The assertion that the Siloam text presents older forms than the Moabite stone is as yet unproved; on the contrary the forms of the mim, nun, and especially of the aleph are those found on texts of the 7th century B.C. and later, and the text is only placed as early as 700 B.C. because some of its letters approach those of the older Moabite alphabet.

C. R. C.

BEZETHA.

This name applied to the new part of Jerusalem, north of the temple. Josephus speaks of Bezetha (Beta) "which is also called the New City." 2 Wars xix, 4) which by no means shows that the Hebrew name meant "New City." Dr. Neubauer (Geog. Tal. p. 139) says the word has been
variously translated. The common etymology is בַּת הָאָדָה Bath Haditha “New house” others give בַּת הָרוֹאֵה “House of Olives.” R. Schwarz points to the word בְּזֵית “swamp” but there are no swamps at Jerusalem. Yet the real meaning of the name may not be unconnected with a passage to which R. Schwarz was referring.

Dr. Neubauer cites this passage which appears in various Talmudic works. Tosiphata Sanhed, ch. 3; Tal Jer Sanhed i, 2; Tal Bab Shebuth 16a, Megillah Taaniti, ch. 6. “Two places called Bitzin (בְּזֵית or בְּזֵית) existed at Jerusalem, the lower and the upper. The lower was added to Jerusalem by the exiles who came back from Babylon and had the same rights as the rest of the city, the other was added later by a king and without consulting Urim and Thummim. It had not previously been added to the city because it was on the weak side of Jerusalem.”

Now since Bezechtha was both on the weak side of Jerusalem, and also only added in the later times of the Herodians, it is clear that the Upper Bitza may, as Dr. Neubauer said, very probably be Bezechtha.

I would now call attention to the meaning of the word. The root בְּזֵית in Aramaic is used according to Buxtorff with the meaning “to cut off” or “divide.” Hence the Bitza was the “cutting” (Frustra Foea Fossa) and Gesenius (s. v. בְּזֵית) makes the Hebrew roots בְּזֵית and בְּזֵית equivalent, all with the sense of dividing. Hence we might easily suppose that Bezatha (with the long vowel Bezatha represents a word נְזֵית from the Root נְזָא equivalent to the Aramaic בְּזֵית.

Bezechtha only appears in history after the Christian Era, that is after the building of Herod’s Temple. Now, as Josephus explains (5 Wars iv, 3), “It lies over against the Tower Antonia, but it is divided from it by a deep valley which was dug on purpose, and that in order to hinder the foundations of the Tower of Antonia from joining to this hill.” It is true that in the same passage he seems to consider Bezechtha as equivalent to the Greek “New City,” but the translation may here be doubted.

It seems probable that Bezechtha, therefore, may simply be the Hebrew or Aramaic Bezechtha, and may mean “the cutting,” referring to the fosse north of Antonia, which still exists and which was converted, after the time of Josephus, into the Twin Pools. This explanation has not, as far as I know, been previously proposed.

C. R. C.

ESAU’S HEAD.

There is a curious legend in the Talmud as to the death of Esau. According to this account, Hushim, son of Dan, cut off Esau’s head in the faction fight which followed the burial of Jacob. The head was buried in Hebron, but the body in Mount Seir.

On the Survey Map north of Hebron will be found the village of Sair.