

# THE BIBLICAL REVIEW

QUARTERLY

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Vol. XIII

OCTOBER, 1928

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THE REVIEW. *Current Thought and Activity. Books*

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# THE BIBLICAL REVIEW

## QUARTERLY

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*The general diffusion of the Bible is the most effectual way  
to civilize and humanize mankind.*—CHANCELLOR KENT.

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### EDITORIAL

THE VERY LIVES OF SOME MEN ARE MIGHTY ARGUMENTS for the miraculous. Deprived of most of the conventional forms of preparation for a successful career, they ignore any such lack and move steadily forward toward high achievement as though conscious from the first of a great destiny. They appear unhampered by doubt, hesitation or discouragement, and the greater the difficulty encountered, the more brilliantly are their powers displayed.

John Bunyan was such a man. He cannot be explained as the product of exceptional hereditary influences, favorable environment or rare educational advantages. His marvelously influential life was the result of a spiritual revolution issuing in "a new creation," and of the resultant overwhelming motive to devote himself wholly to the service of his Saviour and Lord.

The Christian world this year celebrates the tercentenary of this "prince of dreamers," who was born in November, 1628. The interest in this event has been remarkable, and new and special editions of Pilgrim's Progress mark a revival of interest in this immortal work.

But Bunyan, with some sixty books to his credit,

# THE LONG HIDDEN TREASURES OF ELEPHANTINE <sup>1</sup>

By PARKE P. FLOURNOY

WHETHER the ancient Nubians and Egyptians believed that, at the First Cataract of the Nile, where their frontiers came together, there was a chain stretched across to restrain the annual overflow, with Chnub, (Greek, Anubis) the god of the Cataract, on the east, holding one end, and his wife, Sati, on the west, holding the other end, may be left to Egyptologists to decide.

Now, however, we know that a great dam has been stretched across to regulate the overflow, and also, that in the fifth century B.C., Chnub, the ram-headed god of the Cataract, was worshiped at Assuan, on the eastern shore, and Sati, at Elephantiné, across the channel. This last has been made plain by the remarkable papyri discovered within a few years past in the island which is so graphically described, in *A Thousand Miles up the Nile*, by the distinguished traveler and archeologist, Amelia B. Edwards, as follows:

“The green isle of Elephantiné, which is about a mile in length, lies opposite Assuan, and divides the Nile into two channels. The Lybian and Arabian deserts—smooth amber sand-slopes on the one hand; ragged granite cliffs on the other—come down to the brink on either side. On the Lybian side a Sheyk’s tomb, on the Arabian shore, a bold fragment of Moorish architecture with ruined arches open to the sky, crown two opposing heights, and keep watch over the gate of

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<sup>1</sup> All rights reserved.

the Cataract. Just under the Moorish ruin, and separated from the river by a slip of sandy beach, lies Assuan."

Just across the eastern channel of the Nile below the First Cataract, at which the line between Egypt and Nubia crosses it, on the southern end of the island of Elephantiné, was made the discovery of documents of great interest. Some of them were written before the time when Ezra and Nehemiah were leading the Jews back from the Captivity and rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, and some others during the generation following the work of these two remarkable men at the Holy City.

The traveler and archeologist from whose facile pen a quotation has been made above pictures to us the site of the discovery thus:

"It is a very beautiful island—rugged and lofty to the south; low and fertile to the north, with an exquisitely varied coast line full of wooded creeks and miniature beaches, in which one might expect at any moment to meet Robinson Crusoe with his goat-skin umbrella, or man Friday bending under a load of faggots. They are all Fridays here, however, for Elephantiné being the first Nubian outpost, is peopled by Nubians only. It contains two Nubian villages, and the mounds of a very ancient city which was the capital of all Egypt under the Pharaohs of the VI dynasty, between three and four thousand years before Christ."

"The lower part of the island, fringed with palm trees, is devoted to the cultivation of the castor-oil plant and other crops."

Miss Edwards also tells us of two royal palaces which in the days of the early dynasties, 2000-3000 B.C., occupied a part of the island; but she did not tell of the

fortress which stood on the southern promontory of the island, and its twin fortress at Assuan, in which garrisons were stationed to guard the frontier in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, and, indeed, long before. For she could not know of this. The documents discovered on the spot have made this clear. Continuing, she tells us:

“We picked up several bits of inscribed terra cotta—evidently fragments of vases—and brought away some three or four as souvenirs of the place, and thought no more about them.

“We little dreamed that Dr. Birch, in his cheerless official room at the British Museum, was at this very time deciphering a collection of similar fragments, nearly all of which had been brought from this very spot.”

If she had even dreamed of what was concealed there, to be unearthed in the early days of the twentieth century, she would hardly have said of Elephantiné that,

“The ruined gateway of Alexander and the battered statue of Menephtah are the only objects of archeological interest in the island.”

Having no claims to being an archeologist, I will tell of these discoveries chiefly in the words of Professor Sayce, who has ably edited the documents discovered in 1904 at Elephantiné; in quotations from Professor Gunkel’s account of the most interesting of all, discovered by Doctor Rubensohn in 1907; and in the words of the documents themselves, translated by A. E. Cowley and Mary Gurney.

Professor Sayce begins his Introduction to the folio containing the ten Aramaic documents put into his hands by Mr. Mond by referring to some less considerable discoveries at Elephantiné. An examination of this very learned work, in which Mr. A. E. Cowley did

the deciphering and translating of the Aramaic, and the documents which were photographed under the superintendence of Mr. Howard Carter, Inspector to the Service of Antiquities in Egypt, shows that no care was spared to make the most perfect presentation of these interesting finds. The documents as photographed are seen to be in clear, large script, inclining to cursive, and are probably as easy to read as the papyri themselves. As Professor Sayce tells us, there are no distinctive forms for final letters such as we have in our Hebrew Bibles, which represent manuscripts later than these papyri by at least fifteen centuries.

The folio of Professors Sayce and Cowley indicates in its title that the papyri were discovered at Assuan; but it seems quite certain that, as Professor Gunkel says, they were discovered at Elephantiné and were then carried across to Assuan for sale. Indeed, Professor Sayce says that they were assured that they had really been discovered in the island of Elephantiné, and that "the actual spot from which they had come was pointed out to us." Yet he doubted, as now appears, without reason. He continues:

"The find was such as had never been made before. The papyri were in practically perfect condition, the very strings which had been tied round them were intact, and the clay seals which fastened the strings to the papyri were unbroken.

"For the first time, the Aramaic scholar has at his disposal a series of connected and fairly lengthy documents, clearly written and but little injured, and furnished with exact dates."

The exactness of the dates is secured by the dating of these deeds and other business papers with the year of

the Persian sovereign, and the days of the Persian months and of the Egyptian also.

Some interesting and important facts concerning the conditions of Jewish life at Elephantiné appear in these papyri:

“There was no religious intolerance. The Jewish oath by Jahu was as valid in the courts of law as the oath by Sati.” Sati was the Egyptian goddess of Elephantiné.

“The Jews had their own court—‘the tribunal of the Hebrews’—which was recognized by the law quite as fully as any of the other courts of the country, Egyptian or Persian.”

“The law under which the Jews of Elephantiné lived in common with their neighbors was that of Persia. Apart from ‘the Tribunal of the Jews,’ there is nothing to show that they were subject to any code of laws of their own or to local laws of Egypt. The conveyance of property is couched in the technical terms of Babylonian law, from which the law of Western Asia derived its origin, and the deeds which relate to it are drawn up in the form made familiar to us by the legal documents of Babylonia.”

A Jew who owned property “could will it to whom he would, and determine the succession to it after his death.”

In respect to the right to devise by will, the woman was on an equal footing with the man. She could hold property and leave it by will as she wished. “We learn that the woman had the same right as the man to pronounce a sentence of divorce; but in each case it was only valid if pronounced in a public ‘assembly.’”

“The mixture of names in the deeds is of considerable interest.” They were found to be Jewish, Egyp-

tian, Persian, Syrian, Babylonian, Berber, and perhaps others.

Professor Sayce tells us that a new light is thrown by these documents "on the history and character of the Aramaic language, as it was spoken and written in the Western provinces of the Persian empire in the V. century B.C.; new words and meanings are added to the Aramaic Dictionary, and new forms or idioms to Aramaic grammar, while the origin of the Biblical Chaldee is at length explained to us."

It may be added that while twenty-six, if not more, of the persons mentioned in these deeds, bear Bible names, the documents discovered about three years later at Elephantiné introduce the names of persons mentioned in the Bible who were contemporaries of Ezra and Nehemiah, one of whom was still living when the papyri were written, while an appeal is made to the sons of another who had probably died. Sanballat, the chief enemy of Nehemiah and his people, is represented in the papyri by "the sons of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria," and Jehohanan, mentioned in Nehemiah 12:22-23, is appealed to as "Johohanan, the high priest at Jerusalem."

The discovery of this last roll of papyri was made by Dr. Rubensohn of the German expedition, in the same mounds on Elephantiné in 1907 where the ten already mentioned had been found in 1904. The clue as to the locality was gained by the finding of the Egyptian word for ivory, *jb*, on a long strip of papyrus published by Euting in 1903. The island was named *Jb* or *Jeb* (now Elephantiné) because it was formerly a depot for elephants' tusks brought from the more southerly regions of Africa. The island is called *Jeb* in the papyri.

Doctor Herman Gunkel, writing of this last dis-

covery by Rubensohn in 1907, in the *Deutsche-Randschau*, Berlin, and referring to the former discoveries, says:

“All this, however, is cast into the shade by the papyrus lately discovered by Doctor Rubensohn, and now placed in the Berlin Museum. . . . Two copies have been found, one incomplete. A third and fourth portion also refer to the same event. . . . All these papyri belong to the same period, as is shown by dates and names, and they explain one another.”

The roll was taken to the Berlin Museum with the seals unbroken. A description of them is found in *The Expositor* for January, 1911, in Gunkel's article, translated by Mary Gurney. A few extracts from the papyri found in 1907, and described in this article will be in place. The very first words of the earliest temple document are not without significance:

To our lord Bagohi, ruler of Juda, thy servant Jedonja, with his colleagues, the priests in the fortress of Jeb.

Here we find the high priest of the temple, mentioned in the papyri first discovered, with assistant priests, appealing to the Persian governor of the province of Judea, Bagohi. Josephus mistakenly—as has long been thought, and is now proven by the papyri—placed Bagohi about seventy-five years after his real date, leading many critics to place Ezra and Nehemiah long after their time.

The papyrus, written in the seventeenth year of the reign of Darius II (424-405 B.C.), is addressed to Bagohi “the governor of Juda.” Josephus represents Bagoas (*Antiquities*, XI: 7) as under Artaxerxes M., and Sanballat as “sent into Samaria” by “Darius, the last king of Persia.” Sanballat is represented as the contemporary of Jaddua, the high priest who, Josephus

says, went out to meet Alexander the Great when he was approaching Jerusalem in 331 B.C. But Nehemiah mentions him in 446 B.C., 115 years earlier, and these papyri mention his sons in 408 B.C. The critics referred to preferred to follow Josephus rather than Nehemiah. Since the discovery of this papyrus the mistake of Josephus is made evident, and the period of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Sanballat is fixed with absolute certainty.

The occasion of the appeal to Bagohi was the destruction of their temple which had so long stood within the fortress on Elephantiné. Gunkel supposes that the Jews there were descendants of Jewish soldiers who had been stationed in the fortress as a garrison some centuries before this time. As will be seen the temple to Jahu (Jehovah) was erected before the advent of Cambyses, and some think the Jews were there even as early as the eighth century before Christ. At any rate the fathers and grandfathers and great grandfathers of these Jews had worshiped here since the erection of the temple of Chnub, the god of the Cataract, just across at Assuan (or Sewen, as it seems to have been called at the time the letters were written). The chief priest at Elephantiné, Jedonja, tells Bagohi a pitiful tale, for it seems that one Waidrang was bribed by the priests of Chnub to bring about the destruction of the Jews' time-honored temple:

"Thereupon, this cursed Waidrang sent a letter to his son, Nephajan, who was ruler of the fortress of Sewen, saying that the temple in the fortress of Jeb must be destroyed."

"Then Nephajan brought Egyptian and other troops, and having weapons, entered the fortress of Jeb, pressed into the temple and razed it to the ground."

"They broke the stone pillars which were there; they also destroyed the five gateways hewn out of stone, which were in the temple, and the doors with bronze hinges, the roof entirely constructed of cedar beams and the remaining furniture they

burned with fire. The golden and silver vessels for sprinkling and the utensils of the temple they carried away and appropriated.

“In the days of the kings of Egypt our fathers had built this temple in the fortress of Jeb. When Cambyses conquered Egypt, he found this temple already built. He destroyed the temples of the gods of the Egyptians, but this temple was not injured.”

Care is taken to state to the Persian official that Arsames, the Persian satrap of Egypt, was not to blame for the outrage, as he was absent from Egypt at the time. Jedonja continues:

“After the deeds of Waidrang and the priests of Chnub, we wore sackcloth, with our wives and children, and we fasted and prayed to Jahu, the Lord of Heaven.”

It seems that immediately after the destruction of their temple in 411 B.C., Jedonja and his colleagues sent a letter to the high priest at Jerusalem. For, in now appealing to the Persian governor at Jerusalem, we find them saying:

“At the time this misfortune happened to us, we sent a writing to our lords and also to Jehohanan, the High Priest, with his colleagues, the priests of Jerusalem, to Ostan, the brother of Anani and to the nobles of the Jews; but they returned no letter to us.”

He describes their grief:

“We have worn sackcloth and have fasted since Tammuz day of the 14th year of King Darius unto this day; our wives have become like widows; we have not anointed ourselves with oil, and we have drunk no wine. Also until this day of the 17th year of King Darius, no meal offering, no offering of frankincense or burnt offering has been brought to the temple.”

“Thy servants now speak, Jehonja with his companions, and the Jews—all citizens of Jeb. If it appear right unto my lord, have regard to this temple to rebuild it.”

“Behold us here in Egypt who have received thy benefits and favors. We pray thee to send a letter unto thy servants concerning the temple of the God Jahu, that it may be rebuilt in the fortress of Jeb as it was before. Then will we offer meal offerings. . . .”

“And with our wives and children . . . . will pray for thee, if this be so [done] until the rebuilding of the temple.” (See a similar promise in Ezra 6: 10.)

“All these things we have notified in our own letter to Delaja and Shelemja the sons of Sanballat the ruler of Samaria.”

So we find the sons of Sanballat mentioned in this writing of November, 408 B.C., and also Jehohanan, the high priest of Jerusalem; and turning to the book of Nehemiah we find much about Sanballat himself, the enemy of the Jews and the opposer of Nehemiah. We also find (Neh. 12:11) Jehoiada, a high priest under Nehemiah's administration, and Jehohanan, his son, named as next after him in the line of high priests—evidently the same to whom this letter states that a letter had been written three years before, 411 B.C.

The appeal to Jehohanan, the high priest at Jerusalem, was not answered. This high priest's brother, Manasseh, had been driven from Jerusalem by Nehemiah because he had married the daughter of Sanballat, the enemy of the Jews (Neh. 13:28). He is credited with the building of the rival temple of the Samaritans, to whom he had gone, on Mt. Gerizim. It is not very strange, if this was so, that his brother Jehohanan and the leaders at Jerusalem were unwilling to assist in rebuilding a temple in Egypt which they would probably consider another rival place of worship. So, as we have seen, these priests at Elephantiné, after waiting three years, turned to the Gentiles for help. As Cyrus had ordered the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem and Darius had ordered the work, which had been arrested by the opposition of the neighboring Persian pashas, to be resumed and forwarded, when the decree of Cyrus was discovered in “the house of the rolls” at Ecbatana (Ezra 6), it was hoped that the Persian King

might be influenced by Bagoas to help in this extremity. They promise in return, it seems from the document, to pay (probably from revenues of the prospective rebuilt temple), over a million dollars in silver (a thousand talents of silver). It is added:

“As for the gold we have sent out message and communication. . . . All these things we have notified in our own letter to Delaja and Shelemja, the sons of Sanballat, the ruler of Samaria.”

Professor Gunkel tells us of “a leaf, subsequently discovered,” which he considers “a protocol on the reports of Bagohi and Delaja” (Sanballat’s elder son) in which these remarkable words are found:

“It is for thee to command in Egypt, before Arsham, concerning the Altar-House of the God of Heaven, which was built in the fortress of Jeb, before our days and before Cambyses,<sup>2</sup> and afterwards destroyed by the accursed Waidrang in the fourteenth year of king Darius, that it be rebuilt in its own place, as it was before; meal offerings and frankincense to be again offered at the altar as in ancient days.”

It will be noticed that burnt offerings are not mentioned here. The offering of rams, it is thought by Professor Gunkel, was not to be allowed, lest the anger of the worshippers of Chnub, the ram-headed god, should be again aroused.

To a layman in such matters it seems strange to find that, in this temple at Elephantiné, a company of priests under a chief priest had been accustomed to present in the worship of Jehovah sacrifices directed by the “Priest Code,” which, many critics assure us, was promulgated by Ezra in 444 B.C.—a mode of worship which had evidently been practiced there before 526 B.C., when Cambyses conquered Egypt, eighty-two years earlier, and

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<sup>2</sup> Cambyses invaded Egypt 526 B.C.

probably back to the time of Psammeticus I, the contemporary of King Josiah.

If Bagoas and Sanballat were legendary characters, as Winckler has asserted, it seems strange to find them mentioned as real persons here, and one of them and the son of the other earnestly appealed to for help. If Sanballat was governor of Samaria under "the last king of Persia" at the coming of Alexander the Great, in 331 B.C., as critics following Josephus hold, it seems strange to find two of his sons men of influence in 408 B.C., seventy-seven years before. If Nehemiah and Ezra flourished in the time of Artaxerxes II (d. 359), as some have lately contended, we are filled with wonder when we find the grandson of their contemporary, Eliashib, appealed to as high priest in 441 B.C. by the Jews in Elephantiné. Grandsons do not usually precede their grandfathers. If new problems are raised by these discoveries, as some think, here are some that will be quite old when they are solved.

These papyri seem to settle several things which have been questioned:

1. That Ezra and Nehemiah lived at the time represented in the books bearing their names.
2. That the ritual of worship laid down in Leviticus was observed long before the time of Ezra, and therefore was not originated by him.
3. That, since the Aramaic of these documents shows that Aramaic documents quoted in Ezra, and the Aramaic passages in Daniel, do not indicate a later origin than that traditionally assigned these books, critics are forced to find other reasons for discrediting them.
4. That such characters as Sanballat and Jehohanan, mentioned in Nehemiah, and Bagoas, the Persian

governor, were not mythological, but real men, some living in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah and some but little later.

The whole result is an impression of reality and truth in the portraiture of the times as given in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah; and it is hardly possible to believe these most single-hearted restorers of God's worship to have been either deceivers or deceived.

When we find Nehemiah humbly confessing, "We . . . have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances which *thou commandedst by thy servant Moses*" (Neh. 1:6-7) and when we find the Feast of Tabernacles kept with such faithfulness and joy, and read, "*For since the days of Joshua, the son of Nun, unto that day had not the children of Israel done so,*" and when we find it stated that he (Ezra) day by day, from the first day unto the last day, read in the book of the "*law of God,*" who can believe that this was all a solemn farce in which Ezra was foisting a forgery on a credulous people, with Nehemiah joining in the deception? And Nehemiah implies quite accurate knowledge of Jewish history "since the days of Joshua, the son of Nun," in speaking of a law that, though existing, was not observed during the long interval, showing us that the nonobservance of an ordinance is no proof of the nonexistence of a law commanding that it should be observed.

A letter to me from Mrs. Agnes Smith Lewis,<sup>3</sup> the discoverer of the Syriac Gospels in the Convent of St. Catharine at Mt. Sinai, lies before me as I write. She and her twin sister, Mrs. Gibson, were just about to leave their home, Castle Brae, Cambridge, England, to

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<sup>3</sup> This letter, dated March 7, 1912, was one among the last written me before her lamented death.

attend the Orientalist Congress, which was to meet in Athens, Greece. Great honors had come to Mrs. Lewis from English and Continental universities, in recognition of her remarkable scholarship and great discovery at Mt. Sinai. In this letter she shows her interest in the later discoveries in this little island where the Jewish temple had stood "from the days of the Egyptian kings," and was not disturbed by Cambyses, son of Cyrus, the conqueror of Babylon, in 538 B.C., and who, in his turn, became the conqueror of Egypt a decade after his father's death, as this papyrus letter tells Bagoas, the Persian satrap, and "Jehohanan, the High Priest in Jerusalem."

The pleas, first, of Nehemiah the cupbearer of the Persian king Artaxerxes Longimanus (465-425), and, second, of the chief priest of the temple of Jehovah on the island in the Nile to Bagoas, the representative of Darius II (424-405) in Judea, are both felt to be very real and impressive, and certainly historical. For now we have not ordinary historical records, written after events of which the historian had learned and liable to inaccuracy, but the very words of the actors themselves, written *at the time they occurred*.

Mrs. Lewis says, in the letter referred to:

"I enjoy these Congresses, because at them I have made valuable friends of scholars who are authorities in Biblical subjects. It really does good to bring them together.

"Some of them are greatly exercised about the Elephantiné papyri; and the followers of Wellhausen are evidently perturbed. A learned Assyriologist said to me the other day: 'They squirm.'"

It certainly looks as if they had reason to do so; for in this new light from Elephantiné they see their

“assured results” about the origin of the Old Testament suddenly found to have been mere guesses.

The “myths” of Winckler and many other scholars are shown to have been no myths, but men of flesh and blood, earnest, God-fearing men, and women too, with great griefs upon them for the loss of what was dearest to their souls, crying for help from the only human sources from which it would be likely to come.

Now these records, inscribed in Aramaic letters and language more than twenty-three centuries ago, contain earnest pleas to men who are not myths of some long past age, but contemporaries of the writers in the times following the return of the exiled Jews from the Babylonish captivity. It is not strange that critics who have regarded them as myths should be “exercised” and “perurbed” over these discoveries. For we read in Nehemiah (4:1-2): “But it came to pass that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth and took great indignation and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria and said, What do these feeble Jews,” etc. And we find that, here at Elephantiné, far back in Egyptian history the seat of empire and later the scene of the worship of Jehovah in the midst of idolators, when both Israel and Judah had become so largely idolatrous in the Holy Land, a letter has been written appealing to “Delaja and Shelemjah, the sons of Sanballat the ruler of Samaria.” A *daughter* of Sanballat also is mentioned in Nehemiah 13:28.

So in this papyrus letter, written thirty-six years after the time of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, we find at the same Samaria two sons and a daughter of the same Sanballat. To the mistaken critics they must appear as apparitions. It is not

strange that they were "exercised" about the discovery of the papyri. The "sons of Sanballat" were not the only apparitions to startle critics, but these are surely sufficient as links between the book of Nehemiah and these Aramaic records.

A full discussion of facts revealed in these Egyptian papyri may be found in the *Journal of Transactions of The Victoria Institute, London* (vol. LIII, p. 206 f.). For lack of space to include their testimony to the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel, I must refer the reader to that. However, Dr. St. Clair Tisdall, probably the ablest and most thoroughly informed Orientalist in the world, in his lecture answered the critics who held that Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah used some Greek and Persian words; which indicated that these books were not written before the second century B.C. He took these words one by one, discussing each thoroughly, showing that this linguistic criticism had no weight at all. The Aramaic papyri found on the island of Elephantiné proved that these books could have been written in the fifth century B.C., their traditional date. These papyri were dated in different years of the reigns of the Persian kings of that century.

WASHINGTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.