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ARTICLE IV.

EL MOHRAKAH, OR THE PLACE OF ELLJAH'S SACRIFICE.

BY REV. C. M. MEAD, PROFESSOR AT ANDOVER.

AMONG the interesting sites in Palestine, few are better identified than the place on Mt. Carmel where Elijah repaired the altar of Jehovah and defeated the priests of Baal. Tradition fixes the spot, and it is a tradition in which there is no disagreement among the various sects in Palestine. Stanley pronounces it "unusually trustworthy."¹ Dr. Thomson gives six reasons for having confidence in the tradition, and concludes by saying: "Why, therefore, should there be a doubt about the matter? I confess, with hearty good-will, that I am troubled with none."²

The first among modern explorers to visit the place and publish an account of it seems to have been Van de Velde, who found the spot, March 2, 1852.³ Besides his account, the only original sources of information with which I am acquainted are the narratives of Dr. Thomson, Dean Stanley, and Mr. Tristram.⁴ Prof. Porter, in his *Hand-book for Palestine* (Murray's Series) also gives an account of the place, but leaves us in doubt whether his description is derived from personal observation or from the publications of others. Having recently had an opportunity to visit the place twice, and finding the above-mentioned descriptions somewhat unsatisfactory, I venture to undertake a criticism of these, and to make some additional contributions to the topography of the place, and to the exposition of the narrative given in 1 Kings xviii. My object will be accomplished, if any traveller shall be saved from the vexatious disappointment which many have experienced. Having read, in the guide-book,

¹ Sinai and Palestine, p. 346.² Land and the Book, Vol. ii. p. 225.³ Syria and Palestine, Vol. i. p. 316 sq. ⁴ Land of Israel, p. 117.

that everything in the place corresponds perfectly with the sacred narrative, one climbs the mountain in the full expectation of having nothing to do, on reaching the place of sacrifice, but easily to reproduce in imagination the biblical scene. Arriving there, however, he finds himself perplexed by the disagreement between the books and the locality, and spends the time, which might be pleasantly occupied in meditating on the sacred events, in vain attempts to reconcile the statements in his books with the Bible and with the appearance of the place. Let us, then, first notice the principal features of the locality.

As to the spot now called el-Mohrakah (or, as others write it, Mokhrakah, Mohhrakah, Mukhrakah, Muhrakah, or Maharakah), it is situated on the top of the Carmel range, at the southeastern extremity of it. On this point, all except Tristram seem to be agreed. The name itself (signifying the *burnt place* or *place of burning*) is supposed to be derived from the circumstance that here the fire descended and burned the sacrifice of Elijah. The exact spot is assumed to be marked by the ruins of a stone building, mentioned by Van de Velde, Stanley, Thomson, Porter, and Tristram. I may add that there now stands, close by the ruin, on the south of it, an oratory said to be used by the Latin monks. It is about twenty-five feet square, and is divided into two compartments, at the inner extremity of one of which is a rude altar. This building, I was told, has been recently erected.

The summit on which el-Mohrakah is situated, though a part of the range, is somewhat isolated by a deep depression running on the north and northwest side of it. On the west and south the ground also slopes away, but somewhat more gently; but on the east the descent is almost precipitous. From the summit a wide view of the Mediterranean is obtained, there being nothing to obstruct it, except in the northwest, where, of course, the mountain range itself, a part of which is even higher than the point of view,¹ hides the sea for a

¹ Stanley (p. 345) speaks of the eastern extremity as "the highest point of the whole ridge." But the highest point is at Esfieh, some four miles from the ex-
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considerable distance. On the south and southwest one looks upon the hills of Samaria and the plain of Sharon. On the east is a splendid view of the whole plain of Esdraelon, with Mt. Gilboa, Little Hermon, and Mt. Tabor; and in the northeast are seen the hills around Nazareth.

Under this summit, on the east, is a sort of basin on the mountain side, an open space partly cultivated and sprinkled over with olive-trees. I should roughly estimate it to be about two hundred rods in diameter. This is the "wide upland sweep" of Stanley, the "glade" or "amphitheatre" of Tristram. The western half of it, especially the part immediately under the cliff, is very steep. As one descends further, it becomes more nearly level. Still further, at the lower extremity of this amphitheatre (not the upper part, as Tristram affirms) is the fountain from which Elijah is generally supposed to have got the water to fill the trench. It is situated on the northern side of the wady, or ravine, into which the basin here contracts. And at this point, or a little below, the descent to the plain of Esdraelon again becomes more rapid. Stanley says that an old olive-tree marks the place of the fountain (which, however, he did not himself see). Tristram, who was there ten years later, says that it is "overhung by a few magnificent trees." As trees are mutable things, both these statements may be correct; but in the spring of 1872 the fountain was overhung only by a fallen tree-trunk, about nine feet long, lying directly over it. There is a magnificent oak-tree growing over a rocky ledge, a very few rods west of the fountain, under whose shade parties of travellers are fond of resting and taking lunch. Van de Velde speaks of the fountain as "vaulted" and "in the form of a tank." When I was there, little of the vault could be seen. Indeed, except upon a close examination, one would have noticed nothing but a well about six feet in diameter; the wall built of unhewn stones,

tremity. There the height is given by Grove (Smith's Bible Dict. Am. ed. p. 389), as 1728 feet; by Porter (Kitto's Cycl.), as 1750 feet. El-Mohraka, according to Van de Velde, is 1635 feet high; according to Grove, 1600 feet.

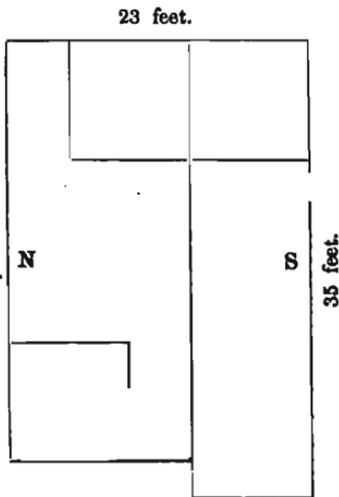
and standing about eight feet out of the water on the north-western (upper) side, and about five feet on the opposite side. But under the upper side of the wall, close to the water, almost covered by it, I observed what might be a part of an arch or roof, made of hewn stones eight or ten inches square. The water extended under this arch; how far, I could not tell. I tried to measure the depth of the water; but, finding nothing better than a tall celery-stalk to use for a plummet, I can only say that I found no bottom, though I put it in as deep as nine feet. The water is clear and good, but not very cold. An Arab, who happened along, stated to my companion that the spring is never dry. Tristram seems to have been more fortunate in getting a view of the vault. He says: "The reservoir of the spring is stone-built and square, about eight feet deep, and the old steps which once descended to it may yet be traced. The roof partially remains. The water is of some depth, and is perennial." Tristram visited the place on the sixteenth of December, and it is not strange that he should have found the water much lower than when I was there (April 25).

The ridges which inclose this basin on the north and south are not very commanding. They are hardly more than gentle swells, except at the eastern part of the southern side. One may ascend to the Mohrakah from the fountain by three different ways. The bridle-path leads to the right, over the ridge on the northern side of the basin, and makes a circuit quite around the northern side of the summit of the mountain, so that the first approach to the Mohrakah is the same as for those who come to it from Esfieh along the mountain ridge. A horse occupies twenty-five minutes or more in going up this path. If one walks, however, one can go much more directly, either by climbing up the precipitous eastern side of the summit, or by passing around a little to the south and coming up on the southern slope. The time required to pass between the two points in either of the two latter ways is from twelve to fifteen minutes. At present the southern slope of the summit is very rough, being thickly covered

with large, angular rocks, and overgrown with brush-wood. The same is true of a considerable part of the more level portion of the summit. As to the east side, Van de Velde's statement that "the rock shoots up in an almost perpendicular wall of more than two hundred feet in height on the side of the vale of Esdraelon," gives an erroneous impression. The rock is not so steep but that I clambered directly up it to the Mohrakah. A little further north, however, on the same side, the rock is quite precipitous; but the precipitous part is not more than thirty feet high. Below this, as already remarked, the ground formed by the debris is very steep, but ought not to be called part of the precipice.

A word respecting the ruins on the Mohrakah. There can be no mistake as to their location. The "rocky, level space" on the summit, of which Van de Velde speaks, is, as he says, "of no great circumference," and it is quite certain that there is only one ruined building on it. Van de Velde describes it as "an oblong, quadrangular building, of which the front wall and door and both side walls are still partially standing. The large hewn stones suggest an older date than that of the Crusades." Stanley calls it a "square stone building,"

and then quotes Van de Velde for the rest. Dr. Thomson says: "There is only a 'spot' on a natural platform of naked rock, surrounded by a low wall, which, from appearance, may have been there in the days of Elijah, or even before." Tristram tells only of "hewn stones." These accounts are only partially correct, as a description of the *present* appearance of the ruins. The shape is, as Van de Velde states, quadrangular, if we except a slight projection on the south-



west corner. The accompanying diagram will best give an

idea of its form and size. Portions of *all* the walls are standing; but the remains vary from one to six or eight feet in height. The stones are not large, however; they are, on the average, hardly more than a foot in diameter; and, although I cannot profess to judge of the age of buildings, I should sooner think the building to have been erected during the last half century than in the time of the Crusades or of Elijah. Not many of the stones are even hewn. Some of the foundation-stones are hewn, however; and it may be that the superstructure was taken away to build into the oratory before spoken of, and that the walls now standing have been recently built to take the place of the older ones. I cannot otherwise account for the above-mentioned descriptions. The walls, as they now appear, very much resemble a farmer's stone wall. No mortar is seen in them, and the chinks between the larger stones are only loosely filled with smaller ones.

Let us now attempt to picture to ourselves the biblical scene. We first naturally ask where the altar was which Elijah repaired. This has been already virtually answered. The tradition implies that it was on the summit; and in this the above-mentioned writers seem to agree. Van de Velde identifies el-Mohrakah with the site of the altar (p. 326), and says of it: "There is not a more conspicuous spot on all Carmel than the abrupt, rocky height of Mohrakah, shooting up so suddenly on the east" (p. 322). Stanley, also, says: "There, on the highest point of the mountain, may well have stood, on its sacred 'high place,' the altar of the Lord which Jezebel had thrown down" (p. 347). Dr. Thomson is less explicit, but seems to imply the same. Tristram, also (p. 117), after saying, "We were standing on the edge of a cliff, from the base of which the mountain sank steeply down a thousand feet into the plain of Esdraclon," adds, in reference to the same place, "The hewn stones among which we stood mark the site of the altar of the Lord which Jezebel overthrew." So far there is perfect agreement. Tristram, however, immediately adds: "No site in Palestine is more

indisputable than that of the little hollow in the knoll, three hundred feet below us, where the Lord God of Elijah manifested his divinity before Ahab and assembled Israel." And again: "We remained here [on the edge of the cliff] for an hour, and then, leaving our horses, descended by a slippery path to the Mohrakah, or place of sacrifice" (p. 119). This is all very obscure. What does Mr. Tristram mean by "the place of sacrifice," if not the place where the altar was? But he distinctly puts the two places at least three hundred feet apart, in reality (if he puts the Mohrakah near the fountain, as he seems to do, p. 119) more than half a mile apart. What other "sacrifice" can be referred to, I cannot conceive. Certainly, not the slaughter of the priests of Baal, which took place in the plain, nor the sacrifice of the bullock chosen by the priests of Baal. It is quite impossible, therefore, to reconcile this writer with himself. There is, then, no ground in what he says for questioning the tradition which puts el-Mohrakah on the summit of the mountain, and identifies it with the place where Elijah repaired the altar.

We are next led to ask whether we are to conceive the scene described in 1 Kings xviii. 30-39 to have taken place on the summit, or in the basin below. This question is almost identical with the last, and would not need to be raised, were it not that some of the writers seem to locate the scene wholly in the lower place. This is not true of Van de Velde, who says: "The place of sacrifice, according to verses eighteenth and nineteenth, must have been ample enough in size to contain a very numerous multitude. El-Mohrakah must at that time have been quite fitted for this, although now covered with a rough, dense jungle." Dr. Thomson, too, though not specific on this point, in general indorses Van de Velde's description. Tristram, however, as we have seen, pictures the transaction as occurring in the amphitheatre below the summit. And Stanley, too, though unequivocally locating Elijah's altar on the summit, yet, after expressing this opinion, immediately adds:

“Close beneath, on a wide upland sweep, under the shade of ancient olives and round a well of water said to be perennial, and which may therefore have escaped the general drought and have been able to furnish water for the trenches round the altar, must have been ranged, on one side the king and people, with the eight hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and Astarte, and on the other side the solitary and commanding figure of the prophet of the Lord.” This is quoted and indorsed by Porter.¹ It is difficult to understand this representation. According to it, the whole multitude were assembled around the fountain, Elijah with the rest. And yet the fountain is, as has been already noticed, more than half a mile from the place of sacrifice. The *central* part of the scene must certainly have been around the altar of Jehovah. Still, we can hardly suppose that the whole multitude could have been on the very summit and immediately around the altar. The “rocky, level space” (Van de Velde), or “natural platform of naked rock” (Thomson), or “terrace of natural rock” (Porter), is not large enough to accommodate such a gathering as the narrative warrants us to suppose to have been there. The level part is hardly more than twenty rods in length, and somewhat less in width. Those who could not conveniently have been congregated on this space itself may have come near, remaining on the southern, western, and southwestern slopes of the peak. Or, a great part of them may have remained in the “upland sweep,” east of the cliff, where they could at least see the fire descend and consume the sacrifice. To borrow Van de Velde’s words: “The rock shoots up in an almost perpendicular wall of more than two hundred feet in height on the side of the vale of Esdraelon. On this side, therefore, there was no room for the gazing multitude; but, on the other hand, this wall made it visible over the whole plain and from all the surrounding heights, so that even those left behind, and who had not ascended Carmel, would still have been able to witness, at no great distance, the fire from

¹ Hand Book, Vol. ii. p. 354.

heaven that descended upon the altar." So obvious is it that those who locate the altar of Jehovah on the summit must conceive this same place to have been the centre of that part of the scene in which Elijah most prominently figured, that one is forced to conclude that Stanley (who did not himself go down to the "upland sweep," but returned to the convent on the other end of the range) must have mis-conceived, or forgotten, the exact configuration of the ground, and especially the distance of el-Mohrakah from the fountain. Otherwise, he could hardly have described the principal actors in the scene as grouped around the well, rather than around the altar. At all events, the last part of the drama must have been enacted (the correctness of the tradition being assumed) on the very summit of the mountain. For we read: "And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down" (xviii. 30).

It may still remain a question whether the altar of the prophets of Baal was also on the same summit. But this, also, there is no reason for disputing. We are told (vs. 19, 20) that the people of Israel and the prophets of Baal were gathered "unto Mount Carmel." This language of itself leaves it undetermined how far the people ascended the mountain, or, indeed, whether they ascended it at all. But it is implied that they went up some distance, at least; for it is said, in vs. 40, that Elijah "brought the prophets *down* to the brook Kishon." And there is nothing to imply that the altar of Jehovah was situated on a higher place than that of Baal. The language of Stanley and Tristram leads one to conjecture that they may have had this conception of the scene. At least, this is the only plausible explanation of their descriptions. But, as one reads the biblical narrative, the impression derived is that the people, the false prophets, and Elijah were all together during the whole occurrence. Elijah addressed the people, after they were assembled (vs. 21, 22); he addressed also the prophets of

Baal (vs. 25, 27). And when the prophets had failed to call down the fire, Elijah, who had been present with them, simply says to the people, "Come near unto me"; not "Come up with me," or "Follow me," as might be expected, if the altar of Baal had been in the amphitheatre below, instead of on the summit itself. In one sense, they must have been near him before; but until now they had not given special attention to him; the altar and prophets of Baal had constituted the centre of interest and attraction. When, therefore, Elijah says: "Come near unto me," he means nothing more than to invite the people now to give their attention to him, to gather more closely around him, and observe all that he is about to do.¹ Without evidence to the contrary, therefore, it seems most natural to assume that both altars were on the summit, though, of course, not on precisely the same spot. "It is well known," remarks Van de Velde, "that such altars were uniformly built on very conspicuous eminences." The heathen, more than the Jews, were inclined to select such eminences for their altars. It is certainly improbable, therefore, that the worshippers of Baal built their altar lower down than the altar of Jehovah.

A few words respecting the water used by Elijah. Van de Velde, Stanley, Tristram, and Porter agree in supposing that the water was obtained from the fountain described above. Dr. Thomson, however, whose opinion on such a matter is perhaps worth more than that of any one else, dissents. He says (p. 225) that the fountain was nearly dry when he saw it, and thinks it could not hold out through the dry season even of one ordinary summer, still less through a drought of three years and a half. We have, it would seem, no more positive evidence than this. The statements of the natives, though they may ever so strongly affirm that the spring is perennial, can hardly be regarded as decisive

¹ This explanation is made all the more probable, if we adopt the reading of the LXX, who insert, before the 30th verse, the following clause: "And Elijah, the Tishbite, spake to the prophets of the idols, and said, Retire now, and I will prepare my whole burnt-offering. And they retired and went away."—Josephus (*Ant.* viii. 13, 5) makes the same representation.

against Dr. Thomson's opinion. Still, it is only an opinion, and may be erroneous. Or, even if it be correct as to the *present* stato of the case, does it follow that it correctly represents what was true in the time of Elijah? May there not have been a change in the abundance of the supply of water from the spring since that time? Dr. Thomson's theory that the water may have been brought from some of the permanent sources of the Kishon at the foot of Carmel may not be inadmissible; yet the time required for bringing it must have been rather long. Thomson himself says that it is doubtful whether any of these sources, except the great one of Saadich, could stand such a protracted drouth. But this water is only about three miles east of Haifa. From Haifa to the Mohrakah the distance cannot be less than fifteen miles. I was four hours and a half in passing over it, though my horse galloped a considerable part of the way. In order, therefore, to bring water from this source to the Mohrakah, a distance of twelve miles would have had to be twice traversed — a process which would occupy more than six hours. Now, we must remember that there is no intimation that the water was brought before Elijah's bullock had been slain; and this, probably, did not take place earlier than three o'clock in the afternoon. It is, therefore, strange that Dr. Thomson can say that the distance to the Saadieh "is not great enough to create any difficulty." To my mind, there would be some difficulty in supposing that the water was brought from the marshes east of the Tell Kussis, where he thinks there might also have been water. For even this would have required two or three hours. I am inclined, therefore, to adopt Van de Velde's theory that the water may have been obtained from the fountain below the Mohrakah. Of course, however, it is conceivable that water was carried up from some distant place, early in the day, not merely to be used in the way mentioned, but to be drunk. It is probable that the occurrence took place on a summer day, when there would be need of such a provision. If this conjecture is adopted, it will not be necessary to assume that

water was first fetched after Elijah had called for it late in the afternoon. Possibly this is Dr. Thomson's conception of the case. At all events, we have no need of resorting to Thenius's easy settlement of the question. He says: "The author seems, for the moment, not to have thought of the frightful drouth in which, doubtless, even the numerous fountains of Carmel and the brook Kishon must have been dried up."¹ It may here be remarked that this apparent difficulty is magnified by the Authorized Version, which renders פְּרִיט by "barrels," whereas it should have been rendered by "buckets," or, as elsewhere, by "pitchers."

We are here led to inquire concerning the trench which Elijah dug. Josephus calls it "a very deep trench." In the original narrative, however, we read, "a trench as great as would contain two measures of seed," literally, "a trench according to the capacity of two measures of seed." This is interpreted by Thenius and Keil to mean a trench the digging of which removed as much soil as would have been sown with two measures of seed. In favor of this exposition might be adduced the circumstance that the word "seeds" is added, which seems unnecessary, if the writer meant merely to designate the capacity of the trench as equal to two measures (סָאֵהִים, two seahs). But, on the other hand, this would be a very singular method of designating the size of a trench. It is, at the very best, rather indefinite as descriptive of the superficial area of the space dug up. Moreover, it tells us nothing as to the depth, the real capacity, of the trench. And, finally, this interpretation would make the trench incredibly large. A seah, according to one estimate, is nearly equal to twelve quarts; according to another, to about six quarts. Two seahs, then, the smallest estimate being adopted, would be equivalent to a peck and a half. This would be sufficient to sow over a space of thirty square rods. The other (and perhaps more probable) estimate of the size of a seah would require us, on this hypothesis, to assume sixty square rods to have been dug up in making

¹ Kurzgefasstes Exeg. Handbuch, ix. s. 224

the trench! The most of the whole level part of the summit would have thus been devoted to the altar and trench. The supposition that Elijah could have undertaken such an enterprise borders on the absurd. To refute it, we hardly need to adduce the argument that, according to the narrative as most probably to be understood, the twelve bucketfuls themselves filled the trench, after running over the sacrifice and round about the altar. Our version reads: "And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water" (vs. 35). But we *may* render the Hebrew of the last clause, "And the water filled also the trench." Leaving this, however, undecided, we ask, What was the object of digging a trench at all? Evidently, to make it obvious that there could be no deception in regard to the fire. But this could as easily be accomplished by a narrow, as by a broad trench. The statement of the sacred writer, interpreted in the most natural way, is, therefore, quite in accordance with the probabilities of the case. A trench dug around the altar would answer the above-mentioned purpose, if large enough to contain twelve quarts, certainly if, as is perhaps more probable, large enough to contain twenty-four quarts. The fact of the water remaining in the trench, even though it were a small one, would prove that there was no secret way of letting it off. What did not remain in it, or soak into the ground before reaching it, may have run over it.¹ But how could a trench have been dug at all on that "terrace of natural rock"? I was at first staggered, as this question occurred to me; but a closer observation showed that there is now soil enough for a shallow trench, at least; whether there was more or less in Elijah's time cannot be said. But if

¹ Bähr (in Lange's Bibelwerk), while rejecting the interpretation of Keil and Thenius, and while apparently adopting the explanation given by Gesenius in his Lexicon (under פֶּחַיִם) and above defended, yet seems to misrepresent that interpretation by adding: "The ditch, therefore, was as deep as the measure containing two seahs." This is only one degree less objectionable than the view which he rejects. If the writer wished only to describe the depth of the trench, he could have found some term more appropriate to his purpose than this. What evidence have we that the Jews had a measure containing two seahs? If they had, what evidence have we that it was always of one shape and of uniform depth?

we are required to believe that "a very deep trench" was dug, or that sixty square rods of earth, more or less, were thrown up in the operation, then we must certainly throw up the tradition which puts the altar of Jehovah on that rocky summit. If the trench was comparatively small, there is no difficulty. One might even believe that a trench could have been dug out of the rock itself. I myself observed, close to the Mohrakah, a rocky surface, artificially smoothed, about eight feet square, around the edge of which had been dug a groove an inch or two in depth. One might almost be tempted to find in that the foundation and trench of the very altar itself.

It remains now to examine the latter part of the narrative (vs. 40-46) in connection with the natural features of the Mohrakah and its surroundings. Elijah's sacrifice having been consumed, he commanded the people to take the prophets of Baal; "and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there." With regard to the place where the slaughter took place, there is general agreement. The path down the mountain, after passing the fountain and leaving it on the left (north), turns somewhat to the left, crossing over the ridge which runs down from the Mohrakah, and continues, with no great windings, almost directly towards Tell Kussis, a commanding hill on the opposite (northeast) side of the Kishon, but very near it. It is a spur from the hills which bound the plain of Esdraelon on the north, close by where the plain contracts into the narrow valley which connects it with the plain of Akka.¹ Its name, signifying *hill of the priests*, not improbably derives from the fact of the slaughter of the prophets of Baal, which must have taken place near it. For it is at this point that the Kishon would be first reached in descending from the Mohrakah. Here, then, the false prophets were slaughtered.

¹ Closely resembling this tell is another, on the Carmel side of the Kishon, at the other end of the valley, i.e., where it opens into the plain of Akka. This tell is a spur from Carmel, and commands the entrance of the plain of Akka, as Tell-Kussis does that of Esdraelon. Thomson (Vol. ii. pp. 143, 218) calls it Tell-Harothieh, and plausibly identifies it with the Harosheth of Judg. iv. 2.

The people now, we must assume, returned to their homes. But Elijah and Ahab, with their attendants, went again up the mountain. Ahab, at Elijah's behest, went up "to eat and to drink." Whether we are to understand this to be the so-called sacrificial feast which used to accompany certain offerings, may be doubted. Dr. Thomson (p. 226) says that the feast "always formed part of these sacrifices." Stanley also calls it the "sacrificial feast." But the sacred writer calls the offering מִזְבֵּחַ , a burnt-offering. The sacrificial feast followed the peace-offering (Lev. vii. 15; xxii. 30), but not the burnt-offering. The feast certainly could not have consisted in eating the flesh of the bullock which Elijah had offered; for that was wholly consumed. Yet Elijah, in summoning Ahab to ascend the mountain once more, instead of returning at once to Jezreel, must have had for his object to bring him again into close association with the place where the glory of Jehovah had been manifested, in order that he might be less easily tempted back into the worship of Baal. That he should be asked to eat and drink was natural enough, inasmuch as it is not probable that, during the exciting contest which had been waged on the mountain, any time had been found for partaking of food. "So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel" (vs. 42). This is thus paraphrased by Stanley: "From the slaughter by the side of the Kishon the king 'went up,' at Elijah's bidding, once again to the peaceful glades of Carmel to join in the sacrificial feast. And Elijah, too, ascended to 'the top of the mountain.'" This description is characterized by that vagueness in which Stanley is apt to indulge when he is more intent on presenting a smooth picture than on giving a clear statement of facts. "The peaceful glades" must be the same as "the upland sweep"; and Stanley, therefore, seems to conceive Ahab as eating near the fountain. But Elijah, "too," we are told, went—where? To the same peaceful glades? If so, why not say so? If not, what is the force of the word "too"? Stanley afterwards says: "Each from his separate

height, the king and the prophet descended." From which we gather that he conceives Ahab and Elijah not to have been at the same place. But where, then, was Elijah? Not on the very top of Carmel, according to Stanley, though he has just declared that he went there; for he tells us that, while he was praying, "his servant mounted to the highest point of all." Then, in a foot-note, we are told that "from the place where Elijah must have worshipped, the view of the sea is just intercepted by an adjacent height." But we are left wholly in doubt where the place is in which Elijah *must* have worshipped. It seems to be a very definite place in Stanley's mind; for he says that from it the view of the sea is "just" intercepted, and adds that "that height, however, may be ascended in a few minutes, and a full view of the sea obtained from the top." The truth is, Stanley has evidently no clear recollection concerning this point, and borrows his description from Van de Velde, without, however, using quotation-marks. Van de Velde says: "The place of Elijah's offering behooves to have been so screened by a rising ground on the west and northwest as to intercept a view of the sea; for he said to his servant, 'Go up now, and look toward the sea.' Moreover, the distance to that height must not have been great; for the passage runs, 'Go again seven times.' Now such is the position of el-Mohrakah that these circumstances might all quite well have been united here. On its west and northwest side the view of the sea is quite intercepted by an adjacent height. That height may be ascended, however, in a few minutes, and a full view of the sea obtained from the top" (p. 326). Porter also tells nearly the same story, saying: "The sea is not visible from the place of sacrifice, the view being intercepted by a shoulder of the mountain. That shoulder, however, can be ascended in a few minutes, and then a full view is obtained." Now, what shall we make of all this? Porter says that the sea is not visible from the Mohrakah, leaving us to understand that *none* of it is visible. Van de Velde tells us that the sea was screened by a rising ground on the west and northwest side,

leaving us in doubt whether it may still have been visible in the southwest. Stanley, however, while drawing his language from Van de Velde, yet seems to have had a vague consciousness of the inconsistency of it with what he has before said respecting the view from el-Mohrakah. He has said (pp. 346, 347) that it is "on the highest point of the mountain"; and again, that it commands "the last view of the sea behind, and the first view of the great plain in front." Having made these declarations, he seems to avoid Van de Velde's statement that from the *place of Elijah's offering* the sea is invisible, and substitutes the phrase, "place where Elijah must have worshipped." But he saves himself from flat self-contradiction only by taking refuge in vagueness. Dr. Thomson, whose description of the locality, though more meagre, is in general more accurate than the others, seems, on the point in question, to agree with Van de Velde; for he says: "If Elijah returned to the place of sacrifice after the slaughter of the priests, his servant would have to go but a short distance to obtain an extensive view of the sea, both toward Caesarea, and also over the plain of Acre to the northwest" (p. 226). Now, this statement is not palpably incorrect, but it makes a false impression. One would infer that *at* the place of sacrifice the sea is not visible at all; whereas the sea *is* visible in the west and toward Caesarea in the southwest. Having seen it with my own eyes, and my experience being confirmed by that of a half-dozen other intelligent travellers who were with me, I do not need to collate authorities to settle the question. But even any one who has not visited the place must be able to see that from the inland *summit* of a range of mountains which, running inward from the sea, makes a very acute angle with it, the sea *must* be visible. Confessedly the range is nowhere higher than at the Mohrakah, except in the neighborhood of Esfieh, which is in the northwest. In the west, and especially the southwest, where the mountain falls away into undulating hills, there is nothing whatever to obstruct the view. Van de Velde's account of the matter is

also somewhat vague, if not incorrect. Why did the place of the offering "behoove" to have been screened on the north and northwest any more than on the south and southwest? Did Elijah tell his servant to go up and get a view of the sea in the north and northwest? The rains in Palestine generally come from the southwest, rather than from the north or northwest. If we may infer anything from Elijah's words, it is that the servant needed to "go up" in order to view the sea at all. We have no right to understand that the servant was to go where he could get an absolutely uninterrupted view of the sea. This would have occupied him two hours, to go and come, each of the seven times that he went. For, in order to accomplish this purpose, he would have had to go to Esfieh, four miles distant. It is true, he might have got a view of the sea in the northwest by going a shorter distance, though even to gain this unimportant end more than a "a few minutes" would be needed.

The case seems, then, to be clear enough; and the wonder is that any one who has ever visited the Mohrakah could have fallen into the confusion and inaccuracy which to a greater or less extent characterize all the above-mentioned writers. The "adjacent height," in Van de Velde's description, must be the whole range, stretching directly away from the spectator for a distance of more than four miles. The "adjacent height" in Stanley's description can be nothing but the height on which the Mohrakah itself is situated. For from there, according to Stanley himself, the view of the sea is *not* intercepted. But if so, where was Elijah when he was praying? And why should this height, which by this time has become so familiar to us, be described so vaguely as "*an adjacent height*"? And as to Porter's statement, that from the place of sacrifice the sea is not visible, but may be seen by ascending a shoulder of the mountain, nothing intelligible can be made out of it by any one who visits the spot. We must, then, reconstruct the narrative as well as may be, without depending on these authorities.

Ahab and Elijah both went up the mountain. Elijah, in

particular, is said to have gone to the *top* of the mountain. This of itself would lead to the conjecture that he went up higher than Ahab, and would seem to lend probability to the hypothesis that Ahab ate and drank near the fountain. But it is not necessarily implied that Ahab remained lower down than Elijah; and that this was not the case is made absolutely certain by the language of vs. 44, where we read that Elijah said unto his servant, "Go *up*, say unto Ahab,"¹ etc. From this we see that Ahab was not in a lower, but a higher, place than Elijah. If Elijah went to the top of the mountain, then Ahab went also to the top. How far apart they were, when Elijah was praying, we have no intimation; but from the foregoing it is evident that they could not have been widely separated. Dr. Thomson says: "I suppose that both Elijah and Ahab did return to the Mukhrakah"; and, adopting this supposition, we must conceive them as near together. There is no ground whatever for assuming that either of them remained in the basin below. The fountain is not more than two thirds of the way to the top, and that place could with no propriety be called the top of the mountain. Besides, if, as has been abundantly shown, we have not the slightest evidence that the scenes of the former part of the day were enacted here, there is also no reason for supposing that Ahab and Elijah on their return stopped at this place, instead of going to the same place where they had been before.

The only remaining point, then, needing to be cleared up, is that which relates to the circumstance concerning the servant of Elijah going up to look towards the sea. If Elijah was already on the top of the mountain, where the sea is

¹ This circumstance seems to have been overlooked by Van de Velde, who says (p. 326), "The king was still standing near Elijah. Not quite close, but so near that the servant could take the message to him, while the wind was rising and the clouds gathering. Perhaps he was near the fountain quenching his thirst." Yet Van de Velde supposes Elijah himself to have been on the Mohrakah, several hundred feet higher than the fountain. If the conjecture concerning Ahab were true, Elijah should have said to his servant, "Go *down*, say unto Ahab," etc.

visible, why did the servant need to go up at all? In view of this representation, we might be tempted to assume that Elijah himself did not go to the Mohrakah, but remained somewhere in the basin below. He might have been just under the cliff on the east side; or, he might have been on the same side, but further south, where one would need to climb but a very short distance in order to reach either the Mohrakah itself, or else a point south of it, lower down on the ridge, where yet the sea is visible. But, after all, there is no need of any such supposition. The express statement that Elijah went to the top of the mountain, taken in connection with the fact that, the sacrifice having been offered there, he would most naturally return to the same place, makes it altogether more likely that both Elijah and Ahab returned to the Mohrakah.¹ We have, then, only to suppose that Elijah, while he was praying, withdrew himself from the very highest point of the summit, leaving Ahab to take his meal at the place where the sacrifice had been consumed. Elijah needed to retire only a short distance to the west, and there, on the slope just below the summit, sequestered by bushes or trees, such as are still to be found there, poured out his petitions for rain. Probably, though no "adjacent height" or "shoulder of the mountain" intervened between

¹ Bähr (in Lange's *Bibelwerk*), following Thenius, propounds this solution of the question: "צֶמֶת, v. 42, does not here mean *peak, summit*, but designates the furthest promontory in the direction of the sea. Both Elijah and Ahab went 'up' from the Kishon; the former went to the promontory, which was not so high as the place where the altar stood and Ahab had his tent; hence Elijah could say to his servant (v. 44), Go up, and say to Ahab, etc. He went to the promontory, because from there one could have a wide view of the sea, and could soonest detect the formation of rain-clouds in the distance." A most remarkable conception! To say nothing of the fact that, of the forty-one instances in which צֶמֶת is applied in the Old Testament to hills or mountains, there is only one (Judg. ix. 7) in which it can with any probability be taken otherwise than as equivalent to "summit," we need only observe that, according to this hypothesis, Elijah must have travelled four or five hours in order to reach the extreme promontory; and, after reaching it, would not have had so distant a view of the sea as from the Mohrakah itself. Moreover, including the time spent in prayer, his going thither and returning to Ahab must have occupied ten hours!

him and the sea, yet the trees so obstructed the view that, in order to look over them, one may have been obliged to mount to the very highest point. This hypothesis satisfies all demands, and has the special advantage of requiring little time to be occupied by the servant in going seven times and back to look for rain.

We may now appropriately consider how the foregoing description of the biblical scene is to be harmonized with the probabilities respecting the time which would be requisite for the whole transaction. We are informed (vs. 29) that the prophets of Baal prophesied from midday "until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice." And in vs. 36 we read that "it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice that Elijah the prophet came near," and invoked Jehovah. Inasmuch as there had intervened the repairing of the altar, the digging of the trench, the preparation of the victim, and the pouring on of the water, it seems strange that no time is allowed for these operations. But, in vs. 29, *עַד לְעֹלֹת* should be rendered, "until towards [the time of] offering." At this time all these preparations had been made, and the fire descended on the altar. But when was the time of the evening sacrifice? It is fixed in Ex. xxix. 39, 41 and Num. xxviii. 4 as *בֵּין הָעֶרְבַּיִם* "between the two evenings." It is a much disputed question whether this means between sunset and dark, or between noon and sunset. Not to enter upon a minute investigation of this question here, it may be sufficient to say that, though the majority of modern commentators support the former view, it is by no means established, as a reference to the Article on "Passover," in Kitto's Cyclopaedia, by Ginsburg, and to Dr. Abbot's Note to the Article on the same subject in Smith's Bible Dictionary (Am. edition), will show. Moreover, whatever may be said respecting the apparent meaning of the Old Testament passages which contain this phrase, it is certain that rabbinical interpretation favors the other view; and usage may have conformed to this, even if the original precept, strictly interpreted, fixed the later point

of time. The narrative before us, certainly, may itself be adduced, as Thenius says, in favor of the rabbinical interpretation. It is not probable that the prophets of Baal kept up their ravings from noon till towards sunset. And the time requisite for the concluding events of the day was more than the current interpretation can easily be made to yield. We may, then, fairly suppose that the sacrifice was consumed not later than three o'clock in the afternoon. Immediately there followed the slaughter of the false prophets. The distance from the Mohrakah to Tell Kussis cannot be more than three miles. My horse carried me from near Tell Kussis up to the fountain in thirty minutes. From the fountain to the Mohrakah, by the direct way, the distance is only about half as great. In descending, especially in the excitement which must have prevailed, certainly not more than forty-five minutes would have been needed. Nor need we suppose that the slaughter of the prophets of Baal occupied much time. It is making ample allowance to assume an hour and a half to have elapsed from the time of the beginning of the descent to the time when Ahab and Elijah started back for the Mohrakah. Another hour would have brought them to the top. At half-past five o'clock, therefore, Ahab may have begun his meal at the place of sacrifice, while Elijah, near at hand, was engaged in prayer. Not more than an hour need be supposed to have been thus spent. By half-past six the cloud may have been seen, and Ahab have received the summons to prepare to return to Jezreel. His chariot was, doubtless, standing at the foot of the mountain, probably not far from the hill on which is now the ruined village of el-Mansurah, and which is situated about S.S.W. of Tell Kussis, on the opposite side of the Kishon. The rain-storm overtook Ahab, however, before he reached Jezreel; yet he probably gained the upper part of the plain before the rain had made the ground impassable for his chariot-wheels. The distance from Carmel to Jezreel is about fifteen miles. Going over a smooth plain, — Ahab riding in his chariot, and Elijah running before him, — both

hastening to escape from the rain, they could not have been much more than two hours on the way. If they spent half an hour in their descent from the summit, they may therefore have reached Jezreel by nine o'clock, or soon after.

There is an element of uncertainty in this estimate, growing out of our ignorance of the exact time of the evening sacrifice. If we follow the other view, above mentioned, we shall have to put these closing scenes each considerably later. There would, perhaps, be nothing inconceivable even in this. If the sacrifice had been consumed as late as six o'clock, Ahab and Elijah *might* have gone down to Tell Kussis, witnessed the slaughter of the false prophets, and returned to the Mohrakah in an hour and a half. This is, to be sure, an hour less than the time allowed in the other estimate; but it is not impossible, or even improbable, that this time was sufficient. Then, if we assume half an hour, instead of an hour, for the time spent on the summit before Ahab was summoned to descend, it follows that the cloud was seen at about eight o'clock, and Ahab reached Jezreel at half-past ten. In the evening of a long summer-day, the western sky would be still bright enough at eight o'clock to enable one to detect a cloud on the water's edge. But, on the other hand, it is possible that the fire descended upon Elijah's sacrifice considerably earlier than three o'clock, in which case the subsequent occurrences would have taken place so much the sooner. At all events, we come to the conclusion that there is nothing against the tradition concerning el-Mohrakah to be derived from considerations respecting the time requisite for the several scenes described in the biblical narrative.

It may not be amiss, in conclusion, to consider the question whether, after all, we can feel certain that the tradition concerning el-Mohrakah is trustworthy. Dr. Robinson, who seems never to have visited the place, makes no reference to it in his "Biblical Researches"; but in his "Physical Geography of the Holy Land" (foot-note, p. 31), he makes the following remark: "A recent hypothesis assumes as the

place of the sacrifice the summit of the southern point of the ridge of Carmel, distant two or three hours (or at least five miles) from the permanent sources of the Kishon. One writer thinks the water might have been brought from a fountain two or three hundred feet below the summit; but this fountain the Rev. W. M. Thomson afterwards saw nearly dried up, during the heat of an ordinary summer." He says, furthermore, that "the direction of Elijah was to 'gather to him all Israel *unto* Mount Carmel,' not to the summit, where there was no standing-place for such a multitude, and no water either for them or for the sacrifice. All these circumstances go to show that the transaction took place at the foot of the mountain, perhaps at some Tell near the permanent fountains of the Kishon. It was also at the part of Carmel nearest to Jezreel, and therefore near the southeastern quarter of the mountain."

Perhaps these are the weightiest objections that can be urged against the tradition. But they are far from conclusive. Indeed, they have been, for substance, already refuted by the foregoing discussion. There is no good reason to suppose that "all Israel," in the strictest sense of the term, was gathered to witness the scene. It is not likely that many, if any, came from such a distance that they would have had to travel during the day or days preceding the one appointed for the trial. It is most natural to suppose that the multitude consisted of those who resided in and around Jezreel. The plain of Esdraelon and vicinity must have been thickly populated. A large assembly could have been convoked in a short time. And, as we have seen, there *is* standing-place, if not immediately around the Mohrakah, yet immediately under it, very near it, and in full sight of it, quite sufficient for all who can be supposed to have come together. No place, even in the plain, can be conceived better fitted for the spectacle than the one fixed upon by tradition. The objection drawn from the want of water, which Robinson derives from the testimony of Dr. Thomson, is not one which has seemed insuperable to Dr. Thomson

himself. The biblical statement, that the people were gathered *unto* (בָּן) Mount Carmel, does not, it is true, prove that they ascended the mountain; but neither does it prove that they did not ascend it. When Isaiah says, "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains" (ii. 2), and then adds, "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up *to* (בָּן) the mountain of the Lord," it is evident that the latter clause means more than an exhortation to go to the foot of the mountain. Or, again, when it is said (Num. xxxiii. 38) that Aaron "went up into (בָּן) Mount Hor, and died there," it is evident that he died on the mountain, not at the foot of it. That the drama was enacted near the southeastern end of the Carmel range, Robinson himself assumes. That is the part of it which is nearest Jezreel; it is in itself an imposing height, and it is more central than any other. If, then, the only question is whether the altar was on the top of the mountain or at the foot of it, we cannot hesitate long in coming to a decision. There is a strong presumption against the theory that the altar of Jehovah had been made at the foot of a mountain. Any hill, it is true, might have been used for such a purpose; but, unless it can be shown that the altar had some special commemorative purpose, it is exceedingly improbable that a hill would be chosen which was overhung by such a commanding height as el-Mohrakah. At all events, the presumption is strongly in favor of a tradition which not only has no rival traditions to oppose it, but which so well corresponds with the biblical narrative and with all the probabilities of the case. The burden of proof rests with him who rejects the tradition; and it is not too much to say that such proof yet remains to be given.