

tians go out from Es Salt to the Zerka every year for the purpose of cultivating the land on shares. The peasant or farmer is given, at the beginning of the season, four or five or six dollars, as the case may be, and a pair of shoes at the outset. He also has seed furnished him; besides this he receives nothing. He must do all the work, from ploughing to threshing, furnish cattle and tools and men, and his own food; and at the end he receives one-fourth of the crop. I went one bright moonlight night to visit the theatre at Ammân, which, by actual measurement, I had found would seat upwards of 10,000 people; and in one of the corridors I aroused a man, who proved to be a "Saltee," as they are called, a Christian peasant from Es Salt, who was cultivating land for the Arabs, and who found here at night a temporary shelter for himself and his cattle.

A poor ignorant Christian cultivating land for a degraded and wretched Bedouin, the present nominal owner of the soil, and making his home in the ruins of a theatre that was once brilliant with ten thousand eager spectators gathered together from a city of churches and palaces and temples—the people of intelligence and wealth all gone, the people and buildings that remain sunk down into moral and physical ruin—is in human judgment a strange reversal of the law of progress, which gives rise to serious and painful reflections.

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DEIR EBAN, THE GREAT EBEN, AND EBEN HA-EZER.

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IN my last, very brief, report (Palestine Exploration Fund, *Quarterly Statement*, No. XIII., October, 1874, p. 279), I formally proposed the identification of *Deir Ebân* with the great *Eben* on which the ark was placed on its arrival at Ekron. I had long before arrived at this result; I have repeatedly spoken of it to several persons, especially Messrs. Drake and Conder, reserving to myself the right of dealing with the question in detail, and particularly the relation of the great *Eben* to *Eben ha-ezer*. Mr. C. R. Conder having in one of the recent *Statements* of the Palestine Exploration Fund (July, 1876, p. 49) proposed afresh to recognise in *Deir Ebân* the Hebrew word *Eben* (stone), and to locate *Eben ha-ezer* there, I am happy to see him partially adopt my theory, and I think I ought to seize this opportunity to set forth briefly the conclusions at which I long ago arrived on this subject.

(1) *The Great Eben*.—The Philistines, bringing back the ark on a waggon from Ekron to Beth-Shemesh, reach the verge of that city, now represented by Ain Shems (1 Sam. vi. 12); the waggon stops in the field of Joshua the Beth-Shemeshite, where there was a great stone (*Eben*); the ark is rested on the "great stone," a sacrifice is offered in this place,

and the cows which were drawing the ark are sacrificed (v. 14-15). A little further on (v. 18), in speaking of the gold offering, the narrator returns to this "great stone"* on which the ark was rested, and which is pointed out to this day in the field of Joshua: it seems this time to indicate clearly the limit of the Philistine territory (to the great stone . . .), which, moreover, is confirmed by the fact that the Philistines go no farther, and that, after accompanying the ark to this point, they return to Ekron. The memory of this event is, if my opinion is correct, preserved in the name of *Deir Ebân*; as to the extraordinary importance assigned it by the book of Samuel, this is explained by the following considerations: †

(2) *Eben ha-ezer*.—The Israelites on their way to attack the Philistines, who had advanced to Aphek, encamp—probably on the confines of their territory—near the stone of succour (*Eben ha-ezer*). Beaten the first time, they bring up the ark of Shiloh, and again try the fortunes of battle; they are completely defeated, and the ark, which falls into the hands of the Philistines, is transported by them from *Eben-ezer* to *Ashdod*. These events occur, be it understood, *before* those which we have just related.

Is it not natural that later on the ark should have been carried back to the same point where it had been captured? On the very same spot where the sacrilege had been committed should the expiation be made. Now this spot bears precisely, as we have seen above, the name of "the great stone" (*Eben*).

There is yet another argument. It is only farther on (chapter vii.) that the narrator tells us the origin of the name of *Eben ha-ezer*, whence it results that, at the moment of the return of the ark, the place did not yet bear this name of *Eben ha-ezer*, and that the narrator only used it by anticipation when speaking of the defeat of the Israelites: as the religious outrage inflicted on the ark had been repaired on the very same spot where it had taken place, so the national outrage was to be atoned for under identical conditions. It was at *Eben ha-ezer* itself that the Israelites, beaten at *Eben ha-ezer*, were to take, under the leadership of Samuel, a signal revenge. It was then only that the

* *Abel* must be corrected into *eben* in the opinion of all the commentators.

† Between *Deir Ebân* and *Ain Shems* is a rocky spot called *Tantura*, and perhaps also *Es-sâ fyé*. This was the scene in ancient times, according to the legend, of a great massacre of fellahs by the soldiers of the Government (*sic*). Since that time *dhabat tantûra* has been a proverbial expression for a great massacre. It should be noted that the word *dhabha* (slaying) is precisely the Hebrew *zebah* (sacrifice). In the middle of the valley between *Sar'a*, *Artouf*, *Ain Shems*, and *Deir Ebân*, there is also a low flat-topped hillock, covered with small stones, called *Khîrbet er-Roudjoûm*; there was there a *gal'a* like a church (*sic*). The old name of *Deir Ebân*, according to the fellahs, is *Zeid el-mâl*. This word *mâl* (silver, money) is added to many names of places as a kind of epithet; thus we have, between *Ramleh* and *Jaffa*, *Sarsend el-mâl* (in allusion to *Sarf el-mâl*, money-changing) = *zeid el-mâl*, meaning "increase of silver."

battle-field, determined by the position of Maspha, Bethkar, Sen (and Aphek), was consecrated by the erection of a stone to which Samuel gave the name of *Eben ha-ezer*, "stone of succour."* It marked the point reached by the pursuit, and the Philistines never again crossed the borders of Israel.

It results, therefore, from these comparisons, which I can now only briefly indicate, waiving certain obscure points:—

(1) The place where the Israelites were beaten and where they lost the ark did not assume till a later date the name of *Eben ha-ezer*.

(2) It is to this same spot, this time called *Eben*, that the Philistines carried back the ark.

(3) The Israelites having beaten the Philistines in their turn at this same place called it *Eben ha-ezer*.

(4) This place must have been on the confines of the Philistines and the Israelites—may, perhaps, even have been one of the boundary-marks.

(5) All these data, including that of the *Onomasticon*, apply remarkably well to Deir Ebân. †

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* It results from a passage in Josephus that the stone must have borne in certain Hebrew MSS. the name of *Azaz* (strength, strong), with a final *zain* instead of a *resch*, for he translates this name by *ισχυρόν*, strong.

† The track of the *waggon* carrying the ark from Ekron to Deir Ebân must have been by the present Wady Sarar, which is certainly the Valley of Sorek, as I conclusively proved by the discovery of *Khirbet Souriq*, in 1874.