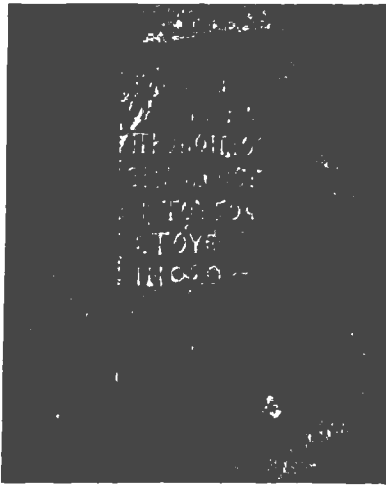


## Inscriptions from BİR es-Seba'.

DR. WARREN J. MOULTON.

NEW HAVEN, CONN.

WHILE visiting BİR es-Seba' in the month of April of the present year we photographed several Greek inscriptions which, up to that time, had not been published. Since then they have appeared, together with photographs of the squeezes taken by the Dominicans of Jerusalem, in the *Revue Biblique* (April and July, 1903). In spite of this anticipation, it will be seen that our photographs of the originals still possess sufficient value for purposes of study to warrant their publication, and, furthermore, in the case of the mortuary inscriptions, I am able to advance some suggestions for the elucidation of more obscure points. All these inscriptions, like those previously published from BİR es-Seba', in all probability came from the ruins to the east of the present village which has so recently sprung up. All the ground there has been very thoroughly overhauled in the search for building material to be used in the structures of the new settlement. The careless and destructive way in which the digging has been carried on is shown by the many fragments of marble, some of them of considerable size, which are strewn about.



PL. I.

Ι. ✠ΑΝΕΠΤΑΗ  
 ΟΜΑΚΑΡΙΟC  
 ΠΡΟΚΟΤΤΙΟC  
 ΕΝΜΗΑΥΟΥ  
 Κ ΤΟΥϚΟΦ  
 ΕΤΟΥC  
 ΙΝΔϚΘ✠

Ἀνεπάη ὁ μακάριος Προκόπιος ἐν  
 μη(νί) (Λ)ώνου κ' τοῦ Ϛοφ' ἔτους  
 ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) θ'

The blessed Procopius died on the  
 20th of the month Lōos of the year  
 576, indiction ix.

This inscription is on a slab of gray marble about 1 foot 10 inches high and 11½ inches wide. The letters are carefully and distinctly cut. The form ἀνεπάη often appears in funerary inscriptions. Possibly it may be regarded as the abbreviation of ἀνεπάη ἐκ τῶν μόχθων or κόπων.<sup>1</sup> Αωον is a mistake of the stone-cutter for Λωον. The character Ϛ appears in a twofold significance in this inscription: in line 5 as the numeral 6, and in the last line as a sign of punctuation.<sup>2</sup> The date is given as year 576, indiction ix. As the era of Eleutheropolis (199 A.D.) is known to be used in some of the inscriptions from Bir es-Seba',<sup>3</sup> it is natural to expect it here; but it is seen at once that the computation is not made on this basis. Father Abel therefore concludes that the reference must be to the Christian era (*Revue Biblique*, 1903, p. 427). This would, to be sure, give us indiction ix., and likewise assign the inscription to about the period to which we expect it to belong. Such a use of the Christian era is, however, so far as I know, without parallel at this early time in Syria, and therefore highly improbable here. I would suggest, accordingly, that it is more likely that we have the era of Gaza, namely, Oct. 28, 61 B.C.<sup>4</sup> Reckoning on this basis, the date of Procopius' death would be Aug. 13, 516 A.D., and this also gives us the indiction ix.<sup>5</sup> Possibly further evidence of the use of the era of Gaza at Bir es-Seba' may be found as new inscriptions are brought to light.

<sup>1</sup> See Rev. 14<sup>18</sup>; and cf. Clermont-Ganneau, *Archaeological Researches*, ii. 408 sqq. Note also the suggestion of a possible connection of μακάριος with the Egyptian *makheru*.

<sup>2</sup> On these two uses, and on a further possible use as a conjunction, see *PEF, QS.* 1902, pp. 270 sqq.; *Revue Biblique*, 1903, p. 277.

<sup>3</sup> See *Revue Biblique*, 1902, pp. 437 sqq., 1903, pp. 274 sq.

<sup>4</sup> See Clermont-Ganneau, *Archaeological Researches*, ii. 419 sqq.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the inscription given by Clermont-Ganneau, *l.c.* p. 402, which is dated the 22d of Lōos, indiction iv., year 571.

This inscription and those which follow were in the Serai, or Government House, at the time of our visit. It is cut on a marble slab about 1 foot 10½ inches by 1 foot 7½ inches, and 3 inches thick.



PL. 2.

2. ✠ΕΝΘΑΔΕΚΙΤΑΙΗΜΑ  
 ΚΑΡΙΑΝΟΝΝΑΚΤΕΦΑΝΟΥ  
 ΑΙΛΗΧΙΑΚΑΤΕΤΗΘΗΔΕ  
 ΕΝΜΗΝΤΕΡΙΤ<sub>5</sub> ΙΒ  
 ΙΝΔ<sub>5</sub>Ι

Ἐνθάδε κείται ἡ μακαρία Νόννα  
 Στεφάνου Αἰλησία. κατετέθη δὲ ἐν  
 μην(ι) Περι(τίου) ιβ' ἰνδ(ικτιώ-  
 νος) ι'

Here lies the blessed Nonna Ailēsia,  
 daughter of Stephanus. She was laid  
 away on the 12th of Peritios of indic-  
 tion x.

Both names are common. The only difficulty is with Αἰλησία. Another sepulchral inscription, which is said to have come from Bir es-Seba' and is now in the Turkish museum at Jerusalem, has Αἰλήσιος after the name Kaioumos (*PEF, QS.* 1903, p. 172; *Revue Biblique*, 1903, pp. 274 sq.). Mr. Macalister refers to this inscription as commemorating "the blessed Kaioumos of Jerusalem," without further comment. It would seem that he associates the adjective with Αἰλία (Aelia Capitolina), the name given to Jerusalem by Hadrian, and long employed as its official designation. I incline to the opinion cautiously advanced by Father Vincent, that the gentile adjective may be connected with the Old Testament Elath (LXX. Αἰλαθ, Αἰλαμ, etc.). In Greek authors the place is commonly called Αἴλινα, with the gentile adjective Αἰλιανίτης; but Ἀιλὰ or Ἀιλᾶς is also found (Eusebius, in Lagarde, *Onomastica Sacra*, 210<sub>79</sub>; Procopius, Philostorgius, *al.*), from which an adjective Αἰλήσιος might be derived. The geographical considerations favor this suggestion. In the Roman period Elath was a place of considerable importance.

It was garrisoned by a Roman legion, and the seat of a Christian bishop. Its next important neighbor on the north, in Western Palestine, would be Bir es-Seba'.

The year of Nonna's death is not given, and we can say nothing certain further than that she died on the 10th of February of the tenth year of an indiction. Father Abel, on the ground of a strong epigraphic similarity of the two inscriptions, as well as of the unusual gentile adjectives Ailesios, Ailesia, which they have in common, combines the epitaph of Nonna with that of Kaioumos, and thus fixes the date of her death in 547 A.D.

3. The small fragment leaning against the last inscription is evidently from some tombstone. The letters are of the same style as those just considered. The fragment is about 8 inches by 10. The probable reading is

ΔΙΟΥ Ι	Δίου ι'
ΤΗΣ ΙΝΔ	. . . της 5 ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος)

The date would thus be the 10th of Dios, or Nov. 6. But for the pause, one might suggest *πρώτης ἰνδικτιῶνος* for the last line, since similar expressions have been found.\*

4. ΖΑΛΤΟΥ ΥΛΟΥΤΟΥ·Ι·ΕΡΘ ΡΧΙΦΥΛΩΝ //ONIANΟΥΣΑΛΤΟΥ// ς ΒΙΚΑΡΙΟCΔΕΥΤΕΡς COTΠΡΟΒΜΛΟΜΕΝΟC ΒΙΝΘΟΥΑΤΤΟΤΩΝ Ν ΔΗΛΩΝ ΩΝ	σαλτο[υ] [δ]ούλου τοῦ ἱερο[ῦ] [ἀ]ρχιφυλῶν [ι]ονιανου σαλτο[υ] ς βικάριος δεύτερ(ος) σ ο προβ(αλ)λόμενος βινθου ἀπὸ τῶν ν δηλων ων
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The fragment on the right in the photograph bears letters which are sharply, although rather irregularly, cut, and, except in two or three instances, are legible beyond all doubt. This piece of marble is about 1 foot 9 inches high, 1 foot 1 inch wide, and 3 inches thick. Evidently it was broken away from the lower part of a much

larger tablet. The style of the letters and the contents lead us at once to connect it with another, larger fragment from Bir es-Seba' which has already been published.<sup>6</sup> This contained parts of two columns, and Professor Clermont-Ganneau concluded from his study of them that the inscription was an official document, possibly an imperial decree regarding the taxes to be levied for the support of military and administrative officials. His hope that other parts of the tablet might be brought to light seems to be in part fulfilled by this new fragment, although the relation, not to say the connection, of the two pieces is not yet established. The present fragment may belong to another column lower down in the tablet. The letters are those of the Byzantine epoch. From comparison with the photograph of the squeeze of the fragment previously found, they seem, if anything, more irregular. It is noticeable that in lines 4, 6, and 7 we have the rounded sigma (C), whereas in the first fragment this letter is always square (C), as here, in lines 1(?) and 7. Further, *ou* are in no instance joined where they occur in lines 2, 4, and 8, as might be expected from the frequent ligature in the other fragment. On the other hand, in the arrangement of the lines, in the use of the title *Vicarius* (line 6), and in the suggestions of other words, we have strong evidence that the two fragments belong to the same inscription. Further study, with the aid that may at any time come from new discoveries, will probably make this clear.

5. ΕΤΙΤΑ~~Α~~Α~~Α~~ΤΡ  
 ΕΚΤΙCΘΗΤΟΦΛΕΑΡΔΟ  
 ΜΕΤΤΙΟΥΘΕΤΟΥCΤΟΥ  
 CΤΠ~~Α~~ΑΕΓ \* ΓΚΑΙΚΡΙΟΜ  
 \ \* ΙΦΟΡΕΡΟCΟΙΚΟΔΕ  
 ΜΝΗCΘΗΟΥΡΑΝΙCΕΥΤΥΧΕ  
 ΤΥΓΧΑΝΕΙΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΕΙ

This inscription, on the left in the photograph, is badly defaced, portions being entirely illegible. The block of limestone in which it is cut is about 2 feet 2 inches by 1 foot 3½ inches, and about 6½ inches thick, the raised portion in the middle being about 9½ inches wide. Clearly as certain words seem at first sight to stand out, I am

<sup>6</sup> *PEF, QS. 1902*, pp. 269 sq., cf. also p. 236; *Recueil d'Archéologie Orientale*, v. pp. 130 sqq.; *Revue Biblique*, 1903, pp. 275 sqq.

not able as yet to suggest any interpretation. I will add the comment of Father Abel in the *Revue Biblique* (1903, p. 429), which may be taken for what it is worth: "L'inscription, découverte par le P. Level dans un chantier de fouilles assez voisin de l'un des anciens puits, est intéressante par la mention qu'elle fait de la création d'un puits."