

red decidedly the exception. There are but few places in Syria where the black pottery is made. In the first century, according to the Talmud, the black kind was considered superior to the red, and brought a much higher price in the markets; and what is also interesting in this connexion, a certain village in Galilee had a monopoly of its manufacture.

On our way home, as we had no guide and paths do not exist, we took the wrong direction, and when we had ridden five hours we did not find our Bozrah. We ascended a slight elevation, which commanded a view of a wide region. We had a choice of seven ruined cities which were in sight from where we stood; but as night was rapidly approaching, even our Effendi could not tell which Bozrah was. We made a guess, which proved to be a lucky one, and after one hour and a half hard riding in the dark we reached our camp in safety.

SELAH MERRILL.

MANUSCRIPTS OF THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES.

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THE Codex of the Hebrew Scriptures which Rabbi Aaron Ben Asher revised has recently been discovered at Aleppo, and Dr. Ginsburg, the well-known Orientalist, intends to start, in a week or two, for Syria on purpose to collate it. This celebrated MS. was originally preserved at Jerusalem; but probably when Saladin took the Holy City and put an end to the Latin Kingdom, it was removed to Egypt, where Maimonides (A.D. 1135-1204) saw it. He adopted it as his model, "because," he remarks, "I saw that there is a great confusion in all the codices which I have consulted with regard to these matters; and even the Massorites, who wrote and compiled works to show which sections are to begin new paragraphs and which not, are divided upon these matters, according to the authorities they leaned upon. I found myself necessitated to write, thus, all the sections of the Law, both those which begin new paragraphs and those which do not, as well as the forms of the accents, so that all copies might be made according to it. Now the Codex which is followed in these matters is the one well known in Egypt which contains the four-and-twenty Sacred Books, which was in Jerusalem for many years, that all the codices might be corrected after it, and *whose text all adopted, because Ben Asher corrected it and laboured over it many years, and revised it many times. It is this Codex I followed in the copy of the Law I wrote.*"

At present this important MS. is preserved in a cave under a synagogue at Aleppo, "at the entrance of which stands a chest in which are deposited crowns of the Law" (*i.e.*, Bibles written with points and accents), "and they are all adorned with flowers and blossoms in various colours drawn like chains around." At the end of the MS. is written, "This complete Bible, consisting of 24 Books, was written by R. Solomon, who was a skilful scribe, May the Spirit of God give him rest: and was punctuated and furnished with the Massora in the most proper way by the great teacher, wise, sagacious, Master of the Scribes, father of the wise, chief of the teachers, skilful in his works, prudent in his advice,

and altogether unique in his generation, R. Aaron Ben Asher, may his soul be bound up in the bundle of life with the Prophets, the just and the holy ones—and was presented as a holy gift by the great prince glorious and mighty, Master and Rabbi of Israel, the beauty of all Israel, wise, sagacious, holy and liberal. May the Lord lift up his banner, make his crown flourish and extol his glory," &c. The writer goes on to say that the MS. is to remain "at Jerusalem, in the possession of the two great patriarchs whose glorious, holy, and majestic names are Josiahu and Zechez Riahuh;" and to be shown to the people on the three festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. "Any learned Rabbi of the children of Israel" who shall wish to consult the MS. may do so; but he must put it back in its place, and no unbeliever may touch it.

We have said enough to show the immense antiquity and authority of this MS., to which attention was first drawn by Iben Safir, and the learned world will no doubt look forward with some curiosity for the publication of Dr. Ginsburg's collation.

Iben Safir has also called attention to another important MS. of the Earlier and Later Prophets, imperfect at the beginning and end, which is deposited in the Karaite Synagogue at Cairo. It is the oldest of the MSS. the Karaites possess. At Cairo the ancient MSS. are usually preserved with peculiar care, being placed in a shrine near the ark containing the law, and a lamp is kept continually burning before it. It is in the square Spanish character, large letters, with points and accents and the Massora according to all its rules. At the end of the minor prophets is written, in the handwriting of its scribe, and in the same ink: "I, Moses Ben Asher, wrote this cycle of Scriptures with all correctness, as the good hand of God was upon me, in the province of Miziah, in the renowned city of Tiberias . . . Amen. Finished at the end of 827 years after the destruction of the second Temple. May the Creator of our souls return to it in mercy, rebuild it with stones of carbuncles, sapphires, and agates, so that it may be a perfect and durable edifice which shall not be forsaken, nor destroyed, nor pulled down for ever and ever. May this be done speedily in our own day, and that of all Israel. Amen." On the same page is added: "Whosoever alters anything in this cycle or writing, or obliterates any letter, or tears any page of it, unless he thoroughly understands that we committed some error, whether in writing or punctuation, or Massora . . . let him have no forgiveness nor atonement, and let him not see the beauty of the Lord, nor the good which is hid for those who fear God, but let him be as an unclean woman, and a leper shut up, that his limbs may be crushed, his strength broken, his flesh consumed, and his bones rotten till he disappear. Amen."

In a note on the following page, in the same handwriting as the above, we are told that "this book is now in the possession of Jabez Ben Salomon the Babylonian."

Dr. Ginsburg intends to collate this MS. also before his return to England.