovah had been completely dropped among the Jews, a question might be raised whether such an inscription as this, with the name in it three times, fully legible to all the people, may not have been probably erected previous to the disuse of the name. Mr. Heath then proceeded to argue from internal evidence that the Samaritan form of letters was earlier than the most archaic of the Phoenician types. The Samaritan could be grouped into classes: *a, u, i, t*, in one class; *k, n, in, p*, in another; *h* and *ch* in another; *b, d, r*, in another. In Phoenician only the class (p. 206) containing *b, d, r* remains intact. Mr. Heath showed also how easy and natural it was to pass from the Samaritan forms to the Phoenician, but altogether unnatural to pass the other way.

DISCUSSION.

The Rev. A. LOWY stated, that there was sufficient evidence to show that the form of the Samaritan characters was far more ancient than the form of the Hebrew "square" characters. The latter were originally, in a crude shape, used in rapid writing, and, as may be noticed in the Babylonian bowls at the British Museum, constituted the "running hand." In the Talmudical treatises we find incidental notices of the archaic shape of the Hebrew alphabet. The letter *tf* ('Ayin) was similar to that of the Samaritans, and was joined at the top. The triangular shape of the 'Ayin, occurring both in the Samaritan and in the ancient Hebrew writings, tends to prove that before the separation of the two forms, the Jews wrote their scriptures like the Samaritans. This fact is, moreover, corroborated by the inscriptions on the Maccabean coins. The Phoenician characters being much simpler than the composite Samaritan, appear to have the claim to greater antiquity, and contain more of that typical shape which recurs, under modifications subject to a love of symmetry and tasteful forms, in the Greek and Italic alphabets.

Mr. GEOUGE ST. CLAIR stated that he could see but little force in Mr. Heath's arguments. Mr. Heath gave us three vowels out of five, and adding the letter */* to them called these a type! If they were a type, they at any rate were not a class. His next "type" consisted of the letters *k, m, n*—two liquids and one letter anything but a liquid. Again, the assertion that the forms of the Samaritan letters bore closer resemblance to the objects

which their names indicated, which Mr. Heath sought to support by the instance of the letter *beth*, seemed rather contradicted by that letter. *Beth* means a house or dwelling; an early dwelling would be the tent, and the Phoenician letter was a better representation of a tent than was the Samaritan letter. He had that morning compared the Samaritan letters, as given by Gesenius, with the Phoenician letters as found on the Moabite stone, and proceeding on the principle that simpler forms—*i. e.*, forms easier to write—were more recent than complex forms, it did indeed appear that the Samaritan letters were the more ancient. Of twenty-two letters, it appeared to him that the Samaritan had thirteen decidedly more complicated, four rather more complicated, three of about the same degree of complication, and only two of less complexity. Even of these two one was the *teth*, which did not appear on the Moabite stone, and which therefore he had taken from the Assyrian tablets. But the question might be asked, does greater complexity in the letters imply greater antiquity? The Greek *beth* was more complex than the Phoenician, from which it was derived, and the same was the case with one form of the Greek *rho*, and with some English letters derived from the Phoenician through the Greek. Again, (p. 207) would it never be a fashion to increase the complexity of letters byway of ornamentation? Were not the German letters more ornamental than the old forms from which they were derived? Or would there never be an effort to revive antique forms, as we see in English to-day? In the Semitic languages the names of the letters were the names of things—*ox, house, camel, door, etc.*, and the Samaritan letters looked less like the things than did the Phoenician letters. This told against Mr. Heath's supposed derivation of Phoenician from Samaritan, and indicated that the derivation was the other way. He believed that Mr. S. Sharpe, of Dalliugton, traced the "square" Hebrew characters from the Phoenician through the Palmyrene and Samaritan. It appeared to the speaker that although the Samaritan characters were so different from the Phoenician, several pairs of letters which resembled one another in the one language did so also in the other: for instance, the *he* and the *cheth*, the *beth* and the *resh*; and there were in Samaritan some additional resemblances, as the *aleph* with the *tau*. The Hebrew *aleph* and some other letters bore considerable resemblance to the corresponding Samaritan letters, indicating that the square Hebrew might be derived from Samaritan; and this did not appear to support Mr. Hyde Clarke's suggestion (made at the British Association meeting at Brighton), that the square Hebrew originated in some cabalistic figures.

Mr. MOGGRIDGE said: I would wish to call attention to the similarity of some of the characters now displayed to those on rocks—varying from 7000 to 8000 feet above the sea—about thirty miles north of Mentone; inasmuch as the inscriptions to which I allude have never been deciphered. Indeed they were unknown until a few years ago, when I brought away copies of some of them. The result of that visit was a paper (with drawings), read before the International Archaeological Society, published by them, a copy being placed by me in your library. It would give me much pleasure to afford any information that might be desired to gentlemen conversant with the languages we now see before us. I may add that the characters were made by repeated dotting with a sharp pointed instrument; and occur frequently on the horizontal surfaces of rocks which occupy an area of about a mile square—elsewhere I have not found them.

Mr. HYDE CLARKE supported Dr. Lowy, and said that it did not follow because a name was written or known, that therefore it was publicly pronounced. He called attention to the secret or magic names of Greek cities, which it was forbidden to divulge. Where

taboo existed, the use of many names, known by the actual prohibitors, were prohibited. Such treatment of sacred names was a mere extension of taboo. As to the antiquity of the type to which Samaritan characters belonged, without adopting the precise views of Mr. Heath, he concurred with him, that it was quite possible they were of ancient origin, nor did ancient or modern use militate against the fact of antiquity. The Tuaricks and the Abyssinians were using characters anciently employed in Libyan, Ethiopian, and Himyaritic. In the Libyan or Thugga, a cuneiform character was to be recognised, and there was a passage of hieratic and cuneiform through Cypriote. The system of survival was of wide application. He considered that in the present state of our knowledge, caution was required, and that we were not justified in attributing the origin of all alphabetic systems to the Phoenician. He called attention to the possible relations of the hieratic, cuneiform, square alphabet and magic or cabalistic character. The author then replied.

#### **Comments on this section from the Editor of theSamaritanUpdate.com**

This reference is not located in *A Bibliography of the Samaritans, Third Edition, Revised, Expanded, and Annotated*, by Alan David Crown and Reinhard Pummer, ATLA Bibliography, No. 51, The Scarecrow Press, Inc. Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, Oxford. 2005