

fairly takes our breath away. Perhaps the "legends" about the Resurrection may yet be studied afresh on modern scientific lines—lines lying, one presumes, at more or less distance alike from Professor Lake's and Professor Orr's—and prove to have some truth in them after all!

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*THE EXCAVATIONS AT GEZER AND RELIGION  
IN ANCIENT PALESTINE.*<sup>1</sup>

THE opening years of the present century have been marked by greatly increased activity in the excavation of the ancient sites of Palestine. Down to the close of the last century systematic excavation had been largely left to the English Palestine Exploration Society, and this Society had mainly confined its excavations to Jerusalem, and in the last years of the century to Tell el-Hesy (Lachish) and four other Tells in the Shephelah, which could not be certainly identified with particular places named in the ancient literature.

Since 1900, excavations have been undertaken on five sites of ancient fame—Gezer, Taanach, Megiddo, Samaria, Jericho. At Taanach Dr. Sellin carried through extensive and successful operations under the patronage of the Austrian government and the Vienna Academy of Sciences in 1902 and 1903; he is now superintending the excavations at Jericho, which have not yet gone far enough to produce results entirely commensurate with those of some sites that have been more fully worked over, but which, thanks to the greater fame of Jericho, have lately attracted the attention of our daily Press. The excavations at Samaria, under American direction, are also as yet in an early stage; no site perhaps promises more for our knowledge of Hebrew history in particular, if only the work is thoroughly and

<sup>1</sup> A lecture delivered to the Jews' Literary Society.

completely done. Prof. Steuernagel has just lately published the memoirs of the work which Dr. Schumacher directed on behalf of the German Palestine Society at Tell el-Mutesellim, the ancient Megiddo; and it is obvious that the fruits of this enterprise have not been less than those yielded by the neighbouring Tell Ta'annak.

I refer briefly to those other undertakings at the outset before I turn more especially to Gezer, because it is important to bear in mind that the meaning of facts yielded by one site is often only elicited, checked, or confirmed by results obtained elsewhere. I confine myself directly, though not also indirectly, to Gezer because it alone has yielded more of interest than it is possible to deal with on a single occasion; and for the same reason I do not propose to touch upon all the interesting matters illustrated or illuminated by the discoveries at Gezer, but merely on a single group of them—those, viz., which are associated with religion in ancient Palestine; even in the case of these it will be necessary to select, without attempting to exhaust.

The identity of the modern Tell Jezer, a few miles from Ramleh, with the ancient Gezer was definitely established by the distinguished French archaeologist, M. Clermont-Ganneau, who, having previously argued for the identification, had the good fortune to discover in the year 1872 a series of inscriptions around the Tell bearing the legend in Hebrew characters of about the Maccabæan period, "Boundary of Gezer" (תְּרוֹם גֶּזֶר). The same savant in the year 1898 read a paper on a recently discovered addition to this series of boundary stones before the "Académie des Inscriptions des Belles Lettres,"<sup>1</sup> and concluded his discussion of Gezer with these words:—

"I will add, but without insisting for the present upon a

<sup>1</sup> A translation of this paper will be found in the *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*, 1899, pp. 118 ff.

scheme which I do not conceal from myself presents difficulties of every kind, that the *tell* of Gezer itself would seem to be one of the most likely spots in Palestine for methodical excavations. Digging would be carried on there with assurance of successful results, thanks to the certainty, unique of its kind, that we possess relative to the identity of the site. Everything there would be of interest, from the layer of the Crusades that covers the surface, to the deep layers in which are hidden the remains of a past anterior to the Exodus. Why should we attack, as is so frequently done, somewhat at haphazard, *tells* that are anonymous or of doubtful origin, and neglect this particular one (as has hitherto been the case), when it possesses the inestimable advantage of having a name that is known, a personality that is ascertained and a continuous history of its own, intimately connected with the general history of Palestine from the most distant times to the era of the Crusades ? ”

This was written at the time that excavations under the Palestine Exploration Society were being carried out at the “ *tells* that are anonymous or of doubtful origin ” of Es-Şafi, Sandahannah, Ej-Judeideh and Zakariya, not very remote from Gezer. Four years later the same Society obtained a firman for the excavation of Gezer ; and now (Feb. 1909) at the end of seven years the work is approaching its completion. The difficulties which M. Clermont-Ganneau foresaw have been overcome by the skill and untiring zeal of Mr. Macalister ; the successful results of which he felt assured have been obtained.

No site in Palestine has ever been so completely laid bare as Gezer, or made to yield the full tale of its secrets. A mere glance at the 300 illustrations in the text of the memoir, or at the 50 plates of the atlas that accompanies it, will show how rich were the results of Dr. Schumacher’s work at Tell el-Mutesellim ; but a study of the plan indicating what

parts of the *tell* were actually excavated will also show how much less complete was the excavation than that of Gezer. In the hope, justified by events, that further search might recover more Assyrian tablets Dr. Sellin re-opened the mound of Ta'annak after he had published his memoir ; and his later work yielded a valuable "Nachlese." The Palestine Exploration Society finding at the end of the period of the firman that less than half the surface of the *tell* had been excavated, decided to apply for a further firman. Now at the close of the second period, and after over five years of active operations, the work, is nearly complete. The value of such completeness should be evident ; it increases the data for the solution of the problems that all excavation raises ; it diminishes the risk that important objects should escape discovery. At the end of the first period of excavation Mr. Macalister discovered tombs of a new and remarkable character : at the beginning of the second period he discovered others of the same type : the further evidence thus obtained reduced the extent of the problem created by the first discovery.

Let me now briefly remind you of the chief characteristics of the site of Gezer and of the chief points in its history as known to us prior to the excavations. Riding north from Ashdod one passes, after some three or four hours, on the right the site of another of the five Philistine cities—Ekron : at this point Tell Gezer is in sight as a long and conspicuous elevation ; in another hour or two one reaches the *tell* itself, and mounts somewhat steeply to admire the fine view seawards which commands also the line of march by which the armies of the Pharaohs marched northwards towards Syria, or the armies of Esarhaddon or Ashurbanipal southwards on Egypt. In a word Gezer borders on the Philistine country and is a natural stronghold close to an important military and trade-route. Jerusalem lies barely twenty

miles in a direct line westward, or let us say, at seven or eight hours' distance.

In the fifteenth century B.C. Gezer is mentioned among the towns conquered by Thothmes III. and among the Tell el-Amarna Tablets (14th cent. B.C.) is one in which Yapahi, its ruler, protests his fidelity to Pharaoh. Later it was captured by Merenptah (c. 1230 B.C.). After the Hebrew conquest it fell to the tribe of Ephraim, but, as the book of Judges informs us, the Canaanites were not expelled, but continued to dwell among the Ephraimites. According to 1 Kings ix. 16, Pharaoh king of Egypt captured Gezer, burned it with fire, slew the Canaanites that dwelt in the city, and gave it to his daughter as her marriage portion when she wedded Solomon. Solomon then rebuilt the city. Thereafter we hear no more of Gezer till the time of the Maccabees, when Simon took it, and built for himself a palace there.

Two points come out clearly : Gezer was a town to be captured if possible, and from an early period it was subject to Egyptian influence. As to the last point the meaning of the inscriptions of Thothmes and Merenptah and the Tell el-Amarna Tablets is clear, even if we were to grant the contention of some scholars that an Egyptian Pharaoh would not have married his daughter to Solomon and that the original text of Kings recorded the capture of Gezer by Piru king of Musri, and Solomon's marriage not to an Egyptian princess, but to a lady from North Arabia.

Both these points are of importance in considering the significance of the excavations at Gezer for the history of Religion. Because Gezer was a border town and because the extent and duration of the effective Hebrew occupation of it is uncertain, it is necessary to proceed with caution in drawing conclusions as to Hebrew or Jewish Religion in particular. I have preferred therefore for the present and

in general to speak of Religion in Palestine rather than Hebrew Religion in particular. I shall point out specifically, where it seems well to do so, the bearing of the more general conclusions on the question of Jewish Religion. Much certainly that the excavations reveal with reference to religion in Gezer belongs to periods long prior to the settlement of the Hebrews in Palestine, much of it to periods when the population consisted only very partially of Jews.

As to the influence of Egypt I will merely say at this point that the excavations entirely confirm the impression that is given by the literary data: they enable us to trace that influence further back, to nearly a thousand years before the time of Thothmes III., whose mention of the city is the earliest reference to it in literature; they furnish evidence also of the nature and extent of Egyptian influence at various times between that remote period and the fall of the Jewish monarchy.

There is one general characteristic of all excavations in Palestine that has its bearing on our special point of view. This is the paucity of written material that they have brought to light, the still greater paucity of Hebrew inscriptions that have been recovered, and again the almost entire absence of inscriptions in Hebrew directly bearing on religion. Nothing has been thus discovered comparable with the Moabite inscriptions of Mesha, the Zinjerli inscriptions, the inscription of Zakir, which have shed so much light not only on the history of their times, but on the religion of those in whose midst they were erected.

The longest of Hebrew inscriptions—the Siloam—was discovered by accident and has no religious significance, being in this respect like the longest of the Hebrew inscriptions recovered at Gezer, which consists of some twenty words recording the months of the agricultural year.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Palestine Exploration Fund *Quarterly Statement*, 1909, pp. 26-34

A sufficiently comprehensive list of all the inscribed matter recovered through the recent excavations can be quickly given. The inscribed handle jars were the chief yield of the Shephelah *tells* excavated in the nineties of the last century. Richest in inscriptions of the excavations of this century have been those at Tell Ta'annak, where Dr. Sellin recovered a series of letters written in Assyrian, and belonging to what may be roughly defined as the Tell el-Amarna period. Historically interesting and valuable, these letters raised one question of great religious interest. Among the persons named in them is a certain Ahijami. Is this name identical with the Hebrew Ahijah? If so, was the Hebrew name of God current among the Canaanites? I do not propose to re-discuss this much discussed question—a question of perennial interest and of great obscurity. It has, as you are well aware, been recently and thoroughly examined by Dr. Daiches.<sup>1</sup> Gezer has also yielded Assyrian inscriptions—two<sup>2</sup> in number, and both of the seventh century, and not without a bearing on the history of religion. To these I will return later. Gezer has also yielded one or two Egyptian inscriptions of some interest, but of no great length.

But of Hebrew inscriptions what have Gezer, Tell el-Mutesellim and Tell Ta'annak together got to show? The Calendar inscription already mentioned, some inscribed weights and some inscribed seals—the weights of no religious interest, the seals of some by reason of the proper names which they bear. Of these the seal of Shama' the servant of Jeroboam has attracted most attention.

This absence of written material leaves much obscure

(also published separately under the title *An old Hebrew Calendar-Inscription from Gezer*).

<sup>1</sup> *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 1908, vol. xxii. pp. 125-136.

<sup>2</sup> Since this was written, a third Assyrian (Neo-Babylonian) inscription has been found and published (Palestine Exploration Fund *Quarterly Statement*, April 1909).

that might otherwise have been clear. The tombs, of which so many, and of so many varieties, have been discovered at Gezer, bear testimony to that important group of religious beliefs which gather around death and the dead; but there are no sepulchral inscriptions to interpret the frequent ambiguity of these remains.

In turning now to some of the points in Palestinian Religion on which these excavations have cast light we may well start with this question of the Dead—"the mighty nations of the dead," in the words of the author of *Urn-Burial*, who would assuredly have taken a deep interest in the skeletons of Gezer, numerous in themselves and yet how puny a remnant of those who died in Gezer during the two or three thousand years that the history of the city can be archaeologically traced.

One of the first and one of the most important of Mr. Macalister's discoveries was a burial cave which told of two successive periods in the history of the site. In the first period the cave was used as a crematorium, in the second for inhumation. Its use as a crematorium, so the indications seem to prove, was not singular; cremation at the period was not something unusual, but a *custom*; the cave was skilfully adapted by the use of vents to secure the strong draught requisite to reduce the human body to ashes; the mass of ashes, the thickness of the layer, pointed to successive incinerations.

The period of inhumation began about 2500 B.C.; the period of incineration may extend 1,000 or 1,500 years behind that date—say to about 4000 B.C. The striking difference in the customary treatment of the dead suggests, though by itself it might not prove, difference of race. But this suggestion was confirmed by an examination of the human remains: sufficient bones remained even in the incinerated stratum to permit of conclusions. The early



population which practised cremation were a people of slender build and small, but not dwarfish stature, with skull bones thick and heavy. These, together with other characteristics, appeared to Professor Macalister to indicate a pre-Semitic stock. The people who substituted inhumation for cremation were a stronger, larger-boned people, with skulls larger in size and of thinner bones, with longer faces, fairly prominent noses and rounded chins, characteristics that point to a Semitic stock.<sup>1</sup>

There is an interesting parallel to the transition from cremation to inhumation, probably corresponding to a change in the racial character of a population, in Babylon, particularly at Nippur. Though archaeological synchronisms in distant countries must be accepted with reserve, yet these transitions may have been roughly contemporary; it is even more probable that in both countries they were due to a common cause—the substitution of a Semitic for a non-Semitic people.<sup>2</sup> For Palestine the conclusion is of far-reaching interest: so far as Gezer is typical of the country as a whole, we may conclude that the Hebrews after the Exodus settled in a country that had for 1,000 or 1,500 years been in the occupation of men of kindred race.

How far customs of that ancient pre-Semitic race influenced directly, or by way of re-action through aversion,<sup>3</sup> the later population is an interesting speculation. Did the horror of burning the corpse linger through long centuries, and is the penalty of burning inflicted in certain gross cases on offenders such as Achan and his family (Josh. vii.), or the man who contracts marriage with a woman and her mother, a direct survival of the customs of an alien and abominated race?

<sup>1</sup> Palestine Exploration Fund *Quarterly Statement*, 1902, pp. 353-356.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. the careful statement and cautious inference of Father Vincent in *Canaan d'après l'Exploration récente*, pp. 260-267.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. the pig-bones in the neo-lithic, i.e. pre-Semitic stratum.

But while we are thus brought face to face with two such distinct treatments of the dead as cremation and inhumation in different periods and probably by different races, the beliefs concerning the dead do not appear in some respects to have differed so widely. There is one custom, eloquent of the belief of those who practised it, common to both periods : this is the custom of depositing with the dead vessels suitable for holding food and drink. The meaning of this becomes particularly plain in certain cases where the corpse was so arranged that one hand of the skeleton was placed, and as placed was found by the excavators, in one of these food vessels. More instructive than any verbal description are the drawings given by Mr. Macalister, or by Dr. Schumacher in the memoir of Tell el-Mutesellim. Enough here to claim attention for the main point that in the earliest period of society in Palestine the belief was current that the dead lived ; for their dead they set apart caves much like their own cave dwellings.

Let us pass to a more special treatment of the dead, suspected before the excavations, and now proved more particularly by the discoveries at Gezer, Tell Ta'annak and Tell el-Mutesellim. I refer to certain special forms of human sacrifice and the extent to which the custom was practised. Of the existence of human sacrifice among the Canaanites, of the practice of some of the Hebrews themselves, such as King Ahaz and many in the days of Manasseh, the Hebrew scriptures leave us in no doubt. Both at Gezer and at Tell Ta'annak and also at Tell el-Mutesellim, the practically unambiguous remains of human sacrifices have been discovered, and they are such moreover as to suggest that the inhabitants of these places followed two customs : (1) Of foundation-sacrifice ; (2) Of the sacrifice of new-born infants. An allusion to foundation-sacrifice has often been suspected in the curse on the man who should rebuild Jericho—" at

the price of his firstborn (בבכריו) shall he lay the foundation thereof, and at the price of his youngest shall he set up the gates thereof" (Josh. vi. 26 ; cp. 1 Kings xvi. 25). In the Hebrew practice of the redemption of all male firstborn some scholars have detected the transformation of an earlier custom of sacrificing the firstborn.

Of the foundation-sacrifices little need be said—the case seems clear enough. Mere burial *under* a house need prove little, but the frequent cases in which a single skeleton has been found buried at the base of a wall, under a *threshold*, or carefully set in the foundation masonry of a building yield no uncertain testimony that the custom of foundation-sacrifice which has left its marks in many countries and in folklore and legend, was practised also by the early Canaanites. One further point, however, of great interest has been made clear ; the rite gradually degenerated in response, as we may safely infer, to the demands of a growth in moral ideas and humane sentiment. The early foundation-sacrifices, like the ordinary cases of sepulture, were accompanied by offerings of pottery. From the fifteenth century B.C. these vessels, formerly the *accompaniments* of foundation-sacrifices, begin to appear under foundations *without* the skeleton. Gradually the accompaniment, which now became the symbol, drove out the reality. Buildings, whether important or unimportant, were inaugurated with a rite as harmless as those which sometimes accompany a foundation stone laying in our country. But the original rite was practised long. Mr. Macalister reports cases from the period of the latter half of the Jewish monarchy (P.E.F. *Quarterly Statement*, 1903, 224).

The human beings chosen for foundation-sacrifices were often, but not exclusively, infants.

The question of the sacrifice of infants not connected with foundations is more difficult. Not indeed that there need

be much doubt that new-born infants were sacrificed ; the uncertainty begins when we ask how generally and why ? In any case it is the last point only that I now care to leave in the form of a question.

The skeletons of infants which first raised the question of general infant sacrifice were found by Mr. Macalister in close proximity to the ancient sacred place of Gezer, of which the most striking features were the eight great monoliths, two of which topped out above the unexcavated soil, but the rest of which were first brought to light by excavation. The *place* then in which these skeletons were found is significant ; but so also was the manner of sepulture. The skeletons were found in large jars ; the bodies had generally been inserted head first and with two or three smaller vessels such as bowls and jugs ; finally, the large vessel was filled up with earth.

As to the " why " of these sacrifices let me quote Mr. Macalister's suggestions with the above facts freshly and strongly pressing for explanation before him. " The infants were all newly born—certainly none were over a week old. This shows that the sacrifices were not offered under stress of any special calamity, or at the rites attaching to any special season of the year, for assuredly *some* occasion would arise when a new-born child was not to be found, and an older child would be sacrificed, whose remains would then be found with the rest. The special circumstances which led to the selection of these infants must have something inherent in the victims themselves, which devoted them to sacrifice from the moment of birth. Among the Semites the one cause most likely to have been effective was the sacrosanct character attributed to primogeniture : and it is, therefore, most probable that the infants found buried in jars in the temple of Gezer were sacrificed firstborn children."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Palestine Exploration Fund *Quarterly Statement*, 1903, p. 33.

The force of this argument was partly destroyed by new facts reported by Mr. Macalister a few months later. "The uniformity with which the child-sacrifices have been found to be infants of less than a week old, has been broken by two cases of children aged about six."<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless Mr. Macalister stands by his theory of the sacrifice of the firstborn, and with him Father Vincent,<sup>2</sup> with the later as well as the earlier facts before him, agrees. Certainly if the *necessary* conclusion from the Hebrew law of the *redemption* of all firstborn *males* is that they had previously sacrificed every firstborn child, the most natural and probable explanation of the infant-burials before the temple of Gezer is that the god in whose honour the temple was erected demanded [that the firstborn of each family should be sacrificed to him, and within eight days from birth, if we infer again from Hebrew law, and the age of the great majority of the sacrificed infants at Gezer. But the conclusion from ancient Hebrew law to which I have referred is not admitted by certain distinguished scholars, and the argument on which it rests is obviously not rigorous. On the whole I am for my own part inclined to think that the discoveries at Gezer, though they establish the custom of sacrifice of infants, preferably of newly born infants, do not carry the case for a primitive Canaanite custom of the sacrifice of *every firstborn child* much further. And unless they prove that *every* firstborn child was sacrificed they obviously by themselves prove nothing at all about firstborn children: the remains of firstborn children differ in no way from those of the later born. In his discussion of this important question Dr. Frazer scarcely draws a sufficiently sharp line between the custom of offering up *some* and sacrificing *all* firstborn children. He remarks<sup>3</sup> very per-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 223.      <sup>2</sup> *Canaan*, p. 190 f.

<sup>3</sup> *The Golden Bough*<sup>2</sup>, ii. 43.

tinently: "A people who burned all their children indiscriminately would soon extinguish themselves, and such an excess of piety is probably rare, if not unknown"; but the somewhat smaller degree of inhuman piety which could sacrifice the firstborn child of every mother seems to him very probable. He remarks again, "The conclusion that the Hebrew custom of redeeming the firstborn is a modification of an older custom of sacrificing them has been mentioned by some very distinguished scholars only to be rejected on the ground apparently of its extreme improbability. To me the converging lines of evidence which point to this conclusion seem too numerous and too distinct to be thus lightly brushed aside, and the argument from improbability can easily be rebutted by pointing to other peoples who are known to have practised or to be still practising a custom of the same sort." He then proceeds to give instances of "customs of the same sort": but in many of these cases we find sacrifice not of all but of *some* firstborn. Thus, "*Certain* families" among the Senjero of East Africa are obliged to sacrifice their firstborn sons; among some tribes of South-East Africa a woman who loses her husband in battle and marries again, sacrifices the first child of the second marriage; "the heathen Russians *often* sacrificed their firstborn to the god Perun," and so forth.<sup>1</sup>

That the ancient Canaanites selected firstborn children by preference for sacrifices is probable; that they sacrificed every firstborn child is at best a matter of speculation: it is not a datum either of literary records or archaeological discovery.

There are many objects of unmistakable religious significance and also of high antiquity brought to light at Gezer with corresponding objects at other sites that I must not attempt to discuss, though they are of the highest interest.

<sup>1</sup> *Ib.* 51, 52 (*italics mine*).

I cannot, for example, attempt to bring out the importance of the temple at Gezer with its striking monoliths above ground and with its elaborate subterranean chambers. Nor must I discuss the altars that have been found: ancient rock altars with cup-marks, roughly hewn altars with steps, altars with horns, and so forth. Nor, again, the numerous objects of worship; most interesting among these are the frequently recurring female figures suggestive of fecundity which have been identified with Ashtoreth and of which, Dr. Sellin seems to have shown, each city possessed its dominating type. Nor, again, the remains of other than human sacrifice.

What further I can say I will consider from the general standpoint of the external influences to which the excavations have shown that the several sites excavated were open.

Ever since the discovery of the Tell el-Amarna Tablets it has become a commonplace to remark that before the fourteenth century B.C. the influence of Babylon had been strong. With the use of the Babylonian script, which these tablets proved to have been in use in Canaan in the fourteenth century, an undefined but possibly enough a large amount of Babylonian thought and civilization must have passed into Canaan. It was not difficult to believe that the ancient Babylonian myths of creation, which the Hebrews adopted to transform and ennoble, were current at this time in Canaan and influencing the religious conceptions of the people. It was, however, possible to hold that the diplomatic use of the Babylonian script did not necessarily imply a wide popular diffusion of Babylonian thought.

Recent excavation has carried the history of the use of the Babylonian script in Palestine a little further. The Assyrian letters found at Tell Ta'annak were not, as those of Tell el-Amarna, correspondence between Canaanite princelings and a foreign court, but between an overlord and his

vassal, both Canaanite, at least both confined, so far as the letters indicate, to neighbouring Canaanite districts. These letters go a considerable way towards showing that what writing was done in Canaan before about 1000 B.C. was in the Assyrian script.

Gezer, too, has yielded its Assyrian documents, but of a later date : the two deeds of sale discovered there are dated in the years 649 and 647 (B.C.). Are we to infer that for certain purposes Assyrian was in continuous use from 1400 B.C. to later than 650 ?<sup>1</sup> Another interpretation of the Gezer deeds of sale seems to be more probable, and to make them a vivid illustration of what we previously knew to be a characteristic feature of religion in the seventh century, I mean its strongly syncretistic character with special prevalence of the cult of the host of heaven. The Assyrian hold on Syria was maintained far down into Ashurbanipal's reign, below the year 647. Gezer, as we have seen, was a natural stronghold of which ancient as well as mediaeval conquerors appreciated the importance. What more probable than that an Assyrian garrison was resident there, and that Assyrian parties to the deed of sale employed an Assyrian notary ? Certain it is that some of the signatures bear pure Assyrian names, certain also that one of them bears a name that is Jewish—Nethaniah. These documents seem to give us evidence of that close intercourse between Assyrians and Canaanites, and in particular Hebrews, that facilitated the pursuit of peculiarly Assyrian cults.

What is really conspicuous about Gezer as revealed by excavation is the paucity of material signs of Babylonian influence. Beyond these documents in Assyrian of the seventh century, there are few Assyrio-Babylonian objects, though there are two other tablets which may no doubt in themselves be interpreted so as to possess particular significance.

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Benzinger, *Hebräische Archäologie*,<sup>2</sup> 176.



These are two tablets containing animal and other signs to the number of about sixteen, which have been supposed to represent the signs of the Zodiac ; the second to be discovered was found in a stratum that Mr. Macalister assigns to the second or the third thousand B.C.

Mr. Johns, writing on the first discovered, sums up judiciously : " What seems most significant is the occurrence on Palestinian soil of such a striking example of the kind of object which elsewhere is taken as evidence for the astral religion of Babylonia. This is evidence that whatever the exact nature and purpose of the emblems, they are common to Babylonia and Palestine. There is, of course, the alternative to be considered whether this tablet was not sent or brought direct from Babylonia." <sup>1</sup>

Even if we attribute the greatest possible significance to these interesting finds we shall no longer confine ourselves to sober interpretation but launch out on the wild sea of speculation on which the modern astral mythologists travel with such enviable ease and comfort, if we follow Dr. Benzinger in explaining the eight standing stones of Gezer as representing the twelve signs of the Zodiac and the double row of five monoliths at Ta'annak as a double representation of the five planets.<sup>2</sup> There is really not the slightest evidence that the eight monoliths of Gezer were once twelve : there is at least as much for Mr. Macalister's opposite theory that they gradually increased from two ; and it is certain that one of the stones is of different provenance from the rest—a fact which at least calls for some explanation and receives none if each stone stands for one sign of the Zodiac.

The paucity of Assyrian objects is enhanced by the extraordinary abundance of Egyptian objects from about 2500

<sup>1</sup> Palestine Exploration Fund *Quarterly Statement*, 1908, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Heb. Arch.* p. 320.

B.C., to which time Mr. Macalister attributes the first group, to far beyond the end of the Jewish monarchy.

There is, of course, nothing surprising in these evidences of intercourse with Egypt and Egyptian influence ; a large amount of what was known of Gezer associated it with Egypt. Unfortunately we cannot very exactly determine how deep the influence of Egyptian religion sank : if we judge from religion in the not far distant city of Jerusalem, it was not very deep. One detail I may refer to that has a special interest in connexion with a passage in Isaiah, for which Lagarde proposed an interpretation of the consonantal text, strikingly different from the Massoretic, that has fascinated a number of later interpreters. According to him Isaiah (x. 4) threatened the unjust and oppressive rulers of Judah or Israel that in the day of visitation the gods whom they trusted would prove useless.

Beltis croucheth, Osiris is broken in pieces,  
And under the slain they fall.

The assumption underlying this interpretation is that when the words were written by Isaiah, or as some have thought, by a later writer, Beltis and Osiris were favourite deities, and the difficulty has been that there is no independent evidence that they were. It cannot be said that the excavations make good this lack of evidence. Images of the Egyptian god Bes have been found, but the traces of Osiris, though not wholly absent, are not conspicuous, and do not occur in strata that come within the period of the age of Isaiah. In a stratum of about B.C. 1000 there was discovered a fine bronze statuette of Osiris, and in much the same stratum a stele with a dedication to Osiris. Yet the conditions which might have made Osiris a general object of worship in Israel or Judah in the eighth century or later should have applied to Gezer also, and we might, if such

worship really was prevalent, have expected to find statues or other traces of the god in strata of this period.

On one question of external influence—real or hypothetical—the excavations are of merely negative value. We are all of us aware how one distinguished scholar, who has devoted a lifetime to the study of the Hebrew Scriptures, and laid students under obligations it is difficult to overestimate, has increasingly found the really dominant external influence over Israel, particularly in matters religious, to have been neither Assyria nor Egypt, but North Arabia. It was part of Mr. Macalister's ambition to settle by excavation the vexed question of the supposed North Arabian Muşri. We can certainly claim that the influence of Egypt attested by the records of Thothmes and Merenptah, whom the hardest Muşrite will scarcely deny to have been lords of the Nile Valley and not merely or not even kings of Muşri, is reflected in the continuity of Egyptian objects throughout the strata of Gezer. He can claim too that there are no specific traces of North Arabian influence, or challenge the defenders of the theory to prove them. But this will scarcely convince them that a great Muşrite kingdom independent of Egypt in North Arabia is merely a mirage.

In these last remarks I have carefully abstained from drawing any very precise conclusions. I have been more concerned to indicate the wide range and importance of the questions that are touched by such systematic excavations as have recently been undertaken. The moral of the whole is, as it appears to me, that precise conclusions on many of the most important matters can only be wisely drawn when far more excavation has been carried out; and conclusions suggested by the results in one place can thus be checked by those obtained at a multiplicity of other places. The field for excavation is wide; the results already obtained have done much to vitalize the study of ancient Canaan

and of its greatest inhabitants—the Hebrews ; but these results are but firstfruits of the rich harvest which continued excavation should yield.

G. BUCHANAN GRAY.

*HOW THE RESURRECTION NARRATIVES  
EXPLAIN ONE ANOTHER.*

It is proposed to bring together here some of the instances in which the Resurrection Narratives help to explain one another : and these are specially interesting as the various accounts (by the four Evangelists and St. Paul) are so obviously independent that not one of them can be considered the source of any of the others. And of course it is immaterial for this argument whether the closing verses of the Second Gospel were written by St. Mark or any one else. Mere agreements will not be included, or even undesigned coincidences as they are called, such as St. Paul and St. Luke both placing the appearance to St. Peter before that to the Apostles ; but only points in which what is said in one narrative explains some obscurity, omission, or improbability in another. Many of them are, no doubt, well known, and some I have quoted in my *Truth of Christianity*, but it has been thought better to repeat them here, so as to make the list as complete as possible.

(1) To begin with, St. John records Mary Magdalene as visiting the empty tomb, and finding the stone rolled away (though St. Matthew alone says who rolled it away), and then telling the disciples, *we know not where they have laid Him*. But to whom does the *we* refer, as she was apparently alone all the time ? St. John does not explain matters, but the other Evangelists do ; for they say that though Mary Magdalene was the leader of the party, and is always named first, yet as a matter of fact there were other women