

Old Testament History 112

is now sending forth his howls, half cry and half . All the dogs of the Arab village immediately take up his challenge and for a moment the peace is upset by howling and barking. It is now quite dark. Caution would advise descending immediately to avoid the danger of falling into one of the many trenches, but a certain fascination holds me here. I should like to find a reason for all this desolation. Why should a flourishing city, the seat of an empire have completely disappeared? Is it the fulfillment of a prophetic curse that changes the temple into a den of jackalls? He is thinking of Isaiah there, as you can see. Did the actions of the people who lived here have anything to do with this? Or was it the fatal destiny of men that all their civilizations must crumble when they reach their peak, and what are we doing here--trying to wrest from the past its secrets, and probably we ourselves and our own achievements may become an object of search for people to come. I have to descend now. The moon has not yet risen and have not my frequent visits taught me the right path to follow the descent that is really dangerous. Still absorbed in my thoughts I feel no desire to break up their course by joining my . In the obscurity I walk through the open country into ruins still untouched of the ancient cities. The ground is soft, being made up entirely of the debris of centuries and at times my foot sinks in it up to the ankle. Here the ancient habitations with their mysteries and their sins have been sleeping quietly for millenniums. In a few months, perhaps in a few days, the ground here will also be broken by trenches as in the Bedouins a battlefield and/repose of the poor ~~and~~ will be disturbed by the frantic search for records and for data." I thought that gives an interesting picture of the situation on one of those mounds today which earlier Mesopotamia. Of course there are large cities and great commercial centers in Mesopotamia and fine farm lands but they are along the new course of the river and the ancient course of the river is deserted and barren and desolate. Now the excavation, you noticed, began with Botta and Layard and it continued