

No. 2. THE ARAMAEAN PEOPLES.

The earliest monumental reference to the Aramaeans is on an inscription of Tiglath-pileser I. (ca. 1200 B.C.), in which we read of the "Aramaean Ahlamu." The word is variously vocalized: Arumu, Aramu or Arammu, Arime. Winckler would identify these Aramu with the barbarian Suti who appeared in the 14th century. W. Max Müller (Philadelphia) has found traces of the Aramaic language in Egyptian inscriptions of ca. 1300.

These data coincide with the Hebrew tradition, which carries back the contact between the Hebrews and the Aramaeans into the patriarchal period (Gen. 31), where, v. 37, is given the earliest citation of an Aramaic phrase. This tradition makes the maternal ancestry of Jacob's children Aramaic (i.e., Israel is one half Aramaic blood), the tradition of which ancestry is preserved in Deut. 26.5. We are thus given a synchronism for dating the background of the Jacob tradition, and the Aramaic stock appears as an important element in the fusion which produced the Bne Israel. (According to the Yahwistic tradition, the land of Aram, on the upper Euphrates, was the native country of Abraham himself. And there is a tendency on the part of some scholars to regard Aramaic as the original language of the Hebrews.)

The Aramaeans constituted a slow and irresistible movement of immigration, proceeding, according to the generally received theory, out of Arabia, which starting about the middle of the second millennium B.C., gradually pervaded both the lower and the upper Euphrates valley and adjacent regions. They appear to have settled extensively in the lands to the east of the land of Babylonia, towards Elam, but politically their most important settlement was in the upper stretches of the Great River, the Aram-Naharaim or "Aram of the Rivers," the Mesopotamia of the Greeks. Here they overcame the old Hittite states, and then became the bulwark of local independence against the advance of the Assyrian empire westward.

About contemporaneously with the rise of the Hebrew monarchy in the South of the Levant (in the 11th century), appears the rise of Aramaean states through-