

GIBEAH OF SAUL.

THE site in question is one important to fix, as a good deal of topography depends upon it. Thus, though no new discovery can be claimed in this case, I may perhaps be allowed to state the arguments which appear to me sufficient to determine the situation of this town.

In the first place I would again insist on the importance in all such cases of having the name identical. No site can be considered as identified unless two conditions are fulfilled: 1st, that the name be recovered; 2nd, that the position be suitable. It will, I think, be found that in almost every instance where a site has been fixed without connection between the native existing name and the ancient title, the site has proved, sooner or later, unsatisfactory. I may point to Megiddo placed at *Lejjûn*, to Mizpeh at *Neby Samwîl*, to Tirzah at *Talluza*, as instances in which the sites can only be considered conjectural, and against which there are important objections. The same applies to Gibeah of Saul placed at *Tell el Fûl*. Gibeah was about 30 stadia from Jerusalem according to Josephus. *Tell el Fûl* is little over 22 stadia. If it represent an ancient Hebrew name it is a former Ophel that has become transformed into the modern Arabic "bean hill," and it is more probably the site of Ophni of Benjamin, as far as the derivation of the name is concerned.

Robinson, in visiting Palestine for the first time, was inclined to place Gibeah of Saul near Geba of Benjamin (the present *Jeb'a*), a conclusion which he afterwards rejected, choosing the site of *Tell el Fûl*.

The word Gibeah is the feminine, according to Gesenius, of Geba, "a hill," but a further difficulty has been raised in this case by the fact that the authorised version has occasionally Gibeah where the Hebrew reads Geba. In the list of the towns of Benjamin (Josh. xviii. 24, 28) we have two names—Gaba, which is generally supposed to be *Jeb'a* near *Mukhmâs*, and Gibeah, which is noticed as near Kirjath (*Kuriet*). This second town is, however, probably *Jibi'a*, a ruin north-west of Jerusalem near *Kubeibeh*, and a place distinct from Gibeah of Saul, for it occurs in a different category among towns far from the site in question. If this conclusion be correct, Gibeah of Saul is not noticed in the enumeration of the cities of Benjamin, unless indeed it be identical with Gaba.

Another connection between Geba, or Gaba, and Gibeah exists in the history of the Levite whose wrongs brought punishment on the Benjamites. Travelling along the north road from Jerusalem towards Mount Ephraim, he "turns aside" towards *Gibeah* and Ramah (Judg. xix. 13), arriving at Gibeah, whose inhabitants were Benjamites.

In this chapter, and the one succeeding, the place is invariably called Gibeah except in two verses (Judg. xx. 10, 33), where it appears in the Hebrew as Geba of Benjamin, and again "the cave of Geba" (A. V., "Meadows").

A third connection between Gibeah and Geba has been noticed in the paper on Saul's journey to Zuph, where he returns to Gabatha, "the hill," where was a garrison of the Philistines. Such a garrison we find to exist in Geba of Benjamin shortly after (1 Sam. xiii. 3).

Thus we find, apparently, places close together, or identical, known under the names of Geba, Gaba, Gabatha, Gibeah of Benjamin, and Gibeah of Saul. The natural conclusion would be that they are one and the same place. It seems probable, however, that the feminine form Gibeah was used *for the country* in which the city Geba stood. This idea will be found to be supported by the passages in the book of Judges above referred to, and also by the various notices of Gibeahs near Geba. Thus we have "Gibeah in the fields" (*Gabathah bi Sadeh*), Judg. xx. 31, and in the later history of Saul we find the king "in the uttermost part of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which is in Migron" (1 Sam. xiv. 2). And, again, "Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah" (1 Sam. xxii. 6). It may also be remarked that many of the Hebrew words signifying "land" or "country" are of the feminine gender.

But beyond the evidence of name it would appear from the facts of the case that there was only one town of the name in this direction. The Levite *turns aside* to Gibeah of Benjamin, an expression which certainly applies well to *Jeb'a* but not to *Tell el Fûl* on the main road. The town where he was insulted was, as we have seen above, Geba of Benjamin, the same town afterwards taken by Jonathan, and here, at the passage, was the rock of *Senneh*, which is translated "thorn."

Now in speaking of Gabaofh Saule (B. J. v. 2. 1) Josephus places it near the *Valley of Thorns*, and at the present day the valley below *Jeb'a* is called *Wâdy Suweintî*, "the valley of the little thorn tree." Josephus is not absolute as to the distance of this place from Jerusalem, but states it at "about 30 stadia"—the distance being nearer to 40 to *Jeb'a*—but this fits the text as well as the 22 stadia to *Tell el Fûl*.

In addition, it may be urged that the watchmen of Saul, in Gibeah of Benjamin, were able to see the conflict which was going on at Michmash, and to hear the sound of the battle. *Tell el Fûl*, though *Jeb'a* be visible, does not command a view of Michmash, and the distance is no less than five miles between the scene of the battle and Saul's supposed position. Finally, in Gibeah of Benjamin there was a cave large enough to contain the ambush (Judg. xx. 33). No cave exists near *Tell el Fûl*, but a large cave exists at *Jeb'a*.

The conclusion appears to me to be that Saul's city was Geba of Benjamin, and that the district round was called first Gibeah of Benjamin, afterwards Gibeah of Saul.

If we accept this view, the question of the position of Nob is greatly simplified, and the position of Gabatha, to which Saul returned after his journey to Zuph, is also confirmed.

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