

most abusive language, unbecoming men of learning, by such as *Scaliger*, *Drufius*, and *Voffius*, as if they were men but half learned, half divines, mere fools, sceptics, &c. but of late I observe this confidence abates, and learned men begin to think that it is far from being a determined point, what were the original characters of the *Hebrews*. The learned authors of the *Universal History* <sup>a</sup> have taken the side of those who are against the *Samaritan* characters, and are for the square letters being the original *Hebrew*, and have given their reasons for it; and I hope to make it appear, at least probable, that the *Jews* always had and retained their letters and characters, and also the *Samaritans* theirs; and that there has been no commutation of letters between them: and to begin

WITH the *Jews*; though we cannot come to any certainty of their ancient letters and characters, yet there is a probability that they were the same in which their sacred writings are now extant; and this is all I shall attempt to shew.

IT has been observed that the *Hebrew* alphabet is the first of the *oriental* languages,

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guages,

<sup>a</sup> Vol. xvii. p. 302, 304.

guages, from whence the rest have received theirs; but in name only, not in signification; for the signification of the names of the letters in the alphabet only correspond with the figures of the square letter; indeed though the Hebrew alphabet is observed in order no less than twenty times in the Old Testament, Psal. xxv, xxxvii, cxi, cxii, cxix. eight times, cxiv. Prov. xxxi. *Lamentations* six times, yet not the name of one letter is given; but in the *Septuagint* version of the *Lamentations*, made three hundred years before Christ, the names of all of them are given just as they now are. The *Greeks* had the names of their letters very early, not only before the writing of the New Testament, in which mention is made of some of them, as of *Iota*, *Alpha*, and *Omega*; and in *Josephus* \* of *Beta*, and *Tau*; but *Herodotus* <sup>b</sup>, who wrote his history between four and five hundred years before the birth of Christ, observes, that the *Persian* names end in a letter which in the *Doric* dialect is called *San*, and in the *Ionic* dialect *Sigma*. *Plato* †, as early, makes

\* *Antiqu.* l. i. c. 6.      <sup>b</sup> *Clio*, five l. i. c. 139.

† in *Cratylus*, p. 271, 284, 286, 289, 292, 297, Ed. *Ficin.*

mention of the names of several of the letters of the *Greek* alphabet; and *Homer*, some hundreds of years before them, has the names of the whole *Greek* alphabet; for his works, both his *Iliad* and his *Odyssey*, the several books of them, have their titles from thence, and are called by their names; unless it should be thought, as it is by some, that the titles are added by some ancient *Grammarians*; which names are chiefly taken from an *Eastern* alphabet: and as the *Greeks* are generally supposed to have their letters, at least most of them, from the *Phœnicians*, they doubtless had the names of them along with them; and *Diodorus Siculus* † expressly says, that as *Cadmus* brought the letters from *Phœnicia* into *Greece*, so he gave to every one their names, as well as formed their characters; and as the *Phœnician*, or old *Samaritan* alphabet consisted of letters of the same name, though of a different character from the *Hebrew*, it may reasonably be supposed that the names are derived from thence as the language is but a dialect of the *Hebrew*, with a little variation and deflexion from it; so that the *Hebrews* had these  
names

† Bibliothec. lib. 3. p. 200.

names originally; and it cannot be thought otherwise but that when their letters were first invented, and marks made for them, but names were given unto them; and *Capellus* <sup>a</sup> himself is quite clear and expresses in this matter: “ before the age of *Cadmus* the *Phœnician*, he says i. e. 1450 “ years before the birth of Christ, the *Hebrew* letters had their own names, and “ indeed the same with those by which “ they are now called, as is plain by comparing the *Greek* alphabet with the *Hebrew* ;” and a little after he says, the same names of *Hebrew* letters are as they were three thousand years ago: now the names of the letters of the *Hebrew* alphabet, though adopted by others, only correspond in their signification with the figure of the square letters now in use: thus according to various writers <sup>b</sup>, א *Aleph* the first letter, signifies an ox, and its figure resembles the head and horns of one, and as that, gives the lead to the rest; ב *Beth*, an house, and it represents one, its foundation, wall,

<sup>a</sup> Arcanum punctat. Revelat. l. 1. c. 12. <sup>b</sup> Vid. Schindler. Lexicon Pentaglott. Herman. Hugonem de prima Scribend. Orig. c. 7. p. 69. &c. Wasmuth Vindicix Heb. par. 1. c. 1. p. 58, 86. Marckii Exercitat. ad Matt. v. 18. Bedford's Chronology, p. 497, and Dr. Gregory Sharpe's Origin of Languages, p. 60, &c.

wall, and roof, which with the *Hebrews* was flat; ג *Gimel* a camel, and it has the figure of its long neck and bunch on its back; ד *Dalet* a door, and it describes the lintel and post of one; ה what it signifies and represents is not easy to say: ו *Vau*, an hook, and it resembles one; ז *Zajin*, signifies armour, and has the figure of a dart, spear, or club; ח *Cheth* a beast, and its position is like that of a quadruped; ט *Teth*, folding or involving, as is the form of it; י *Jod*, an hand, the small part of it the finger, it represents; כ *Cap*, the hollow of the hand, or a curvature, as its figure is; ל *Lamed*, a goad, and it is like one; מ *Mem*, a spot as is impressed on the hollow of the hand; נ *Nun*, a son, child, or infant, and it is thought to resemble one sitting; ס *Samech*, a support, the pedestal of a column, to which it is not unlike; ע *Ain*, an eye, and it is the figure of one open; פ *Pe*, a mouth, an open one; צ *Tzadde*, a fork, and such is its figure; ק *Koph*, a revolution, a semicircle, with a descending line, or a monkey, having the tail of one; ר *Resh*, the head, the hinder part of one it resembles; ש *Schin*, a tooth, and is the figure of three teeth;

ת *Thau*

ן *Thau*, a mark, sign, or border, being the boundary of the alphabet. Now the figures of the letters of the alphabet, neither in the *Samaritan* characters, nor in any other but the square, will answer to the signification of these names.

As the *Hebrew* language was the first and primitive language, and was spoken by *Adam*, as has been shewn, it is probable the letters were first invented by him, as some have thought<sup>c</sup>; since as man is not only a speaking, but a social animal, it can hardly be imagined that *Adam* should live so many years, and not consider the advantage of letters to his posterity, and attempt to form such for their use; nor could arts and sciences, which no doubt were found out in his time, be well cultivated without the use of letters. It is certain some of the arts and sciences were in use before the flood, Gen. iv. 21. and very probably astronomy, as it must be, if there

<sup>c</sup> Suidas in voce *Αδμ*. Hermannus Hugo, ut supra c. 3. p. Bibliander & alii in ib. The Jews ascribe several writings to *Adam*, Wolfii Biblioth. Heb. p. 110, 111. In the *Talmud* they speak of the book of the first *Adam*, T Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 85, 2. and of a book the angel *Raziel* gave him, which bears the name of that angel, Zohar in G. fol. 43, 3. Some writers make mention of a book composed by *Abel* the son of *Adam*. See Bangi Cœlum Orient. p. 103, 123.

there is any truth in the history of the pillars erected by the posterity of *Setb*, which must make writing necessary, as *Huygens*<sup>d</sup> observes : besides, it is not reasonable to suppose that *Adam* himself should be without the knowledge of the sciences, since the very first sight of the heavenly luminaries would lead him into a contemplation of them, and to make future observations upon them ; and by observing their motions, appearance, and disappearance, their revolutions, and the distinctions they made of days, months, and years, and of the seasons, of summer and winter ; he must obtain by degrees a considerable knowledge of this science. Some have thought<sup>e</sup> that the knowledge of all things natural, both terrestrial, as plants, &c. and celestial, was of God infused into him, and implanted in his nature ; and in whatsoever way he had it, it may be reasonably concluded that he would communicate it to his posterity, which seems to require the use of letters ; and *Scaliger*<sup>f</sup> made no doubt of it that the art of printing was known by him ;  
 though

<sup>d</sup> Cosmotheorof. fol. 10. p. 56.      <sup>e</sup> Vid. Lydiat defens. tract. de ann. form. c. 8. p. 26.      <sup>f</sup> Apud Lydiat. ib. p. 125.

though that is not very probable, yet he might have the knowledge of letters, and of the use of them; indeed the *Indian Brachmans* <sup>§</sup>, and the ancient *Druids* <sup>h</sup> and *Pythagoras* <sup>i</sup> taught their doctrines without the use of letters; but it was not through want of them, nor through mere neglect of them, but because they had some peculiar ends to answer thereby: now if letters were invented by *Adam*, it seems most reasonable that as his language, so his letters were continued to the times of *Noah*, and were communicated in the times of *Shem* through the families of *Eber* and *Abraham* to the people of *Israel*; and though the precise character cannot be determined, it is most probable, it was the square character, as being the most expressive, perfect, and elegant, The Jewish writers are quite clear in this matter, that not only the letters but even the points and accents as they now are, were known to *Adam*, being taught him of God; as the author of the book of *Cofri* <sup>k</sup>, and his commentator *R. Judab Muscatus* <sup>l</sup>.

If the pillars set up by the sons of *Setb*  
could

§ Alex. ab. Alex. Genial. dier. 1. 2. c. 30.    h Cæsar. Comment. 1. 6. c. 13.    i Alex. ab. Alex. ut supra.    k Cofri par. 4. f. 25.    l Comment. in ib. fol. 229. 1.



could be depended on as genuine, there would be proof not only of the arts and sciences, particularly astronomy, being known and taught, but of letters, and their use in their days; and to *Setb* himself the invention of letters has been ascribed<sup>m</sup>; *Josephus*<sup>n</sup> says, the pillars erected by his posterity continued to his time: but it is not likely that these pillars, the one of brick, the other of stone, should survive the flood; and the account he has given of the place where they stood, is very dark and intricate; he calls it the land of *Syriad*, but whether he means *Syria*, or a place in the land of *Egypt*, or *Seirath* near *Gilgal*, *Judg.* iii. 26. each of which is guessed at<sup>o</sup>, cannot be determined; nor does he give us the least hint what kind of characters were upon them; and indeed had the pillars been really in being, it can scarcely be thought that the characters could be legible, or that even conjectures could be made of what they were. In *Syria* and *Mesopotamia* are said to be some ancient books of the *Zabians*, which they pretend to be the patriarch *Setb's*<sup>p</sup>; and the *Arabic* writers

<sup>m</sup> Vid. Suidam in voce Σηθ.    <sup>n</sup> Antiqu. l. 1. c. 2.  
<sup>o</sup> Vid. Marsham Canon. secul. 1. p. 3.    † Prideaux, Præfat. ad Marmor. Arundel. & Vossium de ætate mundi, c. 10. p. 37.    <sup>p</sup> Præfat. Hyde ad Hist. Relig. Perf.

writers say<sup>9</sup>, that *Seth* was the inventor of writing letters, and shewed them in the *Hebrew* tongue. If the account that is given of *Cainan*, the grandson of *Seth*, could be credited, it would not only prove the use of letters in those early times, but that the *Hebrew* letters were then used; the account is what is said to be sent by *Alexander* the Great, when in *India*, to his master *Aristotle*, and is as follows:

“ When I came to such a place in *India*,  
 “ says he, the natives told me that they  
 “ had with them the sepulchre of an an-  
 “ cient king that ruled over all the world,  
 “ whose name was *Cainan*, the son of  
 “ *Enos*, who foreseeing that God would  
 “ bring a flood upon the earth, wrote his  
 “ prophecy of it on tables of stone, and  
 “ they are here; the writing is *Hebrew*  
 “ writing.”

ENOCH, the seventh from *Adam*, delivered out the prophecy referred to by the apostle *Jude*, ver. 14, 15. but whether it was written is not certain; it is not improbable it might be: the Jews make mention of a writing of his in their ancient  
 book

<sup>9</sup> Elmacinus apud Hottinger. Smegma, p, 228.    <sup>r</sup> Ju-  
 chafin, fol. 3. 2. fo Ben Gorion, l. 2. c. 18. p. 131.

book of *Zohar* <sup>f</sup>, and in the *Targum* of *Jonathan* on Gen. v. 24, he is called the great scribe; and several of the christian fathers speak of a book of his as authentic, as *Tertullian* <sup>t</sup> and others; and the *Arabic* writers <sup>u</sup> tell us of pyramids and pillars erected by him, on which he engraved the arts and the instruments of them; and some writers <sup>w</sup> ascribe the invention of letters and writing of books to him; but what characters he wrote and engraved in are not said: others <sup>x</sup> have pretended to give the alphabets of *Adam*, *Seth*, *Enoch*, and *Noah*; but the characters they give neither agree with the *Hebrew* nor with the *Samaritan*, and are mere figments, and are no more to be depended on than in what the prophecy of *Ham* the son of *Noah* was written, out of which *Phercydes* the *Syrian*, is said to take his allegories <sup>y</sup>. If *Abraham* the ancestor of the Jewish nation was the inventor of letters, as some say, the *Hebrew* characters might

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bid

<sup>f</sup> In Gen. fol. 53. 2. and 74. 1.      <sup>t</sup> De Cultu famin. l. 1. c. 3. vid. Bangi Coelum Orient. Exercitat. 1. 24. Qu. 5.  
<sup>u</sup> Abulpharag. Hist. dynast. dyn. 1 p. 9.      <sup>w</sup> Vid. Hugo. de orig. scribendi, c. 3. p. 41. Shalshalet Hakabala fol. 94. 2.  
<sup>x</sup> Vid. Bangi ut supra, Exercitat. 2. Qu. 1. p. 100, 101. 104. 105.      <sup>y</sup> Vid. Clem. Ale. Stromat. 1. 6. p. 642.

bid fair to be the first; nay, *Suidas* says <sup>z</sup> they were the sacred letters he invented; and to him is sometimes ascribed the *caballistic* book of the *Jews* called *Jetzirah* <sup>a</sup>.

SOME of the Jewish *Rabbins* say, that the grains of manna which fell from heaven about the tents of the *Israelites* in the wilderness were figured with the character of the *Hebrew* letter  $\gamma$  *Vau* very perfectly expressed; and that that is the principal reason why the wondering *Israelites* said one to another  $\text{מַן הוּא}$  *Man hu*, which according to them is to say, what means this *vau*? the reason of which figure they suppose to be, because the manna was only to be gathered on the *six* days of the week, which that letter numerically signifies: this is to be, treated as a mere fable, nor have I met with it in any writer but *Gaffarellus* <sup>b</sup>; all the advantage I make of it is this, that those *Rabbins* who relate this, believed that the square letters were in use before the giving of the law, for so early was the original descent of the manna; and indeed if the *Israelites* did not understand

<sup>z</sup> In voce *Αερααιμ*, vid. Herman Hugo. ut supra. p. 41

<sup>a</sup> *Cofri* par. 4. c. 27. *Juchasin* fol. 52. 2. <sup>b</sup> Unheard of *Curiosities*, par. 4. c. 12. p. 352.

stand letters before the giving of the law, of what use could the writing of it be unto them? and to what purpose was it written and brought unto them.

IT is not only the opinion of some Christian writers <sup>c</sup> that the *Hebrews* received their letters first from *Moses* thro' the giving of the law unto them, but even *Eupolemus*, an heathen writer, as quoted both by *Clement* of *Alexandria* <sup>d</sup>, and *Eusebius* <sup>e</sup>, affirms that *Moses* first delivered letters to the *Jews*, which is received by many <sup>f</sup>; however this be, it is certain, the law was written in letters engraved by God himself, and given to *Moses* for the *Israelites*; and it is most probable, as has been already observed, that those letters were not the ill-shaped letters of the *Samaritans*, the same with those of the old *Phœnicians* or *Canaanites*, but the noble, majestic square letters, in which the books of the law and prophets are now extant.

E 2

*Philo*

<sup>c</sup> Vid. Aug. de Civ. Dei, l. 18. c. 39. Isidor. Origin. l. 1. c. 3. and chronic p. 263. <sup>d</sup> Stromat. l. 1. p. 343. <sup>e</sup> Præpar. Evangel. l. 9. c. 26. <sup>f</sup> So Clemens Roman. Cornelius Agrippa, Crinitus, Textor, Gyraldus apud Herman. Hugo ut supra, MS. in Vatican. Biblioth. apud Wafer. de Numis Heb l. 2 c. 3. vid. Owen. Theologoumena l. 4. Digress. 1. p. 301.

*Philo* the *Jew*<sup>e</sup>, says, the law was anciently written in the *Chaldee* language, that is, in the *Hebrew* language, properly so called; for, as *Jerom*<sup>h</sup> observes, *Philo* thought the *Hebrew* and *Chaldee* were the same language; and nothing is more common with the *Jews*<sup>i</sup>, than to say the writing in which the law was given, is the *Assyrian* language and writing, by which they mean the modern *Hebrew* letters, in distinction from the *Samaritan*, as appears by what has been quoted out of the *Talmud*, and which they expressly say<sup>k</sup> is what they now write in. This they call the *Assyrian* tongue and writing, from the word *Asber*, which signifies happy and blessed, being happy and blessed above all languages; or because they had it from their ancestor *Abraham*, who came out of *Assyria*; and as they carried it into *Assyria*, when led captive thither, so it came out of *Assyria* with them, when they came from thence<sup>l</sup>; and that the tables of the law were written in it, is generally agreed on, by them,

<sup>e</sup> De vita Mosis. l. 1. p. 657, 658      <sup>h</sup> Comment. in Dan. i. 4.      <sup>i</sup> Balmesii mikneh Abraham, p. 2. lin. 26.  
<sup>k</sup> Gloss. in T. Bab. Megillah, fol. 8. 2. Shalshalet Hakabala, fol. 74. 2.      <sup>l</sup> T. Bab. Sanhedri. fol. 21. 1. and Balmes. ut supra, lin. 24, 25. and p. 6. lin. 13. 14.

them. *R. Jacob* says <sup>m</sup>, the whole world acknowledge that the tables and book of the law, which were in the ark, were written in the *Assyrian* character, by which they mean the square character; that is, the whole *Jewish* nation, a few, only excepted, not more than two or three <sup>n</sup>. If the mediums of proof made use of by the *Jews* could be admitted as valid, as they cannot, it would put the matter out of all doubt, that the square letters were as early as the law: they observe, that the hooks of the pillars in *Exod.* xxvii. 10. are called *Vaus*, and as the pillars were not changed, so the *Vaus* were not changed; from whence they conclude the *Vaus* were made like hooks, and that in the days of *Moses* the *Vaus* were like those now in use <sup>o</sup>; and what is true of one letter is true of the rest; and that their letters were never changed, and which they also conclude from *Esth.* viii. 9. They have likewise a notion that the letters of the law were perforated, so that the figures of the letters could be seen on both sides,

E 3

where-

<sup>m</sup> In *En Israhel Megillah*, c. 1. fol. 415. 1. <sup>n</sup> Vid. *Buxtorf*, de lit. Heb. f. 20. 23. <sup>o</sup> *T. Hieros. Megillah*, fol. 71. 3. *T. Bab. Sanhedrin*, fol. 22. 1. and *Gloss.* in *ib.*

wherefore they observe  $\square$  *Mem clausum* and  $\square$  *Samech* which were in the tables, stood miraculously <sup>p</sup>; for they being near or like to a circle or an O, they had nothing to adhere to, or subsist by, but must fall, unless supported by a miracle. Now though these notions cannot be allowed of, they serve to shew the sense of the *Jews*, that the square letters were then in being, since these observations will not agree with the said letters in the *Samaritan* alphabet; nay, they say that the forms of letters, vowels and accents were written by God on the tables, as we now have them <sup>q</sup>.

It was usual in ancient time to inscribe things on rocks and mountains, in order to perpetuate them to posterity, to which *Job* may allude, ch. xix. 24. thus *Semiramis* engraved her image and an hundred shield-bearers by her at the bottom of a rock, and wrote upon the rock in *Syriac* letters, as *Diodorus Siculus* relates <sup>r</sup>; so the *Arabians*, *Phœnicians*, and *Egyptians*, and others, before the use of paper, engraved their sentiments on rocks and stones <sup>s</sup>.

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<sup>p</sup> T. Bab. Sabbat, fol 104.      <sup>q</sup> Tipheret Israel in Broughton's works, p. 506. 670. 684. 703.      <sup>r</sup> Biblioth. l. 2. p. 100. 101.      <sup>s</sup> PliE. l. 6. c. 28. vid. Huet. Demonstrat. Evangel. c. 2. f. 15.



*Themistocles* cut letters upon stones which the *Ionians*, coming the day after to *Artemisium*, read, as *Herodotus* reports <sup>t</sup>; and it was usual with the *Danes* to write the acts and deeds of their ancestors in verse, and engrave them in their own language on rocks and stones <sup>u</sup>. In a journal made about forty years ago, from grand *Cairo* to mount *Sinai*, a translation of which is published by Dr. *Clayton*, late bishop of *Clogher*, it is related <sup>w</sup>, that those who made it came to some hills near mount *Sinai*, called the written mountains; on which with others they passed for an hour together, were engraved ancient unknown characters, cut into the hard marble rock, twelve or fourteen feet distant from the ground; and though they had several in company acquainted with the *Arabic*, *Greek*, *Hebrew*, *Syriac*, &c. none of them had any knowledge of those characters. The bishop thought it probable that these were the ancient *Hebrew* characters, which the *Israelites* having learned to write after the giving of the law on mount *Sinai*, di-

E 4 verted

<sup>t</sup> *Urania*, five, l. 8. c. 22. vide *Melpomene*, five l. 4. c. 87.

<sup>u</sup> *Salmuth*. in *Pancirolo*. par. 2. p. 256. <sup>w</sup> *Journal* &c. p. 45, 46. Ed. 2.

verted themselves with practising it during their forty years abode in the wilderness; and he was of opinion that the ancient *Hebrew* characters might be recovered by them; wherefore he proposed to the Society of *Antiquarians* in *London*, to send a proper person thither for that end, and offered to bear a proportion in the expence of it; and could those characters be recovered, and an alphabet formed out of them, it would doubtless determine what was the ancient figure of the *Hebrew* letters. About an hundred years before the above journal was begun, *Petrus a Valle* and *Thomas a Novaria* transcribed several of them, which the former had in his possession, and shewed them to some Jews, to whom some of the letters seemed to be like to those of the *Hebrew* now in use, others like the *Samaritan*, and others agreed with neither; but the sense of them none could understand<sup>p</sup>. Now these letters were no doubt of one and the same alphabet, form and figure originally, and if many of them are of the square form, or like those *Hebrew* letters now in use, and those the greater part of them, as it should

<sup>p</sup> *Antiq. Eccl. oriental.* p. 147.