

TOMBS OF THE MACCABEES.

FROM our camp at Lidd, I visited El Medyeh, to resolve, if possible, the much disputed site of the graves of the Maccabees. I first visited Sheikh el Gharbawy, which M. Ganneau has proved not to be the site. There are a good many tombs in the neighbourhood, some of which are called Kabr el Yahûd, tombs of the Jews, but a deep valley separates them from Medyeh, and the sea cannot be seen from immediately above. I next crossed the ravine and visited the village, which is evidently an old site. To the south of the village and close to it there is a round hill, flat on the top, which has almost an artificial appearance; it is called er Ràs. From this hill a good view of the sea is obtained. On the top I found one rock-cut tomb, which had been turned into a cistern; there are many cisterns, and some other cuttings in the rock which might prove to be tombs if they were cleared out. A Mohammedan holy place, el Arbain, now occupies the top. I have no doubt in my own mind that this was the site of the tombs of those celebrated heroes of later Jewish history. The hill is a very prominent feature, and appears to me to fulfil all the requisites of this very important and much disputed site. A little farther on I took refuge from a storm in a curious rock-cut cavern, el Habis. A large face of rock has been scarped perpendicularly, leaving an overhanging ledge at one end. This ledge projects considerably, and is supported by rough square blocks cut out of the rock and left when the rest was excavated. High up in the face of the rock a small hole gives access to a gallery running in a circular direction. Ledges along the sides in alcoves seem to have been intended for sarcophagi. I have little doubt that this was once a spacious tomb, and that the overhanging ledge supported by square columns ran the whole length of the scarped rock—some 50 yards.

H. H. K.

SITE OF AI.

FROM our camp at Beitin I found, in the course of the revision, that the name of Kh. Haiy was well known at Deir Diwân, but on talking to the natives I heard of another Kh. Haiy, which seemed to me nearer to Ai. Having secured a guide who knew the place, he led me to a ruin about one mile south-east of Mukhmâs and north of Wâdy Suweinît. It appears to have been an old and important place. The ruins have escaped previous observation owing to being hidden away behind a small rising ground.

It is extraordinary how the name of Haiy, or something like it, clings to this region. First there is Kh. Haiyân close to Deir Diwân, then there is a Kh. Haiyeh south of Wâdy Suweinît, and now there is a third

Kh. Haiy one mile east of Mukhmâs; thus we have three ruins having the name of Ai in a space of about two square miles.

Kh. Haiyan has been suggested by M. Ganneau for Ai, and I would point out that, if Deir Diwân be Bethaven, as suggested by the Rev. W. F. Birch, this site is most certainly beside it, as mentioned in Joshua vii. 2. Looking at the position on the ground, Kh. Haiyan appears to have been only the site of the graves and cisterns of Deir Diwân, and may have been, as the natives say, the former site of that town. As a strong place of ancient times it is hardly suitable, and the difficulties of the position of et Tell are still prominent at Kh. Haiyan. It also seems difficult to see how the people of Bethaven took no part in the fight, and how their town was not taken with Ai. Kh. Haiyeh, south of Wâdy Suweinît, is evidently not Ai.

The third Kh. Haiy has, however, some claims to consideration. Situated one mile south-east of Mukhmâs, on the ancient road leading up from Jericho into the interior, it would be naturally the first stronghold Joshua would have to overcome.

Dean Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 199, says: "The designation of the site of Michmash is so similar to that which is used to describe Ai as inevitably to suggest the conjecture that it was the successor, if not to its actual, at least to its general position." This deduction exactly suits the new position, hardly one mile south-east of Michmash.

Major Wilson, R.E., had identified et Tell with Ai, but there seems some difficulty in this case in accommodating 5,000 men and 30,000 men in ambush on the west of it, so that the people of Bethel, only one and a half miles distant, knew nothing about it. From Josh. viii. 17 it appears that not only the people of Ai sallied out after the Israelites when they pretended to fly, but also the people of Bethel; they therefore could have known nothing of the ambush. Also there is some difficulty in seeing how a force attacking from the east should move across an almost impracticable valley in order to attack from the north across the same ravine.

At Kh. Haiy these difficulties are cleared away. There is a plain to the north not cut off by any impassable valley and very fit for a battlefield. There is also plenty of room for the ambush to hide without being seen by the men of Bethel.

The connection between Ai and Michmash in the Bible is very close in Isa. x. 29. Here Bethel is not mentioned, as it seems natural to suppose it would have been had Ai been at et Tell, and this seems to me to point to a different site for Ai. Kh. Haiy, however, would have to be passed by the great king before the baggage was laid up at Michmash for the passage of the Wâdy Suweinît.

H. H. K.