

# Elam

The Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature. James Strong and John McClintock; Haper and Brothers; NY; 1880.

E'lam (Heb. *Eylam'*, אֵילָם, corresponding to the Pehlvi *Airjama* [see Gesenius, *Thesaur.* page 1016]), the name of a man and of the region settled by his posterity, also of several Hebrews, especially about the time of the Babylonian captivity.

1. (Sept. Ε'λάμ; Josephus Ἐλαμος, *Ant.* 1:6, 4; Vulg. *AElam*.) Originally, like Aram, the name of a man — the son of Shem (Ge 10:22; 1Ch 1:17). B.C. post 2514. Commonly, however, it is used as the appellation of a country (Ge 14:1,9; Isa 11:11; Isa 21:2; Jer 25:25; Jer 49:34-39; Eze 32:24; Da 8:2). In Ge 14:1, it is introduced along with the kingdom of Shinar in Babylon, and in Isa 21:2, and Jer 25:25, it is connected with Media. In Ezr 4:9, the Elamites are described among the nations of the Persian empire; and in Da 8:2, Susa is said to lie on the river Ulai (Eulaeus or Choaspes), in the province of Elam. This river was the modern Karun (Layard, *Nineveh and Bab.* page 146), and the capital of Elam was Shushan (q.v.), one of the most powerful and magnificent cities of the primeval world. The name Elam occurs in the cuneiform inscriptions (q.v.) found on the bulls in Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh. The country was also called *Nuvaki*, as we learn from the monuments of Khorsabad and Besutun (Layard, *Nin. and Bab.* page 452). The Elam of Scripture appears to be the province lying south of Assyria and east of Persia Proper, to which Herodotus gives

the name of *Cissia* (3:91; verse 49, etc.), and which is in part termed *Susis* or *Susiana* by the geographers (Strab. 15:3, § 12; Ptolem. 6:3, etc.). It includes a portion of the mountainous country separating between the Mesopotamian plain and the high table-land of *Iran*, together with a fertile and valuable low tract at the foot of the range, between it and the Tigris. The passage of Daniel (8:2) which places Shushan (Susa) in "the province of Elam," may be regarded as decisive of this identification, which is further confirmed by the frequent mention of Elymseans in this district (Strab. 11:13, § 6; 16:1, § 17; Ptolem. 6:3; Plin. *H.N.* 6:26, etc.), as well as by the combinations in which Elam is found in Scripture (see [Ge 14:1](#); [Isa 21:2](#); [Eze 32:24](#)). It appears from [Ge 10:22](#), that this country was originally peopled by descendants of Shem, closely allied to the Aramaeans (Syrians) and the Assyrians; and from [Ge 14:1-12](#), it is evident that by the time of Abraham a very important power had been built up in the same region. Not only is "Chedorlaomer, king of Elam," at the head of a settled government, and able to make war at a distance of two thousand miles from his own country, but he manifestly exercises a supremacy over a number of other kings, among whom we even find Amraphel, king of Shinar, or Babylonia. It is plain, then, that at this early time the predominant power in Lower Mesopotamia was Elam, which for a while held the place possessed earlier by Babylon ([Ge 10:10](#)), and later by either Babylon or Assyria. Discoveries made in the country itself confirm this view. They exhibit to us Susa, the Elamitic capital, as one of the most ancient cities of the East, and show that its monarchs maintained, throughout almost the whole period of Babylonian and Assyrian greatness, a quasi-independent position. Traces are even thought to have been found of Chedorlaomer himself, whom some are inclined to

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identify with an early Babylonian monarch, who is called the "Ravager of the West," and whose name reads as Kudur-mapula. The Elamitic empire established at this time was, however, but of short duration. Babylon and Assyria proved, on the whole, stronger powers, and Elam during the period of their greatness can only be regarded as the foremost of their feudatories. Like the other subject nations she retained her own monarchs, and from time to time, for a longer or a shorter space, asserted and maintained her independence. But generally she was content to acknowledge one or other of the two leading powers as her suzerain. Towards the close of the Assyrian period she is found allied with Babylon, and engaged in hostilities with Assyria; but she seems to have declined in strength after the Assyrian empire was destroyed, and the Median and Macedonian arose upon its ruins. Elam is clearly a "province" of Babylonia in Belshazzar's time ([Da 8:2](#)), and we may presume that it had been subject to Babylon at least from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. The desolation which [Jer 49:30-34](#) and [Eze 32:24-25](#) foresaw was probably this conquest, which destroyed the last semblance of Elamitic independence. It is uncertain at what time the Persians added Elam to their empire. Possibly it only fell under their dominion together with Babylon; but there is some reason to think that it may have revolted and joined the Persians before the city was besieged.

The prophet Isaiah in two places ([Isa 21:2](#); [Isa 22:6](#)) seems to speak of Elam as taking part in the destruction of Babylon; and, unless we are to regard him with our translators as using the word loosely for Persia, we must suppose that, on the advance of Cyrus and his investment of the Chaldaean capital, Elam made common cause with the assailants. She now became merged in the Persian empire, forming a distinct satrapy (Herod. 3:91), and furnishing to the crown an annual

tribute of 300 talents. Susa, her capital, was made the ordinary residence of the court, and the metropolis of the whole empire. This mark of favor did not, however, prevent revolts. Not only was the Magian revolution organized and carried out at Susa, but there seem to have been at least two Elamitic revolts in the early part of the reign of Darius Hystaspis (*Behistun Inscr.* col. 1, part 16, and col. 2, part 3). After these futile efforts, Elam acquiesced in her subjection, and, as a Persian province, followed the fortunes of the empire. These historic facts illustrate the prophecy of [Jer 49:35-39](#), "And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and I will scatter them towards all these winds." The situation of the country exposed it to the invasions of Assyrians, Medes, and Babylonians; and it suffered from each in succession before it was finally embodied in the Persian empire. Then another part of the prophecy was also singularly fulfilled: "I will set my throne in Elam, and I will destroy from thence the king and princes." The present state of the Persian empire, in which Elam is included, may be a fulfillment of the concluding words of the passage: "But it shall come to pass in the latter days that I will bring again the captivity of Elam" (Vaux, *Nineveh and Persepolis*, page 85 sq.). *SEE PERSIA.*

⇒See also the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.

Herodotus gives the name Cissia to the province of; which Susa was the capital (3:91); Strabo distinguishes between Susiana and the country of the Elymamans. The latter he extends northwards among the Zagros mountains (11:361; 15:503; 16:507). Pliny says Susiana is separated from Elymais by the River Eulaeus, and that the latter province extends from that river to the confines of Persia (*Hist. Nat.* 6:27). Ptolemy locates Elymais on the coast of the Persian Gulf, and regards it as part only of Susiana (*Geogr. 6:3*). According, to

Josephus, the Elymaeans were the progenitors of the Persians (*Ant.* 1:6, 4); and Strabo refers to some of their scattered tribes as far north as the Caspian Sea. From these various notices, and from the incidental allusions in Scripture, we may conclude that there was a little province on the east of the Lower Tigris called Elymais; but that the Elymaeans, as a people, were anciently spread over and ruled a much wider district, to which their name was often attached. They were a warlike people, trained to arms, and especially skilled in the use of the bow ([Isa 21:2](#); [Jer 49:35](#)); they roamed abroad like the Bedawin, and like them, too, were addicted to plunder (Strabo, 11:361). Josephus mentions a town called Elymais, which contained a famous temple dedicated to Diana, and rich in gifts and votive offerings (*Ant.* 22:9, 1); Appian says it was dedicated to Venus (Bochart, *Opp.* 1:70 sq.). Antiochus Epiphanes attempted to plunder it, but was repulsed (1 Macc. 6). It is a remarkable fact that little images of the goddess, whose Assyrian name was Anaitis, were discovered by Loftus in the mounds of Susa (*Chaldea*, page 379). The Elamites who were in Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost were probably descendants of the captive tribes who had settled in Elam ([Ac 2:9](#)).

It has been repeatedly observed above that Elam is called Cissia by Herodotus, and Susiana by the Greek and Roman geographers. The latter is a term formed artificially from the capital city, but the former is a genuine territorial title, and probably marks an important fact in the history of the country. The Elamites, a Shemitic people, who were the primitive inhabitants ([Ge 10:22](#)), appear to have been invaded and conquered at a very early time by a Hamitic or Cushite race from Babylon, which was the ruling element in the territory from a date anterior to Chedorlaomer. These *Cushites* were called by the Greeks *Cissians* (Κισσεοι) or

*Cossaeans* (Κοσσαῖοι), and formed the dominant race, while the Elamites or Elymseans were in a depressed condition. In Scripture the country is called by its primitive title without reference to subsequent changes; in the Greek writers it takes its name from the conquerors. The Greek traditions of Memnon and his *Ethiopians* are based upon this Cushite conquest, and rightly connect the Cissians or Cossaeans of Susiana with the Cushite inhabitants of the upper valley of the Nile.

The fullest account of Elam, its physical geography, ruins, and history, is given in Loftus's *Chaldaea and Susiana* (London 1856; N.Y. 1857). The southern part of the country is flat, and towards the shore of the gulf marshy and desolate. In the north the mountain ranges of Backhtiari and Luristan rise gradually from the plain in a series of calcareous terraces, intersected by ravines of singular wildness and grandeur. Among these mountains are the sources of the Ulai (Loftus, page 308, 347 sq.). The chief towns of Elymais are now Shuster ("little Shush") and Dizful; but the greater part of the country is overrun by nomad Arabs. *SEE ELAMIT.*

**2.** (Sept. Ι'ενουηλωλάμ v.r. Ι'ωλάμ, also Ωλάμ and Αἰλάμ; Vulg. *Elnam*.) A Korhite Levite, fifth son of Meshelemiah, one of the Bene-Asaph, and superintendent of the fifth division of Temple wardens in the time of king David ([1Ch 26:3](#)), B.C. 1014.

**3.** (Sept. Α'ηλάμ v.r. Αἰλαμ, Vulg. *AElam*.) A chief man of the tribe of Benjamin, one of the sons of Shashak, resident at Jerusalem at the captivity or on the return ([1Ch 8:24](#)), B.C. 536 or ante.

**4.** (Sept. Α'ϊλάμ, Ἡλάμ, Vulg. *AElam*.) "Children of Elam," *Bene-Elam*, to the number of 1254, returned with Zerubbabel from Babylon ([Ezr 2:7](#); [Ne 7:12](#); [Ne 1 Esdr. 5:12](#)), and a further detachment of 71 men with Ezra in the second caravan ([Ezr](#)

8:7; Ezr 1 Esdr. 8:33). It was one of this family, Shechaniah, son of Jehiel, who encouraged Ezra in his efforts against the indiscriminate marriages of the people (Ezr 10:2, text עַלְם, i.e., מִלְעָם, Olam), and six of the Bene-Elam accordingly put away their foreign wives (Ezr 10:26). The lists of Ezra ii and Nehemiah vii contain apparently an irregular mixture of the names of places and of persons. In the former, verses 21-34, with one or two exceptions, are names of places; 3419, on the other hand, are not known as names of places, and are probably of persons. No such place as Elam is mentioned as in Palestine, either in the Bible or in the *Onomasticon* of Eusebius, nor has since been discovered as existing in the country, although Schwarz endeavors (*Palest.* page 143) to give the word a local reference to the grave of a Samaritan priest Eli, at a village named by him as *Charim ben- Elim*, on the bay, 8 miles N.N.E. of Jaffa. SEE *HARIM*. Most interpreters have therefore concluded that it was a person. B.C. ante 536. It is possible, however, that this and the following name have been borrowed from number 1, perhaps as designating Jews who resided in that region of the Babylonian dominions during the captivity.

5. In the same lists is a second Elam, whose sons, to the same number as in the former case, returned with Zerubbabel (Ezr 2:31; Ne 7:34), and which, for the sake of distinction, is called "the other Elam" (אֶלְם אַחֵר; Sept. Ἡλαμάρ, Ἡλαμαρ, Vulg. *AElam alter*). The coincidence of the numbers is curious, and also suspicious, as arguing an accidental repetition of the foregoing name. B.C. ante 536.

6. (Sept. Αἰλάμ, Vulg. *AElam*.) One of the sacerdotal or Levitical singers who accompanied Nehemiah at the dedication of the new wall of Jerusalem (Ne 12:42). B.C. 446.

7. (Sept. Ἡλάμ, Vulg. *AElam*.) One of the chiefs of the people who signed the covenant with Nehemiah (Ne 10:14), B.C. 410.