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## HISTORICAL NOTICES,

## I.

## THE SUPPOSED INSCRIPTION UPON "JOSHUA THE ROBBER."

(Illustrated from Jewish Sources.)

THE historian Procopius makes mention of a Phœnician inscription that was found near the town of Tingis, in Mauretania, and which, it was said, was set up by Phœnicians who were fugitives from Canaan. He quotes the Greek as follows: ἡμεῖς ἐσμὲν οἱ φεύγοντες ἀπὸ προσώπου Ἰησοῦ τοῦ ληστοῦ υἱοῦ Ναυῆ (*Vandall.* ii. 20). Suidas (s. v. Χαναάν) gives it thus: ἡμεῖς ἐσμὲν Χανααῖοι, οὓς ἐδίωξεν Ἰησοῦς ὁ ληστής.<sup>1</sup> However unworthy of belief may be the notion of the existence of such an inscription, in which exiles from Canaan perpetuate the name of Joshua ben Nun, who expelled them, nevertheless the idea which it expresses is attested by Jewish sources of even a much earlier date than the sixth century. In the second century R. Simon b. Gamliel said (*Tosefta, Sabbath, VII., 25, ed. Zuckermann,* p. 119): "No nation is more peaceable than the Amorites, for we find that, trusting in God, they made their way to Africa, where God gave them a land as fair as their own, while the land of Israel was still called after their name (Canaan)." What is here observed about the Amorites, was also said by a celebrated Agadist of the third century about another of the seven Canaanite nations. R. Samuel b. Nachman said (*Jer. Shebi'ith, 36a; Leviticus rabba, c. 17; Deuteron. rabba, c. 5, towards the end*): "Before entering the Holy Land Joshua promulgated a threefold decree (שְׁלֹשׁ פְּרִינְטָאוֹת, *πρόσταγμα*). It ordained that whoever desired to leave the country was allowed to do so; whoever wished to make peace could do so; and whoever wished to wage war was at liberty to do so. The family of the Girschashites wandered forth, relying upon God, and went towards Africa; the Gibeonites contracted a peace; the thirty-one kings came out to fight." This historical fiction relating to the emigration of one of the seven nations of Canaan, explains the circumstance that in the Book of Joshua (xii. 8; cp. ix. 1) only six nations are mentioned as having been conquered; the

<sup>1</sup> The quotations are taken from Winer, *Biblisches Realwörterbuch* (Article, "Josua").

גרגשי (Girgashites) are omitted. At any rate, both the inscription spoken of by Procopius and the opinion of the Jewish sages, which, it has been shown, assumed two forms, rest upon the apparently same hypothesis, that the settlement of the Phœnicians in North Africa is connected with the conquest of Palestine by Joshua. But whilst in the utterances of the Jewish sages a noteworthy superiority over a narrow nationalism is displayed, inasmuch as "trust in God" is ascribed to the Canaanite nation, in reward for which, as is expressly stated in *Midrash Num. R.* c. xiv., the name of the Holy Land was always to be that of Canaan, even long after Israel had dwelt therein; the inscription of Procopius, on the other hand, by a single word manifests its hostile attitude against Israel, whose commander-in-chief, the conqueror of Palestine, it designates a "robber" (λῆστής). This word was, in fact, a favourite controversial phrase, hurled by heathens against Judaism. For this we have indisputable evidence in a well-known passage in the *Midrash*. In the beginning of *Genesis rabba*, it is said: "R. Levi (a famous Agadist of the beginning of the fourth century), explains the words of Psalm cxi. 6, 'He hath shewed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen,' to indicate that God commenced the Torah with the history of the Creation, in order to provide Israel with an argument against the attacks of the heathens. When the pagan nations should charge them with being a people of robbers (as having stolen Palestine from the Canaanites), the Israelites, by pointing to the account of the Creation and the early history of the world, could prove that the Canaanites originally had also not been in possession of the Holy Land." The words in which the reproaches of the heathens are contained, run thus in the Hebrew, יהיו מונין את ישראל ואומרין שלא לא יהיו מונין את ישראל ואומרין, להם הלא אומה של בזוים אתם. The term מונין (from הונה to vex, by word or deed) implies the worst kind of attack that could be made by the heathens against the national honour of Israel; cp. *Gen. rabba*, c. 88, at the beginning (in a saying of R. Chama b. Chanina, of the third century) שלא יהו מונים את ישראל אומה של דווים וסחופים אתם; and also *Shur rabba*, to the *Song of Songs*, i. 6 (in a saying of R. Isaac, a contemporary of the above-named R. Levi, and also a famous Agadist) לפי שאומות העולם מונים את ישראל ואומרים אומה זו המירו כבודם. In the *Midrash Tanchuma*, the exposition of Psalm cxi. 6 is given in a somewhat different form in the name of the same R. Isaac (in the edition of Buber, בראשית § 11, only the beginning of it is quoted), and from this place Rashi took it, and with these words commenced his *Commentary to the Pentateuch*. The passage that concerns us here in this version is as

follows: שאם יאמרו אומות העולם לישראל לסטים אתם שבבישתם בזוים, ארצות שבעה נזים (Jalkut to Ps. cxi. has the plural form בזויות, cp. גְרוֹסוֹת, Levy *Wörterbuch*, I., 362a), this version has the Greek לסטים, the same word as appears in the inscription of Procopius as an epithet of Joshua. That which, according to the evidence of the Agadists, was said of Israel, the conqueror of Palestine, that it was "a nation of robbers," is applied in the inscription to Joshua, the historical representative of that conquest, where he is entitled "the robber." A remarkable proof of the fact that the African descendants of the Phœnicians really asserted that Palestine had been acquired by Israel in an unlawful manner, and properly belonged to them (the Africans), is to be found in a story in the *Boraita* (Sanhedrin, 91a), in which the Africans (בני אפריקה) appeal to Alexander the Great for their right of possessing Palestine, explaining that in the Pentateuch it is called "the land of Canaan," and Canaan was their ancestor. It can be at once seen that in this story the name of the land plays the same part as in the above-mentioned saying of Simon b. Gamliel.

The use of the term "robber" in a hostile sense, in reference to one of the conquerors of Canaan, is further supported by another passage in the traditional literature. In Sanhedrin, 106 *b*, we read: "A heretic (מינא), transformed by the censor into צרוקי asked Rabbi Chanina (of the first half of the third century) whether he had heard how old Balaam was?" Chanina replied, "It is not recorded anywhere, but from the expression in the Psalm (lv. 23), 'Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days,' it may be assumed that he was thirty-three or thirty-four years of age" (and did not reach his thirty-fifth year, the half of the normal age of seventy years). Thereupon, remarked the heretic, "You are right! I have seen the writing-tablets (or the book) of Balaam, and therein it was written, Balaam the lame<sup>1</sup> was thirty-three years old when Phineas the robber slew him." בר תלתין ותלת שנין בלעם הגירא כד קטיל יתיה פינחס ל'יטאה. It is a well-known and also plausible supposition of Geiger (*Jüdische Zeitschrift*, vi. 34), that in this anecdote, as well as in other places, Balaam is a typical name for Jesus, inasmuch as the age of thirty-three years here given agrees with that of the latter; but, notwithstanding this, the subject of the conversation between Chanina and the heretic, it must be noticed, is Balaam himself, the old heathen prophet, and the record, which the heretic declares he had seen, written in Aramaic, has an undeniable relationship with

<sup>1</sup> The epithet הגירא is derived probably from the interpretation of the word 'שפ', Num. xxiii. 3.

the Phœnician inscription of Procopius. Just as in the latter Joshua is designated *ληστής*, robber, so also is Phineas, the leader of the war against Midian, in which Balaam was slain (*vide* Num. xxxi. 8; Joshua xiii. 22) given the same title in the former. The source, whence the information about the death of Balaam is taken, is called by the heretic *בִּינְקָסִיָּה דְּבַלְעָם*. This must have been a work upon Balaam with apocryphal additions to the Biblical narrative, and of an anti-Israelite tone, perhaps a production of the Gnostics, who were fond of distorting figures of the Old Testament, and glorifying just those very persons who are described in the holy writings of the Jews as being godless. The light that the analogy of the phrase *Ἰησοῦς ὁ ληστής* casts upon the *פְּנֵהֶם לִיטָטָה* of the Talmud renders the conjecture of Perles (Grätz, *Monatschrift*, 1872, p. 267), that we have to read *פְּנֵהֶם פְּלִיטָטָה*, which refers to Pontius Pilate, quite unnecessary.

In conclusion, attention must be called to a passage in Josephus "Against Apion," where among the reasons that he gives why the Jews for so long a time remained unknown to the Greeks, he brings forward this, that the forefathers of the Jews did not, as the Greeks did, become sea-robbers, nor did they engage in wars for the sole purpose of gaining more wealth (*Contra Apionem*, I. xii. 4). For piracy he employs the term that indicates robbery in general, *ληστεία*, in the use of which he could hardly have had in mind any charges that had been hitherto levelled against the Jews that they were a "nation of robbers." The remark of Josephus just quoted is not so much apologetic as aggressive, upbraiding the Greeks, whose ancient history was sullied by piracy. It was only after the time of Josephus that it was sought to prove from their own historical sources that the Jews were a "nation of robbers," and from this antagonistic conception of the ancient history of Israel there also originated the inscription spoken of by Procopius which is ascribed to the Phœnician fugitives. It must be remembered that this historian came from Cæsarea, where hostility to the Jews was an old tradition among the inhabitants. This pseudo-inscription that is to be found in his works may at any rate be regarded as another ancient memorial of anti-Jewish feeling that strove to falsify history.

W. BACHER.

## II.

### THE CHURCH FATHER, ORIGEN, AND RABBI HOSHAYA.

In his essay on Hillel, the Patriarch's son, Graetz has hazarded the conjecture that the Jewish sage, from whom Origen, a resident of