

## ARTICLE VI.

## THE STORY OF GEZER.

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SOME five miles southwest of Ramleh with its "tower of forty martyrs," four miles northwest of the site of ancient Nicopolis, and along the road from Joppa to Jerusalem stands a mound, two low but slightly rock-strewn hills with saddle between. Here within an area one half mile by an eighth is the burial spot of the ancient city of Gezer.

The discovery was one of those strange happenings so characteristic of archæology. The fortunate man was Clermont-Ganneau. In reading the Arab historian Mujir ed-Din, he had come upon a story of a Bedawin raid. In this account mention was made of the "mound of Jezar," and the story located the said mound between Ramleh and Khuldeh and within hearing distance of the latter place. "Jezar" was "Gezer." The trained eye of the French savant marked a hill, still known among the peasants as Jezar, as the hill and rubbish heap covering an ancient city. This was in 1873. Later, in 1874, Clermont-Ganneau was again in Jerusalem, and a native brought him a crude copy of an inscription from the Jezar district. One Greek word, "of Alkios," is possibly the name of a governor. The Hebrew portion reads, "the boundary of Gezer." Clermont-Ganneau's conjecture was borne out by the facts.

Gezer was long a habitation for man. "Horam king of Gezer" fell before Joshua and his army (Josh. x. 33; xii. 12). In the division of the land, Gezer fell to the "families

of the children of Kohath, the Levites" (Josh. xvi. 3; xxi. 20 f.), though the native people still held a place (Josh. xvi. 10; Judg. i. 29). According to Egyptian records Gezer fell before the armies (or allies?) of Merneptah (1225–1215 B.C.). Solomon received Gezer as a part of his Egyptian wife's royal dowry (1 Kings ix. 15–17).<sup>1</sup> Gezer marked high tide of Egyptian invasion of Syria in the time of Pepi I. (c. 2500 B.C.); was an objective in the time of Sesostris I. (1980–1935 B.C.); became a part of the great battlefield between Egypt on the south, the Hittites from the north, and the Philistines.<sup>2</sup> Further light comes from the Amarna tablets (c. 1450 B.C.). Yet the story of the excavations far antedates these written records. There are evidences of a cave-dwelling race whose life on this bare, stony hilltop covers a period of possibly five centuries. The story of these primitive men may easily go back to a point 3000 B.C. In the fields around, even palæolithic implements have been found.

Gezer was a vantage point. Situated at the line where sea-plain meets the rolling hills of the Shephelah, the spot is fortified by nature. Water is at hand. The rough nature of the country favors hunting. There is sufficient vegetation for considerable flocks and herds. There is much rich soil in the vicinity. The hill is fairly easy of ascent; and, being considerably higher than the surrounding plain, it affords opportunity for observation and timely defense against hostile invasion. The ready defense of crops in outlying fields would have been made easier by closer proximity in villages of the plain — as was the case after Roman occupation.

Thus archæology supports and supplements history. After

<sup>1</sup> It continued in Hebrew possession, the Canaanites paying tribute. As "Gazara," the place is frequently mentioned in 1 Maccabees.

<sup>2</sup> Breasted, *Ancient Egyptians*, pp. 262, 512.

five hundred years, more or less, these primitive cave-dwelling folk<sup>1</sup> were driven out, perhaps by the first of the Semitic invaders, the Canaanites, to be followed in turn later by others, as the Hebrews. The primitive race, or races, of Palestine suffered the fortunes of war — absorption or extermination.

The area of the city varied from date to date, remains of three walls being discovered. The middle wall was built of stone six and a half feet high by two feet two inches thick, flanked on the outer side by a rounding earth mound with a facing of rough, small stones set in hard mud batter, the latter nowhere exceeding a foot in thickness. The presence of a standing monolith in the course of the wall dates the rampart to the cave-dwelling period.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of so primitive a construction may have been protection from beasts rather than from men. The inner wall is of stones, compactly built in mud and rubble about thirteen feet thick. At intervals of ninety feet occur towers, forty-one by twenty-four feet, probably once containing rooms. Stones in this wall measured as high as four feet by a foot and a half. Two gateways forty feet or more in width afforded entrance.

Next to the walls, a point of prime interest is the evidence of water supply. Three such sources appeared. On the level of primitive culture, a shaft opened to a sloping passage down into the rock, by rough-hewn steps descending first south and then east, to a pool whose depth could not be ascertained. Here is a vast spring, a practically inexhaustible supply. Two hundred gallons drawn off made no difference in level. The cavern is natural, and the water level is 130 feet below the present surface, ninety-four feet six inches below the surface of the rock. The evidence of small objects found in the

<sup>1</sup> PEF Quarterly Statement, Jan. 1916, pp. 26 ff.

<sup>2</sup> The arguments pro and con are too exhaustive for the scope of the present sketch. Cf. Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer*.

silt indicates 2000 B.C. as a latest date for this tunnel and such additions as may have been made to the cavern at the bottom. Mystery envelops the origin of this work; for, though in Canaanite strata, it indicates a higher level of civilization than usually ascribed to that people. Egyptian or Babylonian influence would imply some sort of inscription, but none appear. The outer wall is about 4,600 feet<sup>1</sup> in circumference, with at irregular intervals towers of varying size and projection, though both wall and towers have been plundered for building materials. What remains shows large, roughly-shaped stones averaging two feet by a foot and a half in size, roughly built up with rubble. The towers are not built into the wall, this lack of binding being concealed by a rough stone rampart, or bastion, inclosing both towers and wall joints. Three periods are here marked: (1) the wall; (2) the inserted towers; and (3) the masking bastions.<sup>2</sup>

On the south side was discovered another large reservoir. Estimated at 600,000 gallons, it lay buried under more than fifteen feet of débris. The opening at the rock surface was fifty-seven by forty-six feet, and twenty-nine and a half feet deep. Thence from the bottom a smaller pool extended down another twenty-six and a half feet. The rough walls of this double pool have a double coat of cement, each three eighths of an inch thick. In addition to those was the network of cisterns characteristic of ancient Palestinian cities, bottle-shaped, round or square, and varying in depth from sixteen to twenty-three feet. Often a conical hollow scooped out of

<sup>1</sup> About one third of the circuit of the city of Jerusalem is within the walls. Among the finds were the boundary stones of the Hellenistic period (cf. Macalister, *Excavations of Gezer*).

<sup>2</sup> Not found at all of the towers. The unbonded towers and their bastions are assigned, conjecturally, to the periods of repair under Solomon (1 Kings ix. 16; cf. Schumacher's finds at Megiddo) and Bacchides (161 B.C. 1 Macc.), respectively.

the rock marked the presence of a filter similar to those still in use. A notable instance is one dating from the Maccabean period — a well shaft sunk through the bottom of a cistern to natural water, possibly 120 feet down. The earth rampart has been assigned to pre-Semitic times. The presence of Egyptian objects — scarabs, beads, and amulets — dates the outer wall to at least the fifteenth century B.C. Somewhere between these dates is to be placed the excavation of this last reservoir with its connecting pools.

It remains now to proceed in reverse and read the life story of ancient Gezer.<sup>1</sup> That primitive people, who must have lived here as long ago as 3000 B.C., found a location to their taste: a bare, stony hill commanding the entire country around; natural caves which, by reason of the soft limestone rock, even their crude tools could fashion to their need; water, pasture, and large patches of good soil. Probably these primitive architects followed lines of least resistance. At all events, we find chambers of irregular shapes, twelve to thirty feet across, often connected by narrow passageways. Sometimes a rude trench about the opening served to carry away surface water — at least one instance occurring of a storage cistern; in other instances the dwellers permitted pools of water to accumulate and seep away through flaws in the rock. Wall decorations there were none. Utensils of perishable materials of course long ago disappeared. Nor do metal objects occur. Crude, hand-shaped pottery remains, sometimes roughly decorated with red or white lines. Flint knives also were among the finds, as were smooth polishing stones, stones for crushing pigments, and other stones for heating or even for defense at close quarters. Keenest interest centers around objects evidently of religious import.

<sup>1</sup> Paton, *Early History of Palestine*, pp. 3-6.

About the center of the hill the rock was covered with saucer-shaped indentations, some of them of considerable size and depth. Underneath these were two caves, one of which was divided by a partition into two rooms.<sup>1</sup> The second cave was notable for an opening through the roof connected with a trench or drain, as though the blood of victims was allowed to flow down into the room below, possibly a libation to an earth divinity. Pig bones in the cave below gave a hint as to the animal used in sacrifice. Still another cave was a primitive crematorium, as evidenced by the presence of a chimney and heaps of calcined ashes.

The point of special interest, however, is the now famous High Place, one of the great survivals of Canaanite life.<sup>2</sup> Macalister<sup>3</sup> has summed up an altar site and its working apparatus as follows:—

- “(1) The Altar;
- (2) The Standing Stones and *Asherdh*;
- (3) The Laver for ceremonial washings;
- (4) The Sacred Cave;
- (5) The Depository for refuse.”

Of the altar, discovered on other sites, no example was found at Gezer. Possibly the Gezer altar, or altars, was of perishable materials. A near-by mound of hard-packed earth, with embedded skulls that bore marks of serious injury, represents at least the site of an ancient earth altar.

Of the standing, unhewn pillars there were eight and the broken stumps of two others, ranged in a slight curve north and south. The largest was a huge monolith ten feet nine inches high and twelve feet in circumference. The smallest was five feet five inches high, suggesting by certain smooth spots an object of

<sup>1</sup> These caves were entered by flights of rude steps cut in the rock.

<sup>2</sup> This layer marks the Canaanite period.

<sup>3</sup> *Bible Side-lights from the Mound of Gezer*, p. 54.

special reverence which, like the black stone of Mecca or the great toe of St. Peter's image, had been polished by the kisses of its worshippers.<sup>1</sup> One stone is not native rock, but reminds one of the rock about Jerusalem; and a groove around the stone suggests a cable used in transportation. These hints, coupled with a reference from the Moabite stone, suggest removal as a trophy of victory and of superiority of the tribal deity over those of other tribes. The asherah, like the altar, and for like reasons, is not found at Gezer. A large rectangular stone cut with a square hollow<sup>2</sup> answers to our expectation of a ceremonial laver.

At the northern end of this row of pillars was a cave, originally of two rooms, but, by the blocking up of one entrance, converted into one room, with an inner secret chamber connected by a curved passage. This inner chamber has been marked as having some connection with the giving of oracles.

Lastly, a cistern-like excavation, partly filled with refuse, seemed to complete this phase of Canaanite occupation of the site. The suggestion as to its use finds added credibility in the accumulation of bones—cows, sheep, goats, deer, and human beings being identified. These bones form an indiscriminate mass and seem to include evidence of child sacrifice.<sup>3</sup> The finding of this pit was followed by the discovery

<sup>1</sup> For an interpretation of these data, cf. Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, pp. 82 f.

<sup>2</sup> 6 ft. 1 in. by 5 ft. 2 in. by 2 ft. 6 in. Hollow, 2 ft. 10 in. by 1 ft. 11 in. by 1 ft. 4 in. deep.

<sup>3</sup> The earliest mention of the subject in Hebrew records is with disfavor, and emphasis is placed on prohibition. Until the time of the allies' campaign against Moab there is a growing sentiment against it (cf. Isa. lvii. 3-7; Gen. xxi.; 2 Kings iii. 27; xxiii. 10; Lev. xviii. 21; xx. 2). Yet the custom long persisted, even among the Hebrews (2 Kings xvi. 3; xxi. 6). The prophets opposed it (cf. Mic. vi. 7).

of numerous burials over the entire area of the high place. Infants were buried in large jars, and smaller jars were filled with food for their needs in the next world. Some skeletons showed marks of having been sawn apart, some had been decapitated, and still others showed marks of fire.<sup>1</sup>

Certain conclusions may now be made. The beginning of the hill as a high place may be set between 2000 and 2500 B.C.<sup>2</sup> At a considerably later period the pillars were set up — not at one time, but at different times and by different kings of Gezer.<sup>3</sup> Pillar No. 7, the one out of the series of ten that is clearly from another locality and probably a trophy of war, dates possibly from the middle of the fifteenth century B.C., the date of the Amarna letters. The presence of the cemetery attests the custom of child sacrifice. Eventually increasing population lessened the area, though probably not the sanctity of the place.

Of striking interest, also, is a Semitic temple, dating perchance to the time of the Judges. There were a paved area, probably a chamber or cella, before which was a row of pillars aligned, like those on the high place, north and south, and a forecourt. On five columnar bases once rested wooden struts that supported the roof of a portico. The temple of Dagon, where Samson performed, may well have been such a structure, *hoi polloi* standing on the roof of this portico (Judg. xvi.). Resting against the middle pillars, Samson shoved the wooden supports from their bases, bringing upon the crowd mutual ruin.

Making due allowance for private taste, reconstruction, and

<sup>1</sup> In one pit were found fourteen such skeletons. On this subject see Principal G. A. Smith in PEF Quarterly Statement, address for July 14, 1905.

<sup>2</sup> The caves, or some of them, date to this time.

<sup>3</sup> This is the Canaanite period.

adaptations to needs and location, there are in details certain fairly universal phenomena of construction. Foundations of private houses are superficial, but in large building footings seem generally to have been carried down to rock (cf. Matt. vii. 24-27); walls are built of stones of all sizes from a hand fist to more than a man can lift. The average size has been estimated at one foot eight inches. By the Hellenistic period the arch was in use. Decorative stone-dressing appeared seldom, though notable in the towers of the outer wall, some later parts of the Maccabean palace, and on a reservoir of the same date. One section of wall, unexplored by reason of the presence of a cemetery, showed drafted stones. Sun-burned (rarely kiln-burned) bricks of various colors were used — red, brown, yellow, and grayish white. These bricks varied from four to five inches in thickness, and from a foot to a foot five inches and a half in length. In the later periods at least, walls in the more pretentious buildings were stuccoed and decorated, and floors were of cobble or rubble stone, and in Roman times of mosaic laid in bands and geometrical figures. Doors swung on pivots above and below, working in cups hollowed in stone, numbers of these last being found scattered through the débris. The discovery of limestone rollers similar to those used to-day suggests mud roofs. The finds hardly warrant the belief in houses of more than one story. Silt of the Hellenistic period yielded several rude iron keys.

Three buildings call for special mention. Among the several buildings of evident public significance is a group on the south side, from the Hellenistic period. The buildings include a gateway, a double wall with inclosed rooms (home of the governor: the house erected by Simon Maccabeus). On this

last was discovered a graffito in Greek characters: "Pampras, may fire smite the house of Simon." This imprecation has parallels, and may express the prayer of some dispossessed Syrian householder. Above these in the strata is a fine Syrian bath whose cemented floors, vats, and vaulted roof show us here a well-finished building furnished with facilities for hot and cold baths and rest rooms. The completeness of this building was excelled only by the remains of a Roman bath discovered at a little distance from the neighboring Abu-Shusheh, where a complete structure once stood — atrium, caldarium, tepidarium, hypocaust, and latrinæ. This Roman building was hardly a structure for public use by the people of Gezer, but rather marks the residence of some wealthy Roman citizen or even community.

With the progress of these ancient people and the evolving of the idea of immortality, there is increasing provision for the deceased in the hereafter. In the Troglodyte period disposition of the dead was by burning, the crematorium with its broken chimney being a survival of this custom. Later, in the earliest Semitic period, the bodies were simply laid away in the cave without regard to position or orientation,<sup>1</sup> save as here and there niche-like inclosures and large earthen jars (for infants) mark, possibly, higher caste. Burials under house foundations had religious significance, and burials in cisterns and other unusual places may probably be ascribed to accident or violence. The pottery, scattering beads, discs, and other jewelry that marked the Troglodyte burials continue also here. The second Semitic period differs from the first in the larger provision of food and drink,<sup>2</sup> in the supply

<sup>1</sup> Bodies generally in crouching position.

<sup>2</sup> Jars with pointed bottoms always placed on end, with smaller jar within as drinking cup.

of beads, bronze, silver, and gold.<sup>1</sup> Lamps begin to appear. Shaft tombs, especially hewn, are found. In the remaining Semitic periods are sloping approaches to the tombs, and shelves along the walls for placing the bodies. The Hellenistic period is marked by square and well-hewn chambers with loculi cut into the walls at a little distance from the floor. Well-cut doorways are stopped by slabs of stone. As many as three chambers occur in a single tomb. Boxes (ossuaries) hewn out of limestone and decorated with incisions and painted lines and rosettes occur—a few of them inscribed with the names of the dead. Byzantine burial caves were constructed with benches around the sides (except the door side), on which benches (*arcosolia*) the shrouded corpses were placed.

Of priceless value is the endless diversity of objects gathered from the tombs, also from the various ruined chambers. It is from these survivals that the story of the daily life of the people is retold.

Gezer's habit of life was largely shaped by the agricultural character of the country. Stores of charred grains and fruits reveal traces of wheat, barley, oats, peas, beans, figs, grapes, pomegranates, olives, even masses of straw fodder such as is used by the fellahin to-day. An inscribed limestone tablet, probably the oldest Hebrew inscription yet discovered,<sup>2</sup> gives the round of the year's sowing and harvest. January, August,

<sup>1</sup> Five early graves, sarcophagus shaped, built of stone slabs, cemented, and provided with covers were regarded as Phillistine burials. Richly ornamented articles of iron, gold, bronze, silver, glass and precious stones, vases, jars, jewelry, jars of alabaster. These Phillistine dwellers of the land were worthy descendants of their forefathers. Part of a lapidary's stock in trade, also, was found, about seventy stones ranging from the uncut stone to the finished gem.

<sup>2</sup> Eighth century B.C., so Gray, Lidzbarski, Ronzevalle: sixth B.C., Père Vincent, Marti, Cook.

September, November, are lacking, according to Dalman's scheme, which reads:—

July, the time of fruits.<sup>1</sup>

December, the time of sowing.

February, the time of late sowing or preparing of the fields.

March, the time of flax.

April, the time of barley.

May, the time of general harvest.

June, the time of vines.

July, the time of fruits.<sup>2</sup>

Traces of iron plows were found, as were hoes of several shapes; flint-toothed sickles; rubbing stones for grinding flour, the lower heavy, the upper light and easily moved (Deut. xxiv. 6; Judg. ix. 53); mortars and pestles; brick ovens; what may have been stone bases for fire drills; bronze dishes and flesh hooks; and shell spoons. There are remains of wine- and oil-presses and filtering vessels. Large inverted jars with several circular openings suggest crude beehives. For the weaver's art there were spindle whorls, weights, two shreds of linen, with needles and pins of iron, bronze, bone, ivory, and silver. Even buttons are found. Jewelry included pendants, rings, earrings, bracelets, anklets, and beads of gold, silver, and bronze, and — later — bracelets of glass. For the toilet were tweezers, spatulæ, pencils, perfume boxes, combs, scrapers, brush handles, and mirrors.

Among the débris large place is found for arts and crafts. The flint implements continued into the fourth Semitic period and included knives, saws, boring instruments, sickle flints, chisels, and scrapers; also, of course, spear heads and arrow heads.<sup>2</sup> The art of the gold- and silver-smith<sup>3</sup> has been spoken

<sup>1</sup> Note should be made also of the finding of a zodiacal tablet.

<sup>2</sup> See table for chronological range, *Excavation of Gezer*, vol. II. p. 127.

<sup>3</sup> Note especially cave marked "2811," Macalister, vol. I. pp. 111-141; III., Plates XXX.-XLIII.

of. One of the interesting finds was of gold ingots from the fourth Semitic period, reminding one of Achan's tongue of gold. Molds for molding or casting ornaments came to light, as also stone molds for casting bronze. Palettes for the painter and materials for the scribe were found, as were inscribed stones, bones, and metals. A host of stone weights of material taking a high polish were picked out, also inscribed lead weights from the Hellenistic era.

The finds at Gezer have revolutionized our knowledge of Palestinian pottery. History is not discrete but continuous. Divisions into periods are pure makeshifts, aiding the mind in its investigation but having no actual existence. Life goes on with its continuous progress, its backsets, diversions, and intrusions. Nevertheless, a sort of chronological guide was fixed upon, in part determined by previous finds, as at Lachish. We append Macalister's table.<sup>1</sup>

Knowing as we do the history of Gezer, Egyptian objects of constant occurrence bring no surprise. One, a seated figure, had arms clasped about the knees, the right hand grasping the *ankh*, Egyptian symbol of life. Another figure of granite, only four and a quarter inches high, was of a kneeling man sitting back on his heels. Still others were of bronze, ivory, and stone. The listed scarabs number three hundred and ninety-seven, and they cover the period from the twelfth dynasty to the Hellenistic period. Likewise are represented Cyprus, Crete, Greece, and the Islands of the Ægean.

<sup>1</sup> *Excavation of Gezer*, vol. II. p. 131. Fresh stimulus from without (col. 3, 4, 8) led to improvement. Decline, however, followed (col. 5, 6, 7).

Point of Comparison	Pre-Semitic to B. C. 2000	First Semitic B. C. 2000-1800	Second Semitic B. C. 1800-1400	Third Semitic B. C. 1400-1000	Fourth Semitic B. C. 1000-550	Persian B.C. 550-330	Hellenistic B. C. 330-100
<b>FOREIGN INFLUENCES</b>	None	None	Egypt, Crete, Aegean regions, especially Cyprus (direct influences)	Same as preceding period, but rather a reminiscent influence	Influences of Second Semitic fading. Fresh imports from Cyprus	Period	Greece and Greek Islands
<b>TECHNICAL PROCESSES...</b>	Hand modeling	Potter's wheel worked by hand	Potter's wheel worked by foot	Same as Second Semitic	Same as Second Semitic	of	Same as Second Semitic
<b>WARE.....</b>	Coarse, gritty, on the whole soft-baked	Similar to Pre-Semitic but finer and more varied	On the whole well-refined and good	Various, good and bad	Various, mostly bad	transition	Well-refined and hard-baked
<b>SHAPES.....</b>	Rude and limited in variety	Improved and more varied	The best and most graceful shapes in this period	Fairly good	clumsy and coarse		Very fair imitations of classical models
<b>ORNAMENT.....</b>	Moulded and drip-line paint	Moulded and painted horizontal bands	Elaborately painted, but little moulded	Degenerating painted patterns Practically no moulded	Coarse mouldings and painted rings		Moulded if any, a few well-painted examples