

WHO WAS THE BIBLICAL ARIOCH OF THE DAYS OF ABRAHAM?

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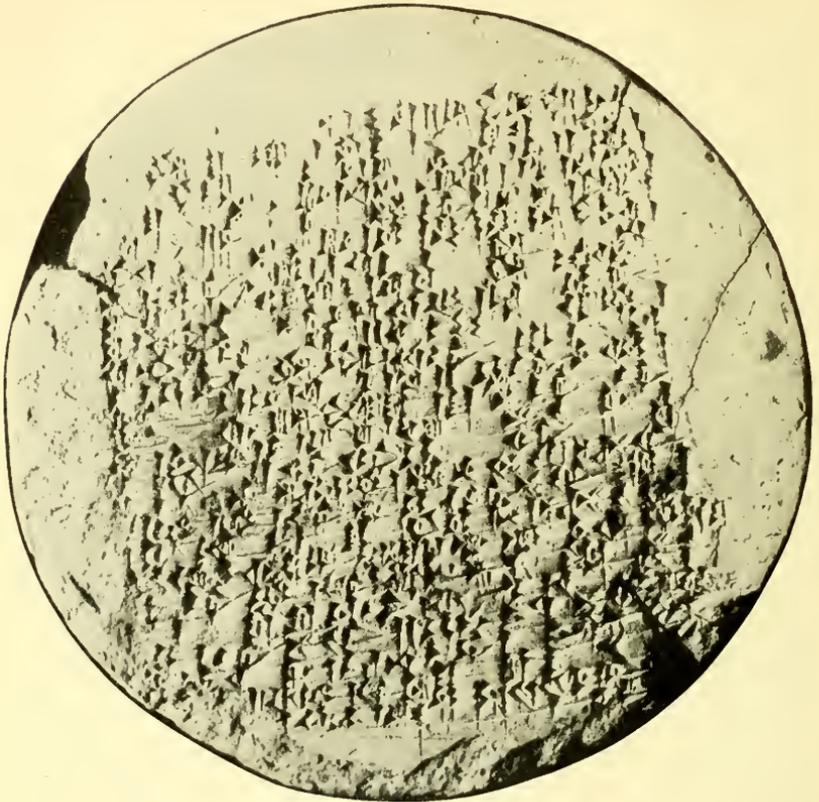
AMRAPHEL, Arioch, Chedorlaomer and Tidal are the names of four kings who invaded Palestine in the days of Abraham, so we are told in Genesis xiv. 2. To learn who those kings were, if they really existed, or were the creation of ancient legend, has long been a riddle which Orientalists have set themselves to solve. Excavations in the ruins of the Babylonian cities have revealed inscriptions which have thrown some light upon the subject. Amraphel was undoubtedly the illustrious Hammurabi, King of Babylon. The King of Ellasar, contemporary with Hammurabi, was Rin-Sin or Warad-Sin, whom the Sumerians of Babylonia called Eri-aku. He was probably the Arioch of the Bible. Chedorlaomer, King of Elam, is supposed to have been the father of Eri-aku, and possibly Tidal was a king of Kurdistan.

Recently in the South Babylonian mound of Senkereh, as Ellasar or Larsa is now called, Arabs discovered a large cone among the ruins of the Ishtar temple. The head of the cone, greatly enlarged to six inches in diameter, is covered with a long Sumerian inscription of fifty lines in an almost perfect state of preservation. The greater part of the cone itself has been broken away, but enough remains to show that the inscription was repeated upon it.

It was the custom of the kings of Babylonia, whenever they restored an ancient temple, to bury in the temple walls the record of their work, that men of the distant future, when the temple should again fall to ruins, might read it. Sometimes the inscription was engraved upon the stone socket of the door post; more frequently it was written on large clay cylinders such as have come from Nebuchadnezzar, but Eri-aku left his record upon the head of a cone, so that when thrust into the wall, the inscription re-

mained visible and might be read. The form of the cone may possibly have had some connection with the nature of the rites employed in the Ishtar worship.

Seldom are these building records of great historical value. They begin by telling who the royal author of the inscription was, and with words of extravagant praise. Then follows an account of the building operations, and at last is a prayer to the deity of



THE INSCRIBED CONE OF ARIOCH.

the temple for the welfare of the king. Such is the inscription upon the cone of Arioch, yet coming, as it does, from an almost unknown Bible king, it is of unusual interest, and makes clearer one of the most obscure and most important historical passages of early Bible history. Its translation is as follows:

“To Ishtar, the exalted lady of splendor, the priestess of hosts, the first-born daughter of the god Sin, his lady!

"I am Uru-aku (Arioch), the favorite prince of Nippur, the restorer of the city of Ur, the governor of the cities Girsu and Shirpurla, who is revered in the temple Ebabbar. (I am) king of Larsa; King of Sumer and Akkad; the beloved lord of the harvest; he who accomplishes the divine commands; who restores the temples of the gods; who built a colossal statue of her ladyship, who restored prosperity to her devastated city, who faithfully built its walls; who truly caused the wide-spread land to be thickly populated; the noble of heart, the warrior who turns the enemy back; to whom Ea has given a wide understanding for conducting the work of the city.

"For Ishtar, the merciful lady, he (Arioch) filled with more light than before, as it was in former times, her house of splendor, the awe-inspiring dwelling of her joyous heart. He enlarged her shrine for the future. He built it for her abode. He reared high its summit. He made it lofty like a mountain.

"May Ishtar, my Lady, look kindly upon these brilliant deeds! May she grant me as a gift an abundance of years, a firmly established throne, the overthrow of those who rebel!"