

Watchman's Monthly Teaching Letter Number 28



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**AN ANGLO-ISAAC-SON CAUCASIAN
CULTURE AWARENESS TEACHING LETTER**

THIS IS MY TWENTY-EIGHTH MONTHLY TEACHING LETTER AND CONTINUES MY THIRD YEAR OF PUBLICATION. With my last teaching letter, I covered more material concerning the Phoenicians. I introduced the subject of the old “Princes’ Wall” in Egypt and the Egyptian story of Sinuhe. I continued with the 400 year blackout of the History of Israel in Egypt, and that there is only one known Egyptian written record of Israel ever being in there.

I really need to go back and make some comments concerning lesson #27. Willis Mason West, in his book *Early Progress*, pages 55-57 makes the statement: “Long before 1000 B.C., they (the Phoenicians) had far outrun Egypt and Babylon in trade.” This comment may be misleading. When we consider it was the descendants of Shem who originally occupied the Indus Valley, moved on to Egypt and setup a thriving civilization there. From Egypt, these Shemites moved on to the area known as Phoenicia. West’s statement may be correct in a sense, but more clarification is needed. West also comments about the Phoenicians: “Sometimes the boatmen used also a square sail, but only to run before the wind. (It was many hundreds of years before sailors learned to ‘tack.’)”

I checked out the art of sailing in my *World Book Encyclopaedia*, and I found that every manoeuvre in sailing could be managed with a single sail. There is no way anyone could row a boat for hundreds of miles by

rowing only with oars. I can see where oars were necessary at particular times, but not for the long sailing runs. Some of the ships in those days were 150 feet long. Not only did the sailors in ancient times use the wind, but they also used the water currents to assist in their progress on the way to their destinations. I am pointing this out because I want you to know I am not 100% in agreement with all of my quoting from various reference materials. At the same time, I try to use the best references I can find. Also the assertion in West's article implying that the Phoenicians "spread civilization that others had created" comes from not understanding who they were. As West speaks of the Phoenicians using "cuneiform script" in 1600 B.C. and advancing to a true alphabet by 1100 B.C., he is saying a great deal, but 1100 B.C. is a bit late.

Did Moses and the Judges (before 1100 B.C.) write in cuneiform? I don't think so! Hecataeus interviewed his Canaanite "Phoenicians" about 610 B.C. Herodotus was there about 455 B.C. All of these accounts, including John Clark Ridpath's article on the Phoenicians, are all late. Surely there were at least some Israelites in Tyre still in Herodotus' time, but would they have understood who they were, over 200 years after the deportations? Aside from these people, the Assyrians had imported about 18 different races (depending on how you count them) into "Phoenicia" and neighbouring Samaria, some of them surely being from regions near the Persian Gulf.

In the last lesson, I also mentioned the discrepancies in the chronologies of the Bible and history. Adam Rutherford, in his four-volume work, Pyramidology, volume 3, page 702 makes the following remark concerning chronology (it is a side note attached to a chart of dates from Adam until the Exodus):

“NOTE ON PATRIARCHAL PERIODS. A careful examination of the most ancient manuscripts and versions of Genesis reveals the unreliability of the Massoretic system of chronology, in regard to the earliest times. Archaeological research has also proved that the Massoretic figures (as appearing in the A.V.) are completely untenable prior to the time of Abraham. In this Table, the chronology of the period from Adam to Abraham is based on the Septuagint system, which for the epoch

subsequent to the Flood, is confirmed by the Samaritan Hebrew text and in agreement with archaeology.”

THE DEMISE OF EDOM

You are probably wondering what my last few letters have to do with Edom. I am trying to establish the background history during Esau's lifetime to ascertain what things were like during his age. I am sure we'll find things were entirely different than we ever imagined when we finally get to his story.

A PLACE CALLED “MARI”

One of the places we should take into consideration is a place called “Mari.” I will quote from The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible, 1964 edition, in the “Archaeological Supplement”, page 345, item 4393 (readings of later editions vary slightly):

“Mari was an important ancient city on the Middle Euphrates which is now known as Tell Hariri. The location is strategic in that it is the halfway city between Carchemish and Babylon.

“Professor Andre Parrot began excavation on the 300-acre mound in 1933, and during his many campaigns uncovered a wealth of material which depicts life as it was lived in Patriarchal times. He uncovered the royal palace of Zimri-lim, King of Mari, which covered seven acres, and contained more than 250 rooms and courts, in addition to the great audience room, administrative offices, and quarters for visiting officials from other lands. Two of the rooms were schoolrooms where youngsters were taught reading, writing and arithmetic in order to train them for life, and especially to become future ‘scribes.’ In the centre of the palace was the king's private chapel, which had three open courts, the innermost of which was 75 feet long, with walls 30 feet high. In this chapel was the statue of Ishtar, the goddess of fertility. Water flowed through the statue and out of a vase, which she held in her hand. This was the same goddess whom the Hebrews called ‘Ashtaroth’, ‘the goddess of the Sidonians’ (1 Kings 11:33).

“In the royal archives of the King’s palace the excavators discovered more than 20,000 tablets. Some 5000 of these were letters to the king from district officers of the state of Mari. Others were diplomatic letters from princes and rulers throughout Mesopotamia and Syria. There were letters from Hammurabi, King of Babylon, to whom Mari fell during the 32nd year of Zimri-lim’s reign. In the district officials’ letters frequent reference was made to the cities of Harran, Nahor, Serug, Peleg, and the ‘mound of Terah’ — places mentioned in the Old Testament. The personal names of Reu, Terah, Nahor, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Benjamin, and David are so common in these letters that Dr. Albright has said:

“Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob no longer seem isolated figures, much less reflections of later Israelite history; they now appear as true children of their age, bearing the same names, moving about over the same territory, visiting the same towns (especially Harran and Nahor), practicing the same customs as their contemporaries.” (Emphasis mine)

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS FIND

Unger’s Bible Dictionary expresses the importance of this find on page 695:

“The Mari Letters have helped to date Hammurabi (c. 1728-1626 B.C.), thus settling a very difficult point in Biblical chronology. In fact, the Mari documents have been a major discovery and have completely revised current knowledge of history, linguistics and historical background at a period around 1700 B.C.”

MARI’S GENERAL HISTORY

From The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopaedia of the Bible, volume 4, page 74, we read the following:

“History. The earliest known example of a king claiming to have conquered Mari is Eannatum of Lagash (c. 2500 B.C.). Around 2350 B.C. Sargon the Great of Akkad made the same claim. During the 3rd dynasty of Ur (c. 2113-2006 B.C.) Mari was ruled by governors (sakkanakku) of

the kings of Ur. But c. 2017 Ishbi-Erra, who hailed from Mari and was an official of the Ibbi-Sin, king of Ur (c. 2029-2006), seized control of the city of Isin, when rampaging Amorites cut it off from Ur. When Ur fell in 2006 B.C. Ishbi-Erra of Isin and Naplanum of Larsa became the leading powers in Babylon. Yakhdun-Lim, king of Khana (c. 1830-1800), conquered the city of Mari and incorporated it in his realm. But not long thereafter he was defeated by King Shamshi-Adad I of Assyria (c. 1814-1782). In c. 1800 B.C. Yakhdun-Lim lost his life in a palace revolution perhaps instigated by Shamshi-Adad, and his son Zimri-Lim fled to Syria. Four years later Shamshi-Adad installed his son Yasmakh-Adad as vice-king of Mari (c. 1796-1780). When Shamshi-Adad died (1782), Zimri-Lim secured the assistance of Ibal-pi-El II of Eshnunna (c. 1790-1761) and the king of Aleppo to drive Yasmakh-Adad from the throne of Mari. After an independent rule of nineteen years (c. 1779-1761), Zimri-Lim was reduced to the status of a vassal king or governor of the city, when Hammurabi of Babylon conquered Mari in 1761 B.C. As a vassal of Hammurabi Zimri-Lim continued to rule Mari until the Kassites destroyed the city in 1742 B.C.”

As you have probably noticed, many of these names are probably new and strange to you. With the next reference the mention of the Kassites will be used helping to put some of the pieces of the puzzle together. I will now quote from *Archaeology And The Bible* by George A. Barton, pages 109-110:

“The Canaanites. — Between 1800 and 1750 B.C. a migration occurred which greatly disrupted all western Asia. There moved into Babylonia from the east a people called Kassites. They conquered Babylonia and established a dynasty, which reigned for 576 years. Coincident with this movement into Babylonia there was a migration across the whole of Asia to the westward, which caused an invasion of Egypt and the establishment of the Hyksos dynasties there. As pointed out previously, it is possible that this movement, in so far as the leadership of the invasion of Egypt was concerned, was Hittite. In any event, however, many Semites were involved in it, as the Semitic names in the Egyptian Delta at this time prove. It is customary to assume that it was in connection with this migration that the Canaanites came into Palestine. This cannot, in the

present state of our knowledge, be clearly proved, but such evidence as we have points in this direction. There began at this time a new period of culture at Gezer, which is quite distinguishable from that which had preceded. This indicates the coming of new influences. Moreover, there was apparently an augmentation of the population of Palestine at this time. New cities were formed at Tell el-Hesy and Tell es-Safi, and elsewhere. We thus feel sure that there was an increase of population and, when next our written sources reveal to us the location of the nations, the Canaanites were dwelling in Phoenicia. The Egyptian scribes of a later time called the entire western part of Syria and Palestine 'The Canaan.' Probably, therefore, the Canaanites settled along the seacoast.

We, therefore, infer that they came into this region at this time. With the coming of an increased population, the Amorites appear to have been in part subjugated and absorbed, and in part forced into narrower limits. A powerful group of them maintained their integrity in the region afterward occupied by the tribe of Asher and in the valley between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountains, where they afterward formed a kingdom. Another group of them survived to the east of the Jordan, where they maintained a kingdom until overthrown by the Hebrews.”

This all seems to fit the Bible account quite well. Not only did all these peoples migrate into Palestine, but Egypt made inroads there also. For this story, I will quote again *Archaeology And The Bible* by George A. Barton, pages 108-109:

Egyptians also came to Palestine during this period. The tale of Sinuhe relates the adventures of a man who fled to Palestine in the year 1770 B.C., and who reached the land of Kedem, or the East, which apparently lay to the east of the Jordan. It is referred to several times in the Old Testament. (See Gen. 29:1; Judges 6:3, 33; 7:12; 8:10; Job 1:3, etc.) Sinuhe there entered the service of an Amorite chieftain, Ammienshi, married his eldest daughter, became ruler of a portion of his land, and lived there for many years. He finally returned to Egypt and wrote an account of his adventures. The region was also called by Sinuhe and other Egyptians Upper Retenu, a name which they also applied to all the higher parts of Syria and Palestine, Retenu is philologically equivalent to Lotan

(Gen. 36:20, 22, 29; 1 Chron. 1:38, 39) and Lot (Gen. 11:27; 12:4, etc.). When Sinuhe arrived in Kedem he found other Egyptians already there. Ammienshi was well acquainted with Egyptians. There was apparently considerable trade with Egypt at this time. Men from Palestine often went there for this purpose. Such traders are pictured on an Egyptian tomb of this period. Trade with Egypt is also shown to have existed by the discovery of Egyptian scarabs of the time of the Middle Kingdom in the excavations of Gezer, Jericho, Taanach, and Megiddo.”

MORE ON THE “PRINCES’ WALL”

Since my last lesson, (#27 for July, 2000), I have more conformation about the “Princes’ Wall” in Egypt. If you don’t understand about this wall, you will have to refer to that lesson. It seems that it amounted to a series of fortresses situated in about the same area, as the Suez Canal is located today. You can find this additional information in the National Geographic magazine for December 1982 entitled “Lost Outpost of the Egyptian Empire”, by Trude Dothan, pages 739-763, 768-769. Although this article gives supporting evidence to the report given by Werner Keller in his book *The Bible As History*, both accounts do not coincide in all details. It would be well for you to compare the two stories for there are some differences in the two accounts. Because of this, the following will be a critical review of Trude Dothan’s article in the issue of National Geographic just referred to here. In my own mind, I have no doubt that both articles are referring to the same thing. Part of the introduction to this National Geographic article reads:

“Artifacts from the late Bronze Age outpost attest to the part it played on the highroad to Egypt. In that era, called ‘the first international age’, new contacts blossomed between the Nile and the world beyond. The Egyptian presence on the coast in Moses’ time may explain the route of the Exodus through the Sinai desert.”

I will continue now with short excerpts from the main article:

“Eventually we were to uncover not only a cemetery full of archaeological treasures, but also a hidden city, a fortress, and a reservoir — all more

than 3,000 years old. And we were to find a clue to a biblical mystery concerning the Exodus: Why, in their flight from Egypt, did Moses take the children of Israel inland to the wilderness instead of pursuing a far easier path along the coast?"

A map of Egypt on page 742 has the following comments:

“Known to Egyptians as the Ways of Horus, the coastal artery from the Nile Delta to Canaan was called ‘the way of the land of the Philistines’ in the Bible. Six fortresses along the route have been identified”

—“The Exodus. Israelites’ 13th century B.C. flight from Egypt may have been through southern Sinai to avoid Egyptian coastal strongholds.”

Continuing with excerpts starting with page 760:

“The fortress, constructed partially above the ruins of the palace, was of even more massive construction. Its walls, more than two meters thick, apparently supported two stories. Corner bastions indicated that this fortress, too, was built in the royal Egyptian style, and in a manner strikingly like fortresses shown on the relief recorded by Pharaoh Seti I on the walls of the Amon Temple at Karnak, far up the Nile.

“This relief, from about 1300 B.C., depicts the ancient route from Egypt to Canaan, a well-traveled road known to the Egyptians as the Ways of Horus. There is more than simply a resemblance between our fortress and the details of the map — the relief provides an almost exact blueprint of the kind of structure we were uncovering ...

“My chief assistant and stratigrapher, archaeologist and Egyptologist Baruch Brandl, had never been satisfied with the geologists’ explanation that the huge depression was a natural feature caused by erosion. Baruch felt that its outlines were too regular — there had to be something more to it than that. Finally we recognized the most important clue. Most of the fortresses depicted on Seti’s Karnak relief are connected with large water reservoirs of varying shapes. “The crater at Deir-el-Balah, we now realize, was actually a reservoir, about 20 by 20 meters, with very steep sides.

Thus our ground plan of the fortress and its adjacent pool fit exactly the depiction of Seti's relief ... as the central feature of a roadside fortress, it served many uses besides providing drinking water. A large volume of water would have been needed to prepare potter's clay ...

“Two of the fortresses shown along the Ways of Horus are designed at towns ‘which His Majesty built newly.’ Considering the close connections between Egypt and Canaan during the XIX Dynasty, it is possible that our fortress, with the thick walls and corner towers, was built during the reign of Seti I, who ruled New Kingdom Egypt and its empire in Canaan from about 1318 to 1304 B.C.

“On the basis of the pottery found in the fortress, we believe that it flourished during the reign of Seti's son, Ramses II (about 1304-1237 B.C.), to whose reign we date the anthropoid burials as well ... The Ways of Horus holds much interest for scholars.”

The article goes on to quote Exodus 13:17 and explains why it was expedient for Moses to take the way of Sinai rather than the “Ways of Horus.” Now quoting again from page 763:

“But our excavations at Deir el-Balah revealed the wisdom of this choice for by escaping into the desert, the Israelites avoided the powerful fortresses of the very pharaoh from whom they had fled ... The period in which they lived was one of intensive international trade and of great ethnic changes and political upheaval. It was the time of the last flowering of the Egyptian New Kingdom before its decline to the point where the Bible scorned it as a ‘bruised reed’ (II Kings 18:21).”

AN IMPORTANT FIND AT NUZI

As we are looking for evidence, which surrounds the story of Esau-Edom, we need to take into account an important archaeological find at Nuzi. For this information, I will quote from The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible, 1964 edition, “Archaeological Supplement”, page 351, item 4401. Before making this quote, I would like to point out there is evidently a very mistaken conclusion at one point on the part of the writer:

“Nuzi. (Yorghhan Tepe), a mound 150 air miles north of Baghdad, was excavated in 1925-31 by a joint expedition of the American School of Oriental Research in Baghdad, Harvard University, and the University of Pennsylvania Museum. Dr. Edward Chiera was the director. The soundings reached virgin soil, yet the level of occupation uncovered was the 15th to 14th centuries B.C. when the Hurrians, who were the long-lost Horites of the Old Testament, populated the city.

“From the palace and from private villas or wealthy homes they recovered about 20,000 [pieces of broken] clay tablets which were written by Hurrian (?) Scribes in the Babylonian cuneiform language, but with the occasional employment of native Hurrian or Horite words. The tablets consisted largely of commercial accounts, contracts, reports, and judicial decisions which revealed the way of life for some leading families for four or five generations. The parallels between the customs and social conditions of these peoples and the patriarchal narratives in Genesis were not only remarkable, but have proved to be one of the external factors supporting the historicity of this section of the Bible.

“The patriarchs came from this general section of the country, and had lived at Haran (which was predominantly Hurrian or Horite). They had maintained contact here for generations afterward, and in the absence of laws and customs of their own (for there was, as yet, no Old Testament written), they followed those to which they had been accustomed. Notice some of the parallels:

1) Exchange of Property: All transactions involving the transfer of property were recorded, witnessed, sealed, and proclaimed at the city gate (Gen. 23:10-18).

2) Marriage Contracts included a statement that a handmaid could be presented to the new bride, as was the case with Leah and Rachel (Gen. 29:24, 29), and contained a provision obliging a childless wife to provide her husband with a handmaid who would bear children, as Sara gave Hagar to Abraham (Gen. 16:3), and Rachel gave Bilah to Jacob (Gen. 30:3-6).

3) Adoption was practiced at Nuzi when a childless couple would adopt a son who would care for them while they lived, bury them when they died, and be heir to their estate. It was specified that if they ever had a son

of their own, then the adopted son took second place. This seems to explain Abraham's adoption of Eliezer as his heir before the birth of Isaac, and the subsequent change when the Lord (Yahweh) promised that a son of his own would be born to become his heir (Gen. 15:2-4).

4) Birthright.. In Nuzi there was found a contract where one brother gave his brother 'three sheep in exchange for his inheritance share' in a plantation. All of which sounds like Jacob's gift to Esau of 'bread and a mess of lentils' (Gen. 25:30-34). Also, in Nuzi the 'blessing' of a dying father in bequeathing property to a son was honored in court where there was a witness to corroborate the words of the father (Gen. 27:30-33; 49:8-28).

5) Inheritance. In Nuzi there was a law that implied that property and leadership of the family could pass to a daughter's husband, providing the father had handed over his household gods to his son-in-law. Thus it was, when Laban overtook Jacob and anxiously searched his camp for the household idols, he could not find them for 'Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them' (Gen. 31:30-35)."

As I said before, as I started this quotation above, I believe the writer is mistaken when implying that Abraham and his family adopted the customs of the Hurrians. If anything, it was the other way around. I believe it is also a mistake to conclude that no part of the Old Testament had yet been written at Abraham's time, for Jude 14 mentions the words of Enoch written in the Book of Enoch, (Enoch chapter 2). This also gives us an idea of the people (Hurrians) that lived in the area among the descendants of Shem.

MORE INFO CONCERNING PATRIARCHS FOUND AT NUZI

For this information, I will quote excerpts from The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, volume 4, pages 470-471:

"The importance of written documents. There was a time when it was widely held that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because it was thought that at that time writing had not been invented. While there

is now abundant evidence to the contrary from various sources, it is of particular interest to note that at Nuzi at this early time written documents were extremely important and a great many of them were produced.

“Adoption. Dozens of adoption tablets have been found at Nuzi. Israelite law, so detailed on many subjects, contains no regulations for adoption, and the history of the Hebrews in Palestine after the Conquest, as recorded in the Old Testament contains no evidence of such a practice. But, at Nuzi, it was customary, if a man had no children, to adopt someone to carry on his name and inherit his property. This seems to be reflected in the statement of Abraham, before Isaac was born, that unless the Lord (Yahweh) should give him a child, Eliezer of Damascus would be his heir (Gen. 15:2).

“Teraphim, or household gods. The incident of the Teraphim (Genesis 31:17-35) was extremely puzzling before the discovery of the Nuzi documents. When Jacob determined to leave his uncle Laban, Rachel stole Laban’s teraphim or household gods. Returning to his home, Laban was greatly excited, not simply because his daughters and his son-in-law had left without notice, nor because of the great amount of property that they had taken with them, which Jacob had amassed during his sojourn in Haran but primarily because of the loss of the household gods.

“Jacob with his great number of flocks and herds, must have had a sizable number of shepherds, and it would have required a considerable force to overcome the resistance that he could offer. Laban pursued Jacob three days, taking with him a sufficient number of supporters to cause Jacob to be terrified at his approach.

Thus the pursuit of Jacob was a very expensive proposition for Laban. In the Middle Ages students wondered why Laban would have gone to so much expense and trouble on account of these household gods. It was suggested that the teraphim might have been made of gold. Even if this were the case their intrinsic value would hardly have been enough to pay for Laban’s expedition, since they were very small. This was evident from the fact that Rachel was able to hide them in the saddle-basket on which she was sitting in her tent. Though her father searched the tent most thoroughly, he never suspected their presence.

“The mystery became still greater when it was noticed that Jacob was utterly shocked at the idea that he might have stolen the teraphim. When Laban was unable to find them, Jacob bitterly rebuked him for his suspicion (Gen. 31:36-42).

“Previous to the discovery of the Nuzi documents, the whole situation was obscure, and it would have been equally so at the time of the Israelite kingdom when, according to the critics, the story would have been composed. The tablets from Nuzi show that according to Hurrian (?) custom at that early time, if a man desire to appoint a son-in-law as his principal heir he would turn over to him his household gods. After the man's death, appearance in court with the household gods would be accepted as proof of such a disposition. Rachel was trying to secure all of Laban's property for her husband, and Jacob was rightfully indignant at being accused of attempting such an underhanded trick. The whole incident becomes understandable in the light of these facts, and it becomes clear why Laban, still suspicious, desired that a boundary stone be put up at Mizpah and that Jacob should swear that he would not pass over this boundary in order to do him harm (Gen. 31:44-53, esp. v. 52). The Nuzi tablets make it clear that a great part of Laban's reason for this was his desire that at his death, the remainder of his property should go to his own sons and not be taken away from them by Jacob. It is good to note that later Jacob demanded that any strange gods in the hands of his people be buried (Gen. 35:2-4), and that at no time did Jacob try to make false use of these teraphim.

“Sisterhood. To the modern reader it seems strange that Abraham should have said that Sarah was his sister instead of stating what to Pharaoh was the more important fact; that she was his wife (Gen. 12:11-20). It is still stranger that he should have repeated this act in the land of Abimelech (Gen. 20:1-18), and perhaps even more so that Isaac should later have followed his example (Gen. 26:6-16). It has been suggested that light may be thrown on these perplexing incidents by the discovery at Nuzi, as evidenced by many legal contracts, that a position called 'sisterhood' was there considered to be of even more importance than that of a wife, and that a wife was sometimes elevated by a special act to this superior position. In view of the evidence that this was the custom in the area in

which Abraham had spent many years [rather, the custom of the Hebrews themselves], it is not impossible that Abraham and Isaac may have felt that they were giving their wives a more important and secure position by calling them sisters. Since such a custom was evidently unknown to Pharaoh or to Abimelech an unfortunate situation resulted.

Yet, although Pharaoh and Abimelech accused the patriarchs of misrepresentation, there is no evidence in the Scripture of Abraham and Isaac having felt guilty or of God (Yahweh) having condemned them for their words. God (Yahweh) punished Pharaoh and Abimelech for what they had done, but, as far as we know, He did not rebuke Abraham. Therefore it is not impossible that it was a case of misunderstanding rather than of misrepresentation. The incident is quite understandable from this viewpoint in the light of the Nuzi documents...”



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