

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE IX.

NOTES ON BIBLICAL GEOGRAPHY.

By E. Robinson, D. D., Professor at New York.

I. SITE OF HAZOR.

In the Number of this work for Feb. 1846, p. 213, after assigning the reasons which go to fix the position of Hazor "on the south of Kedesh in Naphthali, somewhere on the way between Kedesh and Safed," I suggested that "it is a matter well worth the attention of future travellers, to ascertain whether there exists in that district any remains, or any name, which may correspond to the name and the features of the ancient Hazor."

I was not then aware, that something had already been done in this respect. On mentioning the subject to the Rev. Eli Smith, after the article was printed, he informed me that while at Kedes in April 1844, his attention had been directed to a large *Tell* called *Khureibeh* some distance south of Kedes, on which were said to be ruins. He kindly furnished me with the following extract from his journal, with the accompanying remarks. If *Khureibeh* be not Hazor, it is at least deserving of further examination; and we may hope that Hazor may yet be identified, either there or in that region.

"*Khureibeh* is a *Tell*, apparently with ruins on it, at the south end of the plain of Kedes. Its bearing from Kedes is 186°. Just there, in a deep ravine, the *Wady el-Múadhdhamiyeh* [coming from near *el-Jish*] finds its way into the plain of the *Hûleh*, at the fountain of *Mellâbah*."

"The above is all the notice my journal contains respecting *Khureibeh*. We did not visit it; and I can add but little from recollection. It rises from an uneven tract, apparently on the north side of the deep ravine. I should judge it to be less than three miles from Kedes; and though aided by a spy-glass, I could not determine, whether the appearance of ruins on it might not be natural rocks. The name implies that it is a ruin. Should this turn out to be the *Hazor* of Scripture, perhaps the fountain *Mellâbah* may be the *En-Hazor* of *Josh. 19: 37*."

II. ANTIQUITIES ON THE ROUTE FROM BA'ALBEK TO HAMATH AND ALEPPO.

It is singular that in respect to just these regions, certainly among the most accessible in Syria, we have less information than of almost any other. Of the tract between *Ba'albek* and *Hums*, we have as yet only *Buckingham's* meagre notes, (*Arab Tribes*, p. 486 sq.) and the still briefer ones of *W. H. Barker* on his visit to the sources of the *Orontes*; *Jour. of Lond. Geogr. Soc. 1837*. Between *Hamath* and *Aleppo*, the direct

road usually followed by travellers and caravans, presents little of interest; but a route further to the west, which Burckhardt took, leads through a region full of antiquities, though that traveller has not fully described them. The following extracts of a letter recently received from the Rev. W. M. Thomson of Beirut, will serve to give the reader some idea of the interesting objects still to be explored in those regions. I subjoin at the close some explanatory remarks.

"Beirut, Dec. 14th, 1846.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,—My late tour to Aleppo gave me an opportunity to complete my exploration of the Phenician cities, and led me to many other places of interest, as Selucia, Antioch, Jebel Simûn, full of Grecian towns and temples, Aleppo and its neighborhood, the great salt valley where David conquered Hadadezer, etc. This *Vale of Salt* is the most extraordinary place I have yet visited. I could also say something about Zobah, *Khandserék*, etc. in this connection.

Returning from Aleppo, I first visited Jebel el-Aala, ten hours nearly due west of that city; a singular isolated mountain with some sixty-five or seventy ruined Grecian towns, beautiful temples, churches of old date, with many Greek inscriptions. This mountain is inhabited by Druzes; some of whom had once lived in Abeil. They were like old acquaintances. From Jebel el-Aala my route was south by Jebel Nusrin to Edlip; then to Riha; then to the vast remains at *el-Bâra*, perhaps the largest ruin in Syria. I copied many inscriptions, all Greek. Next to *Apamea*, the ruins of which have never yet been described, or at least not in any book I have seen. Burckhardt could not have examined them. There is a single avenue from a mile to a mile and a half long, one hundred and twenty-three feet broad; with a colonnade twenty-four feet wide on each side for a foot-path. The columns were six feet apart. They were of various sizes, from three to four feet in diameter, and thirty-four feet high, with beautiful Corinthian capitals and cornice. The shafts of the columns were of all kinds, plain, fluted, flute inserted, double fluted, and twisted. There must have been about sixteen hundred columns, forming one of the most magnificent avenues in the world. But I cannot enlarge.

I visited *Sejda* and Hamath; and then kept along the eastern base of the mountains of the Nusairiyeh to the head of the Lake of Hums, called Kedes in the old Arabian geographers. Here I discovered the ruins of a Grecian city, called Kedes and also Kudesianos, at the head of the lake, from which the name of the lake no doubt came. I then followed up the Orontes to *Riblah*, the "*Riblah in the land of Hamath*," 2 Kings 23: 33; and thence to the great fountain of the Orontes, leaving *Jûry*, the *Laodicea ad Libanum* on my left. This fountain is near Hürmul. It is twice as large as that of the Jordan at Tell-el-Kady. It rises under Lebanon, and sends out a strong river, which bears directly across the plain towards Anti-Lebanon, until it reaches Riblah, when it turns north and runs down into the lake. This almost impassable river forms the natural southern boundary for the kingdom of Hamath; and guides to the northern limits of the land promised to Israel. I was extremely interest-

ed in this region. The two ranges of mountains come close together; and here I suppose was the "entering in" of the land of Hamath.

There are two objects of peculiar interest. One is the ruined convent [cavern] of *Mâr Marôn*, the founder of the Maronites. It is hewn out of the solid rock, immediately over the great fountain of the Orontes, a dark prison-like construction, more resembling the stronghold of a bandit, than the peaceable abode of the ministers of Jesus Christ, and strikingly emblematical of the dark, fierce, boorish sect, which traces its rise to these dingy caverns. The other curiosity is a very large monument about two miles east of the fountain, called *el-Kâmo Hürmül*. It is built of large hewn stones, is twenty-five feet square at the base, rises seventy or eighty feet, and is terminated by a pyramid. The four sides are covered with figures of various animals, intermingled with bows, arrows, spears, and other implements of the chase, in *alto rilievo*, beautifully executed, and as large as life. This monument is in full view of Riblah, which lies on the river below. Can it have been the work of Nebuchadnezzar, when he was encamped here, and designed to commemorate his conquests? Or is it a great hunting trophy, erected by some one of the chase-loving Seleucidae? I can meet with no description of this wonderful monument in any book of travels. The style of architecture will not contradict the first supposition. There is no inscription in Greek; which would hardly have been the case, had it been constructed by that scribbling people. They could hardly set up a stone in this region, without inscribing something upon it; and had this monument, in some respects the most singular one now standing in Syria, been erected by any of the Graeco-Syrian monarchs, they would hardly have failed to put at least their name upon it.

I passed up between the two ranges of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon to the water-shed between the Orontes and the Litânj, near 'Ain (see Num. 34: 11); and so by way of Ba'albek and Zâbleh to my residence at Abeih.

My colleague, Dr. De Forest, was so much interested in my account of this route, that he set out to visit it a short time after my return. Following my directions, and having more leisure, he visited both sides of the lake Kedeh, passing on the east as he went, and returning on the west side from Apamea. He also visited Selemqa east of Hamath; and thinks he has discovered the site of Shepham, Num. 34: 11.

A little society of intelligent Arabs, mostly young men of Beirût, has lately been commenced; one of whose objects may possibly interest you. They are preparing a *descriptive catalogue* of all known works in Arabic; and these will prove to be more numerous than was supposed. When they shall have made this as complete as possible by corresponding with literary men in Egypt, Bagdad, Damascus, Aleppo, and other centres of Arabic learning, and by the catalogues of European libraries, it will be prepared for the press by Nasif el-Yazagy, the best native Arabic scholar now known in this country. I hope they will be able to print an English translation in parallel columns. Having then the name, character, subject, and value of all Arabic works, it is a part of their plan to use this catalogue as a guide in the purchase of books for an Arabic library.

May we not hope, that this undertaking will not only give a new impulse to the study of this noble and wide-spread language; but that it will also aid in the effort to revive a taste for improvement, which has slept for so many centuries in these oriental countries. With the revival of literature will be introduced the *press* with its mighty and transforming agency. As these young men are generally not wealthy, and the forming of an Arabic library will be expensive, the work must of course advance very slowly. Still, in fifteen or twenty years, a good deal may be done.

I remain, with great respect, yours, etc.

W. M. THOMSON."

I subjoin a few remarks upon some of the names of places mentioned in the above letter, viz. those printed in *Italic*.¹

Valley of Salt. This is the celebrated valley or lake of salt, now called *es-Subbk*, about eighteen miles south-east of Aleppo, near the village Jebûl. It is described by Maundrell (p. 213), by Pococke (II. p. 168), and more particularly in Russell's Nat. Hist. of Aleppo, I. p. 55. In winter the rains and torrents, with a few springs, convert the surface into a shallow but extensive lake. In summer the water evaporates, leaving a crust of salt of various thickness and quality. This is broken up, sorted, and carried to Jebûl; where it is dried and winnowed, and thence sold to all parts of the country; furnishing indeed the main source of supply for all northern Syria.—It is related of David (2 Sam. 8: 3—13) that he undertook a military expedition in order to extend his dominion to the Euphrates; and being attacked by Hadadezer, king of Syria-Zobah, he routed him and subdued the whole of northern Syria. After an enumeration of the rich offerings which David made in the temple on this occasion, it is immediately added, v. 13: "And David gat him a name when he returned from his smiting of the Syrians (אֲרָם) in the valley of Salt, eighteen thousand men." All the circumstances, and the vicinity of the Euphrates, leave little occasion to doubt, that the valley of Salt here named is that above described. It is true, that in the parallel passages, 1 Chron. 18: 12, Pa. 60: 2 (inscr.) we find the reading *Edomites* instead of *Syrians*. This has evidently arisen in the course of transcription, by the change of a single Hebrew letter (אֲרָם for אֲדָם). These passages all obviously refer to the same event; and a change of the name being here unquestionable, it is much easier to account for the substitution of *Edom* for *Syria*, than vice versa. The later Jews were far more familiar with the neighboring Edomites, than with the regions of northern Syria; and would be very likely to confound this distant valley of Salt with that at the south end of the Dead Sea mentioned on another occasion in connection with Petra; 2 Kings 14: 7.

Khandsereh is mentioned by Abulfeda as situated in the border of the descent about two stations south-east of Aleppo. It was at one time the seat of a Khalif Omar, of the line of the Ommiades. But since the days of Abulfeda the name has been entirely lost to modern geography; and

¹ The best maps for consultation are those of Berghaus and Hughes; the latter in the Atlas published by the London Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, No. 98.

now re-appears for the first time. See Abulf. Tab. Syr. p. 170, ed. Köhler.

El-Bāra. This place was visited by Niebuhr in 1766, who writes the name *Beras*, in Arabic *Btrāh*; also *Kefr el-Berā*; see *Reisebeschr.* III. p. 95. Burchardt took it in his route from Aleppo to Hamath in 1812; he writes it correctly *el-Bāra*. He says: "The mountain of *Rīha*, of which *el-Bāra* forms part, is full of the ruins of cities which flourished in the times of the lower empire; those of *el-Bāra* are the most considerable of the whole;" *Travels in Syria*, p. 130. Both he and Niebuhr speak of the remains of public buildings, churches, and private dwellings; and especially of three tombs,—plain square structures surmounted with pyramids, one of which has fallen. Niebuhr, misled by the similarity of the name, seems to regard this as the ancient *Beroea* of Syria; but the specifications of all ancient writers go to make that place identical with Aleppo; Cellarius *Not. Orb.* II. p. 362. But without much doubt, *el-Bāra*, as suggested by Niebuhr, marks the site of the city *Abbaria* destroyed by the crusades in 1096; see Robert Monach. lib. VII, in *Gesta Dei per Francos*, p. 67.

Apamea was a large city on the valley of the Orontes, often mentioned by Josephus and other ancient writers; see Cellarius, II. p. 354. In the time of the crusades it was still a flourishing and important place under the Arabic name *Fāmīeh*, and was occupied by Tancred; it is also described by Abulfeda as situated near an extensive lake in the valley; Wilken *Gesch. der Kr.* II. p. 274. Abulf. Tab. Syr. p. 114, 157. On the strength of these notices the name *Fāmīeh* has continued to be inserted on modern maps down to the present century; although both the name and the site have long been forgotten in those regions. Niebuhr heard at Aleppo in 1766, that the site of the former *Fāmīeh* was now called *Kūlat el-Mudk*; *Reisebeschr.* III. p. 97. Burchardt in 1812 found the castle of this name occupying a hill projecting into the valley of the Orontes, not far from the lake *et-Tākah*; and although he could not enter it nor examine the neighborhood, yet he fixes upon it as the probable site of *Apamea*; *Trav. in Syr.* p. 138. In connection with the Euphrates expedition in 1835, Mr. Ainsworth visited this region, and speaks of *Kūlat el-Mudk* as the site of *Apamea*, and as exhibiting "ruins of a highly ornamental character. Part of the town is enclosed in an ancient castle situated on a hill; the other ruins lie in a plain; part of a strong wall and an archway still exist, and also remains of a temple. In the adjacent lake are the celebrated black-fish, the source of a distant commerce;" see *Journ. of the R. Geogr. Soc.* 1837, p. 414, 415. The above account by Mr. Thomson is still more full and satisfactory.

Sejār is at the point where the Orontes issues from the mountain ridge which it breaks through below Hamath; a bridge here crosses the river. On the summit of the range on the west bank stands a castle; which in its present state is from the times of the later Khalifs; but the many remains of Grecian architecture, fragments of columns and elegant Corinthian and Doric capitals, indicate that a Greek town formerly stood here. It is doubtless the site of the ancient *Larissa* of Syria, situated between *Apamea* and *Hamath*. See *Burckh. Syr.* p. 143. Cellarius, *ib.* p. 356.

Riblah, situated at the elbow of the Orontes, was first seen by Buckingham in 1816; he writes the Arabic name *Rabla* instead of *Ribleh*, and appears to have had no suspicion of its identity with the *Riblah* of Scripture; Arab Tribes, p. 491. It was however recognized by Gesenius; but has since been described by no traveller until the visit of Mr. Thomson.

Laodicea ad Libanum. This place is often mentioned by ancient writers; but the only specifications of its position are found in the Itineraries. The Itinerary of Antoninus places it between *Emessa* (*Hums*) and *Heliopolis* (*Ba'albek*), at eighteen Roman miles from the former and sixty-four Roman miles from the latter. The Peutinger Tables give it at twenty Roman miles south of *Emessa*. These distances, so far as is yet imperfectly known, accord best with the site of *Jûsy*, three or four miles south-east of *Riblah*, on the side of *Anti-Lebanon*. "It was said to be a large city, and to have pillars and aqueducts and castles in it; and below it, on the plain, about two miles to the north of it, was another tower called *Jûsy el-Jedîd*. The former was now entirely deserted; but the latter still retained some inhabitants;" Buckingham, Arab Tribes, p. 490. All this accords well with an ancient site upon the mountain; while the name and the inhabitants have apparently been transferred to the plain. Compare the similar case of *Sarepta*, now *Sarafend*; *Bibl. Res.* III. p. 412—414.

Source of the Orontes. The remotest source is a rivulet coming from *Anti-Lebanon* near the village of *Lebmeh* ten or twelve miles north of *Ba'albek*. This little stream flows through the plain, and approaches the western hills that skirt the foot of *Lebanon* near *Hürmul*; where it unites with the waters of the large fountain spoken of by Mr. Thomson. This latter is usually regarded as the head of the Orontes; the natives considering not the most distant, but the most copious fountain, as the proper source. The same is true in relation to the sources of the *Litány*, the *Barada*, and the *Jordan*. A large volume of water "springs with some violence from a natural basin in the rock, of a triangular form, measuring about fifty paces, and nearly concealed on each side by trees and bushes;" see W. B. Barker in *Journ. of the R. Geogr. Soc.* 1837, p. 99.—The cavern now called *Deir Mâr Mârôn* or *Convent of St. Mârôn*, was known in *Abulfeda's* day as *Mûghârat er-Râhîb*, the *Monks Cavern*; *Tab. Syr.* p. 150. The reference of it therefore to the founder of the *Maronites*, may not improbably be of later date.

The *Monument* described by Mr. Thomson near *Hürmul* is unique, and deserves the early and attentive examination of travellers and antiquarians. It was seen across the plain by Buckingham, who merely speaks of it as "a high and large tower, seen at a great distance, and called *Koormee*;" Arab Tribes, p. 489.

'Ain is most probably, as suggested, the Scriptural name occurring in *Num.* 34: 11, and obviously situated south of *Riblah*. It lies north of *Lebmeh*, and is therefore north of the water-shed. It is mentioned by Buckingham, *ib.* p. 487.

III. THE SABBATICAL RIVER. RAPHANEA.

The famous *Sabbatical River* of Josephus (B. J. 7. 5. 1) has recently been identified, by the Rev. W. M. Thomson, with a large intermitting fountain near the Convent of Mâr Jirjis and the castle el-Husn north of Lebanon; see Silliman's Journ. of Science, Nov. 1846. This fountain had already been noted by Burckhardt; Trav. in Syr. p. 150. There can be no question as to the identity; and thus another incidental proof is given of the general correctness, and trustworthiness of the Jewish historian. On two points, however, there is perhaps room for future elucidation. Josephus describes the river as "between Arka which belonged to Agrippa's kingdom, and Raphanea." Arka is situated at the north end of Lebanon not far from the coast, and doubtless made part of Agrippa's original kingdom of *Chalcis*; this latter city having been situated in the Bûkâ'a, not far from Ba'albek; see Jos. Antiq. 14, 3. 2. The text of Josephus therefore needs here no change. As to Raphanea, which Mr. Thomson supposed he had found at some distance north of the fountain, there are several historical notices which serve to fix it in another place. Raphanea was still a town of importance in the time of the crusades. In 1126 King Baldwin II. subdued it, in connection with Count Pontius, who had for a long time pressed hard upon it from a castle he had built upon a neighboring mountain; Wilken Gesch. der Kr. II. p. 527. This castle was called *Barinum*, in Arabic *Bârn*, and came at last from its importance to supersede the name or mention of Raphanea itself; Wilken ib. II. p. 605 u. 652. It was destroyed in 1236; ib. VI. p. 537. In like manner Abulfeda testifies, that the castle *Bârn* was founded by the Christians about 1120; and that in his day it was a small place with ruins and ancient substructions, called *Rafaniyeh*, situated a day's journey south-west of Hamath; Tab. Syr. p. 107. In accordance with all this, Burckhardt while on his way from Hamath to the castle el-Husn, at the distance of ten or eleven hours from Hamath, was pointed to a ruined castle on a mountain, an hour from his road, called *el-Bârn*; Trav. in Syr. p. 155. The coincidence is complete; and there can be little doubt but that these ruins mark the position of Raphanea. The ancient name of the city has been supplanted by that of the modern castle; as in the parallel instance of Apamea described above.

ARTICLE X.

LITERARY AND MISCELLANEOUS INTELLIGENCE.

Vatican Library. This library was founded by Pope Nicholas V. in 1447, who transferred to his new Vatican palace the MSS. which had been collected in the Lateran as early as the fifth century. The present building was erected by Sixtus V. in 1588. The library has been augmented from time to time by various purchases, bequests and donations. In this work, Leo X. was particularly active, sending agents into distant countries to collect MSS. The great body of the treasures, especially of