

## THE EDINBURGH REVIEWER ON THE TALMUD.

IN the July number of the *Edinburgh Review*, the author of the paper on the Talmud remarks on my version of the "Tract on the Measurements of the Temple" (see *Quarterly Statement of the Palestine Exploration Fund for 1872*, p. 12), that it is translated with "less than absolute accuracy."

The instance given to prove this observation is that "the translator has provided the guards of the Temple with cushions."

It is the author of the Mishna, and *not the translator*, who has done so. If the reviewer be acquainted with the Hebrew language he must know that the word (כסוּרִי) means "his cushion" or "pillow." And though Rabbi Judah Hakkodesh says afterwards that "his garments (כְּנֵרֵי) were burned" yet the explanation is obvious. The drowsy Levite reclined in his clothes, which became his cushion, and when he was found sleeping they were set on fire by the captain of the watch.

JOSEPH BARCLAY.

## ASHKELON.

THE following letter, by the Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, will be read with interest. It has been despatched to the Society's explorers in Palestine, in the hope that the questions raised by Professor Pusey may receive a satisfactory solution:—

DEAR MR. GROVE,—Thank you very much for your reply. I had, perhaps, better say what my ground is for thinking that the Ascalon of the Crusades cannot be the Philistine Ashkelon.

You have yourself, I see (*Dict. of Bible*, Jabneel), drawn attention to the Maiumas of Gaza and Ascalon, and Jamnia. There were also two Azotus', one by the sea (see Reland, page 215). The three, then, Gaza, Jabneel, Ashdod, were inland; and were, I suppose, like Athens, purposely so built for fear of pirates. Even Gaza, which was nearest, was (it appears from Soz., v. 3) distinct in boundary from its Maiumas. They had fields (ἀγροί) belonging to each, having altars between them.

The probability, on the ground of its having a port, and from the three other cases, is that Ascalon itself was inland. Ascalon and its Maiumas must have been distinct cities, since the bishop of each signed a synodical letter inserted in the Acts of the Council of Constantinople, A.D. 536, as also the Bishop of Gaza and Maiumas Gazæ. (It is in col. 1163, 1164 of the *Conc. T. v. ed. Colet.*) But it is so well-known a rule that there cannot be two bishops of one town, that when Julian had annexed the Maiumas Gazæ to Gaza, the Bishop of Gaza on a subsequent vacancy in the episcopate of the Maiumas claimed that its clergy should on this ground be subject to him, though it was locally distinct. The provincial council refused it, because the civil privileges had been

taken away from Maiumas Gazæ by a heathen prince, on account of its Christianity. But, according to all descriptions, Ascalon has too little depth from the sea to have ever contained two towns, and its outside boundary is very marked, being built along a natural ridge, in the shape of a bow; the chord, as William of Tyre describes it, being towards the sea.

2. Benjamin of Tudela, who must have been on the spot, says that "Ashkelona is new Ashkelon, which Ezra the priest built on the sea-shore, and at first they called it Benibra, and it is four parasangs distant from the former Ashkelon, which is desert." His account was naturally the tradition of the Jews whom he found there. Benjamin of Tudela's pronunciation of the modern town is Ashkelonah (as in the time of the Crusades it is Askelona), whereas, in his explanation, he speaks of "new Ashkelon," "the old Ashkelon" keeping the Biblical termination. His account is too concise for him to give an explanation, but Benibra is doubtless a Greek corruption for Bethnimrah (as Bethnabris in Eusebius is for the Bethnimrah, or later, Bethnimrim, of Gad), and the sweetness of its waters (the *aquæ potabiles* within it) is noted by successive writers, I suppose because, so near the sea, they might be expected to be brackish. I think that the tradition in his time that there was an Ashkelon which lay waste, is remarkable, though the Jews, his informants, might be inaccurate as to its distance, as they were not much concerned about the site of a desert place.

I myself think it most probable that the Askalon which Herod beautified was the present Askalon; and that it, the Maiumas Ascalonis, being the more considerable, obtained the name of Ascalon, as Windsor and Sarum must, I suppose, have been originally New Windsor, New Sarum, and yet in early times have been called absolutely Windsor, Sarum; and what is now called Shoreham was, in my memory, still New Shoreham. You will be familiar with other such instances, old and new. There must have been great accumulations of sand, which may have buried the old Ascalon, since the sands are only held back by the walls, with which they seem to be almost level, from burying the new Ascalon.

As you take such kind interest in my question, I thought I ought to tell you my grounds.

With best thanks,

Yours very faithfully,

Nov. 28, 1873.

E. B. PUSEY.

P.S.—Looking at Porter's map, there is apparently a plain enclosed in a sort of triangle between the roads from Burbareh to El Mijdel and that which turns off to Askulân. The places which he mentions (p. 268) are not marked in the map. "One mile from Burbareh is Jiyeh; half an hour beyond it is Beitimah," which must have been, I suppose, where the two roads part. For Porter says, "our path turns to the north-west, along the border of the sandhills. In twenty-five

minutes we come to Nalieh, a poor village on the east side of a *low narrow plain*, which appears to be sometimes flooded in the winter. A ride of ten minutes across the plain, and twenty minutes more *over the broad ridge of sand*, brings us to the gate of Ascalon."

1. But the Jews (*Josephus*, B. J. 3. 2)] were assaulting Ascalon. If, then, *that* Ascalon were the present Ascalon (which I am inclined to think), where is "*the whole plain*," which was "broad, and the whole of it suited for the action of cavalry" (*πᾶν ἰσχυροῦς*), over which the flying Jews were scattered and 10,000 killed?

2. What is the depth of Ascalon? Is it so built that there could be two distinct cities within its present walls, so that one should be an inland city, the other its port? In a description which I have seen, there is mention of a creek running up into the present city; though the harbour was purposely destroyed by Sultan Bibars, in order to preclude any renewed landing of Crusaders there.

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