

variously translated. The common etymology is בית חדתא *Beth Haditha* "New house" others give בית זיתא "House of Olives." R. Schwarz points to the word בצעא "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. Tosiphta *Sanhed*, ch. 3 ; Tal Jer *Sanhed* i, 2 ; Tal Bab *Shebuoth* 16a, *Megillah Taanith*, ch. 6. "Two places called Bitzin (בצעין or ביים) 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 Bezetha 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 Bitz'a may, as Dr. Neubauer said, very probably be Bezetha.

I would now call attention to the meaning of the word. The root בצע in Aramaic is used according to Buxtorff with the meaning "to cut off" or "divide." Hence the Bitz'a was the "cutting" (*Frustra Fovea Fossa*) and Gesenius (s. v. בוא) makes the Hebrew roots בוא and בוע equivalent, all with the sense of *dividing*. Hence we might easily suppose that βεζθηα (with the long vowel *Bezéthā*) represents a word בואתא from the Root בוא equivalent to the Aramaic בצע.

Bezetha 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 Bezetha as equivalent to the Greek "New City," but the translation may here be doubted.

It seems probable that Bezetha, therefore, may simply be the Hebrew or Aramaic *Bezéthā*, 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 Siar

(Sheet XXI, Mem. III, p. 309), in which is shown the traditional tomb of Esau (*El'As*), which I have fully described on a later page (p. 379).

The village appears to be the Zior of the Bible (*Josh. xv, 54*), but it would appear probable that at some time or other this site was regarded as the Biblical Seir, where Esau's body was buried. The legend of the head was not, however, recovered in connection with Hebron.

C. R. C.

GIHON.

IN histories, commentaries, books of travel, and guidebooks, we read of a Mount Gihon, a Valley of Gihon, a Fountain of Gihon, and an Upper and Lower Pool of Gihon. In the Bible, Gihon, near Jerusalem, is mentioned only as a place which had an upper and, as may be inferred, a lower outflow of water (*2 Chron. xxxii, 30*.) It was at a lower level than the city, in the valley גִּחֹן and apparently near enough to En-Rogel for shouting and music to be there heard from it; but the two places were not in sight of each other. From *Joshua xv, 7*, it appears that En-Rogel was to the east or south-east of the city, and as Gihon was near it, and in a nachal, or narrow deep water-course, we must look for the latter in one of the narrow valleys which converge just below the city on the south-east. In the Chaldee and Syriac versions of the Bible, Gihon is translated Siloah, and this gives an indication of its position. According to high authorities, Gihon means a bursting forth and was therefore the name given to this water source. But this term is applied to no other spring, and it seems to me not improbable that the true derivation of Gihon is not גִּיחַן *giah*, to burst forth, but גִּחֹן *gahan*, to bow down to prostrate oneself, and that the term was originally applied, not to the fountain, but to the canal which brought the water from the fountain.¹ How fitting such a term would be for such a narrow passage, which can only be traversed in portions of its extent by a person going literally on his belly גִּחֹן *gahan*, everyone who has been through the canal will feelingly recognise. But however this may be, all the difficulties of the narratives, so far as Gihon is concerned, seem to disappear if we consider that the names Gihon and Siloah were applied to the canal, and especially to its southern end, which was the lower and principal outflow of its waters whilst its upper outflow was at what is now called the Virgin's Fountain. There is nothing to indicate the situation of the Shiloah alluded to by the prophet Isaiah (*viii, 6*), but there can be little doubt that it was identical with the Siloah, or more properly Shelach, of Nehemiah; only the prophet speaks of the softly flowing stream, and Nehemiah of the pool which it supplied. That this pool was the same as the "pool of Siloam" few will question, and if there ever was a "pool of Gihon" (which there

¹ The form גִּחֹן or גִּיחֹן, if derived from גִּחַן, is exactly the same as שִׁלַּח or as the Rabbis spell it שִׁלּוּחַ, from שָׁלַח to send (cf. *John ix, 7*).