

DISCOVERY OF THE ROYAL CANAANITE CITY OF GEZER BY M. CLERMONT-GANNEAU.

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GEZER is one of the most ancient towns in Palestine, and was in existence prior to the arrival and settlement of the Israelites in that country. In the book of Joshua it is classed amongst the royal cities of Canaan; its king, Horam, was defeated by Joshua whilst attempting to relieve Lachish, which was besieged by the Israelites. Later, after the conquest, Gezer was included in the territory of the tribe of Ephraim, and, in fact, marked its extreme western limit. The Ephraimites allowed the Canaanites they found there to remain. The city was assigned to the Levitical family of Kohath.

It is mentioned several times during the wars between David and the Philistines, on the confines of whose territory it was situated.

During Solomon's reign one of the Pharaohs, for motives of which we are ignorant, made an expedition against Gezer, which resulted in the capture and burning of the town. So great, however, was the strategical importance of the point, that, even in ruins, Gezer was of sufficient value to form part of the dowry of Pharaoh's daughter when she became Solomon's wife. Solomon immediately rebuilt Gezer and Lower Beth-horon, which was near it.

The town of Gezer reappears, under the name of Gazara, in the history of the wars of the Maccabees. Taken by assault in the first instance by the Jews, it passed successively into the hands of the two contending parties, who attached equal importance to its possession. John Hyrcanus, the Jewish commander, made it his military residence.

In spite of the distinct indications contained in sacred and profane works, in spite even of the positive statement in the "Onomasticon" of Eusebius, that Gezer was four Roman miles from Emmaus-Nicopolis, a site well known at the present day, the town of Gezer, though sought for, had not previously been found.

Whilst running through an old Arab chronicle, by a certain Mudjir-din, M. Clermont-Ganneau quite accidentally came upon the passage which led to this important discovery. The Arab historian relates that about the year 900 of the Hegira an engagement took place between Jamboulat, Emir of Jerusalem, and a party of Bedawi raiders, between the village of Khulda and that of Tell el Gezer. The latter name means literally the hill of Gezer, and the Arab name is exactly the same as the Hebrew one. As the village of Khulda is still in existence, and, according to the details contained in the account of the Arab author, Tell el Gezer was so near it that the shouts of the combatants were heard at both places, the latter locality should have been easy to fix. No village, however, of this name was shown on the best maps of Palestine. After having determined theoretically the exact position which the Arab and Jewish Gezer ought to occupy, M. Clermont-Ganneau decided upon making an excursion to test the accuracy of his views on the ground. This expedition, made under adverse circumstances, without escort or

tent, and in a desert country wasted by famine, was crowned with success. At the point which he had previously fixed upon, M. Clermont-Ganneau found the Tell el Gezer of Mudjir-ed-din, and the ruins of a large and ancient city, occupying an extensive plateau on the summit of the Tell. On one side were considerable quarries, from which stone had been taken at various periods for the buildings in the town, as well as wells and the remains of an aqueduct; a little beyond this were a number of tombs hewn out of the rock, the necropolis in which repose the people who have successively inhabited the old Canaanite city. It is scarcely necessary to add that this place is exactly four Roman miles from Emmaus-Nicopolis, and that it completely meets all the topographical requirements of the Bible with regard to Gezer.

M. Clermont-Ganneau points out the importance of the discovery with reference to the general topography of Palestine. Gezer being one of the most definite points on the boundary of the territory of Ephraim, the current views on the form and extent of that territory, as well as of the neighbouring territories of Judah and Dan, must be very materially modified. This result alone is of importance, and makes the discovery of Gezer an event in Biblical researches.

The means by which M. Clermont-Ganneau was enabled to find the town are also worthy of remark; it was by availing himself of a source which is too much neglected, the Muhammedan writings on the history and geography of Syria. This work is certainly difficult and thankless, but the example we have before us shows that it is not unproductive, and that it may lead to the most interesting and unexpected discoveries.

NOTE ON THE DRAWINGS AND COPIES OF INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE "SHAPIRA COLLECTION" SENT HOME BY LIEUT. CONDER AND MR. DRAKE.

THOUGH hastily coloured, the outline of each object has been very carefully followed, and those who saw the drawings and the originals in Jerusalem were of opinion that they were remarkably faithful representations.

Lieut. Conder states that he was unwilling to copy the inscriptions, as owing to the imperfect observation of many specimens errors might have been made which would invalidate their value if executed by one ignorant of the characters employed; but Dr. Chaplin and Mr. Drake, who were more familiar with the characters, copied carefully from the originals, or from good squeezes, those sent home.

The total number of drawings is upwards of 200. These represent all the important specimens in the collection up to the time of Lieut. Conder's last visit to Jerusalem, in October, 1872, the number of pieces then in Mr. Shapira's collection being about 700. Since then, however, the number has been increased to 1,000, and several very important specimens added, of which it is hoped to obtain drawings soon. A great number of the specimens so closely resemble one another that one or two examples are typical of each group. A large number are broken.