

latter are written in Aramaic not in Hebrew, and in an Aramaic alphabet, not a Jewish one. Nineveh, moreover, is geographically too far from Jerusalem to allow of a comparison being safely made, while the proper names occurring in the tablets seem to show that the contracting parties belonged to more than one nationality, and the characters, though of the same age, are not always of the same form. A good deal of misconception seems to exist on the subject of these Assyro-Aramaic inscriptions, some of which have been supposed to be as early as the 9th century B.C. This, however, is not the case, the oldest being not earlier than the reign of Tiglath-Pileser II, and all belong to the century between 740 and 640 B.C.

One of the chief lessons taught us by the discovery of the Siloam inscription is that similar inscriptions still exist in Palestine if they are looked for in the right place. This is underground. It is useless to expect to find remains of the præ-exilic period except by the help of systematic excavation. Not only in Jerusalem itself, but also in the south of Judah, ancient Jewish monuments still lie buried, waiting for the spade to uncover them. I was greatly struck, when riding from Beit-Jibrin to Gaza, by the number of ancient *tels* or mounds which I passed, each marking the site of an old city. To say nothing of Um Lakis, supposed to represent the site of Lachish, though the natives insisted upon calling it Um Latis to me, we have the great mound of Ajlân or Eglon, which must go back to the days of the Jewish monarchy, and is only exceeded in size by that of Zêta, a still unidentified site. But the whole plain abounds with *tels* of considerable size, and Gaza itself would be a fine field for digging.

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### KIRJATH JEARIM.

THE interesting account of Lieutenant Conder's visit to Khûrbet 'Erma, induces me to ask consideration for the further suggestion regarding that spot, that there stood "the nameless city" of 1 Sam. ix. The scene of Saul's anointing is nameless in the Scripture narrative, which gives no authority for the statement of Josephus that it was Ramah. Possibly he inferred it from the mention of "the seer's house" (ver. 18). Little stress can be put on the wording of Saul's question as a stranger to a stranger in the city gate. It is significant that throughout the chapter Samuel is never once spoken of as "dwelling" in that city. "He is in the city" (ver. 6). "He came to-day to the city, for the people have a great sacrifice on the high place" (ver. 11). The people are not accustomed to eat till he comes, for he blesses the sacrifice." . . . "Now therefore get you up for about this time ye shall find him" (13). Such are the terms employed, which not only do not say that he dwelt in the city, but suggest the opposite, even that he was there for the occasion of the sacrificial feast.

Although no name is given, the position of the city is pretty fully indicated; Saul and his servant had gone "through all the land of Benjamin" when they came to it; and they returned from it by Rachel's sepulchre. The narrative requires us to find a city set on the upper slope of a hill so that it had a higher and lower part; and to find a high place just outside its gate which was honoured as a "Bamah" and place of gathering to offer sacrifice. These requirements are all met in Khürbet 'Erma, if we accept it as the site of Kirjath Jearim. Saul and his servant, after going through all the land of Benjamin, would find themselves in its south quarter at Kirjath Jearim (Joshua xviii, 15); outside of Kirjath Jearim on the "gibeah" or hill in the house of Abinadab stood the Ark for twenty years. It is close to, and up from Beth-Shemesh, whence the Ark was brought hither. An easy morning walk would bring Samuel and Saul to the spot near which they must have been when the prophet anointed the king, not far from Rachel's sepulchre (1 Sam. x, 1, 2), on his return to Gibeah of Saul.

The course of Saul and his servant is easily traced through Benjamin and over by Soba (Zuph) to the border of the Philistines, beyond which it was vain to follow strayed asses, even if prudent. A reason for the silence of Scripture as to the name of the city may be found possibly in its being assumed that the place of festival and gathering for sacrifice before the Lord would be recognised as the resting place of the Ark of the Covenant. Josephus says, "Now while the city of Kirjath Jearim had the Ark with them, the whole body of the people betook themselves all that time to offer prayers and sacrifices to God, and appeared greatly concerned and zealous about His worship." ("Ant." vi, 2, 1.) This statement seems based on 1 Sam. vii, 2. It certainly is hardly credible that Samuel would not frequent the place where stood the Ark of the Covenant, and have a house for his use on those occasions when there was, as on this occasion, "*a sacrifice of the people*" there.

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