

## “MOSES” AND OTHER TITLES.

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**M**ORE than a thousand years of Hebrew life in Palestine have left to us but a few fragments of its literary product. We hope the spade in modern Palestine will yet recover much. What remains to us, in the Old Testament, refers to various ancient sources of information. It would be presumptuous to assume that all sources are named in the fragments remaining to us. We are compelled by their own testimony to admit the composite character of some of this surviving literature. We find mention of the following lost sources of information:

“Book of the Wars of Yahveh”—(“the Lord”), Num. xxi. 14.

“Book of Jasher”, Josh. x. 13; 2 Sam. i. 18.

“Book of Constitution for the Kingdom”, 1 Sam. x. 25.

“Book of the Acts of Solomon”, 1 Kin. xi. 41.

“Book of Visions of Iddo the Seer”, 2 Chr. ix. 29.

“Midrash on Iddo”, 2 Chr. xiii. 22.

“Book of Iddo the Seer on Genealogies”, 2 Chr. xii. 15.

“Book of Shemaiah the Prophet”, 2 Chr. xii. 15.

“Book of Nathan the Prophet”, 2 Chr. ix. 29; 1 Chr. xxix. 29.

“Book of Ahijah the Shilonite”, 2 Chr. ix. 29.

“Book of Gad the Seer”, 1 Chron. xxix. 29.

“Book of Samtel the Seer”, 1 Chron. xxix. 29.

“Book of John, Son of Hanani”, 2 Chr. xx. 34.

“Burned Book of Jeremiah”, Jer. xxxvi. 4-23.

“Memoir on Annalekite War”, Ex. xvii. 14.

“Book of Isaiah upon Uzziah”, 2 Chr. xxvi. 22.

“Book of Chronicles of Kings of Judah”, 1 Kin. xiv. 21; xv. 7,

etc.

“Book of Chronicles of Kings of Israel”, 1 Kin. xiv. 19, etc.

“Book of Chronicles of King David”, 1 Chr. xxvii. 24.

“Book of Kings of Israel and Judah”, 2 Chr. xxxv. 27; xxxvi. 8.

“Midrash on the Book of Kings”, 2 Chr. xxiv. 27.

“Copy of this law in a Book”, Deut. xvii. 18; 2 Kin. \*xxii. 8.

What is the value of these lost sources? With regard to extant fragments, we are familiar with rational arguments designed to prove the inspiration and ethical value of the scriptures as a whole. The same critical process must be equally reliable for any given fragment. If we decide that Tobit is not worthy to be ranked with Deuteronomy, we may with equal certainty conclude that all portions of Deuteronomy are not equally valuable; and so far any other portion of the Old Testament. If a rational examination of a small section is impermissible, a rational argument for the inspiration of the whole is worthless. We thus assert that all claims of inspiration and special revelation must appear before the bar of rational inquiry and investigation, and accept the decision of that tribunal. Failing this, Romish tradition, Moslem and Buddhist legends and claims, and pagan rituals and mummeries, being equally dogmatic, would be entitled to equal credence. Like the myriad gods assembled in the Roman Pantheon, mutually multiplying each other with the stony stare of unrecognition across the empty spaces, all claims of inspiration would prove mutually destructive. Survival of the fittest must surely be determined by the ability to give a reason for the hope that is within.

Now we have asserted our rational competency to pass upon the relative inspiration and credibility and didactic value of the extant fragments of Hebrew literature, by assigning certain portions of it to the Apocrypha. But what rational conclusion is possible as to the value of the above-mentioned lost literature? Can we, ere its recovery by the spade of the explorer, confidently and dogmatically assert the finality and superiority of all that is extant, when it so often cites, or appeals to the authority of that which is lost? That the thoughts of men as a whole “widen with the process of the suns” does not adequately answer the query.

And what of other prophets mentioned here and there in the Old Testament, of whom no known writings remain to us? Was there ever any written collection of their sayings? No one knows. Temple schools were everywhere in Babylonia; how much writing was done in “schools of the prophets” in Israel? No one knows. Did Elijah and Elisha write anything? What is the curious “writing of Elijah the prophet” to Jehoram, long after Elijah was

dead? (2 Chr. xxi. 15.) Shall we acknowledge a case of "spirit-writing?" or conclude there was a second Elijah? or has the Chronicler credited to Elijah a denunciation that really came from a later prophet? or recorded Elijah's letter of rebuke, specifying the wrong King?

And what is the precise significance of the titles cited above? In answering this question, no problem of Higher or Lower Criticism is involved. It is wholly a matter of dictionary; or correctly understanding ancient oriental idioms and colloquial expressions. Without this preliminary knowledge, any discussion is sure to err—one may be fundamentally wrong from the beginning. To know in advance what ancient people meant by some terms they used daily may prove disastrous to hobbies, orthodox or heterodox, but the truth is more important to us than any hobby.

But in presenting this preliminary truth, there are some disadvantages. The best informed reader of English has not at hand the necessary data for first hand knowledge and decision upon this point. If in addition to the Old Testament every one had at hand the other "Sacred Books of the East", as in English translation, and quantities of the ancient literature of Israel's neighbors, (the amount available now is many times the Old Testament in volume) he would soon observe some vital facts. But the average reader is compelled to be content with the information given him by the expert linguist, archæologist, and orientalist, just as he has to be content with Peary's Poles. The archæologist or comparative religionist himself knows this, and is sometimes sensitive at having to state dogmatically facts highly displeasing to some fervid theorist.

What do such terms as "Book of Iddo the Scer", "Book of Samuel", "Code of Hammurabi", "Books of Moses", mean? The average modern western mind, of moderate information, at once thinks of personal authorship. *But the idea of personal authorship or of "literary property" is not in the ancient world*, and such construction of ancient idioms by the modern Western mind is wholly astray at the outset. We have vast and varied bodies of ancient literature in our possession to-day; ballads of various nations; the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle; The King Arthur Legends; Mahabharata; Babylonian Chronicle; songs, prayers, "divinely authoritative" rituals, royal records, legends, myths, medical books, contracts, epics, royal inscriptions, legal codes and decisions, etc. We find variant versions of the same legend, song, or ritual; we

have combinations of two or more in a later version. *We do not know the author or compiler of any ancient song, code, ritual, royal record, or legend; nor of any revision or combination; nor will we ever know.* We are in the realm of the nameless. Only in the case of personal letters, legal decisions, or business contracts of the ancient Orient do we know names of authors. There is no notion of personal title to any other sort of literary production. This is true of old English ballads, the Teuton's Nebelungenlied, the Eddas of the Norseman; of Assyria or Babylonia; of Egypt or China; Palestine or India. We will never know the authors of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, nor of its component sections; of the Rig Veda songs, nor of the Atharva magical rites; of the Creation and Flood legends of Babylonia; of Ishtar's descent; of Orphic hymns. All ancient sacred literature is "inspired", or "found" somewhere; a wandering mediæval French minstrel was merely a "troubadour" or "finder", not claiming like the Greek bard to be a *poiêtês* (poet) or "maker". Such still is the Arab minstrel. The very latest version of this "inspired" or "found" literature claims the authority of "the fathers" or of antiquity, just as some modern pious dogmatists do. Personal authorship is never claimed.

Then what do popular titles mean? An Assyrian royal inscription may begin "I am Esashaddon, the great King, the mighty King", etc. But the average Assyrian king does not appear to have been able to read or write. In England, William the Conqueror and William Rufus, illiterate, were succeeded by Henry Beauclerc, or "Fine Scholar"—he could write his name. What happened in Assyria was that royal scribes prepared such account, as unknown monks in England wrote the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and like Hebrew scribes wrote like Chronicles. If satisfactory, the King accepted it as his own. There lies before me a letter from an Assyrian architect saying they are ready to put in place the record of royal achievements and if the copy sent to the King is satisfactory, the architect hopes the King will return it at once. We do not know who wrote that chronicle any more than we know the writer of Anglo-Saxon or Hebrew chronicle, but because of its subject matter we may conveniently speak of it as "an Esarhaddon inscription".

So we speak of the "code of Hammurabi", or "Laws of Hammurabi" as the Brahmin speaks of "Laws of Manu", and the uninformed at once think of personal authorship. Hammurabi did

not write it, nor personally revise it, probably not even one paragraph of it. There was an older Sumerian code, fragments of it are extant, and comparison is easy. When this West Semitic adventurer seized the reins of political authority, he found this ancient code, backed by the cult of the sun god at Sippara, Larsa and Harran, so strongly entrenched in life and custom that his kingship depended upon his announcing his humble acceptance of the sun cult and code and its jurists. The Semitic scribes and jurists prepared him a Semitic translation and revision of it which we now have. But neither they nor their successors called it "Laws of Hammurabi"—that title is our invention. They called it *Inuma ilum sirum*. Both this title, and fragments of the code were known to us before De Morgan discovered the nearly complete code at Susa twenty years ago. It had been growing for ages.

But what does *Inuma ilum sirum* mean? It shows us one way of referring to a document in the ancient world. The words are "When the exalted god" and are the opening words of the Prologue. We follow the same method still ourselves, in referring to a popular hymn. So does the ancient Oriental. In a Babylonian ritual we may read: "Here sing, Bel, Bel, in the morning"; or, "Sing, O Sheep of Life, O Pure Sheep," etc. The church of Rome habitually cites all Papal bulls the same way, e. g. "Unam Sanctam," etc.

The ancient Hebrew scholar did the same. His entire ritual compilation he called *Torah*, "instruction." The first section is *Bereshith*, "In the beginning." The second, our "Exodus" is *Shemoth*, "names" (These are the names). Next is *Wayyikra*, "and he called", (And the Lord called unto Moses.) Numbers is *Bammidbar*, "in the wilderness", (And the Lord spoke unto Moses in the wilderness). Deuteronomy is *Debarim*, "words" (These are the words.) For century after century the Hebrew scribe thus cited them the titles not suggesting any personal authorship.

The second and popular method of reference is to refer to any composition by naming its subject matter, or some unique feature of its contents. A royal inscription is about a King—not by him. *Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor* are not written by him. The *Books of Samuel* recognize him as the key personage of the epoch, but are not written by him. An old woman, greatly pleased with a sermon I preached long ago, always referred to it as "That 'ere frog sermon", from a tree-frog illustration I used.

In the same way I find the Moslem named Suras or chapters of the Kuran. One is "The Cow", another "The Table", and so on. If I said to a Moslem scholar "It is said by the Cow" he would understand. If he discovered that I thought a cow wrote it, he would think me crazy. I pick up the Brahmin *Satapatha Brahmana*, and find a certain section referred to as "The Barren Cow", and soon I turn to the "Authorless" Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, and find like nomenclature. I turn to Moslem or Romish compilations of saint lore, and find it is not written by said saints, but about them; I turn to Babylonian ritual that was dominant in Palestine long before the Hebrew, and find "The Lifted Hand Series", "The Eastern Demon Series", "The Water Sprinkling Ritual", "The Effusion Rite", etc. And so I come to understand that Samuel, Judges, Ruth or Kings, or Iddo the Seer, may contain much about such persons, but nothing in the colloquial fashions of the time would warrant the occasional modern western assertion of personal authorship.

But it will be recognized that only the scholar of the ancient world could use the first method of reference, naming the openings words of any composition. The second method is necessarily the popular one. So Jewish scholars who translated their literature into Greek conceded something to popular necessity, and in their compendium of fragments of ancient law used Greek titles suggestive of some feature of each section: Genesis, "Beginning"; Exodus, "Going Out"; Leviticus, "Levite Ritual"; Arithmoi, "Numberings"; Deuteronomy, "Second Law" (Mistranslation of "copy of this Law" in Deut. xvii. 18). But in the Hebrew text the scholar's mode of entitling was retained; and in neither is there suggestion of personal authorship.

As above stated, Jewish scholars called the whole group Torah; the masses find it easier to recall the most prominent figure in the compilation and say "Moses." Their speaking thus was originally parallel to our referring to "the Britannica," or "the Comericana"; an easily understood reference to their compendium of ritual and moral prescriptions. Even so late as Christ's time the Greek idea of being a "maker" (poet) has but partially prevailed, and the compromise with the notion of the divine authority of the past results in much pseudœpigraphic literature, presenting current Pharisee opinions under the names of Enoch, Esdras, Solomon, the Sibyl, Baruch, etc. All of this had to be duly "discovered" somewhere, as it was composed and published.

There is no clue anywhere to the actual personal authorship. In the same way some devout Brahmins, after the Sepoy rebellion failed, undertook to bring out a new edition of Manu, embodying modern English ideas. It was still Manu. No Brahmin could have gained acceptance for it by putting his own name to it; the past is the only admissible authority; as with Rabbinism in Christ's time, claiming only expository authority, however novel their fantasies.

Popular crediting a law or quotation to "Moses" then in earlier days did not imply personal authorship. Such is not the mode of thought of the time. That is a later notion from western influence, and misunderstanding of ancient colloquial usage. One unaware of ancient literary habits may rush into print to demonstrate the inspiration and inerrancy of his own ignorance.