

ARTICLE VIII.

CRITICAL NOTE.

NOT LACHISH, BUT GATH.

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IN the year 1838 Dr. Edward Robinson sought out 'Umm Lâqis, not in the expectation of finding there the site of ancient Lachish, as he explains, but rather in order to satisfy himself more certainly of the fallacy of any supposed resemblance in the two names, adding:—

“These remains are certainly not those of an ancient fortified city, which could for a time at least brave the assaults of an Assyrian army. Nor indeed does either the name or the position of this spot correspond to those of Lachish; although the varying form of the name might be allowed to pass, did other circumstances combine to identify the position.”

From Umm Lâqis he turned aside to visit the neighboring Tell el-Hesy, which he found to be “a truncated cone with a fine plain on the top, somewhat resembling the Frank Mountain, though by no means so high.” He was strongly impressed with the remarkable appearance of this isolated tell, and he confessed a finer position for a fortress or fortified city could hardly be imagined; and, still, he wisely refrained from either considering it, or declaring it, to be the place of Lachish.

In the year 1863 M. Victor Guérin halted in his journey an instant at Tell el-Hesy. He describes it as follows:—

“This hill is very steep on its eastern side. In that direction it commands, from an elevation of about fifty metres, and almost vertically, the Wâdi el-Hesy, which winds round it alike on the north and the northwest. At the point where it offers most easy access, one may observe the foundations of a wall of enclosure, almost entirely demolished. Besides these, some traces of ancient constructions reveal themselves, but not very distinctly, upon the summit at several spots. At the base of the *tell* these vestiges are more numerous within the space which separates it, on the northwest, from the Wâdi.”

And yet, notwithstanding all these relics of antique building and habitation, M. Guérin preferred 'Umm Lâqis for the site of Lachish.

In 1875 Major C. R. Conder, having explored both 'Umm Lâqis and Tell el-Hesy, took the opposite view. In regard to the former, he says:—

“The place was, I may boldly say, never the site of an ancient city, consisting only of a few traces of ruins, two masonry cisterns, and a small low mound.”

Concerning the latter, he says:—

“The great mound of Tell el-Hesy ('hillock of the water-pit') is a conspicuous and important site, supplied well with water, and giving its name to a great valley. The name *el-Hesy* may, I would suggest, be a corruption of Lachish, the Hebrew *Caph* being changed into the guttural, just as it has been changed in the case of *Mukhmās*. Tell el-Hesy is evidently an important site, commanding the approach to the hills, and fits well in position the requirements of Lachish.”

To this, the question might be raised, If Tell el-Hesy has a reason for its Arabic name, referring to its water-supply, how can that name and present form be a survival of the ancient Hebrew appellation? And the concluding remark, to the effect that in position the site of el-Hesy well fills the requirements of Lachish, is simply astounding.

However, in the April number of the *Quarterly Statement* of the Palestine Exploration Fund, for this year, its committee announced, with much pleasure, to subscribers and friends, that it had obtained a firman granting permission to excavate at Khūrbet 'Ajlān, the Eglon of Joshua, adding, that it had been so fortunate as to secure the services of Mr. Flinders Petrie, who was then already in Syria making preparations to start the excavations. But, soon after getting to work, Mr. Petrie found 'Ajlān to be “a trivial site:” and he had nothing to do but to turn his attention to some other point within the area of the Porte's concession. He turned to 'Umm Lāqis, where “three days' work amply proved its late date.” Accordingly, at last, he “attacked Tell el-Hesy, a mound of house-ruins sixty feet high and about two hundred feet square.” His interpretation of its contents runs as follows:—

“Historically this town began as an immensely strong fort, with a wall twenty-eight feet thick, on a knoll close to the spring. This is certainly pre-Jewish, by reason of the relative position occupied by the Phœnician pottery, occurring at half to three-quarters of the height up the mound, and known in Egypt to date from 1100 B. C.; and approximately its age would be about 1500 B. C., agreeing well to the beginning of the Egyptian raids under Tahutmes I. This fort, after repairs, which still exist as solid brickwork over twenty feet high, fell into complete ruin. No more bricks were made; rude houses of stones from the stream were all that were erected; and for long years the alkali burner used the deserted hill, attracted by the water-supply to wash his ashes with. This corresponds to the barbaric Hebrew period under the Judges. Then, again, the town was walled, Phœnician pottery begins to appear, and some good masonry, evidently the age of the early Jewish kings. Successive fortifications were built as the ruins rose higher and the older walls were destroyed; Cypriote influence comes in, and, later on, Greek influence, from about 700 B. C. and onwards. The great ruin of the town was, about 600 B. C., that by Nebuchadnezzar; and some slight remains of Greek pottery, down to about 400 B. C., show the last stage of its history, nothing later than good Greek pottery being found on the top of it. Happily the indications can be interpreted by our literary records, otherwise we could have discovered little about a place in which not a single inscription nor dated object has been found.”

As will be observed from these words, Mr. Petrie does not claim that the ruins he has laid bare are those of Lachish. Personally he believes that they are, on the sole ground that it was an ancient fortress-town commanding a constant spring. But he wants others to take the responsibility of assuming and proceeding upon the identification.

“There is a point I should be glad to hear the opinion of the Executive Committee—as to whether the circumstances will justify us in adopting the name Lachish for this site provisionally, instead of referring to it as Tell Hesya, which does not convey a definite idea to most people.”

Thus far, however, the committee have not endorsed the proposition. It will be noticed, also, that Mr. Petrie wholly abstains from showing how far Tell el-Hesya fulfils, or fails to meet, the biblical and historical *criteria* of Lachish.

Last of all, Professor A. H. Sayce has laid before the readers of the *Independent* an account of the Recovery of Lachish. He is perfectly confident that, at last, this long-lost site has been discovered. Tell el-Hesya is Lachish beyond the shadow of a doubt: he announces the fact in enthusiastic terms, and would have the world accept the recognition as an absolutely safe one, complete and final. Mr. Petrie is eulogized—or, at least, is declared to rank along with Dr. Schliemann as the foremost of living excavators; and, because certain Tell el-Amarna dispatches from the governor of Lachish to the Egyptian monarch imply an archive-chamber in which their duplicates and the answers to them were preserved, it is asserted to be more than possible that this archive-chamber may still be lying within the walls discovered by Mr. Petrie—in other words, the earth which forms the core of the tell, awaiting only a little more digging, contains inscriptions and sculptured monuments which will pour floods of unexpected light upon the records of the Old Testament. Before a single grain of such wheat appears in sight, the harvest is affirmed to be abundant, etc., etc. At the same time, it will be noticed, Professor Sayce, also, refrains from a discussion of the biblical and historical requirements of Lachish. In so doing he is prudent; for the less said about Tell el-Hesya's answering to the records of the past and the character demanded by archæology, the better.

Now, inasmuch as all that possibly can be said in favor of Tell el-Hesya as Lachish has been brought forward by Lieutenant Conder, Mr. Petrie, and Professor Sayce, in the interests of a fair consideration of the subject and a true verdict, let me call attention to some of the requirements of Lachish which the station and ruins at Tell el-Hesya do not possess.

1. Tell el-Hesya cannot be the site of the Lachish existing in the days of Eusebius and Jerome. Strange as it may seem, Lachish was still flourishing on its ancient site in the fourth and fifth centuries of the Christian era. Eusebius says of it:—

“ . . . Locheis, and Joshua took this [place], having slain its king. Isaiah, also, makes mention of it. And it is even till the present moment a village (*ἐστὶν κώμη*) distant from Eleutheropolis seven milestones toward the south going to Daroma. And it is spoken of in Jeremiah as belonging to the tribe of Judah.”

And Jerome:—

“Lochis, in the tribe of Judah; and this also Joshua took, having put its king to death. Isaiah and Jeremiah mention it; and to-day it is a country-place (*et nunc est villa*) at the seventh mile from Eleutheropolis going to Daroma.”

In other terms—during the lifetimes of Eusebius and Jerome the Lachish of Joshua, Isaiah, and Jeremiah still survived as a village (*κώμη*) or hamlet (*villa*) at a distance of exactly seven Roman miles from, and in the direction of south from, Eleutheropolis, the Baît Jibrîn of the present day.

Tell el-Hesy cannot satisfy these conditions:—

(1) Because it ceased to be inhabited seven to eight centuries before the writing of Eusebius and Jerome. Mr. Petrie found no trace whatever of occupation later than B. C. 400—"the last stage of its history." The early Christian Lachish, therefore, must have flourished elsewhere. Professor Sayce endeavors to anticipate this objection by the conjecture of two Lachishes,—an old Lachish and a new Lachish,—placing the older Lachish at Tell el-Hesy and moving the newer Lachish to 'Umm Lâqis! To this it is only necessary to reply, that such a resort is unmitigated special-pleading, a very weak make-shift, in fact utterly worthless; that the extent and character of the remains at 'Umm Lâqis are insufficient for a village of the size indicated by Eusebius and Jerome—"a few traces of ruins and two masonry cisterns" do not represent a *kômê* or a *villa*; that Eusebius and Jerome are clear and positive as to the fact of the Lachish of their days being a lineal descendant of the ancient one on the same site—had Lachish moved to another place after the Exile, they would have known it and reported the transfer to us.

(2) Because Tell el-Hesy does not occupy the proper relative position in relation to Eleutheropolis at Baît Jibrîn. It does not stand at the seventh mile-post from the latter town, nor south of it, nor in the direction of Darama; and 'Umm Lâqis is still worse in each of these particulars. Hitherto, all who have discussed this relationship have frankly admitted that Tell el-Hesy and 'Umm Lâqis do not agree with the position and bearing given by Eusebius and Jerome; and it has been reserved for a professor in Queen's College, Oxford, and a member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund, to publish under his own hand the most extraordinary assertion, that 'Umm Lâqis, standing at a length of fourteen Roman miles almost directly west of Baît Jibrîn, "certainly was the site of the Lachish of Jerome's *Onomasticon*"—at double the distance and at a right angle from the position indicated by a resident of Bethlehem!

2. At the distance of seven miles from Baît Jibrîn, and about south-south-east of it, a site exists which may well be the Lochis of Eusebius and Jerome. From Hebron it lies ten miles to the southwest, and from Dura (Adoraim) four miles west. Over both sides of a little valley, at its beginning, are scattered four or five ruined places closely situated together so as to form a cluster, surmounted on the east by the remains of a tower: one of these associated ruins bears the name of Khirbet el-Kusah, which may readily have had Lachish for its origin. What little we know about them all is the meagre account supplied by Lieutenant Conder in his Memoir upon Judæa:—

"Beit 'Auwa. This name applies to a group of ruins which have separate names. Khurbet es Sueity, Khurbet el Mehâmi, Khurbet el Kûsah are all sites with foundations and caves. El Kûs is an ancient watch-tower, with dry-stone walls in ruins; el Kenîseh seems to be a ruined church; founda-

tions, capitals, shafts, and lintels with the Maltese cross on them, remain, showing a Byzantine building. There is also a fine font [of which a plan and a section are drawn in an accompanying illustration] fitted for immersion. In the centre a square basin 2 feet 3 inches side, 7 inches deep; four steps lead down, 5 inches high, 9 inches broad; the whole surrounded by four segmental recesses, the external form of the font being that of a rounded cross. The longest measurement either way being $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and the total height outside 2 feet 4 inches."

Such a group as this responds to the *kome* of Eusebius or *villa* of Jerome; and the church el-Keniseh gives it a character suiting the early centuries of the Christian era. The watch-tower is admitted to be "ancient." The bearing from Baït Jibrin, "toward Daroma," is exact, Daroma having been the region of rolling country immediately south of Hebron descending to the Negeb, reaching as far toward the east as the Maon (Kh. Maïn) of David's outlaw-life, embracing Juttah (Yutta) five and a half miles south of Hebron in "its southern section," together with Dumah (ed-Dumeh) about five miles and a half south of Khirbet el-Kusah. The form el-Kusah recalls the Lacheisa of Josephus, and the Lakhisha of the Assyrian monuments.

Doubtless, it will be said that this is not "an important site;" to which it may be replied, that it has never been examined with a view of detecting vestiges of ancient Lachish, and that the greater part of ancient structures may have passed into Christian edifices and abodes. Here, at any rate, taking the church Fathers Eusebius and Jerome for guides, is the proper place for investigation to begin in the quest of olden Lachish.

3. After the Exile, Nehemiah says, that the residue of Israel returned every one to his own inheritance in all the cities of Judah, and that some of the children of Judah "dwelt at Lachish," i. e., old Lachish, Lachish itself. But Professor Sayce ventures to amend this record by the correction, "The returning exiles settled not in the city, but in the fields round about." And Mr. Petrie supposes that the returning Jews, being too weak to eject the Bedawin, occupied the nearest point they could within sight of the old place—families from Lachish founding 'Umm Lâqis. All this improvement upon Scripture is made necessary by the evidence from potsherds to the effect that Tell el-Hesy ceased to be peopled about B. C. 400.

4. Mr. Petrie finds that Tell el-Hesy was wrecked by Nebuchadnezzar, about B. C. 600, from whose demolition it never recovered. Such was not the case with Lachish, which never suffered at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. This Babylonian warrior did, indeed, knock at the gates of Tyre from B. C. 586 to 573, and then went on down into Egypt in B. C. 572; but he did not turn aside to interview and ruin Lachish—so far as we know.

5. But, more than a century earlier, Lachish had suffered at the hands of an

the assault and capture of Lachish by Sennacherib, together with the king's encampment and his reception of prisoners. These bas-reliefs are the work of men who were eye-witnesses to the conditions and structure of Lachish in B. C. 701, and they faithfully transmit them to us. From them we learn the following characteristics:—

(1) Lachish stood upon a mountain-side, much wider and higher than the city itself. The assault, effecting a breach in the walls, was conducted on the hill-slope below the town; on both sides, the rising field ascends around the fortified town, and reappears above it. The whole of this mountain-side is planted with flourishing palms, and vines and fig-trees overladen with fruit. In the background of the various scenes, even the mountain-ridge dentate with summit-points, is surmounted by trees, mainly palms.

On the contrary, Tell el-Hesy was always an isolated mound, if anything less in size than the fortress which enveloped it.

(2) From the nature of the mountain-side, Lachish must have been founded on *rock*.

Tell el-Hesy was, both before and after fortification, a pile of *earth*. On Mr. Petrie's approach it exhibited, "All of one side washed away by the stream, thus affording a clear section from top to base." And Professor Sayce imagines the archive-chamber to lie in "the earth which forms the core of the Tel," and he wants to have it *dug* out.

(3) On one side, at least, the side of assault, Lachish was defended by two walls, one outside of and lower down than the other. Of these, the upper one was continuous and ran along on a level, but the lower one was irregular and ran down outwards to a tower standing at the end of a spur along whose sides the house-ways to the breach were carried upwards—a tower through whose doors some non-combatants of the city made their escape.

Tell el-Hesy was protected by only a single strong wall of fortification: the site was not ample enough for more.

(4) The walls of Lachish were strengthened by square machicolated towers at frequent intervals—as shown upon the bas-relief, the upper wall reckoning twelve still intact on both sides of the breach, and the lower wall eight.

In striking disparity, Tell el-Hesy possessed no such towers set between the four corner-towers of its wall.

(5) The Assyrian bas-reliefs introduce no fountain and stream in the foreground of Lachish, as they surely would have done had Tell el-Hesy ("the hill of a water-supply") been the site treated.

(6) According to their witness, too, there stood in the suburbs of Lachish a small fortress, elliptical in ground-plan, whose wall was provided with no less than twenty-four of the same peculiarly machicolated towers—which minor fortress appears to have been abandoned by the inhabitants of Lachish, and to have served as the camp of the Assyrian king while the siege was in progress.

It is almost needless to remark, that Tell el-Hesy has no ruins of such a second fortified enclosure to offer.

Without going into further particulars—these differences between Lachish and Tell el-Hesy are irreconcilable, and condemn the latter as a candidate for the former. The Assyrian slabs are as good as photographs of the site, and they are going to hold the fort against all pretenders until the rightful claimant appears. In this connection, one cannot help asking the provoking question, Why do not Mr. Petrie and Professor Sayce, who are able to define everything else about Tell el-Hesy with most remarkable precision in chronology, point out to us the breach made in its walls by Sennacherib?

6. Rehoboam built cities for defence in Judah, and, among others, "Ziph, and Adoraim, and Lachish." Taking these three places in order—Ziph is now recognized in Tell Zif, about four miles east of south from Hebron, also situated in the Daroma of Eusebius and Jerome; Adoraim is now found again in Dura, about seven miles somewhat to the north of west from Tell Zif; and Lachish? As already stated, in the same westward course taken by this enumeration stands Khirbet el-Kūsah, about four miles away from Dura-Adoraim: the collocation in Second Chronicles points straight as an arrow to the site of Eusebius and Jerome for Lachish.

7. The original Lachish, at the time of the conquest by Joshua, was an Amorite town among the *mountains*. Out of the five Amorite cities whose kings Joshua slew at Makkedah, two—Jerusalem and Hebron—were situated upon the highest watershed of the country; and the other three—Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon—are likewise placed in the Mountain (ha-Har) in Josh. x. 6, but in the Shephelah in Josh. xv. 35, 39. Now the only solution of these different references must be that Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon lay along the boundary line dividing the Har from the Shephelah. Both passages in Joshua are true; and there is no conflict if we suppose these three cities stood on the western limit of the Har and on the eastern limit of the Shephelah. Where was that limit? Sensibly, where the western declivity of Judah ceased to be Mountain and began to be Valley. But, we have historical testimony for answer: Eusebius and Jerome testify that down to their day all the region north and west of Eleutheropolis was called Shephelah. This was a natural and convenient line of demarcation. Accordingly, we are not to seek for Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon west of Baft Jibrin, and if we do identify any of them west of that town, we violate Josh. x. 5; and, in like manner, we are not to place them to the east of the environs of Baft Jibrin, for if we do, we violate Josh. xv. 35, 39.

In this light, the sin of wishing to find Lachish at Tell el-Hesy or 'Umm LAqis is clearly to be seen, for the one is fully ten miles west of Baft Jibrin, and the other twelve miles, in the heart of the Shephelah. Thus would the

unately, out of these three Amorite towns, Jarmuth, was perceived by Dr. Edward Robinson more than half a century ago to be at Khirbet el-Yarmuk, between thirteen and fourteen miles west of Bethlehem, and on a north-and-south line which would touch the eastern border of territory immediately dependent on Baït Jibrin. If extended southward, this line would pass a mile or so to the east of Khirbet el-Kūsah as Lachish. Ultimately, no doubt, Eglon will be found not far from the same meridian as the confine of the Har on the one side and of the Shephelah on the other.

If ever Khirbet el-Kūsah, in turn, comes to be scrutinized for evidences of ancient Lachish and fails to yield them, an important site is not wanting a short way off on the road to Baït Jibrin, namely, the Mejdeleh and the Kasr adjoining the village of Dawāimeh, both of which deserve thorough excavation.

These considerations against Tell el-Hesy are insurmountable: it cannot be Lachish. Indeed, the fallacy of the argument, "Tell el-Hesy possessing a perennial water-supply was inhabited eleven hundred years (from B. C. 1500 to 400), therefore it is Lachish," is readily shown by its converse—"Tell el-Hesy, watered by an unfailing source of fresh water, has remained uninhabited twenty-three centuries (from B. C. 406 to 1890 A. D.), therefore it is not Lachish."

But, Mr. Petrie has laid bare a very old site—manifestly one of the earliest places settled in the country. His spade has disclosed this primitive settlement to have been surrounded by a very thick wall composed of clay-bricks—a most remarkable building-material for Palestine. It is natural to want to know what name this strategic spot, with its singular fortress, bore in ancient times; and if, having shown that it was not Lachish, I am bound to indicate what it really was, I beg leave to remind all who are interested in such matters of biblical and ancient history, that there is another long-lost site which once flourished in this very region, equally as old as Lachish, and which Joshua could not, or at least did not, take. At the era of the conquest, the giant sons of Anak spread further down the Mountain than the Amorites, and dwelt in the maritime plain, even as far outward as the coasts of the sea. From off all the mountains of Judah, Joshua destroyed them, or expelled them, till "there was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel," but the sacred narrative immediately adds, "Only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod, there remained."

Now, 1. Tell el-Hesy belongs to the plain of Philistia. For example, Dr. Edward Robinson says of 'Umm Lâqis, the companion of el-Hesy,—

"The present Um Lâkis lies in the middle of the plain west of Bett Jibrin three hours' distant from the tract of hills."

Lieutenant Conder remarks:—

"Tell el-Hesy is evidently an important site, commanding the approach to the hills."

And Professor Sayce:—

"Tel el-Hesy is one of the most imposing objects in the plains of Judea [Philistia!], above which it rises to the height of nearly 120 feet."

It may, therefore, well be the Gath in which the Anakim were safe from the destroying sword of Joshua.

2. Gath was the scene of more than a dozen biblical episodes—too many to be rehearsed here for the purpose of pointing out local correspondence; but any one who will take up concordance and Bible, and follow the list of references through from beginning to end, will be struck with the unique propriety of Tell el-Hesy for Gath. Even under the parting notice of the prophet Micah:—

“Tell it not in Gath,
Weep not at all:
At Beth-le-Aphrah have I rolled myself in the dust.
Pass ye away, O inhabitants of Shaphir!”

it remains closely associated with Baït 'Affeh (eight miles to the north) and Suwâfir (eleven miles in the same direction).

3. Nor had the recognition of Gath passed away in the early centuries of the Christian era; for, commenting on the above words of Micah, Jerome writes:—

“Geth, as the history of the Kings also attests (1 Sam. xvii.), is one of the five cities (*una est de quinque urbibus*) of Palestine, near the confine of Judæa, and, to those going down from Eleutheropolis to Gaza, it is till now a very large village, whence Goliath was—that Gethite whom David slew in battle.”

And still, in our own day, the survey of Western Palestine reveals Tell el-Hesy lying from Baït Jibrin directly *towards* Ghuzzeh and *on* the almost straight road thereto—in an air line ten and three-quarters miles from Eleutheropolis, and fourteen and a half miles from Gaza! Nothing could be more clear or exact: the Geth of Jerome, which was the Gath of Goliath, must stand at Tell el-Hesy because there is no other site on the road from Baït Jibrin to Ghuzzeh that could have been this Philistine stronghold, and Tell el-Hesy both in size and construction is just what is wanted. In the search for Gath, as in the quest for Lachish, a true result will be arrived at by submitting in a teachable spirit to the leadership of our early Christian Father, who resided so many years near the places he points out, and who must have pressed them with his feet and seen them with his eyes. We know that at least on one celebrated peregrination he went down into Egypt by way of the spot where Samson slew the Philistines with the jaw-bone of an ass, on his way leaving aside the Horites of Eleutheropolis, the Gethites, Maresa, the Judean Idumea, and Lachis. It is only in comparatively recent times that the name and locality of Gath have faded from the memory of man.

4. There is a slight discrepancy between the reports of Mr. Petrie and Professor Sayce: the former says he found not a single inscription at Tell el-Hesy—the latter says Mr. Petrie discovered “a short inscription (*Il Samek*).

property of somebody. In other words, this "Samech" must be a fragment of a proper name, and the whole of that proper name can hardly have been other than Semachiah ("Jah is a support"), and if so the legend originally read, "Belonging to Semachiah." A single Semachiah is mentioned in Scripture, and he was a grandson of Obed-edom the Gittite! From this it by no means follows that the Samech-[iah] of Mr. Petrie's inscription was the veritable biblical grandson of Obed-edom, but these two circumstances do go a long way to show that Samech- or Semach-iah was a current personal name at Tell el-Hesi as Gath, many ages ago.