

the name of Belshazzar or the fact of his power in the kingdom.

Dougherty points out that the book of Daniel has accurately preserved the facts regarding his name, his power, and his death at the time of the conquest. In addition to this, he mentions that it has preserved the record of a dual rulership, in that three times in this chapter (Daniel 5:7, 16, 29) reference is made to the honor of becoming "the third ruler in the kingdom." In the opinion of Professor Dougherty, such an accurate representation of the actual situation in this point, which seems to have been forgotten otherwise, weighs strongly against the widespread theory that the book of Daniel represents the ideas of the Maccabean period four hundred years after the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and suggests instead a much earlier date for the book.<sup>15</sup>

In the instance which we have just examined, the archaeological evidence at first seemed to point in the direction of a serious inaccuracy in the Biblical narrative, and it was only after additional evidence came to light that it was possible to see the matter as a whole and to realize that the Bible preserved historical facts which had been otherwise completely forgotten.

#### BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW

Another striking incident, somewhat similar in nature, is connected with the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt. In Exodus 1:11 it is stated that the Israelites "built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses." In chapter 5 it is related that after Moses' request for alleviation of the oppression Pharaoh gave orders that it be made still worse. He declared that straw would no longer be given them; they must gather it for themselves and yet be held responsible for the same number of bricks as before (vss. 7-11). "So the people were scattered abroad throughout

<sup>15</sup>R. P. Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, (New Haven: 1929), pp. 199,200.

all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw" (vs. 12). Naturally they complained at this increase in their labors, but Pharaoh refused to listen to them, and declared his intention to treat them severely, saying, "There shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks" (vs. 18).

Over sixty years ago a bit of evidence came to light which seemed at first to give a remarkable special corroboration to the account. Professor E. Naville conducted excavations in 1883 at Tell el-Maskhutah in the Wadi Tumilat in north-eastern Egypt. It was his opinion that this was the ancient Pithom, which the oppressed Israelites had built.

His publication of the results quotes the following statement from Mr. Villiers Stuart, who had visited the site during the excavation: "I carefully examined round the chamber walls, and I noticed that some of the corners of the brickwork throughout were built of bricks *without straw*. I do not remember to have met anywhere in Egypt bricks so made."<sup>16</sup> Evidently he felt that these were the very bricks which the Hebrews had been compelled to make without straw.

However, we must always be cautious, for the cause of Biblical knowledge is never advanced by hasty conclusions. The statement in Exodus 1:11 that the Israelites were forced to build the city of Pithom does not by any means prove that they were still working there when the incident recorded in Chapter 5 occurred many years later. Moreover, there has been grave question as to the correctness of Naville's identification of Tell el-Maskhutah, and most Egyptologists incline now to the opinion that Pithom was at Tell Retabeh, eight and a half miles further west. Thus it is by no means certain that the bricks which Mr. Stuart observed to be bricks from a city built by the Israelites, and the validity

<sup>16</sup>E. Naville, *The Store City of Pithom and the Route of the Exodus*, (London: 1903), p. 9.