Metal Record Plates in Ancient Times

by

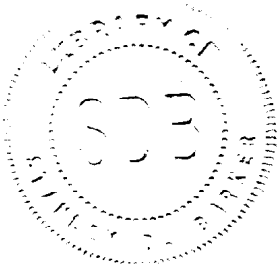
ARIEL L. CROWLEY, LLB.

FILE
M

Metal Record Plates in Ancient Times

by

ARIEL L. CROWLEY, LLB.



Copyrighted 1947
By Ariel L. Crowley, LLB.
Printed in U. S. A.

METAL RECORD PLATES IN ANCIENT TIMES

Were the sacred records of ancient Israel engraved on metal plates?

The Book of Mormon describes a record of the Jews engraved on plates of brass prior to 600 B. C. It reports plates of gold made and engraved by the Israelitish house of Lehi between 600 B. C. and 400 A. D. And it recites the keeping of an even more ancient record on gold plates dating to the dispersion at Babel. It follows that no careful investigation of the faith of the Latter Day Saints can avoid this fundamental inquiry.

If the records of ancient Israel were engraved on metal plates, it seems reasonable that some evidence of that fact should have survived, with the books of the Old Testament, the ravages of time and the obliterating violence and generations of strife which were Israel's lot.

There is such evidence, and much of it, ranging from the obscurities of legend and tradition to archeological treasures and biblical disclosures. It is the purpose of the present study to indicate the evidence now known, without pretense of exhaustion of sources.

Traditional and Legendary Evidences

It is written in the *Secrets of Enoch*[1] that sacred books were written by Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahaleleel, Jared and Enoch, for the benefit of their posterity. The ancient rabbinical tradition is that Tubal-cain, the hammerer of brass,[2] made the plates on which the books were inscribed.[3] Enoch's parting admonition to Methuselah was this: "So preserve, my son Methuselah, the books from thy father's hand, and see that thou deliver them to the generations of the world."[4]

---

[1]33:11.
[2]Gen. 4:22; Berry, *A New Old Testament*, Harrisburg, 1897.
[3]Yerameel 24:7.
[4]Enoch 82:1.

The tradition that the patriarchs learned the things of heaven from tablets inscribed and kept there is a familiar one. In the *Book of Jubilees* it is said "an angel descended from heaven with seven tablets in his hands, and he gave them to Jacob and he read them and knew all that was written therein which would befall him and his sons throughout all ages."[5]

Again, there is reported the exulting message of Enoch, "I know a mystery and have read the heavenly tablets and have seen the holy books."[6]

The moral instructions of the patriarch Asher carried the word "God in the heavenly tablets hath thus declared," and "I have read in the heavenly tablets that in very deed ye will disobey Him and act ungodly."[7]

In the *Testament of Levi* on the priesthood is an account of a vision of the continuance of the priesthood in the house of Levi until the coming of Messiah, followed by Levi's words, "I destroyed at that time the sons of Hamor, as it is written in the heavenly tablets."[8]

The heavenly tablets are often appealed to in old apocalyptic literature, as containing all that is foreordained in heaven, all wisdom, the source of all understanding, the punishment of sinning angels, the plan of division of weeks, the name of Abraham as the friend of God, and many similar things.[9]

When Abraham bought his burial place, the field and cave of Machpelah, from the sons of Heth, monuments were erected, according to tradition, bearing plates of brass engraved with the terms of the accord. These plates are said to have continued in place and legible until the time of David, to whom the promises of Abraham so written were pointed out when he came to assault Jerusalem.[10]

---

[5]Jubilee 32:22.

[6]Enoch 103:2.

[7]Testament of Asher, c. 2, 7.

[8]Testament of Levi, c. 5.

[9]Enoch 81:1; 93:2; 106:19; Jubilees 5, 6, 19; Note 8, Vol. 8 ANF Amer. Ed. p. 13.

[10]Sayce, *Early History of the Hebrews*, pp. 53, 97; Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, Vol. 4, p. 92; Vol. 6, p. 254; Graetz, *History of the Jews*, Vol. 1, p. 4.

There is an ancient story that the Jebusites, descendants of Abimelech king of Gerar, built a strong fortress in Zion, on top of which he placed two monuments with metal plates attached, engraved with the terms of his covenant with Abraham, a covenant respected as long as any member of the house of Abimelech remained alive.[11]

The legendary account of Rachel's theft details the manner of preparation of her father's idols as follows: "They took a man who was first-born, slew him, and took the hair off his head, then salted the head and annointed it with oil, then wrote The Name upon a small tablet of copper or gold, and placed it under his tongue. The head with the tablet under the tongue was then put in a house where lights were lighted before it, and at the time when they bowed down to it, it spoke to them on all matters that they asked of it, and that was due to the power of the Name which was written upon it."[12]

The cup of Joseph, made of silver, is said to have been cut up by Moses and converted into silver plates, upon which he engraved figures designed to raise the leaden coffin of Joseph from the bed of the Nile. According to a variant account Moses used leaves of silver, the engravings on which caused the bull of gold to come up out of the fire into which Aaron had cast both gold and silver.[13]

The fine engraved brass plates which covered the altar in the Tabernacle were, according to tradition, made from the censers used by the sons of Aaron, in order that Israel might ever be mindful of their transgressions.[14]

The highly polished brass plates used by the women of Israel as mirrors were so numerous, so goes the tale, that in two hours Moses was able to collect enough of them to make the brazen vessels of the Tabernacle.[15]

---

[11]Yalkut Reubeni, 44c; Midrash quoted by Rashi and Kimhi on II Sam. 5:6.

[12]Ginzberg, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 371; Yashar Wa-Yeze, 58b-59-a; Targum Yerushalmi Gen. 31:19.

[13]Ginzberg, op. cit. Vol. 2, p. 182; Vol. 5, p. 185; Vol. 3, p. 122.

[14]Lekah, Num. 17:2; Ginzberg, op. cit. Vol. 3, p. 303.

[15]Ginzberg, op. cit. Vol. 6, p. 70.

So go the legends of old, and many like those recounted might be found. Through them runs a thread of recognition of the use of metal plates, and the art of engraving them with words of importance. Engraved metal plates and highly polished metal plates were taken as a matter of course by the story tellers of old Israel.

Archeological Evidences From Lands Outside Israel

The land of Israel lies at the crossroads of three continents. The armies and travelers of successive dominant powers tramped century by century across her ways. Her language, customs and culture bear the indelible imprint of the civilizations of her conquerors and her commerce abroad. What prevailed consistently among her neighbors may therefore be taken as probable in Israel.[16]

Back of historic times lay an age when bronze dominated the use of metals. Even in recent times discoveries of masses of unworked bronze gathered in remote eras have been made.[17]

If Homer's *Illiad* is history, then Hephaestus made the brazen shield of Achilles from fine bronze, alloyed with copper, tin, silver and gold.[18]

In Egypt, and dating to about 2795 B. C. there is conclusive evidence of high skill in preparation of bronze (or brass) plates. An elaborate statute of Pepi has been found covered with fine hammered plates.[19]

It is appropriate to say here that no artificial lines may properly be drawn between bronze and brass, aurichalcum, sariru and such preparations as the shield of Achilles. The technically accurate modern formulae for brass were unknown of old, and even today there is a strong tendency to obliterate or regard as merely nominal the distinctions formerly observed.[20]

---

[16]Yahuda, *Language of the Pentateuch in its Relation to Egyptian,* Oxford 1933, p. xxvii, seq.

[17]Am. Jour. of Arch. Vol. 18, p. 402.

[18]Illiad, 18:474.

[19]*Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. 1, Ch. 7, p. 291.

[20]Ency. Americana, Vol. 4, p. 583.

Around the world, in China, while the Israelitish women were handing up their brass mirrors to Moses to be melted and cast into sacred basins, Chinese women were reflecting themselves in brazen mirrors also.[21]

A remarkably fine engraved seal cylinder, dating to the Sixth Egyptian Dynasty (c. 2500 B. C.) has been analyzed by the French chemist Berthelot, and found to be pure copper.[22]

In 1854, the excavated foundation of the palace of Sargon, the Assyrian, (B. C. 724) yielded a beautiful sealed chest, buried there more than twenty-five hundred years before. It contained six inscribed plates, four of which, the bronze, the silver, the gold and one probably magnesite, have survived. The other two and the chest were lost in the Tigris accident of May 23, 1855, with many other priceless treasures of antiquity. The text of the inscriptions has been published by Lyon and Winckler.[23]

Sargon, destroyer of Israel, kept his records on plates of metal. Over and again his *Annals* repeat "On tablets of gold, silver, bronze, lead, magnesite, lapis lazuli and alabaster, I inscribed my name and I placed these in their foundation walls."[24]

On the wall tablets of the Khorsabad palace Sargon caused to be engraved a record of an offering made to his gods. It is worthy of note because of the nature of the metal, "Offerings of ruddy sariru (an alloy of copper and gold) I solemnly set before them."[25]

The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago has a gold tablet found at the source of the Tigris, made and engraved by or for Shalmanezer III, which reads, "Shalmanezer, prefect of Eubil, priest of Assur, son of Assur-nasir-pal, priest of Assur, grandson of Tukulti-Urta, priest of Assur, conqueror from the upper sea to the lower sea, even the Sea of Chaldea which they call the bitter

---

[21]Todd, O. J., *Chinese Bronze Mirrors*, N. Y., 1935.

[22]*La Chimie au Moyen Age*, Vol. 1, p. 365.

[23]*Die Keilschrifttexte Sargon's*, 1883, pp. 20-27; Luckenbill, *Ancient Records*, University of Chicago, 1927, Vol. 2, p. 56.

[24]*Annals*, 110, 112, 114; Luckenbill, op. cit. ad loc.

[25]Luckenbill, op. cit. p. 38, Sec. 74.

sea, who marched to Hittite land, who brought it under sway to its farthest border: to Babylon, Borsippa Kutha I went; I offered my sacrifices."[26]

In 1876 the bronze plates of the palace at Balawat were recovered. Thirteen bands engraved in two registers, an upper and a lower, bear the record of the most striking episodes in the campaigns of Shalmanezer III (860-849 B. C.).[27]

"In addition to the bronze bands which were nailed across the doors and around the massive doorposts, there was a sheathing of bronze running from the top to the bottom of each free edge of the doors. On the edgings were engraved the so-called 'Gate-Inscriptions' in duplicate. Only a few selected events in the first four years are recorded and the inscription closes with a detailed account of the campaigns against Babylonia years 8 and 9."[28]

Ernest Babelon has reproduced the Gates of Balawat pictorially and expresses the opinion they were probably fashioned in the workshops of Tyre or Sidon.[29]

In 1876 the mountains of Portugal yielded a rare find in the form of a plate of great antiquity, engraved with regulations establishing a monopoly in a mining zone.[30]

Votive tablets were sometimes supplanted with elaborate works of art. Thus, Hiero of Syracuse in 478 B. C. presented to Jupiter Olympus a dedicatory inscription cut into a fine bronze helmet.[31]

The Roman system of engraving important records on brass or bronze plates is so well known as to need hardly more than passing notice. The catalogue is very long and the passing years bring forth in increasing numbers, evidences of the governmental and religious dependence on the permanence of records cut in imperishable metal.

---

[26]Lehman-Haupt, *Materialen*, No. 9; Luckenbill, op. cit. p. 251, Sec. 706.

[27]King, *Bronze Reliefs from the Gates of Shalmanezer*, p. 9.

[28]Luckenbille, op. cit. p. 227, Sec. 615; Pinches, *The Bronze Ornaments of the Palace Gates of Balawat.*

[29]*Manual of Oriental Antiquities*, N. Y. 1889, p. 129.

[30]Flach, *La Table de Bronze d'Aljustrel.*

[31]McClintock & Strong, *Ency. of Theo. & Ecc. Lit.*, Vol. 4, p. 605.

Of highest historical importance in Roman inscriptions is the Augustan contribution to Roman law, *Index Rerum a se Gestarum,* usually known as *Monumentum Ancyranum* engraved and set up on brazen plates in the Via Pontifici in Rome for all to read.[32]

The pact of Sulpicius Cassius Vecellinus with the Latini (493 B. C.) was standing in the forum engraved on pillars of bronze in the days of Cicero.[33]

The pact of Claudius (a very old and unidentified Claudius) is the most ancient of the treaties set in bronze yet recovered. Engraved on a plate cut in the shape of a fish, it established hospitality with the community of Fundi.[34]

Nero's grandfather set up a *tabella fastigata* in bronze in the Forum upon taking over the *pagus Gurgenzium* in Africa.[35]

The *Lex Acilia* of 123 B. C. is incised in a bronze tablet two meters broad, containing ninety lines of more than two hundred letters each; and on its back is cut the *Lex Agraria* (111 B. C.).[36]

The plebiscite on autonomy of Termessus in Pisidia was recorded on five large bronze plates (72 B. C.).[37]

The laws promulgated by Caesar for cisalpine Gaul, the Julian municipal laws, the laws of Vespasian, the legislation for Spain, the edicts of Vespasian for municipalities, the municipal enactments of Domitian, the Flavian laws of metal, and many similar enactments were engraved on metal plates.[38]

Even such prosaic things as the regulations for demolishing old houses and rebuilding the same were so engraved. In a plate containing such regulations and found in an excavation at Herculaneum, the reverse of the tablet bears an inscription made in honor of Germanicus and the younger Drusus.[39]

---

[32]*Corpus Inscr. Lat.,* 3:779 seq. Suetonius, *Augustus,* 101.
[33]*Pro Balbo,* 23:53.
[34]*Corpus Inscr. Lat.,* 1:532.
[35]*Orel.* 3693.
[36]*Corpus Inscr. Lat.* 1:198, 1:200.
[37]*Corpus Inscr. Lat.,* 1:204.
[38]Ency. Brit. 11th Ed. Vol. 14, p. 636.
[39]Momsen, *Berichte* etc., Classe, 1852, p. 272.

Without unduly extending the list of Roman plates, of which there are an astonishing number, some should be mentioned which have special significance. The *diplomata militaria*, which were imperial decrees granting favors to soldiers, were uniformly written on metal plates which were then joined together in the form of diptycha.[40]

Tacitus made note that a speech of the emperor Claudius on the citizenship of the Gauls was engraved on large bronze plates, which yet survive in part.[41]

Great numbers of private documents, formularies, religious documents, receipts, imprecations and the like were engraved on bronze or lead tablets, and many have been recovered in modern times.[42]

The historian Polybius took his colleague Philinus sharply to task for failing to give recognition to a treaty with Carthage reduced to writing in a brass plate. Said he, "Seeing that such treaties exist, and are preserved to this day, engraved on brass in the treasury of the Aediles in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, the historian Philinus certainly does give us some reason to be surprised at him."[43] Polybius was born about 203 B. C.

Livy likewise wrote of such inscriptions thus: "The Sabines fell to the lot of Horatius. The Equans and Voluscians to that of Valerius. . . . Before they marched out of the city they engraved on brass and fixed up in the public view the *decemviral laws* which have received the name of the *Twelve Tablets*."[44]

"A code of laws was promulgated in the year B. C. 451 which was designated by the name of the *Law of the Ten Tablets*, so-called because it was inscribed on ten tablets of brass, set up for the public inspection on the walls of the temple of Jupiter. Two other tablets were soon afterward added; and the code was then known by the name of *The Law of the Twelve Tablets*, and so

---

[40]Ency. Brit. 11th Ed. Vol. 14, p. 637.
[41]*Annals*, 11:23.
[42]*Corpus Inscr. Lat.*, 2:5042; 2:462; 1:818, 819; 3:291 seq.
[43]Polybius, *History*, Bk. 3, Ch. 26 (Shuckburg Trans. London, 1889).
[44]Livy, *History* Bk. 3, Ch. 57 (Spillon Trans. London, 1911).

continued to be known to after generations. It was the foundation upon which all subsequent Roman law was built."[45]

The tenth tablet was "Ius Sacrum," including the sacred rites of burial.

"Far richer and more valuable, in their extent almost unique in Italian epigraphy, are the seven bronze tablets excavated in 1444 in the theater at Iguvium, now Giubbio, and still preserved at that place, written partly in Umbrian, partly in the Latin alphabet, but all in the Umbrian dialect. They are the legacy of a religious brotherhood which had, at Iguvium, nearly the same importance as the pontificial collegium at Rome, and at all events far surpassed the known Roman brotherhoods in weight and influence in the *sacros* of all the communities. . . . These tablets (tabulae Iguvinae or Eugubinae) are the work of the *fratres Atiedie,* who have here set down their ritual, and in addition some decisions of their college. . . . The most important tablets are 1, 6 and 7, which describe the most essential sacrificial rites of the ancient communities, the lustrations of the sacred citadel and the purification of the people from moment to moment, with all the ceremonies and prayers."[46] The period referred to was prior to the end of the fourth century B. C.

In Greece, says Dr. Charles Anthon, "the art of hardening copper by the admixture of tin was known before the historical period," and "brass they regarded as a sort of bronze."[47] In another work he has described a Greek helmet bearing an engraved boustrophedic inscription and then in the British Museum, and a bronze statue bearing an engraving in the foot, inlaid with silver letters.[48] The Greeks had a name for hammering out brass plates. They called it *sphyraton.*

The oldest Greek letter yet discovered is a note from Mnesiergius of Athens to his housemates written in the fourth century B. C.,

---

[45]Morris, *History of the Development of Law,* Washington, 1916, p. 160.
[46]Harper's Dictionary of Classical Antiquities, NY, 1898, p. 1626.
[47]*Grecian Antiquities,* N. Y. 1871, p. 66.
[48]*Dictionary,* NY 1845, pp. 176, 178.

and now in the Berlin Museum. It is engraved on a lead plate and folded like a book.[49]

Another Greek tablet, engraved with a charm for binding, and dating to the fourth century B. C., is reproduced also by Dr. Deissmann, in the same work.[50]

While it is not strictly history, in the usual sense, and probably belongs with the traditional and legendary, it will be recalled that the seven, or ten, holy plates said to have been delivered by God to Mohammed, contained "an admonition concerning every matter, and a decision in every case" which he was to "receive with reverence, and command his people that they live according to the most excellent precepts thereof."[51]

Two of the truly great treasures of antiquity, and most remarkable examples of the ancient uses of gold and silver plates for record purposes, are the gold and silver plates recently found buried in a cement box in the cornerstone of the Apadana or royal audience hall of the emperors at Persepolis in Iran. After twenty-five centuries buried in the earth, the plates are as legible as the day they were interred, and the method of their preservation is virtually identical with the manner in which the plates of the Book of Mormon are reported to have been kept. Dr. James Henry Brestead of the University of Chicago has called the find a "magnificent discovery" and has published a photograph of the site, the plates in the box and a description, as a special frontispiece to his *Conquest of Civilization.*[52]

A photograph of the plates was published in the *Improvement Era* for March, 1942.[53]

The pommel boss of Tarkendemos, a bilingual inscription engraved with charming precision around the figures on a circular silver plate, and dating somewhere between 1100 and 700 B. C.

---

[49]Deissmann, A., *Light from the Ancient East* (Strachan) NY 1927, p. 151, and Figs. 18 and 19.

[50]Deissmann, op. cit. p. 305, and Fig. 55.

[51]Ch. VII, Sales Ed., Philadelphia, 1923.

[52]Harpers, NY, 1938.

[53]p. 151.

will serve adequately to illustrate the skill of that strange neighbor of the Hebrews, the Hittite nation.[54]

It is thus put beyond cavil: Israel's neighbors over many centuries, early and late, hammered out plates of metal, and often caused their governmental records, religious records, laws and letters to be incised thereon.

Now what of Israel in history outside the Bible?

Israelitish History

When Judas (as reported by Josephus, contrary to the Maccabean record) became high priest, he sent ambassadors to Rome, who negotiated a treaty of mutual assistance. "They also made a decree concerning it, and sent a copy of it into Judea. It was also laid up in the capitol, and engraven in brass."[55]

The same historian records the presentation by Esdras of the "brass that was more precious than gold" to the treasurers, who were of the family of the priests, to the amount of twelve talents.[56] In a footnote to the passage, Whiston has said at the same place "This kind of brass, or copper, or rather mixture of brass and gold or copper, was called *aurichalcum*, and was of old esteemed the most precious of all metals." In this Dr. Whiston is in agreement with Pliny.[57] The Jews called the metal *chasmal*, and in the LXX it is *electrum*, a brilliant metal, probably an alloy of gold, or gold and silver, with copper or brass.[58]

"Now when it was heard at Rome and as far as Sparta that Jonathan was dead, they were very sorry. But as soon as they heard that his brother Simon was made high priest in his stead and ruled the country and the cities therein: *They wrote unto him in tablets of brass* to renew friendship and league which they had made with Judas and Jonathan his brethren, which writings were

---

[54]Hillprecht, *Explor. in Bible Lands*, Phila. 1903, p. 768.
[55]*Antiquities*, 12:10:6.
[56]*Antiquities*, 11:5:2.
[57]*Hist. Nat.* 34:4; 33:4.
[58]Gesenius, *Lexicon* (Robinson Ed. Boston, 1844, p. 359).

read before the congregation at Jerusalem."[59] So recites the Maccabean history.

Again, in the same work, it is written, "After this, Simon sent Numenius to Rome, with a great shield of gold, a thousand pound weight, to confirm league with them. . . . *So then they wrote it on tablets of brass* which they set upon pillars in Mount Sion; and this is a copy of the writing."[60]

Yet again "And Simon accepted thereof, and was well pleased to execute the office of the high priesthood and to be captain and prince of the nation of the Jews and of the priests and to be chief over all. And they commanded that this writing *should be put in tablets of brass,* and that they should be set up within the compass of the sanctuary in a conspicuous place: And that a copy thereof should be put in the treasury that Simon and his sons may have it."[61]

In the account of the construction of the furniture of the tabernacle by Moses, Josephus has this account:

"Before this tabernacle there was reared a brazen altar, but it was within made of wood, five cubits by measure on each side, but its height was but three, in like manner adorned with brass plates as bright as gold."[62]

When Judas Maccabeus made a league of friendship with Rome, the reply came to him engraved on brass plates. In the record, the treaty is quoted, prefaced as follows: "And this is the copy of the writing that they wrote back again, graven in tablets of brass, and sent to Jerusalem, that it might be with them there for a memorial of peace and alliance."[63]

From Moses to the Maccabees, the traditional Hebrew reports, the legends of the patriarchs, the history of neighboring nations, and Hebrew extra-biblical history are agreed.

---

[59] 1 Macc. 14:17.
[60] 1 Macc. 14:24-26.
[61] 1 Macc. 14:47-49.
[62] *Antiquities* 3:6:8.
[63] 1 Macc. 8:22.

There remain for examination, biblical sources of Israelitish history.

Metal Plates in the Bible

The gold plate that was to be carried on Aaron's forehead in performing his priestly offices was ordered to be made as follows:

"And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD."[64]

The passage is of great significance, for it presumes on the part of the people to whom it was given a knowledge of skilled metal working, including the making of thin gold plates, and knowledge of the art of engraving. The descriptive words "like the engravings of a signet," many times used in the Bible,[65] carry the knowledge of engraving far back before the time of Moses. Tamar demanded and received of Judah possession of his signet, the seal, stamp or ring that bore his name.[66]

That the direction to make the gold plate and engrave it was within the power of the people is made clear by the record of its fulfillment: "And they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote upon it a writing, like to the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD."[67]

In Numbers it is recorded that the altars were covered with metal plates, made of the censers of the sinning sons of Aaron, conforming with the tradition above noted.[68]

Forty brass plates were attached to the bases (pedestals) of the furniture of the great temple, each one elaborately engraved.[69]

The source of silver and gold plates in his time is recorded by Jeremiah: "Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workmen and of the hands

---

[64]Exodus 28:36.
[65]Ex. 28:11, 21, 36; 39:14, 30; Jer. 22:24; Dan. 6:17; Hag. 2:23.
[66]Gen. 38:18, 25.
[67]Ex. 39:30.
[68]I Kings 7:27, 30, 36.
[69]I Kings 7:27, 30, 36.

of the founder." The word "plates" used here is the Hebrew word *looach,* a glistening or polished tablet, characterized by Jeremiah as the "work of cunning men."[70]

Inquiry into the history of brass plates in Israel of necessity involves the remarkable instruction to Isaiah to engrave his prophecy.[71] It is there, as the Authorized Version has it, recorded:

"Moreover, the Lord said unto me, Take thee a great *roll* and write in it with a man's pen concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz."

Virtually all of the modern translations recognize the error in the use of the word "roll." Ferrar Fenton has "Take a great tablet and engrave upon it with a human engraver;" Moffatt uses "board;" the Revised Version has "tablet;" American Standard Version has "tablet;" Alexander on Isaiah has "tablet." The Hebrew text has *gillayon,* which means a tablet for writing, but of a very special kind. Years ago Thomas W. Brookbank suggested that the word should be rendered "mirror" to conform with the translation of the same word in Isaiah 3:23,[72] and to recognize the very obvious reference to the highly polished brass mirrors of Israelitish women referred to in Exodus.[73]

The Brookbank view is supported by the weighty opinion of Dr. Adam Clarke, distinguished commentator, (1762-1832) on this passage. Dr. Clarke says the text should be translated: "Take thee a great mirror." He points out that *gillayon* is from the root *galah,* to show or reveal, to render clear and bright by rubbing. His words are instructive:

"According to this derivation (*gillayon*) is not a roll or volume: but may very well signify a *polished tablet of metal,* such as was anciently used for a *mirror.* The Chaldee paraphrast renders it by *luach,* a tablet, and the same word, though somewhat differently pointed, the Chaldee paraphrast and the rabbins render *a mirror,* chap. iii. 23. The mirrors of the Israelitish women were made of brass, finely polished, Exod. 38:8, from which place it likewise appears that what they used were little hand mirrors

---

[70]Jer. 10:9.
[71]Isaiah 8:1.
[72]*Concerning the Brass Plates,* Millenial Star, Liverpool, undated, p. 3.
[73]38:8.

which they carried with them even when they assembled at the door of the tabernacle. I have a metalline mirror found in Herculaneum, which is not above three inches square. The prophet is commanded to take a mirror, or brazen polished tablet, not like these little hand mirrors, but a large one; large enough for him to engrave upon it in deep and lasting characters, *becheret enosh,* with a workman's graving tool, the prophecy which he was to deliver."

The town of Herculaneum referred to by Dr. Clarke was destroyed in the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 A. D. Long since the time when Dr. Clarke wrote, conclusive evidence of the character of the metal hand mirrors of the ancients has been unearthed. Excavations in the ancient city of Gezer, one of the cities of Canaan conquered by Joshua,[74] have yielded two circular bronze mirrors, one five inches and the other four and one-half inches in diameter.[75]

In the 1914 edition of Smith's *Smaller Dictionary of the Bible,* there is set forth an admirable reproduction of an ornate brass hand mirror of the type used in Israel and Egypt, with the following note: "Two Hebrew words Ex. 38:8 and Job 37:18, are rendered 'looking glass' in the AV, but from the context evidently denote a mirror of polished metal. The Hebrew women on coming out of Egypt probably brought with them mirrors like those which were used by the Egyptians, and were made of a mixed metal, chiefly copper, wrought with admirable skill and susceptible of a bright lustre."

Light is thrown on the character of these thin brass mirrors by the use Moses found for them. "And he made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the looking glasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." And in the AV marginal note the alternative rendition for "looking-glasses" is given "or brasen glasses."[76]

---

[74]*Joshua* 10:33; 12:12; 21:21; I Chron. 6:67.

[75]Quarterly Statement, Palestine Exploration Fund, 1905, p. 321; 1907 p. 199.

[76]Exodus 38:8.

The same mirrors formed the background for the question in Job: "Hast thou with Him spread out the sky, which is strong and as a molten looking-glass?"[77]

The views of Brookbank and Clarke are supported by the Egyptologist Wilkinson. In connection with the passage under consideration he said: "The fact that this word (*gillayon*) denotes a writing tablet in Isaiah 8:1 perhaps indicates that in the former passage (3:23) we have an oblong mirror in a wooden frame."[78]

The use of brass mirrors is attested in the Apocrypha. In Sirach the necessity for constant polishing to prevent the tarnishing of metal mirrors is noticed.[79] Similar notice occurs in the Book of Wisdom.[80]

The obscure image which is seen through a tarnished brass mirror is the substance of the often misunderstood passage in which Paul declares "Now we see through a glass darkly."[81]

Lest it be thought that glass itself was intended, it should be mentioned that glass was indeed known, but called *crystal*, as in Job.[82] Fine glass had been known from the days of Osirtasen, contemporary of Joseph, and wine glasses as old as the exodus are yet preserved. There are hieroglyphic representations of glass-blowers in the paintings at Beni-Hassan, and at tombs in other places.[83]

Evidence of extensive use of brass in old testament times is abundant. In the Authorized Version one hundred seventeen instances have been noted in which the word "brass" is used, and seventeen more where the word is "brazen." The word as used in that version, whether "brass" or "brazen" is not always strictly accurate. As used in general the reference is clearly to an alloy in which copper is the principal ingredient, but sometimes copper alone is intended. Thus the brass that is "molten out of the

---

[77]Job 37:18.
[78]*Ancient Egypt*, Vol. 2, p. 350 ff.
[79]12:11.
[80]7:26.
[81]I Cor. 13:12; II Cor. 3:18.
[82]Job 28:14.
[83]Smith, *Smaller Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 194.

stone,"[84] and the hills out of which "thou mayest dig brass"[85] cannot be understood as involving alloys.

Of great significance as regards the use of brass, are the passages in II Chronicles, and the parellel passages in I Chronicles, where direct reference is made to engraving. In the Douay Bible the passage in I Chronicles (22:3) is rendered clearly, and reads:

"David prepared in abundance iron for the nails of the gates and for the closures, and joinings, *and of brass an immense weight.*"

The construction of the magnicent temple planned by David involved the use of highly skilled labor, particularly for the purpose of utilizing the great quantities of brass accumulated. It is accordingly recorded that David made such labor available. He had "prepared for the House of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight, for it is in abundance." And he procured the services of "all manner of cunning men for every manner of work, of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron there is no number."[86]

Even in the presence of so many skilled workmen, evidencing a great and common understanding of metal work, Solomon yearned for greater skill. Being a perfectionist he appealed to his father's old ally Hiram of Tyre for assistance, saying:

"Send me now therefore a man cunning to work in gold and in silver, and in brass and in iron, and in purple, and crimson and blue, and that *can skill to grave gravings with the cunning men that are with me in Judah and Jerusalem* whom David my father did provide."[87]

Hiram remembered his old friend and sent to his son Solomon

"The son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, and his father was a man of Tyre, skillful to work in gold, and in silver and in brass, in iron, in stone and in timber, in purple, and in blue, and

---

[84]Job 28:2.
[85]Deut. 8:9.
[86]I Chron. 22:15.
[87]II Chron. 2:7.

in fine linen and in crimson: *also to grave any manner of graving.*"[88]

It takes but a cursory examination of the details of the metal work of the temple to be struck with the extraordinary skill which the metal workers acquired in that ancient day. And it is of importance to note that the brasswork was sometimes, if not always, highly polished. The metal instruments designed for ceremonial use were of "bright brass."[89] The marginal note of the translators shows that the term "bright" means "made bright, or scoured."

So much brass was used in the construction that no estimate could be made of its quantity. "For the weight of the brass could not be found out."[90]

The habit of polishing brass, and the lustre of it so impressed the mind of the prophet Ezekiel that he could think of nothing brighter with which to compare the persons in his initial vision. His words described the feet of the living creatures as sparkling "like the colour of burnished brass."[91]

In the similar vision of Daniel the word "polished" is substituted for "burnished" where it is written,

"His body was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and his words like the voice of a multitude."[92]

The value of the brass in the temple in the estimation of the people of ancient time is well demonstrated in the words of Jeremiah written after the Babylonish invasion:

"Also, the pillars of brass that were in the House of the Lord, and the bases, and the brasen sea that was in the House of the Lord, the Chaldeans brake, and *carried all the brass of them to Babylon.*"[93]

---

[88]II Chron. 2:14.
[89]II Chron. 4:16.
[90]II Chron. 4:18.
[91]Eze. 1:7.
[92]Dan. 10:6.
[93]Jer. 52:20.

The toil of transporting an enormous weight of metal through the mountainous and desert country east of Jordan and far off to Babylon by the primitive modes of seventh century B. C. travel, would never have been undertaken except for a prize of great worth.

If we go a step farther and remember that this same brass was at least once thereafter re-transported over the same territory,[94] and once probably as far as Greece,[95] the inference of great value is clear. It was no mean feat to carry two hollow brass pillars four fingers thick, more than thirty feet long and six feet or thereabout in diameter.[96] Add to these a great tub sixteen feet across, eight feet deep, a handbreath thick, and the twelve life-size cast bronze oxen on which it stood, and the task becomes monumental.[97]

There is interesting lore in the tale of Goliath the Philistine. At the time of his encounter with David who slew him, Goliath was wearing a coat of brass mail, five thousand brass shekels in weight, or approximately four hundred pounds, calculated on the basis of the special brass shekel of 528 grains.[98]

It is a curious and interesting fact that the Hebrew word which is translated "write" in the Old Testament occurs thirty-four times only. The Chaldean word "write" occurs once. In all thirty-five times the word is *kathab* (Chaldean *kethab*), a primitive root meaning "to engrave."[99]

If the word "engrave," the literal meaning of the Hebrew root, is substituted in some passages of the old scriptures, a great flood of light is thrown upon what is otherwise rather uninformative text. Thus when Jeremiah announced that "The sin of Judah is *written* with a pen of iron, with the point of a diamond"[100] the sense would have been much clearer if the meaning of the root

---

[94]Ezra 1:7-11.
[95]I Mac. 1:1-33; Josephus, *Antiquities* 12:5:1-5.
[96]I Kings 7:15; Jer. 52:21.
[97]I Kings 7:23-26.
[98]I Sam. 17:5.
[99]No. 3789, Strong's *Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary* of the Old Testament.
[100]Jer. 17:1.

of the word "written" had been literally stated. For an iron pen tipped with a diamond point is the engraving tool used for cutting words upon polished metal plates.[101] Properly, the passage should be read "The sin of Judah is engraved with an engraver's tool of iron with a diamond point," and is so being read in modern days.[102]

An excellent example is the passage in which the prophet Isaiah is directly commanded, "Now go, write (engrave) it before them in a table (*looach* in the Hebrew, meaning a glistening or polished plate).[103]

Another pointed illustration is the direction to Habakkuk "Write (engrave) the vision, and make it plain upon tables" (*looach,* a polished plate).[104]

In the time of Moses a special revelation was given to the Israelites concerning brass, commanding that they should make offerings by way of gifts of brass, along with gold and silver.[105] In the same chapter, and as part of the same subject matter it is recorded that as part of the offering "tablets" were brought; and "every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought the Lord's offering." Then by revelation two men were called to special service, "to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver and in brass."[106] They were Bezaleel and Aholiab, men "filled with the spirit of God" and with "wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work of the engraver, and of the cunning workman."[107]

This Bezaleel was the agent of Moses who converted the brass mirrors of the women into temple vessels.[108]

The quantity of brass used for that purpose was 56,707,200 grains.[108]

101Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible,* p. 981.
102Ferrar Fenton, *The Holy Bible in Modern English,* ad loc.
103Isa. 30:8.
104Hab. 2:2.
105Ex. 35:5.
106Ex. 35:30-35.
107Ib.
108Ex. 38:8.

The same man, with Aholiab beat gold into thin plates,[109] and did the fine engraving of names on the settings of the tribal stones in the breastplate of the high priest.[110] They also engraved the plate of gold set in the headdress of Aaron, with the words "Holiness to the Lord."

The commandments to Moses to reduce the words of the Lord to writing are numerous. And in some instances at least, there may be buried behind the cover of English words meanings which throw light upon the problem of the formation by Moses of a great record engraved on brass plates. Thus, where it is written that the Lord wrote upon the tables of stone, it is recognized and taken as a matter of course that the word "written" means "engraved."[111] But one of the sets of tablets engraved with the ten commandments was written by Moses, not the Lord.[112] Moses was accordingly a capable engraver.

The Hebrew words used with respect to the writing of the commandments and law not included in the decalogue, are identical with the words used to describe the engraving of the decalogue on the plates of stone.[113]

Moreover, there is great significance in the meaning of the word which is translated "book." An example will sufficiently show the need to look back into the meanings of words in use in that primitive era: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book."[114] The word "write" is *kathab* (to engrave) and the word *book* is *caphar* (to scratch, scrape, shave or engrave with letters, all with the idea of "cutting in," and by derivation, a book, so written).[115]

Having in mind the uses of brass and the manifest skill in engraving which existed in and before the time of Moses, it is clear that the repeated directions to the prophets above noticed to

---

[109]Ex. 39:3.
[110]Ex. 39:6.
[111]See *inter alia*, Jamieson, Faussett and Brown, *Commentary, ad loc.*
[112]Ex. 35:27-28.
[113]Strong, Exhaustive Concordance, *writing, write, wrote, written.*
[114]Ex. 17:4.
[115]Gesenius, *Lexicon,* Robinson's Edition, 1844, pp. 738-739.

engrave prophecies on metal plates may indicate in fact the keeping of such records on metal plates separately. It is accordingly necessary to inquire into the problem of record keeping in old Israel, with a view to ascertainment whether or not a consistent policy prevailed, before a conclusion of probability that such a record was engraved can be justified.

It has been often taught, and is generally believed that the Ark of the Covenant, carried about by the wandering Israelites, contained only the stone tablets on which were incised the ten commandments. This notion, however, appears to be entirely unscriptural. The Deuteronomist recounts that just prior to the time when Moses was notified of his impending death, "Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests, the sons of Levi, which bare the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, and unto all the elders of Israel."[116] This could not have been the ten commandments, for the traditional reading of the law which was commanded in the succeeding verse, was carried out in the time of Ezra, and occupied at least seven full days of the feast of tabernacles.[117]

The record so committed into the hands of the Levites was designed to be kept for future generations as a permanent record. No other conclusion can be drawn from the Mosaic record:

"And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites which bare the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, saying,

"Take this *book of the law,* and put it in the side of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against you."[118]

The record was intended as a means of correcting the people, for the in succeeding passage there is added this significant message: "For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you, and evil will befall you in the latter days."

---

[116]Deut. 31:9.
[117]Neh. 8:18.
[118]Deut. 31:24.

Accepting these passages as historical, it must be recognized that there existed at the time of Moses, in addition to the tablets of Horeb, a written record called the *Book of the Law of the Lord.* Its permanent character is further attested by the words which detail the purpose of the record "that their children, which have not known anything, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God *as long as ye shall live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.*"[119]

In that passage may also be found a prophecy of the disappearance of the great book at the time when the children of Israel should cease to live in the land they went over Jordan to possess. The Book of Mormon account declares that the record was carried away by one of the prophets mentioned in Jeremiah immediately before the Babylonish captivity dispossessed the remnant of Israel then in the promised land, precisely meeting the terms of the prophecy.[120]

Moses foresaw the creation of a kingship among his people. And he directed that when a king should be chosen "he shall write him a *copy* of this law in a book, *out of that which is before the priests, the Levites.*" The rulers were not to possess or use the original, but only the copies, and were to "read therein" all the days of the lives.[121]

It should be remembered that while the decalogue was inscribed on tablets of stone (or sapphire as the rabbins would have it), the presence of the text of the commandments twice in the Old Testament is an indication that they were transcribed into the formal codification.

The extent of the writings of Moses is not alone indicated by the five books which bear his name in the present Bible, but by the record that, as commanded, Moses wrote "all the words of the Lord" given to him.[122]

---

[119]Deut. 31:13.
[120]I Nephi Chs. 1-5.
[121]Deut. 17:14, 18, 19.
[122]Ex. 24:4.

After Moses, Joshua caused the law of Moses to be read to the people, as he had been directed to do;[123] so the record was indisputably transmitted to Joshua. Thereafter he caused the record to be engraved on the stones at the top of Mount Ebal,[124] and in due course of time he added his own record to the book. It is written "Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God."[125]

As bearing on the probability that the record was engraved on thin metal plates, some comment is necessary on the size of the Ark of the Covenant in which the book was carried about. The dimensions of the box are specifically stated.[126] Its measurements were 2½ cubits by 1½ cubits by 1½ cubits. A cubit was 19.0515 inches, or slightly over one foot seven inches. The notion that the book of the Law of the Lord prepared by Moses was written on stone tablets is accordingly discredited, for no box of the size mentioned could have contained even the Rosetta Stone, nor by any stretch of imagination could the Stele of Hammurabi have been contained in it. To imagine that it contained, engraved on stone, a law so lengthy that it occupied Ezra for seven days in the reading (and there is no record that he completed it), is patently absurd. Yet the record was in the Ark, for Moses put it there, and the commandment required it to be kept there for the making of kings' copies in generations far removed.

When it is recalled that the stone tables of the decalogue were already in the Ark, the space available for the great record is seen as substantially diminished.

A century later than the Philistine capture of the Ark (c. 1141 B. C.) the compiler of the First Book of Kings took care to state there was nothing in the Ark except the two stone tables put there by Moses. It may be readily imagined that the record, written on brass "more valuable than gold" would not be allowed to fall into the hands of the Philistines. The probability that it was removed

---

[123]Deut. 11:29; Josh. 9:35.
[124]Josh. 8:31.
[125]Josh. 24:26.
[126]Ex. 25:10.

before the Ark was captured is supported (1) by the intrinsically probable defense which would have been given so great a national treasure otherwise, and (2) the very evident loss of national interest in the Ark itself. It passed through many hands, alien and domestic alike, was treated as a serious burden, and finally, in the days of Josiah, found its way back into the temple so that it might not be "a burden upon your shoulders."[127]

What actually happened to the record, how it was found in the temple, how it was used in a last desperate attempt to reclaim the people, is a story but little variant from the account of the finding of the plates of the Book of Mormon. Of that more must be said, in the appropriate place.

A hint may be found in the action of Samuel, who established the kingdom. "Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and *laid it up before the Lord.*"[128]

David says that the Lord made him understand "in writing" the manner of the temple service and the structure and equipment of the temple to be built.[129] It can only be inferred that a writing existed in which David found his instructions.

In the book of the Proverbs adversion is made to the habit of writing upon tablets: "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them on the table of thine heart."[130]

David not only was instructed by writing, but he and Solomon, his son, prepared the directions for the temple service for posterity: "And prepare yourselves by the houses of your fathers, after your courses, according to the writing of David, king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon, his son."[131]

In many places in the Old Testament there are references to a mode of "blotting out" matters of record. A most striking example, which may have a bearing upon the keeping of records of brass is the case of the blotting out of the named curses upon a

---

127I Kgs. 8:9; Num. 7:9; 10:21; Josh. 3, 6.
128I Sam. 10:25.
129I Chron. 28:19.
130Prov. 3:3; 7:3.
131I Chron. 23 ff.; II Chron. 8:14; 35:9.

sinning wife. The priest was commanded to write the curses in a book, and afterward to blot them out with "bitter water." Most of the temple vessels and tabernacle vessels were of metal, as has been noted. But the "bitter water" had to be kept in an earthen jug,[132] and when administered to an accused person it produced terrible physical consequences, swelling and putrefaction. If the entries in "the" book (not "a" book as in the Authorized Version) were inscriptions in a permanent record on brass, they could only be blotted out by the use of a powerful corrosive liquid quite capable of producing the disastrous results described.[132]

It has been thought by some that the tablets upon which the ancients were directed to make their records were wax tablets, or tablets of wood covered with a wax surface. The fundamental error in such an idea was well decried by Brookbank, when he pointed out that the inscriptions were to be made to last for ever.[133] "Now go write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever."[134]

To Jeremiah came the same direction to make records. "The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying: Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book."[135] In this passage lies confirmation of the account that the record had been carried away. By context it will be seen that Jeremiah wrote the book here ordered *after* the Israelites were carried into Babylon. The very reason given for the direction to write is this, "For lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it." The instruction was therefore intended to provide a book for the use of those who returned from the captivity, and incidentally so that the Book of Jeremiah might be in the present Bible.

---

[132]Num. 5:11, 17.
[133]Op. cit. p. 15.
[134]Isa. 30:8.
[135]Jer. 30:2.

But when the commandment came to Jeremiah he already had such a book, one which he had himself described as "written with an iron pen" tipped with a diamond point.[136] That he had had it in his personal possession just before is made abundantly clear by the fact that Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe, made two copies from it and presented them in the royal court before the exile began, and at Jeremiah's direction.[137] In the prophecy of seventy years captivity, the Lord commanded Jeremiah to say that all that had been written in Jeremiah's book of prophecies would be inflicted upon Babylon.[138] The problem is thus: What became of Jeremiah's book of his prophecies that it became necessary for him to rewrite his words for the returning captives? It had left his hands, for God commanded him to write it over again. No explanation has been offered which satisfies the standard that the holy prophetic records "shall be for the time to come forever and ever"[139] except the explanation in the Book of Mormon that the prophecies of Jeremiah before the captivity were engraved on the brass plates carried away by Nephi.[140]

There may be in Jeremiah a prophecy that that ancient record should one day be buried in the earth. In a prophecy no more obscure than many of the Messianic passages of the Old Testament, he wrote: "O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that foresake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be *written in the earth.*"[141] The idea is supported by the prophecy of Isaiah that the voice of Jerusalem shall "speak out of the ground" and "whisper out of the dust."[142]

It is a well known fact that many of the original books of prophecy and record are only mentioned, but not included in the Old Testament. The Chronicle of Judah, the Book of Nathan, the Book of Gad the Seer, the Book of Shemaiah the Prophet, the Book

---

[136]Jer. 17:1.
[137]Jer. 36:1-28.
[138]Jer. 25:13.
[139]Isa. 30:8.
[140]I Nephi 5:13.
[141]Jer. 17:13.
[142]Isa. 29:4.

of Iddo the Seer, the Book of Jehu, and the Book of David are among many mentioned as authoritative, but not included in the present canon, or now known to exist.[143]

The reason is that when the captivity in Babylon was over Nehemiah, for lack of the original record, "made a library, and gathered together out of the countries, the books both of the prophets, and of David, and the epistles of the kings, and concerning the holy gifts."[144] The editorial work resulting in the present Bible down to his time is credited to Ezra, collaborator of Nehemiah.[145] The omission of essential books is in itself striking evidence that the great record had been carried off. No one can doubt that Ezra and Nehemiah would have included the missing books had they been found. More particularly is this so when it is recalled that Ezra was a disciple of that Baruch who kept the records of Jeremiah and thus had first hand knowledge of the disposition made of the original writings.[146]

The question of disposition, and its answer, involve a narrative too little noticed, yet of transcendent importance.[147]

Just before the Babylonian invasion Josiah, the last righteous king of Judah, assumed the throne. In his time repairs were undertaken to restore the temple. Engaged in that important work were Hilkiah the priest, father of the prophet Jeremiah,[148] and Shaphan, the scribe.

In the course of the work, Hilkiah "found a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses," a work which Dr. Clarke, in his commentary considered very probably "the autograph of Moses."[149] The Jews regarded the find so highly that they began to date a new era from the event.[150]

143I Kgs. 14:29; I Chron. 29:29; 2 Chron. 12:15; 20:34, etc.

144 2 Macc. 2:13.

145 2 Esdras 14:21-26; Sayce, *Early Hist. of the Hebrews*, p. 132.

146Megillah 16b.

147 2 Chron. 34; II Kings 22.

148Jer. 1:1.

149II Kings 22:8.

150Ginzberg, op. cit. Vol. VI, p. 377.

A nation wide period of fasting and repentance followed the reading of the book in the presence of the king. For a short while it appeared that the doom which threatened, the Chaldean invasion, might be averted by that wholesome change.

The book contained much more than the writings of Moses. It should be remembered that it was found under the threshold of the temple. While the book was the Book of the Law of the Lord Given by Moses, Josiah found therein the writings of David and Solomon, the commandments, the testimonies, the statutes, the covenants, the curses upon Israel, the words of prophetic denunciation "against this place" (Jerusalem). No list of its contents may be found beyond these indications. As a result of the sudden revelation to the king of the great sins of his people, he caused them to undergo such a cleansing and abolition of iniquity as had not been seen before in Israel.

But the days of Josiah ended, and with his death the book that was found passed from sight. The people forgot, and the iniquitous rulers who conducted the nation into captivity forsook the righteousness of Josiah; Jeremiah was arrested and jailed, and only the staying hand of Ahikam, son of Shaphan the friend and comrade of Jeremiah's father saved the prophet's life.[151]

Somewhere in this period, the book that was found passed out of the hands of Shaphan, Hilkiah and Jeremiah. In the Book of Mormon it appears that it passed into the hands of Laban, custodian of the treasury.[152]

The traditional account of the disposition made of the other treasures of the house of the Lord is in some degree corroborative. Jeremiah delivered a long exhortation to the captives to the end that the law should not depart from their hearts, and thereafter he took the Ark of the Covenant, the altar of incense, and the tabernacle, and sealed them up in a cave, there to remain until the gathering of Israel is complete.[153]

---

[151]Jer. 26:24.
[152]I Nephi 4:20.
[153]2 Macc. 2:4-8.

In this period there came many messengers of God, prophesying the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy."[154]

Then it was that the temple, which had housed and hidden the record handed down from the time of Moses, was utterly destroyed by the invading Chaldean and Edomite hosts. All the treasures of the temple which remained in the temple were seized and carried away into Babylon, and the whole people, save only a poor remnant deemed worthless by their conquerors, were transported as prisoners.

The conclusion of the whole matter is this: It is clear that according to all tradition in Israel, tablets of gold and of brass were kept, inscribed with holy writings from antiquity far antedating Moses, and thereafter. It is clear that Israel stood on no basis different from her neighbors in the use of metals or in culture. Those neighbors utilized brass plates for many centuries and set their permanent records upon them many times. The history of Israel outside the scriptures attests the making and use of such records in Israel. In the scriptures the knowledge of the use of brass and other brilliant metal plates, and the existence of a high skill in engraving words upon them is demonstrated. Among the prophets there is direct evidence that by commandment of God the words of prophecy were cut in imperishable letters upon such plates for the time to come, forever.

Moreover, it is very clear that Israel was a record keeping nation, and kept, in elaborate detail great records, many of which cannot now be found in the scanty collection of Old Testament writings gathered after the captivity.

---

[154]II Chron. 36:15-16.

It is plain that God intended those ancient records to exist. He did not intend that they should be destroyed. "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever."[155]

It is also plain that having preserved and added to the record of his prophets through the ages down to the time when the ultimate destruction of the temple was to be consummated, He would not then tolerate its destruction. Having compassion on his people and his dwelling place, He brought it forth in the hands of his servant Hilkiah, and when the deep rooted wickedness of the people left no remedy, He destroyed the house they had profaned, and sent his records in safe hands into another land.

The Book of Mormon record is sustained.

---

[155]Ecc. 3:14.