

34. *Festuca ovina*, var. *pinifolia*. Hackel in litt., Flor. Or., V, 617.—Higher Lebanon.
35. *Scleropoa maritima*. L. Sp. 128.—Coast near Sidon.
36. *Bromus flabellatus*. Hack., Boiss., Flor. Or., V, 648.—Near Jerusalem.
37. *Bromus alopecurus*. Poir. Voy., II, 100.—Galilee and the coast.
38. *Bromus squarrosus*.—L. Sp. 112.—Lebanon.
39. *Bromus brachystachys*. Hornung. Fl., XVI, 2, p. 418.—By the Jordan.
40. *Brachypodium pinnatum*. L. Sp. 115.—Lower Lebanon.
41. *Agropyrum panormitanum*. Parl. Pl., var. Sic. II, p. 20.—Hermon.
42. *Agropyrum repens*. L. Sp. 128.—Lebanon.
43. *Agropyrum elongatum*. Hort., Gr. Austr., II, 15.—Near Beyrout.
44. *Ægilops bicornis*. Forsk., Descr., 26.—Sandy places, coast.
45. *Psilurus nardoides*. Trin. Fund., I, 73.—Coast and interior.
46. *Hordeum secalinum*. Schreb. Spic., 148.—The Lejah.
47. *Elymus debileanus*. Schultz. Mant., 2, 424.—Central Palestine.

H. B. TRISTRAM.

Durham, 26th November, 1884.

A DOLMEN IN THE TALMUD.

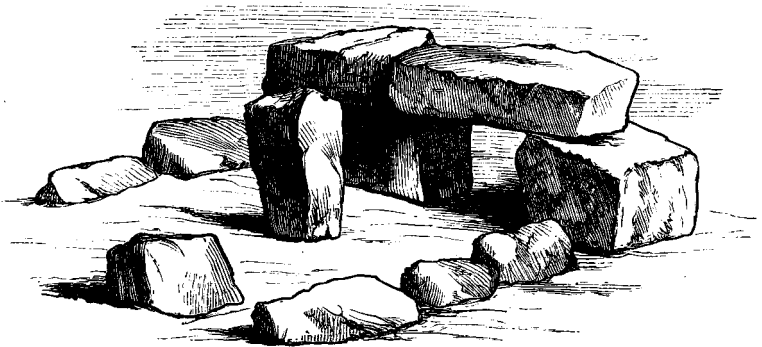
“RABBI ISHMAEL said, ‘Three stones beside each other at the side of the image of Markulim are forbidden, but two are allowed. But the wise say when they are within his view they are forbidden, but when they are not within his view they are allowed.’” (Mishnah Aboda Zarah, iv, 1.)

This passage from the tract treating of “Strange Worship” refers to the idolatry of the second and third centuries A.D., before the establishment of Christianity by Constantine. R. Ishmael was a contemporary of Akiba (circa 135 A.D.). From the Babylonian Talmud (Baba Metzia 25 *b*) we learn that these three stones near the “Menhir of Mercury” (for Markulim was Mercury or Hermes, the god of the pillar) were arranged two side by side and the third laid flat across. From another passage (T. B. Beracoth 57 *b*) we gather that such symbols, viz., an “image” (צורה) or Hermes with a tirlithon in front of it, were commonly to be found.

From the Midrash on Proverbs xxvi, 8, we also gather that the cultus of Markulim (or Mercury) consisted in throwing a stone at his image, and it is well known that this practice was connected in Greece with the cultus of Hermes or Mercury.

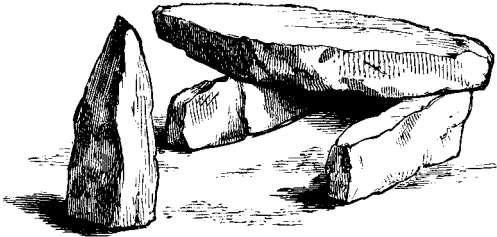
This trilithon was evidently a dolmen similar to the dolmen tables still erected by the Arabs in Moab, and its connection with a menhir recalls the “Sentinel Stones” which are found in Brittany, Scandinavia, and England, standing in front of a dolmen or trilithon.

MARKULIM ON MOUNT GILBOA.



Monument on Mount Gilboa discovered by Captain Conder in 1872. ("Memoirs," Vol. II, p. 115.)

MARKULIM IN SWEDEN.



The Dolmen and Sentinel Stone of Oronst. (Fergusson's "Rude Stone Monuments," p. 306.)

I feel little doubt that the curious monument which we discovered on Mount Gilboa near the village of Deir Ghazález in 1872, is one of the Markulim of the Talmud. It was, I believe, the first rude stone monument discovered west of Jordan (not including Phœnicia). The standing stone is 6 inches thick, 2 feet wide, $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet high. I found it very firmly fixed. It was impossible to move it, and it is probably sunk to some considerable distance in the ground. The trilithon or dolmen has a table-stone 6 feet 9 inches long. The other stones form an enclosure such as often encircles dolmens in every land. The enclosure with a central stone is also a kind of monument found in Moab, as I have shown in my reports and memoirs. All these facts tell strongly in favour of the contention, which is supported by Lubbock, Forbes, Leslie, and other competent authorities, that rude stone monuments in all lands are intimately connected with the religious ideas of early tribes. This subject I have endeavoured to treat in "Heth and Moab," but a great many confirmatory facts have come to my knowledge since I completed that volume.

Idolatry was of course the general practice in Syria when the Mishnah was written, and in the tract above quoted we find mention of the sun, moon, planets, mountains, Zodiacal signs, trees, and stones, as objects of idolatry; also the sacred baths or springs of Venus, and the serpent or dragon. One other passage is of interest in connection with rude stone monuments.

"In Zidon, at the tree where they worshipped, they found beneath it a heap) or cairn, (גַּל), said R. Simon to them, examine the heap.' And they examined it, and found in it an image (צוּרָה). He said to them, as the object of worship is the image, we shall allow the tree to you." (Mishna Aboda Zara, iii, 2.)

In this case the menhir had been covered up in a cairn made of the stones thrown at it as an act of worship. The meaning of this custom has been made plain by archæologists, and each stone thrown is witness of a visit paid to the spot. The larger therefore the cairn the greater the veneration shown.

From another passage it appears (iv, 2) that offerings used to be placed on the head of Markulim or on the top of the menhir. In Brittany, and in Scotland and in India alike, menhirs may still be seen which form the nucleus of the cairn which surrounds them. This practice is probably also noticed in the Bible (Genesis xxxi, 45-48), but I have not met with any explanation of the cultus in the dictionaries and commentaries.

The arrangement of the trilithon and menhir, especially when the latter is surrounded by an enclosure as is the case in the Gilboa example, may be considered to represent the prehistoric prototype of such temples as were afterwards erected in Phœnicia or Greece, with a rude stone instead of a statue, and a pair of pillars standing in front of the fane, and supporting only a single block of stone. The relative position of the pillar and the trilithon appears sometimes to have had a relation to the sunrise or sunset, but this though observed by the modern Arabs is not an invariable rule.

In connection with this subject, a few words may be added as to hollows in dolmens and menhirs. The cup hollows have been described (see "Heth and Moab") in Moabite monuments. In Finland such hollows are made in stones, and connected with a charm against diseases, which are conjured into them. In Scotland the same hollows were used for libations of milk. Milk was poured through a hole in a menhir in the western isles off the Scottish coast. Another menhir in Aberdeenshire had a hollow in the top in which rain water accumulates, which the ignorant suppose to spring from the stone, and a cross-shaped stone, called Water Cross, was said to bring down rain when placed upright.

Visiting recently the well known Kits Coty House dolmen, near Maidstone, to see if there were any cup hollows in its table stone (which is slanted just like the table of a Moabite dolmen), I found the side stones pitted with deep hollows, some of which it is impossible to suppose to have been natural erosions. About a quarter of a mile south of Kits Coty House there is a ruined circle of fallen stones (sandstone from the neighbourhood, as is Kits Coty House also). The farm people believe that these stones cannot be counted, a legend which is I believe not peculiar to this circle alone. I found in some of the stones of this circle (which are 7 to 8 feet long) holes like those in the Cotty House, but still more plainly cut with the object of holding something. Perhaps, as in so many other cases, libations of blood or milk, honey, or water, were once poured on these holy stones, or small offerings placed in the stone itself, by those who regarded these monuments as sacred. The offering was placed on the top of the stone in the case of Markulim as above noted. One of the best examples of such holes in side stones is noticed by Fergusson, in the famous covered dolmen at Gavr Innis in Brittany.

There is another circle at Addington Park, near Maidstone, which I have not yet been able to visit, which has a curious outlying cairn on the east or north-east. We may compare the circle and gigantic cairn of Wâdy Jideid in Moab.

C. R. C.

THE ARAMAIC ALPHABET.

In my paper on Hebrew inscriptions, published in the *Quarterly Statement*, October, 1883, I have mentioned the inscription at 'Arâk el Emîr. This we both copied and photographed, and my original copy made on the spot differs in the first letter from that of previous writers. According to Levy, it has the form of a rude *Teth* open at the top.

According to my copy it is round like an O, and could only read as an *Ain*.

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