

*THE SITE OF CAPERNAUM.*

No. II.

TELL HUM *v.* KHAN MINYEH.

As the Rev. Asad Mansur, curate to the Rev. Charles Augustus Manley of Nazareth, who accompanied me to the Sea of Galilee in January, 1906, takes a different view of the site of Capernaum from that which I have formed, and stated in the *EXPOSITOR* of July ; and as his letter to me on the subject only reached me after my own article was dispatched to the editor, I think it well to send the larger part of his interesting paper as a supplemental article, omitting only a few points already mentioned by me. His discussion of it illustrates the difficulty of determining the site with absolute confidence ; although several correspondents have written to me to say that they think I have proved the point I tried to establish, and Mr. James Cohen, of the Free Church of Scotland mission—who accompanied us on the expedition at the request of Dr. Torrance of Tiberias—writes that he agrees with me as to Khan Minyeh being the real site. I send Mr. Mansur's letter with the greater confidence as Mr. Manley has kindly translated it from Arabic into English. I may perhaps return to the subject at a later date, as it is certainly worthy of additional study and research.

WILLIAM KNIGHT.

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A JOURNEY WITH PROFESSOR KNIGHT TO TIBERIAS AND  
ITS VICINITIES.

*Part I.*

On January 23, 1906, Professor Knight of St. Andrew's University, Scotland, arrived at Nazareth. He had previously written to the Rev. C. A. Manley, C.M.S., and myself,

asking that, if possible, one of us should accompany him to the Lake. It was my privilege to have that honour accorded me.

We left Nazareth about 2.30 p.m. the same afternoon, and after a somewhat tiresome drive on account of the bad state of the roads, we reached Tiberias at 8.30 p.m. The rest of the evening was occupied in making the necessary arrangements for our trip to Tell Hum and the north-west shore of the Lake.

Next day, Wednesday, January 24, at 8 a.m., we took boat. There was with us also Mr. James Cohen, of the Free Church of Scotland Mission. Dr. Torrance had kindly asked him to render us all the assistance he could.

After the boatmen had rowed a short distance they spread sail, and the boat made good way. We did not experience on this occasion a storm such as came down on our Lord and his disciples, although we gathered from the fear written on the faces of the rowers, when the slightest wind arose, what such an experience must be.

We then asked them to take us to the place where the Jordan enters the Lake. This they refused to do, saying that they were only four in number, and that the wind was rising in the East. The wind was not at that moment very strong, but the fear was that later in the day it would gather strength. Indeed, on our return to Tiberias, we kept close to the western shore of the Lake to avoid the wash of the waves.

We arrived at Tell Hum about 10 a.m. Our boat was anchored in the little harbour. This had all the appearance of modern workmanship about it ; but when one landed and viewed the ancient ruins, one could not but feel that there must have been a harbour in olden days suitable to the magnificence of those splendid buildings.

After leaving the landing-place, a few steps brought us

to the garden of the Latin monastery. Here are the ruins recently excavated by the German Archæological Society. They are different from all others found on the western shores of the Lake, being composed of large white limestones, whereas the prevailing stone elsewhere is the black basalt. These stones are covered with symbolical carvings. We noticed representations of vines with clusters of grapes hanging from them, palm trees laden with dates, pomegranates and pear-trees with their respective fruits clinging to their branches. We also noted carvings of the seven-branched candlestick, the pot of manna, and two intersected triangles of star-like form. We long wondered over these symbols, and wished to know whether this was the site of Capernaum, and if we were gazing on the ruins of the old synagogue which the centurion built, and in which Christ had taught. We were told that the Latin monks intend rebuilding the synagogue on its old foundations, and replacing as far as possible the old stones in their original positions.

We then left these ruins by a door on the south-west, and found about thirty to forty workers—men and women—busy building a wall round a large space of ground. On asking the foreman what they were doing, he said that this space was for a garden; but report says that a church and monastery are to be built on it, and that on this site there are important ruins which are at present covered over.

After this we re-entered our boat, and bore a little to the south-west. In a quarter of an hour we arrived at *Tannur Eyyub* (Job's oven), probably so called from the shape of a pool in that place. Here we once more disembarked, and after three minutes' walk between dry grass, thorns, bushes, and oleander trees, we reached the highest point of the *octagonal fountain pool*. This is built in the side of the hill, and is called to-day *Birket Dahir el-'Amr*. From

the bottom of it there wells up a spring which is said to be the largest in Galilee ; and a little lower down on the shore of the Lake a mill is worked by means of the water, which is brought to it through an aqueduct. The present masonry of the fountain pool, the aqueduct, and the mills are reputed to be the work of the famous Dâhir-el-'Amr, who lived in the middle of the eighteenth century.

The water does not now rise to the full height of the fountain basin, but issues out through an aqueduct built up the slope of the hill from the mill, and, so to speak, joining or tapping the basin of the pool near its bottom. No doubt formerly the water issued from a place higher up in the basin, at a depth of about two feet from its lip or rim, as will be explained later on.

I went up the valley to the north-west of the fountain pool. We might well call this a "little plain." I was following the traces of an aqueduct, and having walked for only a few minutes discovered that it is of modern date, but for what purpose it was made I could not ascertain.

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My opinion is as follows :—

1. I do not think that a civilized government like that of the Romans would leave waters so copious to fall into the Lake without using it for irrigation purposes, which could be done without much difficulty.

2. In our Lord's time this part of the country was densely populated, which would mean that the inhabitants would have to take advantage of any way of increasing their means of livelihood.

3. I have no doubt that the water formerly issued, not as at present from the lower part of the basin, but from the upper part, near the rim.<sup>1</sup> My reason for this statement is as follows :—Standing near the present mills a little to

<sup>1</sup> The depth of the basin from the lip to the bottom is about 20 feet.

the north-west, and in a higher position (in level) to them, there are ruins of an ancient mill. From this mill there is an old aqueduct on which one can walk, which joins the fountain pool at the top or rim of the basin. At the place of juncture there are two holes through which originally the water must have flowed from the fountain into the now disused aqueduct.

4. My conclusion is that the traces of the channel above the monastery, and which were pointed out by Father Daond, are ruins of an old aqueduct for irrigating the "little plain" which lies between the fountain pool and the monastery.

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Between Tahghah and Khan Minyeh there is a rocky headland reaching down to the sea, and dividing the Gennesaret Plain from the "little plain." Following the line of the aqueduct that is visible in many places, especially near the monastery, we came to this headland through which there is a cutting made. *This is the highest point between the fountain pool and the Plain of Gennesaret.* Here Professor Knight took the level, and compared it with that of the fountain pool, the latter of which he found to be ten feet higher. The cutting is only in the highest point of the headland, and this made me conclude that it was made as an aqueduct to bring the water from the fountain pool to the Plain of Gennesaret for irrigation purposes.

In addition to what I have already said in Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, I now make the following remarks :—

5. Between the monastery and the cutting in the headland the ruins of the aqueduct are visible in many places.

6. The cutting was not made for the purpose of a road. It is too narrow. Two horsemen meeting in it could not pass each other.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> At the Ras-en-Nakura, between Acre and Tyre, there is a cutting in the cleft for the purpose of a road, but this is much wider than the one under discussion.

7. When the highest point is passed the rocks bear no trace of having been chiselled or cut, and are of too rough a nature for a road. For the purpose of an aqueduct it would not be necessary to cut or shape them, because there is a natural slope which would direct the flow of water downwards.

I therefore conclude that this traceable channel from the fountain pool to the Plain of Gennesaret was an aqueduct for purposes of irrigation; and that most probably *the fountain pool is the same as "the fountain which is called Capernaum" mentioned in Josephus (chap. x. no. 8).*

At the bottom of the headland there is the fountain called Ain-et-Tineh; which flows into the sea, and causes the ground west and south-west for some distance to be marshy and full of papyrus grass, oleanders, and other bushes. From this point commences the Plain of Gennesaret.

Two minutes' walk from the headland brought us to *Khan Minyeh*, which is also claimed by some as being the site of Capernaum. After spending some little time there we made our way to the shore, and re-entering our boat, sailed along, hugging the coast on account of the high wind that had now risen. Half an hour brought us to *Wad Erubadyeh* and opposite to *Ain-el-Mudawara*. Here we again landed and found that the amount of water coming down from the Ain-el-Mudawara was much less than that which flows out of the "fountain pool." Re-embarking, we in turn arrived opposite Wady-el-Hamâm, el-Mijdel, Ain Bardi, Ain-el-Fûliyeh, and finally reached Tiberias about 4 p.m.

## *Part II.*

### THE SITE OF CAPERNAUM.

For a long time there has been great dispute amongst scholars about the real site of Capernaum. The natives of the country in general seldom take an interest in the

identifying of Biblical sites, though they have special qualifications for so doing, living on the spots themselves and speaking the language (Arabic) that has for so many centuries been the common language of Palestine. For myself, I have long been interested in this subject, and have compiled a book for the Church Missionary Society's Schools on the Biblical geography of the country, hoping to create an interest in these matters among the people of the country.

In considering the subject of the site of Capernaum I shall divide it into four parts.

1. What we know about Capernaum from the New Testament.
2. What we know about it from Josephus.
3. What has been said on the subject by more modern writers.
4. My own conclusions.

#### I. NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES REFERRING TO CAPERNAUM.

1. Christ visited and performed some miracles in it, before He made it "His own city" and dwelt there. (John ii. 12; Luke iv. 23.)
2. The nobleman came from Capernaum to ask Christ to heal his son. (John iv. 46.)
3. Christ made it his own city. (Matt. iv. 3; Mark i. 21; Luke iv. 31.)
4. After his first itineracy in Galilee (Mark i. 36-39) He came back to Capernaum. (Mark ii. 1-14.)
5. Christ came from Jerusalem to Capernaum after the second Passover. (Luke vii. 1-10.)
6. After the second itineracy (Luke viii. 1-3) He returned to it. (Matt. xiii. 1, 3; Luke viii. 4.)
7. Christ went to the East of the Lake to the country of Gerasenes (Luke viii. 22), and returned to Capernaum. Matt. ix. 1.

8. Third itineracy (Mark vi. 1-6). Return to Capernaum. (Mark vi. 30.)

9. Christ went with his disciples to the other side of the Lake (John vi. 1), and withdrew apart (Luke ix. 10) "into a desert place" (R.V. to a city called *Bethsaida*, ? *Julias*), where He fed the 5,000. After this, when even was come (Matt. xiv. 23), He constrained his disciples to enter into a boat, and go before Him to the other side to *Bethsaida* (Mark vi. 45). They "were going over the sea to *Capernaum*" (John vi. 17) and "in the fourth watch of the night" (Matt. xiv. 25), having rowed about five and twenty furlongs" (about four miles) Christ came to them walking upon the sea (John vi. 19). Now "when they had crossed over, they came to the land *unto Gennesaret*, and moored to the shore" (Mark vi. 53), and the men of that place knew Him (Matt. xiv. 35). On the morrow the multitudes entered boats, and came to *Capernaum* seeking Jesus, whom they found on the other side of the sea (John vi. 22-25).

10. Fourth itineracy (Matt. xv. 21), and after feeding the 4,000 (Matt. xv. 32) He came into the borders of Magadan (*Magdala*, Matt, xv. 39), or "unto the parts of *Dalmanutha* (Matt. viii. 10). Then "entering into the boat He departed to the other side"—that is to *Bethsaida* (*Julias*)—and then went forth into the villages of *Cæsarea Philippi* (Mark viii. 13, 22, 27).

11. He came back to *Capernaum* (Matt. xvi. 24, 25), but did not remain long there. Then He left Galilee altogether (Matt. xix. 1).

12. Christ pronounced woe against *Capernaum*. (Matt. xi. 20 ; Luke x. 13-15.)

## II. TELL HUM.

I myself feel that this site is the most probable one.



## ANSWERS TO SOME OBJECTIONS.

*Objection 1.*

That although there is a tradition in favour of it yet this cannot be depended on, as Christian tradition has erred in regard to other sites, i.e. Sychar (*Hist. Geog. of Holy Land*, G. Adam Smith, p. 456 note).

The same might be said of the tradition that Khan Minyeh is the site of Capernaum. It proves as much, or as little, for both places. But the tradition for Tell Hum is of older date.

*Objection 2.*

Some deny that it was on the main road. But Dr. G. A. Smith says that "it is on the great road." Supposing it was not on a main road, and was not suitable for a customs city, I ask :

1. Is it certain that all the great cities were on the main roads? Josephus calls Capernaum a village.

2. Is it certain that there were no custom houses except on the main road? Why should it not be a custom-house for the taxing of fish, and boating on the Lake?

3. It is not plainly said that Matthew was at Capernaum when Christ called him, but rather it appears from Mark ii. 13, 14 that after healing the paralytic in Capernaum Christ "went forth again by the seaside." It is possible that this place was near Khan Minyeh, or any other spot on the seashore or main road. But the ruins that are pointed out near Khan Minyeh are some distance from the shore of the Lake, while those of Tell Hum are on the shore.

*Objection 3.*

It is said that Capernaum was on the Plain of Gennesaret. How do we know that Capernaum was on the Plain of Gennesaret? Canon Tristram says (*Bible Places*, p. 280): "Its distance from the Round Fountain and from

the Plain of Gennesareth seems the obstacle to a decisive admission of its being the city of the gospels."

Perhaps this idea was built on the saying in John vi. 17, "And they were going to Capernaum," and Mark vi. 35 confusing Capernaum with Gennesaret, and on John vi. 22-25. It may be said that the disciples were going to Capernaum, and arrived at Gennesaret. Then Capernaum must be in the Plain of Gennesaret. This is the argument.

Also those who came to seek Jesus found Him in Capernaum, while He had arrived at Gennesaret. Then again Capernaum was in Gennesaret.

*Answer to this.*

1. The Lord compelled his disciples to go before to Bethsaida (west), Luke ix. 10, but we see that they were going to Capernaum (John xi. 17). Ought they not to have been going to Bethsaida? (probably Bethsaida = Tahghah). But on account of the dangers of the storm on the sea they started from the eastern shore about evening (Matt. xiv. 23), at the fourth watch of the night they were not farther off the eastern shore than four miles (Matt. xiv. 25). We should naturally expect to find them obeying their Lord's command to go to Bethsaida. Why were they then going to Capernaum? The probable reason is that on account of the storm they determined to seek the nearest place of safety. Tell Hum is nearer than Khan Minyeh and is the nearest inhabited place from the point where the Jordan enters the Lake.

2. When our Lord entered the boat and the storm ceased, they were not obliged to go to the nearest place on the western shore. No doubt there must have been a sufficient reason for the Lord's change of plan in now going to Gennesaret.

3. If Capernaum was in the Plain of Gennesaret, it would

have been said about those who came to Capernaum seeking Jesus that they "found Him there," or merely that they "found Him." But it is said that they found Him "on the other side" (John vi. 26). There was no need for this addition unless we suppose that they did not find Him at Capernaum. But they reached Capernaum, and when they found Him not, they went to the Plain of Gennesaret and found Him there.

4. If the Lord had arrived at Capernaum, there had been no need for saying (Matt. xiv. 35), "When the men of that place knew Him." Is not this saying superfluous if "that place" was Capernaum—his own city? But the objection will disappear if we suppose that He had arrived at a place other than Capernaum, where He was known, but not so well known as at Capernaum.

#### *Objection 4.*

It is said that there is no "Tell" at Tell Hum (see Dr. G. A. Smith, *Hist. Geog.*, p. 456, note).

*Answer.* I do not understand what the objectors mean by the word "Tell." In Arabic the word "tell" is used for any heap of ruins or mound. So that the ruins of Tell Hum themselves are to-day a "tell."

#### *Objection 5.*

It is said that "*Tell Hum*" is derived from *Tan hum*, the name of a Jewish Rabbi buried here (see Dr. G. A. Smith, p. 456, note).

At first sight this appears reasonable; but when we remember how many mistakes have occurred in settling the derivations of such names it is possible after all that this is a mistake. For example (1) *Abu Shoosheh*, where the Palestine Exploration Society is working to-day, is now without doubt identified as the site of old *Gezer*. At this place there is a wely called اطرايرلي The inhabitants of

the present village say that the wely is named after that part of North Africa called Algerira اطزائر Al-gezair, while we now know that it is named after Gezer.

(2) The same thing can be said about هوشة near Shefa Amr. It is the Asheh of the Talmud. The inhabitants say that it is derived from the name of a man who ran هاشش furiously after some enemies who were attacking the village and was killed.

*Objection 6—*

That there is no water at Tell Hum (Dr. G. A. Smith, p. 456). I do not understand how Dr. G. A. Smith and others gather that Josephus means that the fountain called Capernaum is *in Capernaum*. All he says is "the people of the country call it Capharnaum." This may mean that the fountain was called Capernaum because it was near the city, but how near is not implied.

The fountain pool above described is less than two miles distance from Tell Hum, and might well have been called Capernaum after the city of that name.

*Instances of this custom.*

1. عيون صفوري The springs of Sepphoris.
2. حفاير دبري The pits (fountain pits) of Dabûrieh (the "Daberath" of the Bible, Josh. xix. 12).
3. بئر طبعون Beer Tab'aun (on north-west of Plain of Jezreel).
4. نهر بيروت Nahr Beirout (river of Beyrout).

These fountains, in common with others in Palestine, are to-day named after their several cities or villages, although they are about the same distance from them as Tell Hum is from the fountain pool.

## FINAL CONCLUSION.

*The ruins that are at Tell Hum.*

Canon Tristram says (*Bible Places*, p. 280): "At least it seems tolerably certain that whether this is the Capernaum of our Lord's time or not, it is the Capernaum of the Jews when, under Hadrian, they were permitted to return to their land."

Can we not go back a little, and say that it seems tolerably certain that the ruins of Tell Hum are those of a city existing in our Lord's time?

On February 13, 1906, I was in Mujudel (a village about three miles from Nazareth), and was guest of a man who is well known as a discoverer of ancient glass. He told me that the best glass that he had found was at Tell Hum. He had also discovered lead coffins, that had afterwards been melted down and sold. He had found about fifty pieces of thin gold plate about the size of the palm of the hand. All these were found in that part of Tell Hum which belongs to عرب السليّة (Arabs of Es-Simakeyeh). The boundary between this portion of ground, and that of the Latin monastery, is near the north-east of the wall of the monastery garden.

I asked him if he had found any ancient glass at Khan Minyeh. He replied, "None: and even Father Daond told us that if we found any antiquities he would give us a present. We did our best to find some at the Khan and above it, but were unsuccessful?"

Does not this finding of ancient glass at Tell Hum, together with the importance of the existing ancient ruins, prove that there was a city here in the time of our Lord?

There remains one point more. If there was a city here in our Lord's time, it seems to me that there can be no doubt that this is the site of old Capernaum. For in addition

to what has already been said about the disciples seeking, at the time of the storm on the Lake, to reach the nearest harbour, or shelter, (see under objection 3,) we have the incident related of Josephus, after he had fallen from his horse, that he was "carried into a village named Capharnome, or Capernaum" (*Life*, 72). Where was he when he fell from his horse? Was he not near Julias, that is near the point where the Jordan enters the Lake? Would he not have been brought to the nearest inhabited place on the west of the Jordan? Now the city that existed in his day at the present site of Tell Hum would be the nearest "village" to the mouth of the Jordan. And therefore the ruins of Tell Hum are on the site of the old Capernaum.

ASAD MANSUR.

*April* 3, 1906.

Nazareth, Palestine.