

NOTE ON VARIOUS JEWISH TRADITIONS AS TO THE PLACE WHERE MESSIAS SHOULD BE BORN.

No less than seventy-two Targums upon various passages of the Old Testament exist in which the name Messiah has been added in a sentence not to be found in the original. Two of these Targums have a geographical value as giving the origin of certain later traditions.

To the passage in Gen. xxxv. 21, in which Israel is mentioned as pitching his tent "beyond the tower of Eder," the Targum of Jonathan adds, "which is the place where shall be revealed the King Messiah in the end of days."

In a former report (*Quarterly Statement*, April 1875, p. 93) I have shown that Migdol Eder, or the "Tower of the Flock," was known in 700 A.D. as about 1,000 paces from Bethlehem, where the mediæval "Monastery of the Holy Shepherds" is still to be found represented by the present Keniset er Raw'at on the edge of the traditional shepherd's plain.

From a passage in the Mishna (Shekalim, vii. 4) we may also conclude that the same place was not far from Jerusalem, and in the original text of the Bible it is mentioned in connection with Jerusalem (Micah iv. 8) and with Bethlehem (Gen. xxxv. 21). There is a considerable ruin near the Keniset er Raw'at called *Khirbet Sir el Ghanem*, "The Ruin of the Sheep Fold." It is, however, not a mere ruined sheepfold, for it is noted as follows in our list of ruins for the Jerusalem plate of the Survey:—

"Walls arched, cisterns, vaults, and tombs, probably early Christian ruins."

This is very probably the site of the original Tower of Eder.

Another Rabbinical tradition seems to refer to the same neighbourhood. A place called Beth 'Arba, Birath 'Arba, or Birath Malcha, is noticed (Preface to Midrash *Ekha* and Berachoth ii. 3, Tal. Jer., as quoted by Neuerbauer) as near Bethlehem, and as the place where Messiah should appear. At the farther end of the Shepherds' Plain, on the edge of the Desert of Judah, is a lofty hill-top called *Sh'aib el Rabdh*, which is not improbably the 'Arba of the Talmud (עֵרְבָא). Ancient ruins under the name Khirbet Johdhum exist at this place, and an old road from Jerusalem to the desert leads across the hill. The whole of the country round can be seen for a great distance from this summit, Bethlehem, four and a half miles to the west, being plainly visible.

These traditions it is interesting to compare with the passage in Matt. ii. 4, whence it appears that in the time of our Lord the Messiah was expected to appear at Bethlehem.

A second and entirely different tradition, also derived from a Targum, places the site of the birth of the expected Messiah not far to the north of Nazareth. This Targum I have quoted in a former report, being an addition to Exod. xii. 42.

"Moses cometh forth from the desert and Messiah goeth forth from Roma."

Roma is mentioned as though in Galilee by Sæwulf in 1102 A.D. Rabbi Jacob, of Paris, in 1258 A.D., visited the same place, and mentions the tomb of the patriarch Benjamin as existing there, as also a cavern. Rabbi Uri, of Biel, in 1564 A.D., speaks of the same place, and of the Cavern of Caisran (it is not certain whether this is a proper name or not), from which cavern Messiah was expected to appear. From these accounts we gather also that Roma was in the vicinity of Sepphoris (Sefürieh), Caphar Menda (Kefr Menda), and 'Ailbon ('Ailebün), and we are thus enabled to identify the traditional site with the present ruin of Rümeh, near the village of Rummáneh (Rimmon of Zebulon).

Visiting this spot in the summer of 1875, I found on the east side of the site of the village (destroyed some thirty years ago) a cavern of moderate dimensions, of which we made a plan, and a rude Jewish tomb with *kokim* cut in soft rock. From the character of the capitals of pillars and other indications, it seems not improbable that a synagogue once stood close to this sepulchre. Instances of synagogues built close to sepulchres are not wanting in Galilee.

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THE SHAPIRA POTTERY.

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It is now a few years since the English press disposed of the Moabite antiquities, and most readers of the *Academy* have probably forgotten all about them. To refresh their memory we may be permitted to remind them that the stir caused by the sale of the stone of Mesa among the Arabs both in Jerusalem and in the Desert was immense. Everywhere search was made after antiquities; in the year 1872 almost every day brought some curious remains into the shop of Shapira in Jerusalem. They were of two kinds, both of which, though different from each other, had something in common with the stone that had fetched so much money. At first the discovery of stone monuments seems to have been frequent. They were not exclusively Moabitic, but resembled the Mesa stone inasmuch as they were all covered with inscriptions, one of them so covered even on both sides. Of architectural ornaments or statues not a fragment turned up. In the eyes of scholars of the rank of Herr Wcser, the value of these inscriptions was very great. He writes respecting one of them in the *Journal of the German Asiat. Soc.*:—"This stone contains Psalm 117 in magnificent ancient Hebrew characters, similar to those on the stone of Mesa. Who can tell whether it is not the original from which the Psalm was copied in the Holy Writ?" Some more sober Hebraists discovered several incongruities in the writing, and finally honest Shapira himself came to the conviction that it might possibly be a forgery. It is not improbable that the archæologists of Jerusalem did not go to the expense of having the original executed, yet it is clear from these two instances that monuments in stone did not pay. They now concen-