

CHAPTER II

THE EGYPTIAN DECLINE IN CANAAN AND THE SEA-PEOPLES

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A. THE DAYS OF MER-NE-PTAH

THE PERIOD OF THE Israelite Settlement extended over some two hundred years, from the later part of the 13th century to the last quarter of the 11th century, with the establishment of the Monarchy. This period is marked by the decline of the great powers in the Ancient East, which facilitated the rise of small nations in Syria-Palestine. These conditions aided the political consolidation and settlement of the Israelite tribes in Canaan, of the Arameans in Syria, and of the nations of Transjordan. Egypt's waning influence on the Phoenician coast led to the political and economic independence of the Phoenician harbor towns.

The peace treaty between Egypt and Hatti, concluded in the twenty-first year of Ramses II, shaped international politics in Hither Asia until his death and Egypt's dominion over Canaan never came into dispute. Papyrus Anastasi I presents a vivid picture of Canaan in this period, of the country's landscape, inhabitants, major cities, and network of roads.¹ This document attests to Egypt's general rule over Canaan, from Gaza in the south to Şumur in the north and Damascus (the Land of Upi) in the east, all of which were under the direct jurisdiction of the king. At the same time, it indicates a lack of security along the country's roads and the spread of the Shosu-Bedouin and other unruly elements, no doubt including already the Israelite tribes, in the country's hill-regions. Interesting in this connection is the allusion to a heroic deed by the head of a tribe named *ʾusr*, apparently identical with the name of the Israelite tribe of Asher; this is reminiscent of the heroic characters described in the Book of Judges.

With the death of Ramses II, the Canaanite city-states attempted to shake off the yoke of Egyptian rule. Mer-ne-Ptah (1237-1228 — higher chronology; 1223-1214 — lower chronology) was thus forced early in his reign to undertake campaigns to Canaan, *inter alia* also against the Israelites. From journals of Egyptian officials stationed on Egypt's eastern frontier

(Papyrus Anastasi III, dating from Mer-ne-Ptah's third year)² we learn a great deal of this pharaoh's rule in Canaan and the control over such centers as Gaza and Tyre on the coast, and even over a few places in the hill-country. We know that Egypt ruled the interior from the mention of Gezer³ and Yanoam (on the Jordan, south of the Sea of Galilee) on Mer-ne-Ptah's Victory Stele (the so-called "Israel Stele"). Also apparently from the time of Mer-ne-Ptah, from his "fourth year", is an Egyptian hieratic inscription on a bowl found at Lachish.⁴ This gives a list of produce delivered as tribute to an Egyptian official by the local inhabitants. Shortly after this, the city was apparently conquered and destroyed by the Israelites.⁵

The major threat to Egypt and its rule in Canaan, however, came from an entirely different quarter. The migratory movements of the Sea-Peoples involved extensive dislocations of populations in the Eastern Mediterranean, and may have been connected with the downfall of Mycenae, the Dorian invasion, and the penetration of new ethnic elements into Italy and the neighboring islands. In any event, the Sea-Peoples brought in their wake the overthrow of the Hittite empire and caused the near collapse of Egypt.

The origin of the Sea-Peoples is one of the most complex problems of history, philology and archaeology (cf. below the chapter on the Philistines). Ethno-linguistically the Sea-Peoples are Indo-European, and have been defined variously as Illyrians, Pelasgians or Luwians, etc. As for their geographic origin, from whence they invaded Egypt and the Palestinian coast, there are two seemingly conflicting views: the Anatolian hypothesis, placing them on the western and southern seaboard of Asia Minor; and the Aegean hypothesis, tracing them to the islands and Greece.⁶ Such clear-cut geographical distinctions, however, seem too rigid. Indeed, for sea-faring people such as these, the coasts of Anatolia and Greece, together with the Aegean Islands, were a single organic sphere interconnected by sea.

The Sea-Peoples, who made themselves felt already in the days of Ramses II, truly reached Egypt in the 5th year of Mer-ne-Ptah. Five confederated "Peoples of the Sea" joined Libyan tribes in attacking Egypt's western flank. This first alliance, according to the Egyptian sources, comprised: the Aqaywasha or Aqawasha (most likely to be identified with the Achaeans and the Ahhiyāwa of the Hittite sources); the Teresh (the Tyrsēnoi or Tyrrhenians of classical sources, possibly the ancestors of the Etruscans); the Lukka (the Lycians of classical times); the Sherden (who lent their name to the island of Sardinia) and finally the Shekelesh (the Sikeloi of classical records, for whom the island of Sicily was named).⁷

Of these (a) the Lukka and Sherden were known already generations earlier; (b) the Teresh and especially the Shekelesh participated in the onslaught on Egypt also during the reign of Ramses III; and (c) the Aqawasha were mentioned only in Mer-ne-Ptah's inscriptions. Mer-ne-Ptah succeeded in stemming the Sea-Peoples, but could not break their power. New waves of Sea-Peoples subjected Egypt to even stronger assaults in the days of Ramses III (cf. below, D).

In the face of the common danger represented by the Sea-Peoples, the longstanding rivalry between the Egyptian and Hittite empires gave way to more cooperative relations. Mer-ne-Ptah's Victory Stele merely states that "Hatti is pacified," and this probably reflects the new situation. In this context we may see the sending of grain ships by this pharaoh, early in his reign, to the king of Hatti (apparently Tudhaliya "IV"), during a severe famine there⁸ — probably the result of incursions by the Sea-Peoples. The Hittites also requested aid from Ugarit (cf. below, C). Indeed, finds at Boghazköy (Hattusa, the Hittite capital)⁹ and Ugarit¹⁰ (at this time still a Hittite vassal) indicate positive relations between Hatti and Egypt.

B. THE CLOSE OF THE NINETEENTH DYNASTY AND THE BIBLICAL EPISODE OF CUSHAN-RISHATHAIM

The power of Egypt declined after the death of Mer-ne-Ptah, and till the ascendancy of the Twentieth Dynasty, a period of about 20 years passed during which no Egyptian king was able to keep the throne for more than a few years.¹¹ Archeological evidence from Palestine indicates the continuation of contacts between Egypt and Canaan even in this period. Thus, sherds of a jar were found at Tell el-Far'ah (Sharuhén, in the western Negev), inscribed with the name of Seti II; and at Tell Deir 'Allā (probably Succoth, near the confluence of the Jabbok and Jordan rivers) a faience jar was found bearing the cartouche of Ta-User, Seti's wife, who later reigned as Queen of Egypt in her own right.¹² On the other hand, intercourse with Canaan at about this time is reflected, for instance, in Papyrus Anastasi IV which refers *inter alia* to ships "loaded with all manner of good things" returning to Egypt from Haru (i.e. Syria-Palestine), as well as in the fact that Mer-ne-Ptah-Siptah, one of Seti II's successors, dispatched an emissary to Haru.¹³

Papyrus Anastasi V and VI¹⁴ — containing an account of the pursuit of runaway slaves and that of the entrance of a nomadic tribe into Egypt, respectively — apparently also date from the time of Seti II. The latter

papyrus tells that "we have finished letting the Shosu-Bedouin of Edom pass the Fortress of Mer-ne-Ptah which is in Tjeku, to the pools of Per-Atum of Mer-ne-Ptah, which are in Tjeku, to keep them alive and to keep their cattle alive." These reports by Egyptian frontier officials make it evident that, even during this period of decline, Egypt retained tight control over its eastern border — a fact which sheds significant light on the biblical tradition of the Exodus.

At the very end of the Nineteenth Dynasty, however, Egypt reached a state of anarchy and rule apparently fell into the hands of a foreign usurper known only from a later source. Papyrus Harris I, written at the end of Ramses III's reign, or perhaps even after his death, describes the chaotic conditions prevailing in Egypt: "Other times came afterwards in the empty years, and Irsu, a Horite [Hꜥrw] was with them as prince. He set the entire land as a tributary before him. One joined his companion that their property [of the Egyptians] might be plundered. They treated the gods like people, and no offerings were presented in the temples."¹⁵

Despite the propagandistic tendency to emphasize the state of chaos in Egypt on the eve of Ramses III's ascent, this document nevertheless preserves the historical nucleus of a foreign subjugation of Egypt. The identity of this foreign ruler is controversial; his designation as a "Horite" refers to "Haru-Hurru," i.e. Syria-Canaan. It has been suggested recently that he was one Bay, the top official in the days of Mer-ne-Ptah-Siptah (the last king of the Nineteenth Dynasty), or even the king himself. Bay was apparently of Canaanite extraction as possibly, was the above king's mother.¹⁶ In such case there would have been no foreign interregnum between the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties. But this entirely overlooks the mention of Irsu (or Arsu), as well as of the offences he is accused of having committed against the Egyptian cult, which hardly seem compatible with the behavior of a local official, even if of foreign origin.

On the other hand, it is possible that the foreign domination of Egypt is connected in some manner with events in Canaan, reflected in biblical tradition: Cushan-Rishathaim, King of Aram Naharaim, the first "oppressor" of Israel in the period of the Judges (Jud. 3:3-10).¹⁷ This enigmatic period should be regarded against the broader background of events in the Ancient East, rather than merely within the limited framework of Israelite history so closely adhered to in the Bible.¹⁸ It is difficult to assume that a ruler from Aram Naharaim (i.e. from the Euphrates region) should undertake such a large-scale campaign to southern Canaan for the mere subjugation of a single tribe (Judah, or rather Kenaz or Caleb) or even several tribes. Would it not seem more likely that it was directed against

Egypt, the war against Israel being ephemeral? Further, it would appear that Israel's deliverance by Othniel the son of Kenaz is to be linked with the general defeat of this foreign invader of Egypt, at the hands of Setnakht, the founder of the Twentieth Dynasty.

The linking of the biblical episode with events in Egypt is chronologically compatible. The usurpation in Egypt took place in ca. 1200 B.C.E., which could easily coincide with the first "oppression" of Israel in the time of the Judges. Moreover, Israel's deliverer Othniel also appears in the biblical accounts of the conquest of southern Canaan (Josh. 15:17; Jud. 1:12 ff.), which would also tend to indicate his early date. Thus, the Cushan-Rishathaim episode may well have taken place at the end of the 13th century B.C.E.

Whether Cushan-Rishathaim is to be identified with the foreign ruler in Egypt or not — we cannot ignore the contemporaneity of Egypt's decline at the end of the Nineteenth Dynasty and the possibility of a ruler from Aram Naharaim overrunning Canaan (and even penetrating into Egypt). The latter events are, in any case, hardly conceivable under Ramses II and Mer-ne-Ptah, or Ramses III, all of whom maintained Egypt's dominion of Canaan.¹⁹

C. THE END OF THE HITTITE EMPIRE AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE LEVANTINE COASTAL CITIES BY THE SEA-PEOPLES

The fate which befell the Hittite empire and its vassals in Syria in the second half of the 13th century is still known only in outline, in spite of much new epigraphical and archeological material. The last Hittite king of stature was Tudhaliya "IV" — actually III — "the Great King, King of the Universe" (ca. 1250–1220 B.C.E.), son of Hattusilis III who made the peace treaty with Ramses II. The so-called "Annals of Tudhaliya IV" are now considered to date actually from the time of Tudhaliya I or II (who reigned in the 15th century), and cannot be used unreservedly to reconstruct the period of the later king.²⁰ Even so, Tudhaliya "IV" was still able to marshal forces strong enough to overpower the enemies threatening his empire from several quarters. He succeeded in checking the nations to the west, on the coasts of Asia Minor, who were in turn stirred by pressure of the Sea-Peoples. New documents from the Hattusa archives reveal that he realized a long standing aim of the Hittites, to conquer Alashiya (Cyprus) and to exact tribute from it.²¹

Tudhaliya "IV" still maintained his domination in northern Syria, as is proven by a relief discovered at Alalakh, by documents found in the

diplomatic archives of Ugarit (which include a treaty between Hatti and 'Ammishtamru II), and by a vassal treaty dictated to Shaushgamuwa, King of Amurru.²² This latter treaty shows that as late as the middle of the 13th century Amurru was still a key buffer country in Syria, between Hatti and Mesopotamia; it also sheds light on international relations and diplomatic usage of that time. The treaty denotes the major powers of the day besides Hatti, as Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, and Ahhiyā (the latter name erased at a later date). Of particular interest is a stipulation in the treaty, alongside the clauses concerning military assistance, compelling the Hittite king's vassal to impose a total economic boycott on Assyria. It appears that the Hittites considered the aggressive Assyrian ruler, Tukulti-Ninurta I (1243–1207 B.C.E.), their most dangerous enemy. His hostile attitude toward the Hittites is evident in his campaign against Amurru, as well as in the mention, in his inscriptions, of "28,800" Hittites deported to Assyria, most likely inhabitants of the Hittite protectorates in northern Syria.²³ However, domestic conflicts within Assyria, during which Tukulti-Ninurta was murdered, brought this danger to an end.

The Hittite empire was already on the decline at the end of Tudhaliya "IV"'s reign, but his death brought it toward the very brink of destruction. During the troubled and brief reign of Tudhaliya's son Arnuwanda III (last quarter of the 13th century), the Hittite grip on Syria certainly weakened. The greatest danger still threatened from western Anatolia where various states had joined up with the Sea-Peoples. Shuppiluliuma (Shuppiluliamu) II, who succeeded his brother Arnuwanda upon his death, is the last Hittite king mentioned in the sources. The many documents discovered in recent years in the Hittite capital reveal a last brief flicker of glory, prior to the end.²⁴ Even at this crucial hour the Hittite king concluded treaties with several countries and succeeded in inflicting defeats, such as his triple victory over the fleet of Alashiya (Cyprus), which country may or may not have come under the control of the Sea-Peoples in the meantime.

Around 1200 B.C.E., Hatti met its destruction apparently at the hand, of people which (as we have seen above) had lurked on the northern, western and southern coasts of Anatolia.²⁵ Traces of this catastrophe have been discovered at many Hittite sites in Anatolia, first and foremost at Hattusa the capital, and at such coastal towns as Tarsus and Mersin. Following this, south Anatolian population groups, mainly Luwian elements, spread over northern and central Syria, reaching Palestine as well, and determining the future ethnic make-up of the region. Many neo-Hittite kingdoms, such as at Carchemish in the north and Hamath in the

south, arose at this time. From now on, "Hatti" became the designation in Assyrian terminology, as well as in the Bible, for these latter kingdoms and for Syria in general.

In Syria and Palestine, too, there is much evidence of violent destruction at the coastal towns, which is evidently to be attributed to the Sea-Peoples. This is found wherever excavations have been made in this area; and even at such inland sites as Megiddo (stratum VIIB). The archeological findings do not, however, permit a precise dating of these events.²⁶ Some of these ravaged cities, such as Alalakh²⁷ and Ugarit (see below) in the north, and Tell Abu Huwām near Haifa,²⁸ were never rebuilt, or at least never regained their former status. Other towns, such as the Canaanite settlements along the southern coast — Jaffa, Tel Mor, Ashdod and Ashkelon — were resettled by the Sea-Peoples shortly after. In the south, however, the historical picture is somewhat more complicated, since intermediate settlements have been found at certain sites, between the Late Bronze Period strata and those of the Philistines. Such localities as Jaffa, Ashdod, Tel Mor and even Gezer show evidence of having been destroyed twice — first apparently in the time of Mer-ne-Ptah, in hit-and-run raids from the sea;²⁹ and the second, a more massive action in the time of Ramses III, involving settlement on the conquered sites.

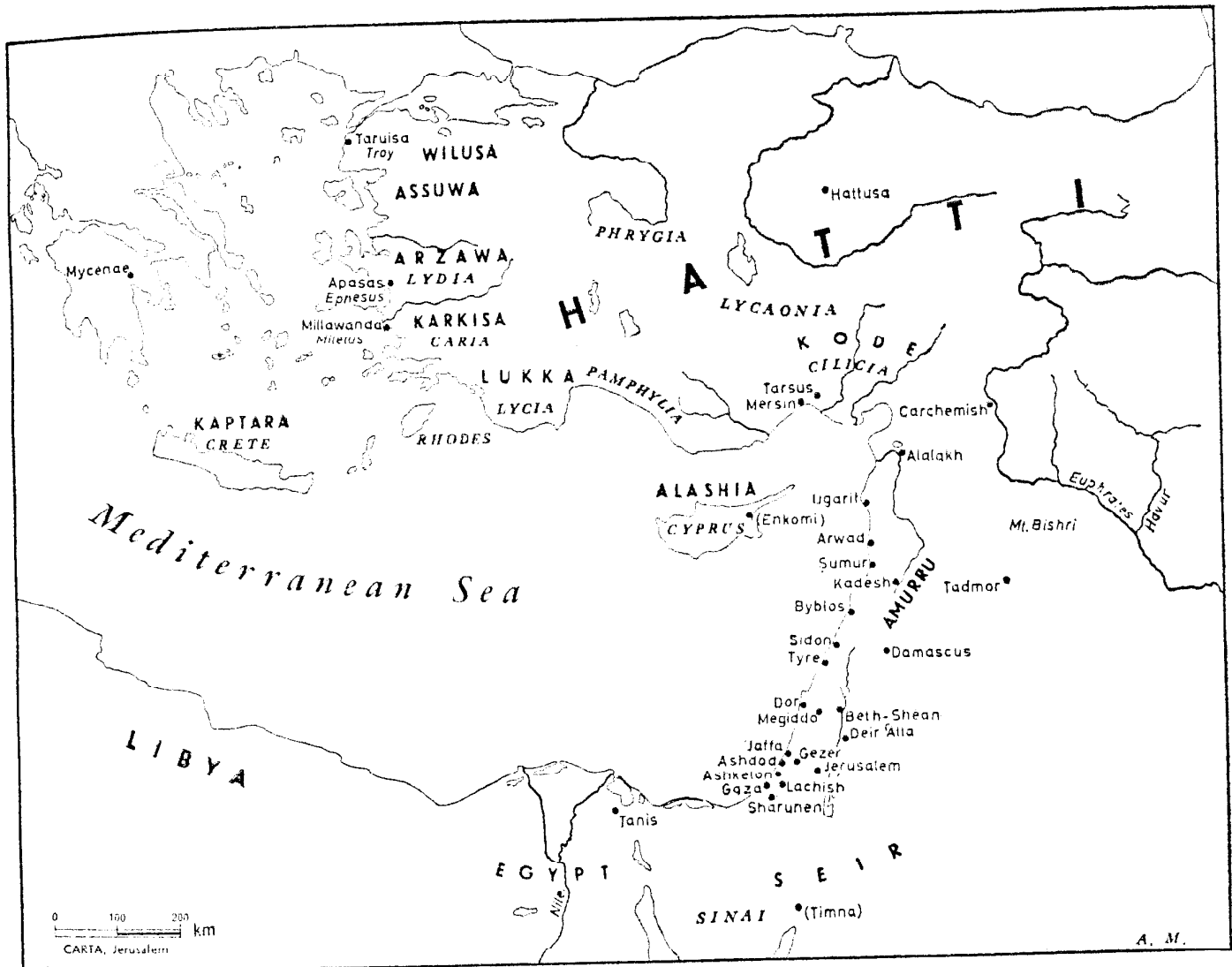
The destruction of Phoenician harbor-towns, for which as yet there is no archeological evidence, is alluded to in a tradition quoted much later by Justin (XVIII, iii, 5): the king of Ashkelon defeated the inhabitants of Sidon, who "founded" the city of Tyre "one year before the conquest of Troy." This may refer to the destruction of Sidon by the Sea-Peoples, who presumably had already conquered Ashkelon, making it one of their main centers.³⁰ We learn, moreover, that at that time Tyre lay in ruins and was then rebuilt by the Sidonian refugees (as was the city of Arvad, according to Strabo, XVI, ii, 13), a tradition reflected in Josephus and in the legends of Phoenician coins.³¹ Tyre, too, appears to have been destroyed by the Sea-Peoples, since we know from Papyrus Anastasi III that it was still an important center as late as the days of Mer-ne-Ptah. Tyre's stature at about this time is also indicated in a letter sent by its ruler to the king of Ugarit, whom he addresses as "my brother", thus stressing their equal status.³² (The letter relates that a ship sent from Ugarit to Egypt had already passed Tyre and was at present lying at Acco). But the cities of Phoenicia were not settled by the Sea-Peoples, in contrast to the harbor-towns of Palestine; upon the decline of Egyptian rule they became independent kingdoms.

The archives of Ugarit are a primary source of information concerning

the approaching menace of the Sea-Peoples; in recent years they have yielded the only extant sources stemming directly from these dramatic events, the like of which must have been repeated over and over in that period at numerous Mediterranean harbor cities. Thus, several relevant letters written in Ugaritic were found within a kiln for baking clay tablets which was destroyed during the fall of the city; another group of tablets written in Akkadian and found elsewhere in the destruction layer, comprises a correspondence in part or entirely between 'Ammurapi, the last known king of Ugarit, and the Hittite and Cypriot courts.³³ These documents deal, principally, with a famine plaguing the Hittite empire, and with an enemy common to Ugarit and Hatti — most certainly the Sea-Peoples (and their allies).

In one of the letters (*PRU V*, no. 60), the Hittite king urges 'Ammurapi to send him food supplies to relieve the famine; the advance of an enemy is also mentioned. Similar events are related in another letter (*Ugaritica V*, no. 33), ordering the king of Ugarit to send a large quantity (some 450 tons!) of grain by sea to the Cilician coast, the matter being one of "death and life". Another (*Ugaritica V*, no. 171), with its superscription missing, but from a most crucial point in the crisis, orders the total mobilization of the fleet of Ugarit so as to ensure the transport of a supply of grain to the Cilician coast (cf. also *Ugaritica V*, no. 34). A further letter (*PRU V*, no. 63), written to the king of Ugarit by one of his generals in the field, possibly relates of the retreat of combined Hittite and Ugarit forces in southern Anatolia or northern Syria, in the face of an unidentified enemy.

Even more dramatic is the correspondence between Ugarit and Alashiya (Cyprus). In one letter (*Ugaritica V*, no. 22), the "Grand Supervisor" of Alashiya reports that enemy ships made a surprise attack on a fleet from Ugarit off the coast of Cyprus or Anatolia apparently forcing them to surrender. On another occasion (*Ugaritica V*, no. 23), the king of Cyprus warns 'Ammurapi of the approach of sea-raiders, and urges him to place his country on the alert. The king of Ugarit on his part — perhaps in reply to this last letter — reports the first landings of a "commando" of the Sea-Peoples (*Ugaritica V* no. 24): "My father, now the ships of the enemy are coming [here]. He has burned my cities with fire and has done evil things in the midst of the country . . . All my troops [. . .] are stationed in the land of Hatti and all my ships are stationed in the land of Lukka. Until now they have not arrived [back] and thus the country is abandoned to itself . . . Now, seven ships of the enemy that have come here have done to us evil things. Now, if further enemy ships appear please do report to me so that I shall know."



The Eastern Mediterranean in New Kingdom times.

The importance of the last-mentioned letter is that it reveals that Ugarit's helplessness was due to the city's army being away in Hatti and its fleet having sailed off to the land of Lukka (Lycia), on the southern coast of Anatolia. This fits in well with the general politico-military alignment which first emerged in the days of Mer-ne-Ptah, when Egypt and Hatti apparently presented a unified defensive front in the face of the Sea-Peoples, together with their Syrian vassal states such as Ugarit and even Alashiya (which was subjected already by Tudhaliya "IV"; see C, above). These allies embarked on widespread actions, as did their enemies in the latter case, when the Lukkians and several Sea-Peoples joined the Libyans in attacking Egypt from the west, as related in the inscription from Mer-ne-Ptah's 5th year. Ugarit's role in this period seems to have been to bolster the Hittite army, especially at sea, and to meet specific threats such as that which evidently emerged in Lukka.³⁴ The scope of the fleet of Ugarit may be inferred from one of the letters from the tablet-kiln (*PRU* V, no. 62), in which the king is advised to prepare 150 ships for sea (in addition to his regular fleet?).

The precise date of Ugarit's fall eludes us: one view holds that it occurred already in the days of Mer-ne-Ptah, an assumption based in part on a supposed synchronism between the famines in Hatti mentioned on the one hand in Mer-ne-Ptah's inscription and, on the other hand, in the letters from Ugarit (see pp. 28-30, above).³⁵ Since, however, famine and other calamities were certainly not rare during the final years of the Hittite empire, such a synchronism is not decisive. Actually Ugarit may have been destroyed within a generation later, for, indeed, the context of the documents could very well fit the period shortly before the final destruction (ca. 1200 B.C.E.) of the Hittite empire (see p. 28, above).³⁶

D. RAMSES III — CONFLICT WITH THE SEA-PEOPLES AND RULE IN CANAAN

The only documentary evidence of the actual destruction of the Hittite empire and the Syrian states is the Medinet Habu inscription of Ramses III's 8th year (ca. 1198, 1187 or 1162 B.C.E., according to the higher, middle [to be preferred] or lower chronology, respectively). This presents an eloquent description of the Sea-Peoples' invasion:³⁷ "The foreign countries made a conspiracy in their islands. All at once the lands were removed and scattered in the fray. No land could stand before their arms, from Hatti, Kode, Carchemish, Arzawa and Alashiya on, being cut off at [one time]. A camp [was set up] in one place in Amurru. They desolated its

people, and its land was like that which has never come into being. They were coming forward toward Egypt, while the flame was prepared before them . . .”

The invaders had penetrated not only Asia Minor but also northern Syria, whence one group conquered Carchemish and another continued southward to the land of Amurru, ravaging it and setting up a base there. This brought to an end the mighty and longlived state of Amurru, whose name is mentioned henceforth only as a geographical term. In their sweep, the Sea-Peoples seized Alashiya (Cyprus), or at least part of the island, as transpires perhaps also from Hittite documents of Shuppiluliuma II (see above, p. 28), as well as from the excavations at several sites on that island, first and foremost Enkomi (revealing two destruction levels at this latter site like at the cities on the southern coast of Palestine).³⁸

Within one generation of the death of Mer-ne-Ptah, the political and ethnic map of the Eastern Mediterranean changed radically. Even the names of the Sea-Peoples specified in Ramses III's inscriptions differ (with the exception of the Shekelesh) from those mentioned by Mer-ne-Ptah; the confederation of Sea-Peoples now comprised: the Philistines, Tjekker (most likely to be identified with the Teucrians of the Greek sources), Shekelesh, Denye or Denen (Danuna, Dnnyim or Danaoi of the Akkadian, Phoenician and Greek sources, respectively), and Weshesh (mentioned only here).³⁹

This is the first mention of the Philistines in an extra-biblical source; their special status is indicated by their usual appearance at the head of the list of Sea-Peoples in Ramses' inscriptions. The Tjekker, several times mentioned together with the Philistines, also settled on the coast of Canaan, north of the Philistines, as is known from the story of Wen-Amon who, a century later, mentions their kingdom at Dor and their maritime activities along the Phoenician coast and Cyprus. It is almost certain that it was this same group that settled also in Cyprus, as is indicated by a Greek tradition according to which Teucros, the ancestor of the Teucroi — to be identified with the Tjekker — founded the city of Salamis, the port of ancient Enkomi (and cf. note 38, above).

The date of Ramses III's first clash with the Sea-Peoples is by no means certain. According to one inscription, Ramses undertook a campaign to Amurru as early as his fifth year, conquering the country, slaying its ruler and carrying away many of its inhabitants. The inscription, however, does not mean that Amurru was captured from the Sea-Peoples. On the contrary, the accompanying relief portrays the captive ruler of Amurru as a typical Syrian and the inscription enlarges upon the victory over

Syrians "who were [formerly] ruining Egypt . . . while they persecuted the gods . . .", possibly referring to the earlier subjugation of Egypt at the end of the Nineteenth Dynasty (cf. above, B). Only at the end of the inscription is there any mention of a victory over Sea-Peoples (Philistines and Tjeker, and possibly a third group).⁴⁰ The fifth year would seem, thus, to be the earliest date for the war against the Sea-Peoples; however, this could be a mere anticipatory spill-over from the great battles with the Sea-Peoples in Ramses' eighth year. Whatever the case, in his eighth year Ramses set out to check the southward movement of the Sea-Peoples toward Egypt, engaging them both by land (in Djahi — the Canaanite coast) and by sea (in the Nile Delta, in a second phase of the battle?), as is evident from his reliefs and inscriptions (and see below, the chapter on the Philistines).

Ramses III successfully prevented the penetration of the Sea-Peoples into Egypt, and their attacks subsided. Indeed, in the conflict in Ramses' eleventh year they no longer appear as *allies* of the Libyans; he even settled them in military colonies in his kingdom, and employed them as mercenaries in his army.⁴¹ Still, Pharaoh could not prevent settlement of the Sea-Peoples in Canaan — particularly the Philistines and the Tjeker — and may even have encouraged it, as a measure to avert the threat to Egypt. In fact, the Bible places the Philistines in precisely those areas which had previously been under effective Egyptian rule, namely the southern coastal plain of Palestine, the Plain of Jezreel and the Beth-shean region. At the Egyptian administrative centers in Canaan, such as Gaza, Tell el-Far'ah (south) and Beth-shean (see below), the Philistines or other Sea-Peoples were doubtlessly employed as mercenary forces, useful in quelling Canaanite and other unrest in the countryside.

Apart from the above campaigns another, undated campaign was undertaken by Ramses III, against nomadic tribes in southern Palestine: "I destroyed the people of Seir among the Bedouin tribes. I razed their tents; their people, their property, and their cattle as well, without number, pinioned and carried away in captivity, as the tribute of Egypt."⁴² It is not known whether this was concurrent with the greater events which took place to the north or was a separate operation, directed toward the Negev and the Arabah. Most interesting in this context is the recent discovery of an Egyptian temple of the Nineteenth-Twentieth Dynasties in a copper mining center at Timna (Wadi Meinei'yeh), some 25 km north of the Gulf of Elath. Finds in the earlier stratum here bore cartouches of Seti I, Ramses II, Mer-ne-Ptah and Seti II, and in the later stratum, of Ramses III-V. Mining activities in this area under Ramses III may even

be referred to in Papyrus Harris I, where the king states that he sent an expedition by sea and then by land to a locality named 'Atika.⁴³

Nothing of Ramses III's campaigns to Asia is entirely clear, for no definitive historical sources — such as annals — are extant. Indeed, Papyrus Harris I, the Medinet Habu reliefs and inscriptions, and the archeological evidence from Palestine, altogether yield a rather sketchy picture. The inscriptions and reliefs are, in no small part, pompous and unreliable, particularly the depictions of conquests of North Syrian cities (perhaps with the exception "the city" of Amurru), and no less those of cities in Anatolia (in the land of Arzawa).⁴⁴ Ramses III's topographical lists in the sanctuaries at Medinet Habu and Karnak, purporting the conquest of more than 120 cities in North Syria and even trans-Euphratean and trans-Tigridian regions, are equally of no value.⁴⁵ These lists, like the reliefs of the sieges of the northern cities, are little more than a plagiarism of those of Ramses II.

The data on Canaan proper in Ramses III's inscriptions and reliefs seem more solidly based, as we have seen. The depictions of typical Canaanite (as well as Shosu-Bedouin) captives — alongside Libyans and Sea-Peoples — complement Ramses's inscriptions mentioning hundreds of captives from the land of Haru (i.e. Canaan-Syria) serving in the sanctuaries of Amon at Thebes and Memphis.⁴⁶

Ramses III, in his several expeditions to Canaan, revitalized Egyptian rule there, establishing centers — such as "Migdol of Ramses III"⁴⁷ — along the major highways, especially along the *Via maris*, to ensure his control. This last brief period of Egyptian grandeur in Canaan is reflected in the archeological evidence at several of these sites, including numerous scarabs bearing the name of Ramses III⁴⁸ and other objects inscribed with his name, from such places as Gezer and Megiddo.⁴⁹ The finds at Beth-shean (stratum VI) are particularly indicative of this renewed Egyptian activity; Ramses III apparently fortified the city and he refurbished its temple placing his statue there. Egyptian inscriptions found there in the same stratum mention two Egyptian commanders of the local garrison.⁵⁰ This garrison undoubtedly included mercenaries from among the Sea-Peoples, for several anthropoid coffins found there are characteristic of them.

The archeological finds in Canaan, including epigraphical material, demonstrate Egypt's positive attitude towards the local gods, evidently to lend an air of legitimacy to its rule there. Egyptian stelae dedicated to various Canaanite deities have been found in Beth-shean and other places, and numerous temples are known to have been maintained by the Egyptians in Canaan.⁵¹ Thus, on the basis of an inscribed ivory from Megiddo,

we know of a probable temple dedicated to Ptah at Ashkelon,⁵² and Papyrus Harris I mentions "the House of Ramses III in Pa-Canaan" — apparently at Gaza — and that "the foreigners of Retenu come to it bearing their tribute before it."⁵³ This latter papyrus also notes that the Temple of Amon at Thebes possessed nine estates in Haru, indicating that Egyptian priestly interests in Canaan were not limited solely to the religious sphere, but were also economic. Such estates are reminiscent of the later, Israelite priestly and levitic cities.⁵⁴ Furthermore the inventories of the same papyrus attest to the fact that the temple estates in Egypt proper drew considerable numbers of serfs, cattle and produce from Canaan.

E. THE DISINTEGRATION OF EGYPTIAN RULE IN CANAAN AND THE INTRUSION OF ASSYRIA INTO PHOENICIA

The Egyptian hold over Canaan under Ramses III was rapidly lost after his death, not to be recovered during the remainder of the Twentieth Dynasty (till ca. 1075 B.C.E.) or during the Twenty-First Dynasty (till ca. 945 B.C.E.).⁵⁵ In the time of the feeble Twenty-First Dynasty, Egypt became divided, with a hierocratic state in the south, based on Thebes, and the kingdom of Tanis in the north. Only towards the end of this latter dynasty, in the mid-10th century, was an attempt made to regain a foothold in Egypt's former territories in Asia, as is recorded in the Bible (I Kings 9:16; and cf. 11:14-22).⁵⁶ The latest definite evidence for Egyptian presence in Canaan appears to be a statue-base of Ramses VI (mid. 12th century), discovered at Megiddo.⁵⁷ This king was also the last known to have exploited the copper mines in the Sinai Peninsula.⁵⁸ Though excavations in southern Palestine have yielded scarabs of Ramses IV (at Tell el-Far'ah, Tell eš-Šafi, Tell Zakariyya and Gezer), Ramses VIII and IX (at Gezer), and an inscribed ring apparently with the name of the last pharaoh, such finds are insufficient to indicate actual Egyptian rule over Canaan.⁵⁹

Egypt's plight, and especially the decline of its prestige in Phoenicia, is clearly evident in the story of Wen-Amon, who travelled to Phoenicia in the 5th year of Heri-Hor, the priestly ruler of Upper Egypt and a contemporary of the Lower Egyptian Smendes, founder of the Twenty-First Dynasty.⁶⁰ Here we see that even at Byblos — where Egyptian influence had prevailed for most of the previous 2000 years — Egypt was given little consideration. A causative factor of a new nature can also be seen in this ebbing of Egyptian power — the rise of Assyria and its intrusion into Phoenicia around the year 1100 B.C.E.

As already discussed (see C, above), in the second half of the 13th century Assyria under Tukulti-Ninurta I had penetrated into the west and even invaded Amurru. The murder of this king, and the re-establishment of a strong local dynasty at Babylon, lowered Assyria's fortunes for close to a century. For a brief period, Tiglath-pileser I (1115-1077 B.C.E.) restored Assyrian power, extending its borders on all flanks and anticipating the rise of the mighty Assyrian empire in the 9th century.⁶¹ Realizing a long-cherished Mesopotamian aspiration, he reached the Mediterranean Sea along the Phoenician coast. Though short-lived and followed by another period of decline, Tiglath-pileser's exploits in the west set an example for the kings of the Assyrian empire in the 9th to 7th centuries.

The main obstacle blocking Tiglath-pileser's drive toward the west were the Arameans, whom he mentions in the annals of his 4th year. This is the first definite mention of that people in any extra biblical source. The annals relate his pursuit of the Arameans beyond the Euphrates and his sacking of six of their "cities" in the Bishri mountains, southeast of the Great Bend of the river, the perennial breeding ground of nomadic tribes. The Assyrian frustration in attempting to subdue the Arameans is evident in the fact that Tiglath-pileser crossed the Euphrates 28 times in the course of repeated campaigns and pursued them as far as the oasis of Tadmor (Palmyra) and even the Lebanon range.⁶² He records that he also cut cedars in the Lebanon to build his temples in Assyria; a recently discovered inscription (from the time of Shalmaneser III) reveals that he had his image placed there to commemorate this feat.⁶³ Upon reaching the Mediterranean, Tiglath-pileser levied tribute from the maritime cities of Arvad, Byblos and Sidon, and he proudly records that he sailed from Arvad to Šumur, catching a whale on the way. The silence concerning Tyre may indicate that it was at that time under the hegemony of its sister city, Sidon.

The brief penetration of Assyria to the Phoenician coast served to offset the traditional influence of Egypt there. Further, it paved the way for Assyrian contact with Egypt — through the intermediate of the Phoenician coastal cities. This Assyrian inroad explains the background of Wen-Amon's hostile reception by the king of Byblos and, even more so, the fate of Egyptian emissaries dispatched there a few years earlier (also described in Wen-Ammon's tale). That Egypt attempted to establish relations with Assyria, which had now become a political factor along the Phoenician coast — may be inferred from inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser I and his son Ashur-bel-kala, describing various exotic animals sent by Pharaoh as gifts of good will. Assyria may well have replied to these advances, for a lapis

lazuli ornament bearing an Assyrian inscription was found in the tomb of King Psusennes I (successor of Smendes) at Tanis.⁶⁴

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Upon the wane of Egyptian rule in Canaan, and prior to the rise of Assyria as an effective political power in the west, the local contest for control in Canaan came to a head. The Israelite role in this struggle was decisive, their overcoming the autochthonous Canaanite population, stemming the Transjordanian nations and nomadic raiders on the east, and entering into a fierce and bitter conflict with the Philistines, who saw themselves as heirs to Egyptian rule in the land.⁶⁵