

ART. V.—THE BATTLE OF GIBEON—II.

ASTRONOMICAL.

TO question the possibility of a miracle like what is generally supposed to be here recorded is not our object, nor is there the slightest intention on our part to minimize the extent to which the Lord, by hearkening to the voice of a man, fought for Israel on that incomparable day, the whole of which was one grand instance of Divine interposition. But our entire argument will be found to be based on the text itself, from which it appears to us that the means may not have been so transcendently miraculous as the common acceptance would lead us to believe. May we ask, with all sincerity, at the outset of this inquiry, if it is absolutely certain that the day was lengthened in answer to Joshua's desire, or, in other words, is that absolutely the meaning that we must gather from the text? If there is the slightest hesitation in the answer, we feel we are not doing wrong in venturing to discover what really could have happened, though we admit to having never doubted the general acceptance till closer inquiry revealed to us that a totally different occurrence may have taken place. To understand this, let us see if we can find out the spot, and at what time of day it could have been that Joshua apostrophized the two luminaries. The difficulty of regarding the moon as a light-giving power in broad daylight, and the fact of its being *in* the Valley of Aijalon so far west, or at its setting, leads us to conjecture that it must have been either morning or evening, as it would be only at the beginning or end of the day that the lesser luminary would be in evidence when the light of the sun is beginning to wax or wane. And when we consider that when the sun is high, from about an hour or two before to an hour or two after noon, it cannot be said to be over any place in particular; and that the nearer it is to the horizon, the better can it be described in terms of any terrestrial place, we are strengthened in our conjecture. Then, again, the word *upon* is rendered in the Septuagint as *contra*, which shows the meaning to have been, perhaps, *over against* rather than *over*. Following this line of reasoning, we can easily see that, if the time were morning, each luminary must have been on opposite sides of the compass—*i.e.*, the sun in the east rising and the moon setting in the west—because we are told that the moon was "*in* the Valley of Aijalon," to the west, and therefore setting, and because the sun always rises in the east. But

this may not be so readily admitted, and the question may be asked how we know that the Valley of Aijalon was on Joshua's west when he spoke. Well, it was not to his south, for the moon does not set in the south, nor was it to his north for a similar reason, nor was it to his east. But why not to his east? Because, if it were to his east, *both* sun and moon would have been over it, and therefore he could not have apostrophized the sun in terms of Gibeon, which was miles still farther east, and quite out of sight; whereas he saw the sun *upon* or *over against* Gibeon, and the moon only in the Valley of Aijalon. But, perhaps someone may say, it was quite possible to see both sun and moon to the east, the one *over against* Gibeon, and the other in the Valley of Aijalon, in the morning. If so, both would have been close together, and therefore the phase of the moon would have been new, or *quasi-new*, in which case it would have been invisible, especially as we must infer it was lower down than the sun. So therefore the Valley of Aijalon was not on the east of Joshua if he spoke those words in the morning. Nor was it possible it could be to his east in the evening, as the sun cannot be in the east in the evening. Therefore at neither morning nor evening was the Valley of Aijalon on Joshua's east—*i.e.*, he was not to the west of it when he spoke; nor was it to his south, nor to his north, but to his west. Well, if to his west, was it morning or evening? Some think he must have spoken in the evening, as it is so natural to infer that was the time the prolongation of light must have been desired, when it was about to be withdrawn. A little thought will show us that this theory is untenable, because *both* sun and moon would in that case be over the Valley of Aijalon to the west, and both setting, and if they were near each other, the moon would still be invisible, because it would be new, and the sun would not be upon Gibeon. But could Joshua not have been to the east of Gibeon, and in that case seen both luminaries to his west in the evening? Yes, if he could have seen the moon at all nine miles at least further west in the Valley of Aijalon, in which case he would have to overlook the hill of Gibeon, which he could not have done. The only conclusion, therefore, is that he apostrophized the luminaries in the morning on the west of Gibeon, when the sun was on his east, and when the moon was in the Valley of Aijalon on his west—*i.e.*, he was between both places at that time, and that he spoke at that time. Does the narrative bear out this view? It does, fully (ver. 9): "Joshua therefore came upon them suddenly; (for) he went up from Gilgal all the night." From these words it would seem clear that the attack began in the small hours of the morning. Just think over it. In no other part

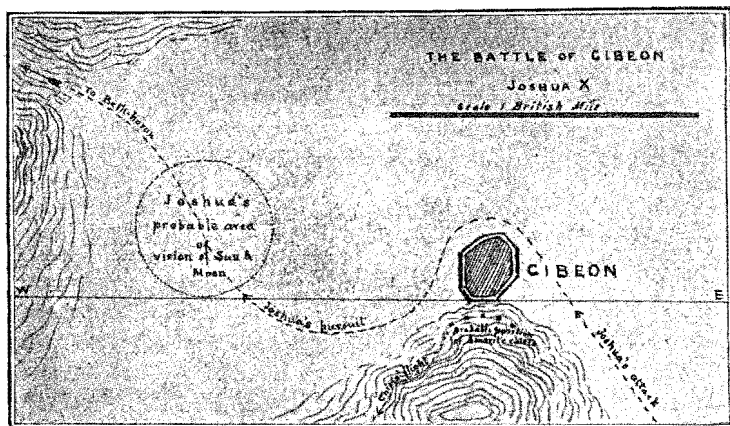
of the twenty-four hours are human beings, and no less armies of human beings, more unprepared for danger, or so oblivious of it, as the hour or two before dawn. And he evidently found the enemy unprepared and took them by surprise. This shows us they could not have been long there, or their dispositions against attack from the east, which they must have expected to come sooner or later, would have been made. The fact, indeed, appears to have been that their *coup* had been so quickly carried out that they did not expect him so soon, certainly not before noon, when, if he could have managed the march under the forenoon sun, his troops would not have been in any fighting condition, and his approach would have been noticed a long way off from the heights of Gibeon; so there was really nothing to fear before then. Had it been after dawn that he arrived, we have good reason to think his advent must have been noticed for adverse reception, and, as the light increased, his chances of complete success would have been greatly hindered. For, though assured of success, that assurance of the Divine assistance was only given to the active energy of faith, and not to mere passive conduct. Directly Joshua received the assurance, all his strategic faculties appear to have been aroused. He saw that if the paralyzing blow was to be struck, now was the time, for the assurance had been given to inspire the natural means of compassing that end to its fullest extent, and—mark the force of the word—“*therefore* (he) came upon them suddenly; (for) he went up from Gilgal all the night.” He realized that victory was in his grasp if he could reach and fall upon his enemies at the unprepared hour in the early morning. Surely we may say, in all reverence, the issue would have been by no means the same if he had not been prompt to seize the opportunity. When the Lord gave him the assurance of success, He anticipated the natural falterings of the human heart, even in His faithful servant, and under no other auspices could Joshua have been inspired to exercise his skill to meet the crisis. He had learned that the whole force of those very enemies with whom he had been preparing to measure his strength were there before Gibeon, and now they were to be given into his hand in a way he had not looked for. *Their* best and most approved course of action was to be *his* opportunity for their destruction; but he recognised that the opportunity, to be entirely successful, must be seized with promptitude. *Therefore* he marched all night and took them by surprise.

This ninth verse in a few graphic words is the description of a decisive action which was practically won before dawn. Now, can we say, when we study this verse, that he could

have apostrophized the sun and moon when he was still east of Gibeon? Decidedly not; for we are constrained to think he must still have been on his night march, or that he reached it before sunrise, or perhaps even at sunrise, in which cases the sun would have been behind him in the east, and not before him *upon or over against* Gibeon. And the nearer he approached it the more remote would be his chances of seeing the moon in the Valley of Aijalon, owing to the hill of Gibeon coming between; and that he must have been at Gibeon before he spoke will not be disputed. Is this argument and its conclusion clear? We submit that it is. Then, could he have seen the sun over Gibeon from the north-east? Certainly; at about four p.m. at that season he could have done so. But did he take all that time to get such a short distance in the limited space about Gibeon during that decisive action? That is improbable; but even if it were probable, it would be quite impossible for him to distinguish the moon's orb at that season and at that hour, between three and four days before becoming new. In the same manner is any aspect from due north quite improbable, as not only would it be mid-day in the hot season, with the sun almost overhead, and no index of any place in particular, but the orb of the moon would be quite indistinguishable in that light, though at its last quarter. We must remember that the actual chase had not begun, for all the enemy round Gibeon would not have been touched before the west was reached; and surely, from the decisive nature of the action, we are justified in concluding that it could not have taken him long to sweep round the town to the west, so as to circumvent the enemy from breaking south down the Valley of Gibeon, and drive them north-west. For the "great slaughter" was "at Gibeon," presumably wherever the cordon was, before the chase had commenced at all. Therefore, *unless he was quite close to the town*, he could not see the moon in the Valley of Aijalon at the same time that he could have seen the sun over Gibeon from a north-west aspect. We may dismiss at once any aspect from the south—*i.e.*, anywhere south of the latitude of Gibeon—because neither sun nor moon could ever be north of anyone's latitudinal position in Palestine, and, therefore, could be neither over Gibeon nor in the Valley of Aijalon at any time of the day at any season of the year. The actual location of Joshua's position, therefore, is focussed down to the west of Gibeon, or slightly north of its latitude to the west—*i.e.*, between the town and the Valley of Aijalon, but quite close to the former. Indeed, if asked to define more distinctly what we should determine as Joshua's probable area of vision, we should say it would be as near as possible to that shown

in the accompanying diagram, the arrow indicating the direction of pursuit towards Beth-horon. For no other point of view outside this area will locate both luminaries at the same time in terms of the two places, if their orbs or their light were to be visible.

We have hinted that this must have taken place in the hot weather. We have no actual date given us, but we can form a tolerable estimate of the time it must have taken to complete all the successive events recorded since the passage of Jordan and the celebration of the Passover. The passage of Jordan was effected on the tenth day of the first month (iv. 19), and the first Passover in the Promised Land was kept on the fourteenth until the twenty-first of the same. The general



circumcision of the Israelites then took place (v. 1-10), and though this is mentioned before the Passover, it is obvious that it took place after it, as we should certainly allow three weeks to a month to elapse after the operation before convalescence and purification could be complete. Then followed the investment of Jericho for a week, and its capture, after which was the reconnoissance of Ai, the first disastrous attempt on it, the short time of humiliation ending with the execution of Achan, and the capture of Ai. Then came the deputation from Gibeon, the formal taking over of its State, and, lastly, the battle of Gibeon. At the lowest estimate we should reckon that three months had elapsed since the Passover up to this battle. In the present year of grace, 1903, the Passover was on April 11, so that about the same date in July the battle of Gibeon may have taken place. At any rate, it must have been in the summer, if not in the sultry season.

Now, if Joshua saw the sun *upon* or *over against* Gibeon when he saw the moon *in* the Valley of Aijalon, his position being between the two, it must have been morning. This suggests the natural inquiry what he wanted light for, when he knew the whole day was before him. It is quite clear that the moon was setting in the Valley of Aijalon, and Joshua was probably apostrophizing its waning light. Knowing that the day was before him, he could not have desired the *light* of the moon as the sun was rising, and yet he desired the sun to stand still. What could have been his motive? Clearly not more light. But if the sun were rising while the moon was setting, what can have been the phase of the latter? It was full, or *quasi* full, moon. Therefore, as it was full moon, it must have given Joshua the full benefit of its light on his night march from Gilgal, and assisted him considerably in locating the enemy before dawn, and winning his victory. But that victory began to be decided on the east of Gibeon, probably, before he had come round to the west side from which he saw the moon set and the sun rise. This shows us how early he must have arrived, and how short a time it must have taken him to reach the west side in touch with the surrounding besiegers, and confirms our belief in the decisiveness of that victory at an early hour. But having succeeded in turning the enemy's flank, as it were, he changes the nature of the battle, which forthwith becomes a headlong flight. The fugitives have no chance of doubling round Gibeon, whence they have been driven, so the only opening is towards the north-west over the broken ground to Beth-horon. The actual chase has now commenced, and the sun rising *upon* or *over against* Gibeon is desired to stand still; while the moon's light is just visible as that orb has sunk over the ridges on the west into the Valley of Aijalon, and is desired to stay there—in the Valley of Aijalon. What, then, can have been the motive of Joshua's words? His troops had made, not a hard march if done at the usual pace, but a fatiguing one if done at a quick pace; they had also fought hard for a couple of hours, perhaps more—not our kind of fighting, at a distance and taking cover, but a hand-to-hand fight; and, now that they had practically won, and pursuit had commenced, day broke! Can we imagine that this was a welcome sight to the General, when a running chase, at that season of the year, had begun, which he had no desire to relinquish? But we can imagine—nay, realize—his lifting his eyes to heaven, and, stretching his right hand towards Gibeon and the sunrise, giving expression to a feeling of dissatisfaction; while towards the west he stretched his left in parting acknowledgment of the moon's failing light, now no

longer necessary—the quotation from the Book of Jasher putting the expression into suitable words! Joshua's motive, we think, must have been in deprecation of the coming sun's heat, as the whole scene is so suggestive of it at that season and at that hour. Yet, at what have we, after all, arrived? That Joshua's desire was fulfilled, and that the sun was—must we say stopped?—seems clear. What, therefore, have we tried to suggest that changes the miracle from its transcendent nature to an intelligible phenomenon brought about by the Almighty, in deference to the desire of his servant? For, granted that Joshua's wish was not for light, but for the withdrawal of heat, still, for that purpose the sun was stopped. And yet the words "stand still" are rendered in the margin as "be silent" in the quotation from the Book of Jasher, though the comment upon it, both by the poet as well as by the writer of the Book of Joshua, does not make use of the same verb to express the term. This is, indeed, significant, and the fact has, no doubt, occupied the grave attention of translators and commentators, though we would suggest that the words "stood still," "stayed," or *stopped*, in many other languages, when applied to *sunshine*, which is often used as a synonym of the sun itself, is quite predicative of withdrawal. But if "be silent" or *cease* (Young's "Analytical Dictionary") is what Joshua said, we think there is more reason to infer that withdrawal of light—and therefore heat—was intended, rather than intensity or continuance of light. But was, then, the sun obscured and heat withdrawn, and how? Are we to lose sight of what state the heavens were in, that culminated in the dreadful storm on the other side of the heights of Beth-horon? We have ourselves seen two or three hailstorms of tremendous violence in the East, and do not remember that brightness was a characteristic of any of the days on which they occurred. On the other hand, we recall them as gloomy and awful, though conveying a sense of comparative coolness, and surely the storm which burst at the "going down of Beth-horon" must have been like one of these. It seems incredible to us that the visibility of the sun's orb during their continuance could be entertained. But this is all very well and plausible. What shall we say about the expression, "hasted not to go down for about a whole day"? That would, indeed, seem to show that the sun's course was actually arrested, though there is something peculiarly enigmatical in the language. May we ask if by it is meant it *did not go down for an additional day of twenty-four hours*? We rather see in it an indication of the fact that, if Joshua's words were spoken at sunrise, whatever happened continued almost the whole day till sunset. For if we understand that the sun

did not set for another twenty-four hours, we are bound to keep Joshua to the east of Gibeon all day, so that he should apostrophize the luminary *upon* or *over against* the town at its setting, or in the west, in which case the moon would be invisible in the same direction. But there is something very significant about the word "hasted," the use of which would seem to be superfluous in describing a daily unvarying phenomenon. We find that the word (Young's "Analytical Dictionary") as here used is found but three times in the Scriptures in the sense of *pressed* (may we suggest *intensity of action*?), viz.: (1) Exod. v. 13, where "the taskmasters were urgent"; (2) in the passage under consideration; (3) Prov. xix. 2: "he that hasteneth with his feet sinneth (stumbleth)," where the idea of impatience is clearly conveyed. May we not, therefore, think that, in fulfilment of Joshua's "be silent," or *cease*, where withdrawal of light rather than its continuance is suggested, "hasted not," or *pressed not*, may be suggestive of a modification of intensity of action, not in velocity, but in heat? We commend the consideration of these words in all humility to the further earnest study of Hebraists.

But we cannot leave the subject yet without turning to the "Concise Dictionary of the Bible" edited by Dr. Smith, and reading what the author of the article on Makkedah says about it, an allusion to which we have not been able to discover elsewhere in its pages: "A place memorable in the annals of the conquest of Canaan as the scene of the execution of the five confederate kings (Josh. x. 10-30). It unquestionably occurred in the afternoon of that tremendous day, which 'was like no day before or after it.' After the execution of the chiefs, Joshua turns to the town itself. To force the walls, to put the king and all the inhabitants to the sword (ver. 28), is to that indomitable energy, still fresh after the gigantic labours and excitements of the last twenty-four hours, the work of an hour or two. And now the evening has arrived, the sun is at last sinking—the first sun that has set since the departure from Gilgal—and the tragedy is terminated by cutting down the five bodies from the trees and restoring them to the cave, which is then so blocked up with stones as henceforth never again to become refuge for friend or foe of Israel."

There appears to us to be a perplexing paradox in the above statement prefaced by the emphatic word "unquestionably." Twenty-four hours of "gigantic labours," etc., plus two hours for the sack of Makkedah, gives us twenty-six hours of Joshua's exertions till the first sunset after his departure from Gilgal. Is that what we must understand? That is to

say, that Joshua's continuous exertions did not extend over more than twenty-six hours before this last sunset! But surely Joshua's continuous exertions began from the time he left Gilgal? If so, twenty-six hours before the sunset at Makkedah would bring us back to two hours *before* sunset at Gilgal, which phenomenon could not have taken place, according to the writer. But as the narrative tells us that Joshua marched all the night, it must have taken place. Perhaps he means that Joshua's march began just after sunset from Gilgal. If so, his exertions of twenty-four hours would have brought him to Makkedah just after sunset, and not two hours before, on the afternoon of "that tremendous day." But we may have quite misunderstood his meaning so far. Is it that, because of the lengthening of the day in deference to Joshua's desire, that "tremendous day" was one of twenty-six hours of continuous exertions since his apostrophe? If so, the apostrophe must have taken place at Gibeon, or thereabouts, twenty-six hours before sunset at Makkedah. And if this is his meaning, surely he will allow us to enhance Joshua's exertions by a period of twenty-two more from the time he left Gilgal, which he has forgotten, as well as the battle of Gibeon, to include in his "gigantic labours." For, by the writer making use of the term "twenty-four hours," we surmise he means that the course of the sun was arrested for a whole day of that period. So, to recapitulate, if we are to understand that Joshua's arrival at Makkedah was in the afternoon, twenty-four hours after leaving Gilgal, the sun *did set once*, for, as he marched all night, it must have done so. But if by "that tremendous day" we are to understand the period of twenty-four hours before the afternoon that he reached Makkedah, and not the period up to that time from the hour it rose—say, twelve hours in the hot season, plus the hours spent on the night march after the last sunset at Gilgal—he has certainly omitted the battle of Gibeon, which must have raged during the day, as well as that night march, from the total number of hours of Joshua's continuous exertions. And what adjective can we find adequate enough to express these exertions after his use of "gigantic" for those of only twenty-four? For we are constrained to judge, if Joshua went on to Makkedah via Beth-horon, that his continuous exertions must have lasted at least about forty-eight hours. But, indeed, the writer may not have included the battle of Gibeon and the night march in Joshua's exertions, his subsequent labours being sufficiently astonishing to warrant the expression "gigantic"; and certainly they would be so if the chase and its attendant details extended to Azekah and Makkedah via Beth-horon under his personal guidance. For

of what must those labours have consisted? Are we asked to believe that Joshua and all Israel with him (for they do not appear to have been separated throughout) chased the Amorite enemy over the Beth-horon, round or through the Valley of Aijalon, over hill and dale and stream (just glance at the map), to Azekah and Makkedah, wherever these places were (no wonder the above writer deems Eusebius' authority for the site of Makkedah to be "irreconcilable" with every detail of the narrative), after a whole hot day's fighting at Gibeon, preceded by a quick night march of twenty miles or so from Gilgal, begun the evening before; that he was on his way, or somewhere in that chase, met by other pursuers, who had gone on so far in front of him as to have tracked the five kings, who had gone on before them, to their hiding-place, and had returned with the news to him; that he did not even accompany or go back with them to Makkedah, but sent them either on or back, with orders to roll stones—great stones—unto the mouth of the cave, and not relax their pursuit, but leave a guard on the cave, as their enemies were given into their hands; that they did not relax their pursuit, but followed their enemies unremittingly, till there were none left to pursue who had not entered into their fenced cities; that they, after all this necessarily scattered pursuit, returned in peace to Joshua to the camp at Makkedah, where he himself finally arrived; that then the great stones were rolled away from the mouth of the cave, the hidden Kings taken out, humiliatingly used, and hanged; that after this the town of Makkedah took an hour or two to capture and sack—are we asked to believe that all these details took place in the space of twenty-six hours, when we realize that the previous twenty-two hours, at least, must have been spent in incessant action, either of march or fighting? The exercise of faith, we submit, is the same, whether we believe all this to have taken place in forty-eight hours or in twenty-six, if the actual narrative warranted it. But does it? This is what it says, and if we are wrong in reading between the lines here and there, we are open to correction.

Let us begin again from the ninth verse, for there is nothing perplexing up to it. Ver. 9: "Joshua therefore came upon them suddenly; (for) he went up from Gilgal all the night." Ver. 10: "And the Lord discomfited them before Israel,"—that tells us in a few words the nature of the action, decisive, the result of a determined march, and which was practically won before or by dawn—"and He (the Lord) slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and (He, the Lord) chased them by the way of Beth-horon, and (He, the Lord) smote them to Azekah and Makkedah." Joshua is not mentioned as having

done all this himself, though no doubt he controlled the action under the Lord's hand as far as Beth-horon. Ver. 11: "And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, while they were in the going down of Beth-horon, that the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died:"—the hailstorm from north to south caught the fugitives before Israel at Beth-horon, and, sweeping down as far as Azekah, caught the southern fugitives, inflicting further damage upon them—"they were more which died with the hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword." The Lord did all this after Joshua had proved his faith by resolutely attacking his enemies in the morning at Gibeon. The whole of Joshua's gigantic labours is, in fact, summed up by the narrative so far in his night march and attack, the rest of the action being explicitly the Lord's up to the, may we say, extermination of the fugitives before Israel in the going down of Beth-horon. For we think the extermination is significantly expressed by the greater number of those who were killed by hailstones than of those whom the children of Israel, under the Lord's hand, had slain in the "great slaughter at Gibeon" and during the pursuit, literally fulfilling the assurance that had been given him of not a man being able to stand before him. Once before, as far as we know, had Joshua seen such a hailstorm, which might be compared to this one, in Egypt, when the plague of hail and lightning was destructive to vegetation and whatever animal life remained abroad without shelter. He had also experienced what the Lord's hand did at the Red Sea when the Egyptian host was overwhelmed within a short distance of him. And now at Beth-horon he saw his enemies involved in a destructive storm which left him and his host untouched, though his Israelites must have been pressing those enemies close all the way from Gibeon. He must have fully recognised the extent to which the Lord's hand had helped him, and seeing that no more remained to be done, he led back his tired veterans in thankfulness to Gilgal, as he could not overtake the southern pursuit, and did not know it was not successful. We may even infer that he had no idea of the escape of the chiefs themselves southward. It was, however, only in this southern pursuit that the destruction was far from complete, which seems to show us that the pursuers, though "*among* Israel" (ver. 1), were not *of* them, and would give us a clue to the reason why these pursuers should in no way disparage any Israelite's prowess in comparison with their own, when they returned to the camp at Makeddah in peace to Joshua on his arrival there, after he had been to Gilgal. From the twelfth to the end of the fourteenth verse

is the account of the episode of the sun and moon, which we have endeavoured to clear as far as we could. We might, however, say here appropriately that the prophet Habakkuk in his reference to this event appears clearly to attribute whatever phenomenon occurred to the means of a storm wielded by the Almighty's hand; and also that neither the reference in the Psalms nor that by the prophet Isaiah in any way militates against the theory that our suggestions advance, and we may proceed with the narrative. Ver. 15: "And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal." The narrative does not appear to be broken by this verse, which is not out of place, to our thinking. With what a different step can we imagine that march to have been made in comparison with the elastic swing of the previous night! And yet how profoundly impressed must every man have been with the sense of his own feeble efforts when he thought over how victory had been given. This verse surely cannot be said to be out of place, when we remember what the coming campaign meant to Joshua in reinforcements of men and material.

Ver. 16: "And these five kings fled, and hid themselves in the cave at Makkedah." If we have already pictured to ourselves the position of these leading chiefs on the commanding heights of Gibeon to the south of the town, whence the operations of their several hosts upon it could be directed, we can easily see how they escaped among the first fugitives to the south, eluding the Israelite pursuit altogether. Ver. 17: "And it was told Joshua, saying, The five kings are found hidden in the cave at Makkedah." Cannot we now understand how this news might have been brought to him either on his leisurely march back to Gilgal or to that camp itself? And cannot we thoroughly grasp that he should have no idea of going back with those who brought him the news, but should give them the directions he did. Ver. 18: "And Joshua said, Roll great stones unto the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for to keep them." When we consider these words seriously, do they seem like the directions given by a man who was to be at that very place Makkedah on that same day? Very unlike, we should say. Would not, also, just a guard have been sufficient for that presumably short time, which we are forced to think would have been more than taken up by the laborious process of rolling *great* stones on the mouth of the cave? But do not these directions rather show that, not intending to be at Makkedah for a day or two, a small guard night and day was not enough to insure the safe custody of his most valued prisoners in the hands of such allies as the Hivites. Ver. 19:

“But stay ye not, pursue after your enemies and smite the hindmost of them ; suffer them not to enter into their cities : for the Lord your God hath delivered them into your hand.” It was so natural for Joshua to address these words to those who had lately been received “among Israel,” and to have repeated to them the assurance that had been given to himself, though not so definitely, in order to rouse their apparently flagging energies into action. Now, if Joshua had been anywhere near Makkedah when he gave all these orders, is it not to be wondered at that he should not have gone back with the messengers and himself seen to the disposal of the prisoners, about whose safe custody he was evidently anxious ? And if he were at a distance from it, are we not allowed to take into reasonable consideration the time that must have elapsed to carry out all these directions fully, and for everyone to have returned to him to that very place on the same afternoon of the day on which he had given the directions ? But we must confess that we should never have questioned the possibility of all this, or, indeed, considered it so seriously, had not an alternative, and to our minds a perfectly reasonable, reading suggested the impossibility of reconciling it to our faculties of comparison. Ver. 20 : “And it came to pass, when Joshua and the children of Israel had made an end of slaying them with a great slaughter, till they were consumed”—that is to say, when Joshua and the children of Israel had done all their share of the slaughter of the Amorites up to exterminating all that they had encountered (under the Lord’s hand)—“and (when) the remnant which remained of them”—surely referring to those with whom they had had absolutely nothing to do so far, but who must have been pursued by other people—“had entered into their fenced cities (ver. 21), that all the people”—obviously those other people who had not engaged in the great slaughter, but had been engaged in an unsuccessful and scattered pursuit—“returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace.” Now, who of all the people of the land could have returned *in peace* to Joshua but his allies the Gibeonites ? For none of them were Israelites, because “none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel.” Indeed, we can well understand now how they could not have done so, after their futile efforts compared with those of the Israelites, whom they must rather have regarded with feelings of awe, as it justified in their own experience what they had heard and admitted to having dreaded, the Lord’s hand with His chosen people ; and how they must have realized that, although allies, that hand was not over them in the same relation. It is unnecessary to quote further from the sacred narrative, as we have found no more perplexities to study, but

will only add that it is satisfactory to note that if the position of Makkedah be where Eusebius and Jerome place it, there appears no reason why that site should be irreconcilable with any of the details given us, but, on the other hand, rather well situated as a centre where every information about the surrounding fortresses could be obtained, against which Joshua's subsequent campaign was directed. Also, before concluding, let us glance at the thirty-eighth verse: "And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to Debir." Why returned? May it not be expressive of Joshua's direction of march from Hebron back to Gilgal by the same way he had last come straight to Makkedah? If so, it would appear that the Debir not far to the south of Jericho is here meant, the last of the cities destroyed by Joshua before his final return to headquarters after having subdued the whole of the southern kingdoms.

Such is this tenth chapter of Joshua, with all its apparently perplexing details, the solution of none of which, in our endeavour to facilitate inquiry, have we attempted to force upon our readers. But we can truly say that in no part of Scripture, as far as our judgment goes, has such a sequence of undesigned coincidences been recorded as in this one marvellous chapter; and as we are not conscious of having in any way wrested the text or its meaning, we feel that we can leave the sober perusal of these suggestions to our readers, under God's blessing.

APPENDIX.

Q. What time of day should we judge that the battle of Gibeon took place?

A. It apparently began early in the morning, and as it was decisive, it was practically won by dawn or sunrise (verses 9 and 10).

Q. Have we any reason to think that Joshua did not pursue the enemy to Makkedah?

A. Yes, because we are not told so. We are told that Israel pursued to Beth-horon, where the hailstorm destroyed their enemies, after which they returned to Gilgal (verses 11 and 15).

Q. Was there, then, no pursuit to Azekah and Makkedah?

A. Yes, direct from Gibeon southward; but this was by a "people" who were not so successful, except in tracking the five kings to the cave. Israel, under the Lord's hand, had made "an end of slaughter" of their enemies "till they were consumed." "The remnant that escaped" were those that were pursued of these "people," who allowed them to enter into their fenced cities (verse 20).

Q. Who were these "people," then?

A. They could have been no other than the Gibeonites, for no others could have returned to Joshua in peace to the camp at Makkedah (verse 21).

Q. Can we give any reason why none of these people should have moved their tongues?

A. Yes, for the text appears to show us that, as their pursuit was not

so successful, they must have realized that the Lord's hand was not with them as with Israel.

Q. Should we not, then, think that the day was lengthened in answer to Joshua's apostrophe?

A. The text does not say so absolutely, and if the battle took place in the morning, the need does not appear.

Q. How, then, should we explain the fourteenth verse?

A. When we realize from Joshua's position that the sun must have been obscured by the storm, and read how the Lord fought (verses 10 and 11), there is no difficulty.



ART. VI.—WHY WAS THE HARE CONSIDERED “UNCLEAN” AMONG THE ISRAELITES?

VARIOUS reasons have been put forward to account for the fact that the hare is classed among the “unclean” animals in the lists in Lev. xi. and Deut. xiv.—*e.g.*, in the Old Testament itself the reason given is that it chews the cud (Lev. xi. 6; Deut. xiv. 7). Its habit of rubbing the teeth together when eating causes its cheeks to move in such a way as to make a superficial observer conclude that this is the case. Another reason suggested is its proneness to disease. The supposed thickness of its blood, resulting in sleepiness and melancholia to the eater, has also been assigned as the cause of its “uncleanness.” Or, once more, it has been said that to the general unhealthiness of its flesh was due the command to abstain from eating it; and, lastly, it has been maintained that the prohibition originated in the desire to differentiate the Israelites from the surrounding nations. But strong objections, which it is not necessary to enlarge upon here, can be urged against all these contentions; the real, the original reason, must be sought elsewhere.

I.

It may be well to observe first the place which the hare occupied in the religions and in the “Volks-Ideen” of some widely separated peoples.¹

Among the ancient Egyptians, the hare was holy to Neptra,² the god of grain; it appears in the “Book of the Dead,” where it is represented in a sitting posture with a wisp of corn before

¹ The data here given are not exhaustive, but seem to contain the salient points.

² *I.e.* Osiris, as the giver of grain. Egyptologists are not at one as to the hare being holy to a god. Cf. also Renouf, “The Myth of Osiris Unnefer,” who regards the hare from an entirely different point of view.