

The second key was the great **Behistun Rock**, located in Kurdistan, Northern Persia, beside the ancient road from Ecbatana to Babylon. Henry Rawlinson, a young English army officer serving in India, was the discoverer of this key. For centuries travellers had known of the peculiar inscription, carved 200 ft. up on the sheer face of this massive cliff, which juts upward 1,700 ft. out of the surrounding plain. In 1835, Rawlinson, at great personal risk, climbed the precipitous cliff-face and began to copy the inscription. Four years of the most arduous and dangerous work were required to copy the writing, and another eighteen years to decipher it. It proved to be a memorial proclamation made by Darius the Great, of Persia, and inscribed in 516 B.C. Three languages were employed—Old Persian, Elamitic and Babylonian. This key unlocked the hitherto mysterious Cuneiform (wedge-shaped) writing of ancient Babylon and Assyria.

The keys discovered, a host of European and American scholars began to delve eagerly into the long-forgotten literary treasures of the ancient world!

5.—DISCOVERIES THAT HAVE AMAZED THE WORLD

It would be impossible to report adequately on a century of archaeological triumphs within the limits of one brief Bible lesson, so we will concentrate on just a few of the specific discoveries which have broken the force of the seven criticisms mentioned in Section 2.

(1) The Tel-el-Amarna Tablets

Over 300 clay tablets, inscribed in Babylonian cuneiform script, were found accidentally by an Egyptian peasant woman at Tel-el-Amarna, 200 miles south of Cairo, in 1887. They proved to be urgent letters from panic-stricken Canaanitish vassal kings, imploring help from Pharaoh Amenhotep III and his dreaming successor, Akhnaton, at a time when Palestine and Syria were seething with intrigue within, and under attack from without (approx. 1400 B.C.). This body of correspondence sheds significant light upon the jittery political condition of Palestine about the time of Joshua's invasion, and establishes conclusively that writing was familiarly known and widely used in the days of Moses.

(2) The Laws of Hammurabi

This famous law-code, engraved in Babylonian wedge-script on a round-topped pillar of smooth black stone, was found at Susa, about 200 miles east of Babylon, by the French archaeologist, de Morgan, in 1901. Hammurabi, king of the old Babylonian Empire, lived about 1750 B.C., and was a near-contemporary of Abraham. His code contains nearly 300 paragraphs of legal provisions. Whilst there are some similarities between this code and the laws of Moses, found in Exodus-Deuteronomy, there are also unbridgeable dissimilarities. The high ethical and spiritual tone of the Hebrew code obviously mirrors a far purer and nobler original. However, this discovery proves that remarkably advanced law-codes were in existence centuries before Moses.

(3) The Nuzi and Mari Tablets

Excavated between 1925 and 1941, the ancient site of Nuzi, south of Nineveh, has yielded several thousand clay documents from the 15th century B.C., describing customs which parallel those described in the Patriarchal narratives of Genesis.

Later excavations at the ruined city of Mari, on the middle Euphrates, since 1933, have unearthed more than 20,000 tablets from the 18th century B.C., which also shed valuable light upon the Patriarchal period and which, like the Nuzi documents, illuminate the social and religious backgrounds of a significant period in Biblical history.

These discoveries have lifted many of the Patriarchal narratives out of the realm of myth or legend and have helped to verify the substantial accuracy of the Genesis record concerning the times of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In the very field where critical