

and share the blessedness of Messiah's kingdom. That the resurrection of the body was to be the peculiar privilege of the holy among the Hebrews, is an opinion, which, as we shall see below, was largely prevalent in post-Christian times. But this seems to be the earliest mention of it in the apocryphal literature of the old Testament.

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### APHEK AND BETH-DAGON.

IN the Philistine wars which devastated the Land of Promise during the last days of the Judges and the first days of the Hebrew monarchy, few names are more conspicuous than that of APHEK. Here the enemies of Israel were pitched at that great battle when four thousand men of Judah fell on the field, the ark of God was taken, and the sons of Eli were slain. Here, too, it was they mustered afterwards, when the anger of the captains of the different local contingents rose against Achish, their commander-in-chief, for having brought with him such an ally as David the Israelite whom, with his outlaw band, they compelled to return to Ziklag, while they marched on to the plain of Jezreel and encamped before Shunem, on the eve of that day which proved so victorious to themselves but fatal to King Saul. After this period—probably because of the rapidity with which the chosen people retrieved their position and became, under David, a strong nation, with their capital far southwards, first at Hebron, then at Jerusalem—Apek is no more mentioned in Scripture, and no clue to its whereabouts has been discovered by travellers or found in the works of writers, early or recent, on Bible topography. Yet the identification of it is obviously important to a clear understanding of the history of the period; and it is equally evident that the place must have been one affording considerable natural advantages, or it would never have been chosen as a *rendezvous* by the warlike hosts of the Philistines.

The name itself is not an uncommon one; but, unfortunately, like many another, both ancient and modern, in Palestine, it repeats itself in contiguous localities; a fact which, it is well known, constitutes one of the stumbling-blocks to the Biblical investigator. We read *e.g.* of an Aphek, or Aphekah, in the vicinity of Hebron, in the territory of Judah (Josh. xv. 53, which is probably the same as that named in xii. 18); of another in Asher (Josh. xix. 30, which again probably is that of xiii. 4); of a third in 1 Kings xx. 26, 30, which was a walled city on the way from Syria (of which Damascus was the capital) to Samaria, situated in Ha Mishôr, or "the Plain" (ver. 25), and identified with the modern Fik, a village a little east of the Sea of Galilee, in the direct pilgrimage road from Damascus, and still a general halting-place for caravans from that city to Nablus (Sichem), Jerusalem, and Egypt. But the Aphek of our narrative has hitherto been as completely lost to us as has that monolith—the Ebenezer of a nation's gratitude—erected by Samuel between Mizpeh and Shen, in this same war with the Philistines. A recent residence of several years in Palestine and Syria having made me somewhat familiar with the country, I would ask your readers to follow me in a fresh consideration of the indications of the locality in question, in the hope that some reasonably likely site for a place of such natural as well as historical importance may commend itself to us.

Let us, first, glance at the geographical data furnished us in the Bible. Our Aphek was more than two days' journey in a northerly direction from Ziklag, the seat of David's chieftaincy (1 Sam. xxix. 1, 11; and xxx. 1). This place, unfortunately, is not identified, though its approximate whereabouts is indicated. It was situated in the Negeb, or "South Country," below the mountains of Judæa, and must have been somewhere in the vicinity of Beer-Sheba, because in juxtaposition to it in all the lists; it was first assigned to

Judah and then transferred to Simeon, but was always left in the actual possession of the Philistines until given by the king of Gath to David (Josh. xv. 31, xix. 5 ; 1 Sam. xxvii. 6). It may have been as far south as 'Aşluj, or 'Asluj (twelve miles south of Beer-Sheba), the only place hitherto suggested for its identification.<sup>1</sup> David left Aphek with his small company of hardy followers early in the morning—a thing only done in Palestine in cases of urgency—and under circumstances which, to men of their temperament, would have stimulated their movements, even if they had had no news of an Amalekite invasion of their homes until they reached them. As they did not arrive at the end of their journey until the third day, Aphek could scarcely have been less than fifty miles distant from Ziklag. Aphek, too, was *en route* for Jezreel from Achish's capital at Gath, and within a few hours' run of Shiloh (1 Sam. iv. 1, 12).

Now as the way of the Philistines from Gath to Jezreel would be through Mount Ephraim and by Bethel, the most likely place for their army to gather would be in the vicinity of the passes of Mount Ephraim. Here they would be in a good position to march on to the south-eastern lateral of that great central battlefield of Palestine—the Plain of Esdraelon—where Saul was concentrating his forces, and here they would be able to control or defend the passes through which the various sections of their army must advance under the several “lords of the Philistines.” All the other *data* agree in permitting us to place the site of Aphek in Mount Ephraim, somewhere near where the present road from Jaffa to Jerusalem cuts through it. Such a neighbourhood is generally accepted by modern Scripture geographers. For example, Lord Arthur Hervey, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, in his note on 1 Samuel iv. 1, in the “Speaker's Commentary,” says: “It would be towards the

<sup>1</sup> By a jumble of guesses, for which, I believe, Julius Fürst, the Hebrew lexicographer, is chiefly responsible.

western frontier of Judah, not very far from Mizpeh of Benjamin"; again on 1 Samuel xxix. 1, "Aphek in Mount Ephraim"; and Mr. (now Sir George) Grove, in his article on Aphek in the "Bible Dictionary," observes that it "would be somewhere to the north-west of, and at no great distance from, Jerusalem." Having got thus near, one is surprised that such able scholars did not light upon and identify the exact site.

Who is there that has climbed the road from Jaffa to Jerusalem, and, as he reached the locality in question, has not been impressed with the natural importance of that conically peaked mountain, over whose massive shoulder he climbs, ere he descends to the little halting-place of Kolónieh in the valley beneath, and thence makes the last ascent to the Holy City? From this vantage ground he has a good view of another conical mountain, standing apparently almost isolated a full mile distant in a south-easterly direction, and crowned by a little village. The mountain on which we stand, too, bears on its higher crest one of those wretched hamlets so common in Palestine, and which often mark places of great historical interest or of ancient beauty (as, for example, at Jezreel and Tirzah); and here among the hovels are a few large old stones, which are doubtless the survival of better things, while on the very apex of the hill is the ruin of a fortress or castle.

The traveller eagerly asks what these two mountains are and were; for points so conspicuous must surely have borne an important part in the country's history.

The southern mountain village, we are told, is Šoba, the ancient Zuph or Ramathaim—Zophim, the birthplace and residence of the Prophet Samuel, and where Saul was chosen and anointed first king of Israel.<sup>1</sup> This fact makes

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. i. 19, 20, ix., and x. 1. The evidence of identity is too elaborate to be given here. Grove adopts the identification in his map of the Holy Land in the new "Atlas of Ancient Geography"; but the merit of proving it belongs to Herr Schick of Jerusalem, whose argument is given in a lecture delivered in

yonder cone glow with interest ; albeit the Philistines did not muster at Zuph.

But what of the massive-browed mountain on which we stand ? Our guides can only inform us that its peak peers up 2650 feet above the level of the Mediterranean, and 540 feet above the valley of Kolónieh ; that it is called *Ḳaṣṭal*, which is the Arabic form of the Latin *castellum* ; that it may have been a strong place of the Crusaders, but probably marks the site of a Roman fortress placed here for the strengthening, or as an outpost, of its *Colonia*<sup>1</sup> just below, where, it has been said, the customs dues of the Jerusalem traffic were collected. It would serve also for the protection of the road to Jerusalem (from which city it is distant about two hours' military march) and of the passes of Mount Ephraim. This information is all interesting enough ; but what was the place *before* the time of the Romans ? If they made use of it on account of the advantages of its natural position, it is the more probable that others did so before them. From the time that Rehoboam made his double fence of fortified cities<sup>2</sup> from Hebron to Gath and Lachish, and from Bethlehem to Zorah and Aijalon, the children of Judah would not need to utilize such a place as this *Ḳaṣṭal* ; for Zorah and Aijalon covered the approaches to it ; and if these were broken through, "Mount Zion" was of course the central refuge of the nation. But in the days of Saul things were different ; the nation was not organized, nor of course its national defences, and Jerusalem itself was but a Canaanitish city. In point of position and strength, as we have seen, it would have admirably suited for a *rendezvous* of the Philistines, their main force coming from Gath and contingents from Gaza, Ashkelon, the Holy City in 1878, and printed in the *Jewish Jerusalem Year-Book* for 1881 (published at Vienna in 1882).

<sup>1</sup> Kolónieh or Kulóniyeh probably represents the Mozah (Ham-Motsah) of Joshua xviii. 26, and of the Talmud, where willow branches were gathered for the Feast of Tabernacles, and it may be the Koulon or Culon of the Septuagint and Jerome.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chron. xi. 5 ff.

and Ekron in Judah, and from Beth-Dagon in Dan; while Saul's strength lay in an opposite quarter. With reference to Ziklag, *Ḳaṣṭal* is forty-five miles from Beer-Sheba in a straight line (and David and his followers would have been able to go down there from here in almost a straight line); it is a little over twenty miles, *i.e.* a very "few hours" distant for one of the military runners, from Shiloh. While its conspicuous position gave it a wide outlook, it was free from any liability to surprise from Beni Israel, and at the same time it guarded its own rear in case retreat became necessary. In fact, in reviewing the circumstances, one feels that if this were not Aphek, it would be a hard matter to find any other place so suitable.

There is no valid reason against our identification, and the probabilities in its favour thus far are exceedingly strong; but the difficulty of change of name remains yet to be faced. In any case this need not be insuperable, especially when we remember that Roman names in Palestine have not infrequently displaced earlier ones, as Cæsarea has supplanted Strato's Tower, and Nablus (the Arabic form of Neapolis) Sichem. But, as a matter of fact, the difficulty vanishes when looked at. The modern name agrees exactly with the old one. Aphek comes from a root meaning "to make strong," and thus signifies "a strong place," "fortress," or "Castellum."

∴ Aphek = *Ḳaṣṭal*.<sup>1</sup>

The result of the last mustering of the Philistine forces in this place was disastrous and apparently overwhelming to Israel. But "man's extremity is God's opportunity,"

<sup>1</sup> Since writing the above, I find that this identification has been briefly proposed by the Rev. W. F. Birch—the sharp-eyed critic of the Palestine Exploration Fund—in the *Quarterly Statement* for 1881, p. 101. The fact that our investigations (which were perfectly independent and unknown to each other) should have led us to the same conclusion is of course a confirmation of its soundness. Indeed, as I have previously remarked, it seems strange that the identification was not made long ago.

and this crushing defeat was, as we know, overruled by "the strategy of Providence" to the recovery, stability, and glory of his people. A fearful incident in the crisis of the disaster, however, we propose now to try and localize.

In 1 Chronicles x. 9, 10 (the narrative of the Chapter is substantially the same as that of 1 Samuel xxxi.), we read that after the Philistines found the corpses of King Saul and his sons on Mount Gilboa, they stripped him, "took his head and his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to carry tidings unto their idols, and to the people. And they put his armour in the house of their gods, and *fastened his head in the temple of Dagon.*"

The "house of their gods," where they hung his armour, was probably some place in the heart of Philistia itself, where such trophies were usually kept (as the Tower of London among us); but the head and body of their fallen enemy were nailed up to the walls of towns in the vicinity of the battle-places, in the land of Israel, which had lately passed, by "the fortunes of war," into the hands of the Philistines. Here the mutilated remains were transfixed—in accordance with the usages of those rough times—as ghastly tokens of the prowess of the conquerors, to strike terror into the hearts of the children of Israel, and leave the Philistines in undisturbed possession of their conquests.

For the fact that many Israelitish cities had been acquired by the enemy during their forty years' oppression, we have not only natural inference, but ample proof, and with reference to this last war it is definitely stated in both copies of the narrative. *E.g.* we read in Samuel that "when the men of Israel that were on the other side of the valley (*scil.* of Jezreel) . . . saw that the men of (the army of) Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities and fled; *and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.* . . . And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth

Shan." The Chronicler, as we have seen, adds, "and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon."

"The house of Ashtoreth," presumably in Philistia proper, is supposed to have been that at Ashkelon which, according to Herodotus, was afterwards plundered by the Scythians. Beth Shan, or Beth Shean, still exists (the name corrupted into Beisán); it is a modern village with ancient ruins, just on the line where the Plain of Jezreel dips into the Jordan valley, a dozen miles north-east of the modern Jenîn, with the village of Gilboa (now Jelbôn) lying between the two places.

We have now to find the third place, viz. "the temple of Dagon," which, whether a locality or an edifice, could not have sprung into existence at the moment of victory, but had survived from the days when the Philistines over-ran the country—the period of 1 Samuel xiii.

What "in the temple of Dagon" means we are helped to understand by turning to the original, where we observe that the Hebrew for the whole phrase is simply *בֵּית דָּגוֹן*, "Beth-Dagon"; evidently *the name of a place*, which there is no more reason for translating here than in Joshua xv. 41 and xix. 27.<sup>1</sup> It was, however, a different spot from either of these, which are both too much out of the way, the former being in the territory of Judah and lying in "the valley" or Shephelah (Josh. xv. 33), and the latter being in the territory of Asher.

The Beth-Dagon we are in quest of should be either in the immediate neighbourhood of the battle of Gilboa, the region of the triumphs and conquests of the Philistines; or between the scene of that battle and Aphek, their mustering place, which, as we have endeavoured to shew, was the modern Kaṣtal. Is there any site which can be identified with Beth-Dagon in the locality indicated?

<sup>1</sup> A similar mistake is made by the A.V. in Judges xx. 18, 26, 31, and xxi. 2, where the proper name Bethel is translated "house of God."



There is. A spot meeting all the requirements of the test still exists, and bears the very name (in its Arabic form of Beit Dejân) which was given in ages long gone by. Beit Dejân is now a hamlet (and probably never was much more than this), with a few ruins, situated in the Plain of Salîm, seven miles east-south-east of Nablus, about twenty-two miles south of Jelbôn, and about thirty miles north of Aphek.

These identifications will, it is hoped, help to give reality and life to an obscure period of Israel's history; a period not without importance and interest for us (as what portion of Bible history can be?), albeit that period of anarchy and confusion with which a national apostasy was visited.

And in Beit Dejân we have another monument discovered to us of the widespread idolatry of ancient Palestine, and another token of its influence among an energetic race, if not of their missionary zeal in promoting it. The terrible fascination of this sin held, as we know,<sup>1</sup> many of the Chosen People in its thrall; and at this very shrine, doubtless many a heart, straying from Jehovah, bowed down and worshipped. The Nemesis was sure. They who had been their teachers in a false religion, marched against and utterly defeated them in battle, and on the very walls of this temple of their god they transfixed the gory head of the first hapless king of Israel, once the pride of his people, but now forsaken of God and man.

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### THE STONE AND THE ROCK.

Two very interesting papers in the December number of *THE EXPOSITOR* bearing the above title prompt me to attempt another and very different exposition of the words recorded in Matthew xvi. 18 as spoken by Christ. Our task

<sup>1</sup> Judges. x. 6; 1 Sam. vii. 3 and 4, and xii. 10.