

## THE MOABITE STONE

TRANSLATED BY DR. A. NEUBAUER

THE Moabite stone was discovered by the Rev. F. Klein, on the site of Dibon (now Dhibān), on the 19th of August 1868. When on his way to the Bekka his attention was drawn by a friendly sheikh to a black basalt stone in the vicinity of his tent. This stone, about 3 ft. 10 in. high, 2 ft. in breadth, and 14½ in. in thickness, and rounded both at the top and the bottom to nearly the shape of a semicircle, contained an inscription on one side consisting of thirty-four lines. The discoverer, although he did not immediately recognise the importance of his find, had good sense enough to try to acquire it for the museum at Berlin. As soon as the natives learned that the infidels were in search of the monument, they began to interest all persons they could get hold of in it. Captain Warren (of the Palestine Exploration Fund) was informed of its existence some weeks after Klein's discovery, but knowing that the Berlin Museum was already concerned in the matter, he took no steps towards its acquisition till 1869. However, whilst the negotiations of the Prussian Government were

making only slow progress, everything in the East moving but slowly, M. Clermont-Ganneau, then dragoman of the French Consulate in Jerusalem, wisely took at once the necessary steps for procuring squeezes and copies of the inscription, and finally endeavoured to buy the monument itself. Fortunately he was successful in his attempt to obtain a squeeze of the inscription while the stone was still in its entirety, for it soon became too late. After the Turkish authorities had begun to interfere, the Bedouins of the country of Dhibān, rather than give up the monument for the benefit of the Pasha and Mûdir, broke the stone by first making a fire under it, and then pouring cold water on it, and subsequently distributed the pieces among themselves to be used as amulets and charms. Thus, through the zeal of those who acted in the name of two European countries, one of the earliest Semitic monuments written in alphabetical characters was irretrievably ruined.

For a detailed history of the vicissitudes undergone by the stone, I must refer to Dr. Ginsburg's second edition of his work on the Moabite inscription, and to M. Héron de Villefosse's notice (see full title below, p. 196), who does not, however, even mention the name of Klein. Happily more than half of the inscription remained intact, and M. Clermont-Ganneau's squeezes and copies supply in large measure the lacunæ in the text, as may be seen from an inspection of the original monument, which now adorns the museum of the Louvre. It stands there

in its original shape, the lacunæ being supplied from the squeezes and copies. And from this monument, as reproduced in 1886 by Professors Rudolf Smend and Albert Socin, I shall give the translation which follows.

It would be superfluous to mention in detail all the literature that bears upon the stone. The reader will find it given up to 1875 in M. Héron de Villefosse's monograph under the title of *Notice des monuments provenant de la Palestine*, Paris, 1876, arranged according to the countries to which the authors belong. It is seldom that such a number of names can be found contributing to a subject of Oriental study, as was the case with the Moabite inscription. I shall mention them in alphabetical order, the names being taken from M. Héron de Villefosse's work. They are—Auerbach (J.); Balagi; Beke (D.); Bensly; Bonelly; Burton (A. F. and Ch.); \*Clermont-Ganneau; Colenso (Bishop); Derenbourg (J.); Deutsch (E.); Fabiani; Geiger (A.); \*Ginsburg (Ch. D.); Goldziher; Grove (G.); Halévy (Abraham); Harkavy; Haug; Hayes Ward; \*Héron de Villefosse; Himpel; \*Hitzig; Howard Crosby; Jenkins (G.); \*Kaempff; Levi (M.A.); Merx; Neubauer (A.); \*Noeldeke; Oppert (J.); Palmer (E. H.); Petermann; Rawlinson (G. and Sir H.); Renan; Rougé (Vicomte de); Sabatier; Sachs (S.); \*Schlottmann; Schrader (E.); Schroeder; Smend; Socin; Testa; \*Vogüé (Comte de); Warren (Sir Ch.); Weier; Wright (W.). The names to which

an asterisk is prefixed are those of authors who have published separate works on the subject; the contributions of the others are scattered through periodicals and daily and weekly papers, in many languages, viz., English, French, Italian, German, Hebrew, and Greek (Schroeder). I shall not supply here the titles of the periodicals nor of the separate monographs; this I hope will be done either by M. Clermont-Ganneau when he gives us his final commentary on the inscription, or in a second edition of the pamphlet published by Professors Smend and Socin.

Our bibliographical list will not be complete without a notice of the Rev. A. Löwy's article on "The apocryphal character of the Moabite Stone" in the *Scottish Review* for April 1887. Mr. Löwy's article was ingenious, but, as was pointed out in the *Athenæum*, *Academy*, and *Guardian*, was destitute of palæographical support, and his conclusions have not been accepted by any other Semitic scholar.

M. Clermont-Ganneau promised as far back as 1875 a final publication of this important inscription according to all the materials at his disposal. But of this edition nothing exists except a bookseller's advertisement. In a catalogue of M. Ernest Leroux, 1878, M. Clermont-Ganneau's final publication was announced under the following title:—"La stèle de Méša, roi de Moab (ix<sup>e</sup> siècle avant J. C.). Edition définitive, avec les photographies du monument et de l'estampage, le plan du pays où la stèle fut découverte, plusieurs planches d'inscriptions, fac-

simile, vignette, etc. (sous presse), 20 fr." Up to the present date nothing more has been heard of this authoritative edition.

In 1885 two German professors, Dr. Rudolf Smend of Bâle and Dr. Albert Socin of Tübingen, seeing that the long-expected edition of M. Clermont-Ganneau had been postponed indefinitely, and feeling the necessity of such an edition for the purposes of instruction in the university, decided to make one with the help of the original in the Louvre, and of the squeeze made by the Arab for M. Clermont-Ganneau, as well as of another squeeze in the library of Bâle. The edition, which is the result of hard, minute, and skilful labour on the part of the two professors, is now the final and authoritative edition of the inscription, although contested on many points by M. Clermont-Ganneau in an article (not always impartially written) in the *Journal Asiatique* for 1887, tome ix. p. 72 *sqq.*, and by M. Renan in the *Journal des Savants*, 1887. In my translation I shall notice the differences between M. Clermont-Ganneau's readings and those of the two professors, adding a few remarks of my own.

Let me say at once that the last four lines of the inscription are hopelessly inexplicable owing to the lacunæ found in them.

The object of the inscription is to commemorate the victory of Mesha over his Israelitish enemy. Chemosh was once angry with Moab and caused them to lose territory and even to be conquered by

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Israel. Chemosh then showed favour to his nation and Moab was victorious. The Moabites not only recaptured the towns they had lost, but added others to them which they took from Israel. Mesha captured the priests(?) of the god or goddess Dodo and Jahweh, and hewed them in pieces before Chemosh, just as Samuel hewed Agag before Jahweh. Mesha took great pains to construct cisterns in some of the towns belonging to Moab. The Moabite dialect is tinged with non-biblical words and forms, but the construction remains biblical. The characters are Phœnician, and form a link between those of the Baal Lebanon inscription (of the tenth century B.C.), and those of the Siloam text.

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1. I, Mesha son of Chemosh-melech<sup>1</sup> King of MOAB the DI-
2. BONITE.<sup>2</sup> My father reigned over MOAB thirty years<sup>3</sup> and I reig-
3. ned after my father. I made this monument to CHEMOSH at KORKHAH.<sup>4</sup> A monument of Sal-
4. vation, for he saved me from all invaders,<sup>5</sup> and let me see my desire upon all my enemies. Omr-
5. i [was] King of ISRAEL, and he oppressed MOAB many days, for CHEMOSH was angry with his
6. land. His son followed him, and he also said : I shall oppress MOAB. In my days CHEMOSH<sup>6</sup> said,
7. I will see my desire on him and his house. And ISRAEL surely perished for ever. Omri took the land<sup>7</sup> of

<sup>1</sup> The letter *m* is doubtful according to M. Clermont-Ganneau, but no other is possible. Chemosh-melech is a compound analogous to Eli-melech.

<sup>2</sup> Dibon is said to have been built by Gad (Numb. xxxii. 34).

<sup>3</sup> Probably a round number like 40 in l. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Most likely a district of Dibon, perhaps alluded to in Isaiah xv. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Smend-Socin read **המלכן** "the Kings," which would presuppose an allied force, of which there is no further question in the inscription, nor does the Bible mention that Mesha was assisted in his revolt by allies. The **נ** is according to M. Clermont-Ganneau doubtful. The following restorations are possible: 1st, **השלכן** "freebooters." Comp. **שלך** Lev. xi. 18, A.V. "pelican," or identical with **השלהן**, "swordsmen." 2d, **החלכן** "the misfortunes" or "misery," Comp. Ps. x. 8.

<sup>6</sup> The reading **כדבר** by S.S. is not idiomatic; **כזה** would do better. According to M. C.-G. there seems to be the trace of a **נ** following the **ב**. I propose therefore the word **נמש**.

<sup>7</sup> According to M. C.-G. : S.S. read "all the land;" of the word *all* there is no trace in the inscription.

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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