

The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Editor: DR. PAUL CARUS.

Associates: } E. C. HEGELER.
 } MARY CARUS.

VOL. XVII. (NO. 12) DECEMBER, 1903.

NO. 571

CONTENTS:

<i>Frontispiece.</i> GATEWAY AT KARNAK.	
<i>Hammurabi and Amraphel.</i> DR. HUGO RADAU	705
<i>Tolstoy's Answer to the Riddle of Life.</i> E. H. CROSBY	708
<i>Robert-Houdin.</i> Conjuror, Author, and Ambassador. (Illustrated.) HENRY RIDGELEY EVANS	714
<i>Cross or Crescent in India?</i> (With Table.) FREDERICK AUSTIN OGG . .	738
<i>P'A-Lek.</i> (Illustrated.) (Concluded.) EDITOR	747
<i>The Wandering Jew.</i> A Buddhist Parallel. ALBERT J. EDMUNDS . . .	755
<i>Frederick Douglass on Toussaint L'Ouverture and Victor Schoelcher.</i> Posthu- mous Publication Communicated by THEODORE STANTON	758
<i>Hammurabi and Abraham.</i> CONSTANTINE GRETHENBACH	760
<i>Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Green.</i> Obituary	760
<i>Zodiacal Mithraic Tablets.</i> A. B. GRIMALDI, M. A.	763
<i>Eduard Koenig's Bible and Babel</i>	763
<i>Book Reviews and Notes</i>	764
<i>Immortality.</i> EDMUND NOBLE	768

CHICAGO

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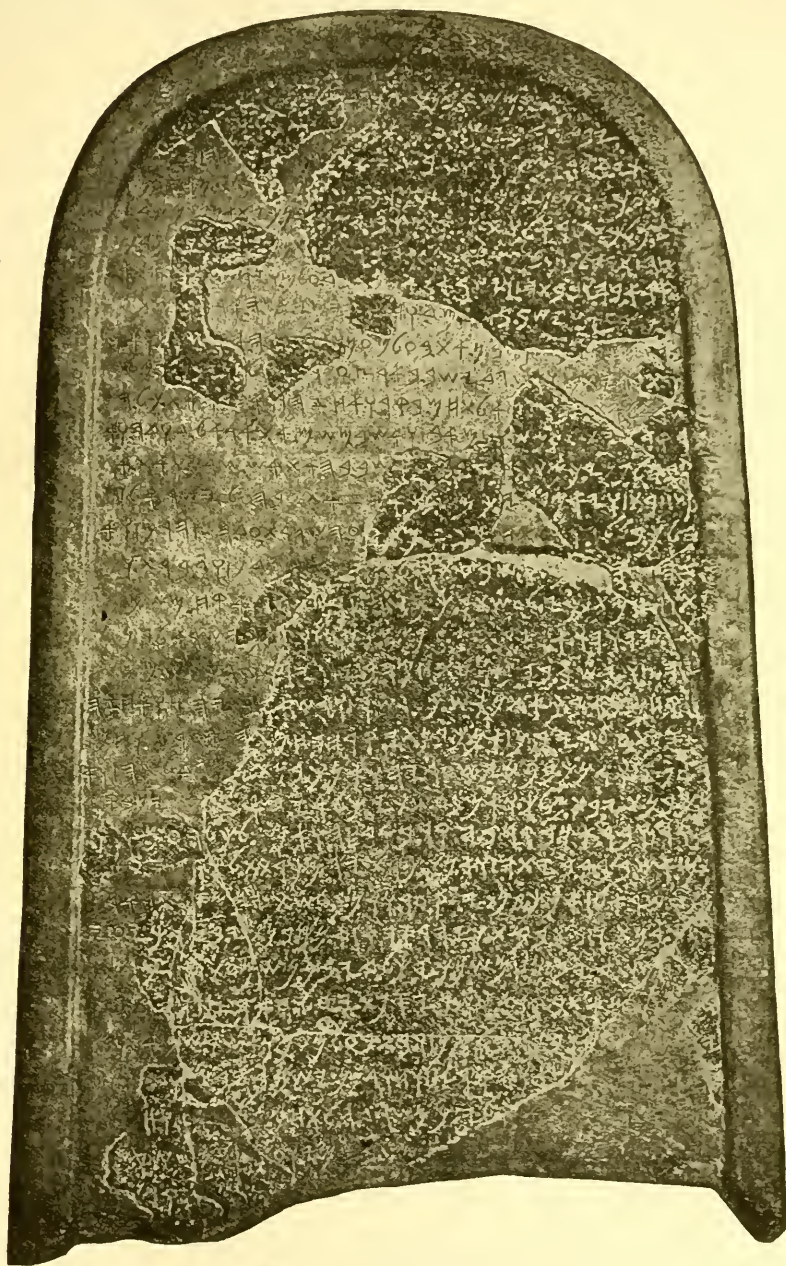
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HAMMURABI AND AMRAPHEL.

BY DR. HUGO RADAU.

[People not familiar with Semitic languages, especially with Hebrew and Babylonian, may very well be puzzled why Hammurabi should be identified with the Biblical Amraphel, and it is quite natural that a correspondent of ours should conceive the ingenious idea of identifying Hammurabi with Abraham. Considering the English transcription alone and neglecting entirely the philology of both Babylonia and Palestine, the identification of Hammurabi and Abraham would be more plausible than that of Hammurabi and Amraphel.

We deemed it wise to submit the question to a specialist, and take pleasure in publishing the answer of Dr. Hugo Radau.—*Editor*,]

HAMMURABI has been identified with the Biblical Amraphel not without good reason. The arguments which are so strong that scarcely any student of Babylonian inscriptions would doubt them are two-fold; first, historical; secondly, linguistic.

Since the writer of the letter submitted to me is concerned only with the linguistic difficulties of this identification, I shall here omit the weighty historical arguments and limit myself to the latter.

The name Hammurabi may be written in Babylonian either
cha-mu ra bi or *cha-am-mu-ra-bi*.

If we transcribe these syllables in Hebrew script, we would get either

חַמְּרַבִּי or חַמְּרַבִּי

The Biblical name is Amraphel or

אַמְרַפֶּל

A comparison shows that only two consonants are common to both names: *mr* = מר.

The difficulties of this identification, then, consist in the equation of the

Babylonian *cham* (חם) = Hebr. *am* (אם) and of the
 Babylonian *bi* (ב) = Hebr. *phel* (פל).

I. CHAM = AM.

The name Hammurabi is in Babylonian a *foreign* name, for we have a syllabary in which it is explained by *kimtu rapashtu*, i. e., "the great or extended family." The Babylonian scribes, then, saw in this name two elements, one meaning "family," the other "great." These two elements are *chammu* + *rabi*.

Hammurabi belongs to the kings of the first dynasty of Babylon, which is of Canaanitish origin. The *language of the Canaanites* is, as we know now from the Tell Amarna tablets, identical with the *Hebrew language*. From a comparison of the Canaanitish words to be found in the Amarna tablets with their Babylonian transcription we know that Babylonian *ch* corresponds.

a. Mostly to Canaanitish ע.

Canaanitish שַׁעַר (gate) =	Babylonian transcription: <i>shachri</i> (שַׁחַר).
“ זרוע (arm) =	“ “ <i>zurûch</i> (זרוח).
“ עיני (my eyes) =	“ “ <i>chinaja</i> (חיני).
“ על (yoke) =	“ “ <i>chullu</i> (חל).
“ עברי (Hebrews) =	“ “ <i>chabiré</i> (חברי).

See here also from Assyrian inscriptions:

Hebrew עִיָּה (a city, Gen. x. 19) =	Assyrian <i>chaziti</i> , <i>chaz(z)atu</i> , etc.
“ עִמְרִי (Omri) =	“ <i>chumri</i> .

The syllable *cham* in the name cha-am-mu-ra-bi would correspond therefore to the Canaanitish עם, which means "people," "tribe," "family."

b. But the Babylonians transcribe the Canaanitish resp. Hebrew ע also by *a*, hence the name עִיָּה occurs in the Babylonian resp. Assyrian inscriptions also as Azzatu! If this be true, then we might expect, if the syllable *cham* be = עם, that the name Cham-murabi be also written Ammurabi. Indeed, such a writing does occur. In an Assyrian letter, K. 552, 5 ff., our name is written *ammurapi*, which when transcribed in Hebrew would become:

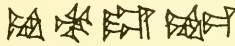
אַמְרָפִי

This writing proves beyond a shadow of doubt that the syllable *cham* in Chammurabi corresponds to the Canaanitish resp. Hebrew עם, and means "people" or "family" = *kimtu*. But Gen. xiv. where the name Amraphel occurs is written in *Hebrew*, why should the *Hebrew* rendering of this Hebrew Canaanitish name be written with an א (אם) instead of an ע (עם)?

The answer is: "The writer of Gen. xiv. had a copy or has seen an inscription where the name was written Ammurabi (as above) instead of Chammurabi."

II. BI = PHEL.

How is the syllable *phel* instead of *bi* to be explained? The Babylonian script is a syllabic script, and each syllable or sign is again polyphone, i. e., one sign may be read in several different ways. Now it appears that there is in the Babylonian writing one sign which may be read not only NE but also bi, bil, pil. The writer of Gen. xiv. therefore must have had a copy before him or seen an inscription where this sign was to be found at the end of the name, an inscription where the name was written



AM - MU - RA - PIL,

which he read and which he transcribed in Hebrew by

אמרפל

but which ought to have been read

am-mu-ra-be or *am-mu-ra-pi*,

and transcribed by

אמרבי or אמרפי

The syllable *rab(i)* contains the root רבה or רבב, "to be or become great, extended, numerous," etc., which again is the Canaanitish-Hebrew equivalent of the Babylonian *rapashtu* or *rapaltu*. Chammurabi, then, is = עב רב = *kimtu rapashtu* = the *great family* (*people*).