

DAVID'S TOMB AND THE SILOAM TUNNEL.

By Rev. W. F. BIRCH, M.A.

It is certain (*Quarterly Statement*, 1895, p. 261; 1890, p. 204) that the Sepulchres of David were on Ophel (so called), and also, I believe, within the wall of Nehemiah (1886, p. 34; 1879, p. 179), and were so situated that the course of the wall, after passing the pool of Siloah at the southern end of Ophel, and after reaching as far as the stairs that go down from the city of David (Neh. iii, 15, 16; close to which stairs the wall itself went up, xii, 37), came at some point as far as over against (*i.e.*, opposite to, in face of) the sepulchres of David, and thence was continued as far as the pool that was made and as far as the house of the mighty men.

It is necessary to be thus painfully precise, in order that the uncertainties attendant on the search for the said sepulchres may be reduced to a *minimum*. To speak briefly, the sepulchres fronted the wall between the foot of the stairs and the pool that was made. Unfortunately, Dr. Bliss's excavations were cut short before the position of the said stairs and pool was definitely settled.

My conviction is that the wall of the pool of Siloah (1897, p. 74) was adjacent to the great dam; that the stairs may have ascended Ophel from close to the north end of the dam; that the steps (1897, p. 263), discovered a few hours before the excavations ended, may very probably have to do with the course of the said stairs; and that the pool *that was made* (if this description is genuine and not a clerical error for *the old* pool, 1890, p. 205) must have included the site of the present upper pool of Siloam (1897, p. 74); although, so far as I can see, there is some difficulty in drawing Nehemiah's wall *as far as* (1890, p. 206) this said present pool, and, indeed, *as far as* any pool placed even in the Kidron valley, south of the Virgin's Fount, *i.e.*, Gihon.

Satisfied as to the topographical accuracy of the Bible, I cheerfully return to the attack of the difficult question of the position of David's tomb; and though Herod was scared by fire in his second attempt, and the Fund was repulsed in Dr. Bliss by the expiring firman, I rejoice that Professor Ganneau at once blows a trumpet call to a fresh assault—get a firman, dig in the bend of the Siloam tunnel, and in six weeks (you may) find the sepulchres of David. Who will show himself a peaceful Joab, by being the first to get through the subterranean passage into the long home of David? I shall welcome any discoverer, even from the land of Sinim. Nehemiah did what he could to point out to posterity the position of the sepulchres. To me the long way of first making sure of the *stairs* and the *pool that was made*, seems likely in the end to be the shortest. Still, if French dash can, by a short cut, more speedily lead us to victory, let it be so.

Meanwhile it may be well to examine Professor Ganneau's theory, that David's tomb was (1) of Phœnician type, *i.e.*, entered by a vertical shaft, and (2) situated in the great bend of the Siloam tunnel ("Athenæum," 1897, p. 361).

(1) No old Jewish tombs, entered by a vertical shaft, have, so far as I know, yet been discovered near Jerusalem. The shaft tomb lately found (1897, p. 248) proves nothing as to Davidic Jerusalem, *if* its date be Christian, as pointed out by Lieut.-Colonel Conder (1897, p. 83). The cave of Machpelah seems to have been of the ordinary type, with its entrance in a perpendicular face of rock. The same position for the door apparently marked the tomb prepared by Shebna; Isaiah, xxii, 16, "Thou hast hewed thee out here a sepulchre, hewing him out a sepulchre on high, gravating an habitation for himself in the rock" (Hebr. *sela*, a cliff). This led me to adopt the vertical position (1879, p. 176), although Sir C. Wilson then thought that the entrance was possibly by a shaft, like a well. In favour of the Phœnician "shaft" type it might be urged, on the other hand, that as David had Phœnician stonemasons to build his house, so they might make him a Phœnician tomb; and that the Jews thought (1877, p. 134) that on the way from the Temple to Siloam there might be a "Sepulchre of the Abyss," which term was explained to mean a hidden tomb, the depth of which was not known to any man. So far the evidence is extremely meagre.

Professor Ganneau, however, impresses into his service the statement of Josephus ("Ant." xvi, vii, 1) that Herod erected a white stone monument *on* (others say *at*) the mouth (*ἐπὶ τῷ στομίῳ*) of David's sepulchre, and adds:—"This characteristic expression, *στόμιον*, implies expressly, to my mind, an entry not in the form of a door in the rock of a vertical shape, as every one supposed, but an entry *in the form of a pit*." The fact, however, that the same writer, four times in one chapter ("Ant." xiv, xv, 5) uses the same Greek word, *στόμιον*, to describe the entrances to the robbers' caves in the precipices of Wady Hamam in Galilee, shows that the word is neutral in this controversy, and does not necessarily imply that David's tomb had an horizontal opening.

Nor can *ἐπὶ*, with the dative, be forced into necessarily meaning *on*. This is clear from the frequent expression in LXX and New Testament, *ἐπὶ θύρα* or *θύραις*, at the door or doors. In reference to the tomb of Lazarus we read (John xi, 38, R.V.): "It was a cave, and a stone lay *against* it" (margin or *upon*, *ἐπέκειτο ἐπ' αὐτῷ*), on which Professor Wescott observed: "Thus the word rendered *lay upon it* does not necessarily describe a pit. The sense may be better given by *laid against it*." The reader will by this see that Josephus is neutral.

(2) The approach of Sennacherib undoubtedly led Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxxii, 3, 30; 2 Kings xx, 20; Isaiah xxii, 11; Eccles. xlviii, 17) to make the S-shaped tunnel from Gihon to the southern end of Ophel, near Ain Silwân. Ten years ago Professor Ganneau "ingeniously suggested" ("City and Land," p. 20) that the remarkable curve in the southern part of this conduit was "due to the existence of the tomb and

the necessity of avoiding it," the shaft to the tomb reaching at least down to the level of the tunnel of Siloam ("Atheneum").

The reader is invited to refer to the plan of this S tunnel, and he will notice that it has also a *northern bend*, smaller, indeed, but more extraordinary than the other, inasmuch as to reach a south-west-by-south terminus, the course actually goes more north than the starting place. Was the object of this northern bend to avoid tombs? If so, whose tombs were they? An explanation of this bend must be given. Was Melchizedec (Heb. vii, 3) buried hereabouts? Or was David, if the pool that was made was near Gihon? For myself, I demur to tombs having caused either bend.

From the internal evidence of the tunnel, I think it might be shown clearly, if time permitted, that the said tunnel (from the part leading to the Jebusite shaft to Ain Silwân) was, in an emergency, begun practically at the same time from both ends, before there was time for proper levelling; that the northern miners not starting from daylight, but from a point 50 feet along the Jebusite tunnel (so tortuous that "six feet lengths could only be got into the passage," by Sir C. Warren, "Letters," p. 38) mistook the right direction from the first, being six points wrong; while the southern miners, starting from the surface, took an admirable aim at Gihon, and kept on very fairly for 160 feet.

Meanwhile the chief engineer had gained time for quiet reflection, and modified his plan. Accordingly, on the south the miners were made to strike right across the axis of Ophel, so as to come under its eastern lower slope, and learning there, by the aid of persons tapping overhead, their position, they opened up a shaft (as shown in plan) to the surface at 470 feet from Ain Silwân. It is obvious that before this they had corrected their level. Now striking north from the shaft the southerners, still using overhead tapping, easily forged ahead, getting in fresh air and putting out rubbish through their invaluable shaft, and so, on an average, making progress at the rate of 10 feet to the 6 or 8 feet, at the most, of the unhappy northerners. Of course, the latter had easily obtained the right level from Gihon, and could be confident that, by keeping well to the west, they must eventually outflank the southerners, as it would be impossible for the latter to pass them, if the two levels were tolerably alike. But beyond this single advantage, the northerners had a very bad time of it, ignorant from the very outset (so far as I can see) of their proper direction, with no overhead jumper in crowded Zion to give them a bearing, without any ventilating shaft in all their own 762 feet of tunnel, not to mention the initial 50 feet of Jebusite work at Gihon, while their more fortunate rivals were, even at the last, not more than 474 feet from open air.

Perhaps our Hon. Secretary will describe the terrible miseries endured by these north-tunnel Jews in their mining task, carried on always at high pressure through weary months, day and night, without ceasing, amid ignorance of the true course, in air so vitiated that lamps at times would hardly burn (as in the long tunnel, which, however, was *ascending*).

"Warren's Letters," p. 68), with chippings to be discharged through a passage kept to the smallest practicable dimensions, evidently $3\frac{3}{4}$ feet high and 2 feet wide (*Quarterly Statement*, 1891, p. 18), along a distance, at the last, of some 800 feet, and all this without one friendly tap overhead to show that others were thinking of them. It was, indeed, a grand moment when first they heard the thud of the southern pick. How great the ecstasy of their joy as the hole was knocked through the soft rock, and the draught blew out the lamp and wafted through the tunnel a deafening cheer towards Gihon or the shaft! Well might the feat be recorded in the Siloam inscription. Such seems to me to be the story of the tunnel as recorded in its windings.

The fact that the southern miners in the first 470 feet practically described an arc with its convex side northwards, instead of excavating in a direct line, so far as they could, to the position of their shaft, suffices, apparently, to show that the avoidance of the sepulchres of David is not the correct explanation of the great bend. Even if Professor Ganneau's position for the tomb be right, his argument from Josephus does not seem to me sound.

The following is the letter of M. Clermont-Ganneau referred to in Mr. Birch's article. It is reprinted by permission from the "Athenæum" of September 11th, 1897:—

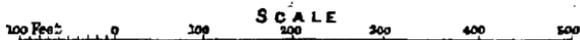
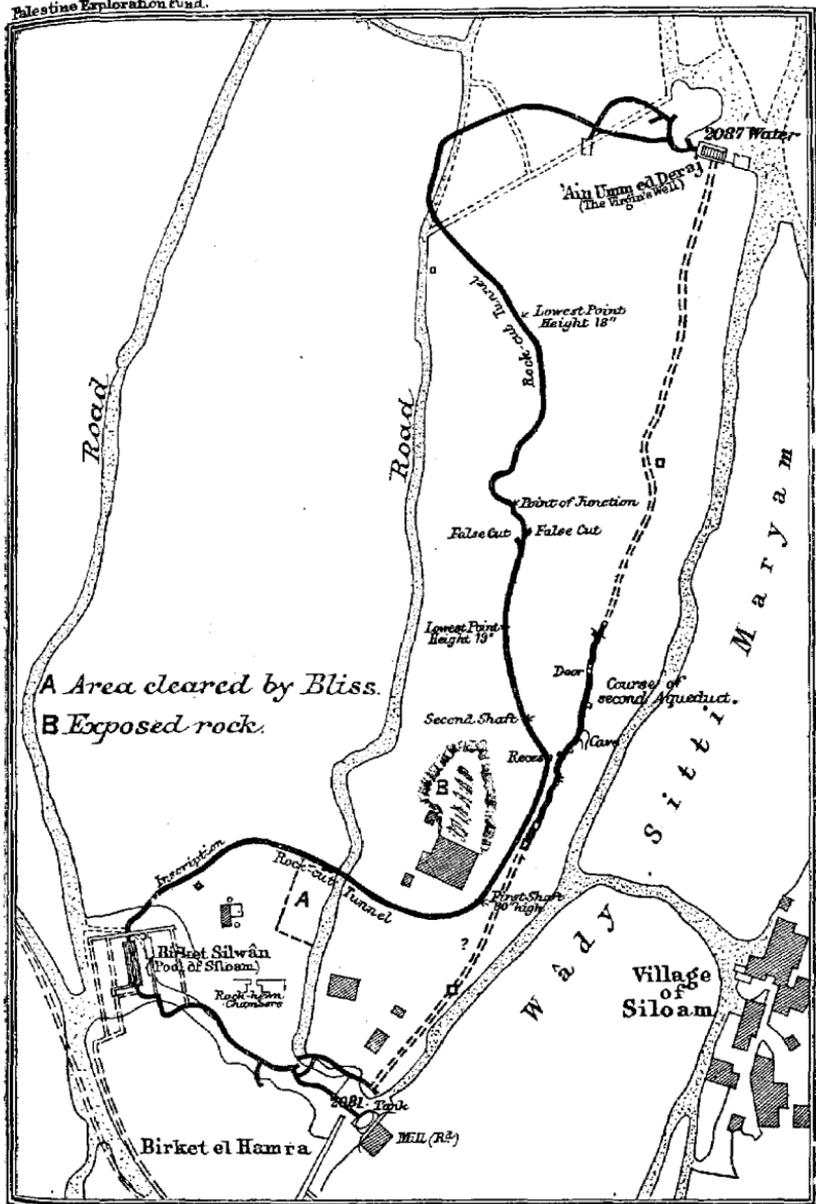
The chief problem of Hebrew archaeology is without a doubt the discovery still to be made of the tomb of David and the kings of Judah. This question, so many times mooted without result, has been once more raised by a passage in the last report of Dr. Bliss, published in the *Quarterly Statement* of the Palestine Exploration Fund (July, p. 180). In this we read:—

"It has been suggested that the apparently unnecessary curve in the Siloam Tunnel before it enters the pool was made in order to avoid the tomb of the Kings. Accordingly we have made a large clearance to the Rock of Ophel in a field to the east of the pool, *south of this curve* Our hope was to find a *pit* entrance to the tombs, but the clearance has been completed this morning, and no such discovery has rewarded our toil."

The attempt of Dr. Bliss has led incidentally to the discovery of an interesting small cornelian seal of scarab shape, with an inscription in Israelitish Phœnician characters dating before the Exile, of which I will speak later. But it has failed completely to realise the splendid object in view—the discovery of the tomb of the Kings. The result could not have been otherwise, for reasons which I shall explain.

First, I may be allowed to remark that the suggestion, whose author Dr. Bliss does not name, is mine. I am, therefore, responsible for it; and as the event seems to have proved it to be wrong, it only gives me a greater right to examine the means adopted for verification. The theory of the close connection of the extraordinary deviation, up till then

Palestine Exploration Fund.



PLAN OF SILOAM TUNNEL.

unexplained, of the tunnel with the position of the tomb of the Kings, was expounded by me at length 10 years ago in the "Revue Critique" (October, 1887, pp. 329-343), and supported by a schematic plan, which even marked on the ground the point where, as I calculated, the royal vault ought to be concealed. As I am unable here to reproduce this plan I will content myself with an explanatory description. The place is between the southern curve of the tunnel and the intersection of the path which descends from the south-east angle of Haram to the Pool of Siloam, with the level of 2,179 in the map of the Ordnance Survey on the scale of 1 : 2,500 (towards the bend made by the path). I pointed it out more than once to members of the Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund, and I have every reason to believe that it was owing to instructions given by the Committee to Dr. Bliss that he attempted this excavation *in extremis*, unhappily at the moment when the firman granted by the Porte was expiring. It is to be regretted that I was not consulted on that occasion, for I could have furnished indications which might, perhaps, have not been useless towards achieving success and avoiding a failure of a sort calculated to discredit my theory. In fact, if my article was known either to Dr. Bliss or to those who inspired his efforts, its conclusions were misunderstood, and, consequently, it is only my bare duty as a scholar to explain things.

The digging was made *on the south*—that is, *outside the convex side*—of the curve of the tunnel, which I regarded as due to the necessity of avoiding the vault, which lay full on the straight line of the source of the Fountain of the Virgin at the Pool of Siloam. Now, on the contrary, it is, as I have expressly indicated, on the *north* of this curve—that is, *inside the concave side*—that the digging should have been, and must be in the future, made, for the curve naturally encloses and partly envelops the obstacle interposed, since it is meant to pass round it. Dr. Bliss has then, one can see, proceeded to do exactly the opposite of what he ought to have done.

I may be allowed also to claim the authorship of the idea of which Dr. Bliss speaks in passing as if it was an obvious datum, viz., that the entry of the tomb of the Kings should be a pit, by which descent was made into the royal vault. This idea, which I submitted at the time to M. Perrot, was adopted and briefly mentioned by him in his "History of Art in Antiquity" (vol. iv, p. 336); it is to be found stated at greater length with reasons in the same article of the "Revue Critique" of 1887. And this was no gratuitous conjecture of mine due to pure imagination. It rests, in fact, on the reasonable interpretation of a particular passage of Josephus ("Ant. Jud.," xvi, 7, 1), the bearing of which had not up to that time been recognised. This passage says that Herod, after having desecrated and pillaged the royal vault, constructed a monument to atone for his conduct *on the mouth of the vault* (ἐπὶ τῷ στρομίῳ). This characteristic expression *στρομίον* implies expressly, to my mind, an entry, not in the form of a door made in the rock of a vertical shape, as every one supposed, but an entry *in the form of a pit*. I need not insist on the

importance of these data, so material to guide the digger who would make an attempt on the ground in the right place; we must look here not for a vertical entry consisting of a gate more or less monumental, analogous to that of the ordinary Jewish tombs, leading to a series of mortuary chambers sunk horizontally in the mass of the hill, but the mouth of a pit, probably rectangular, relatively of very small dimensions, perhaps not more than two metres long and a metre wide, that is, large enough to pass in a sarcophagus. It is easy to understand that an opening so small is very likely to escape notice, unless great care is taken; and this is, perhaps, why the entry to the vault has defied all attempts at discovery up to our times. This pit, analogous to the mortuary pits of Phœnicia and Egypt, must descend into the vast chambers of the vault, which possesses probably several stories, and plunges, if my theory is sound, into the depth of the hill, at least down to the level of the Tunnel of Siloam.

This is the *thing* to look for and the *place* to look for it. With a few thousand francs, a new firman authorising operations, and six weeks' work, any one can satisfy himself. I present amateurs with the suggestion. Well-founded hopes of discovering the sarcophagus of David, Solomon, and their successors, with the inscriptions which must have been engraved there, will surely make the small outlay worth while.

Lastly, I will say a few words about the ancient Israelite seal so happily discovered by Dr. Bliss in the course of this last excavation. It is reproduced in the same number of the *Quarterly Statement* with various attempts to interpret it.

Like several other Israelite seals of the same archaic date which I have had occasion to study in former times,¹ this one bears two proper names in simple juxtaposition, without being preceded by the *lamed possessoris* or connected by an indication of patronymic or otherwise. The first name is easily read "Ishmael." Not so the second, which has been variously rendered: by Père Lagrange, בריח, Bariach; by Professor Sayce, first בר יח, Bar-Yahu, then פריח, Paryahu. None of these readings appears to me satisfactory. I recognise in the second letter a *duleth* in place of a *resh* (the two characters have the same form in this archaic Israelitish alphabet), and I propose to read this difficult name thus: פדיח, Pedayahu. This is an excellent Israelitish name found exactly so written in 1 Chron. xxvii, 20, and in the shortened form פדיה, Pedayah, in 2 Kings xxiii, 36; Neh. iii, 25, viii, 4, xi, 7; 1 Chron. iii, 18. It is clearly formed from the root פדה, "to deliver," and the divine title of Jehovah (Yahu): "Yahu has delivered." It is closely related to other Biblical names of the same family, פדהאל, Pedahël; פדהצור, Pedahsur, and to that which I have deciphered on a very old Phœnician seal: פדאל, Pedaël.

¹ See my "Recueil d'Archéologie Orientale," vol. ii, pp. 27 and 116. On the second seal the two names, notoriously Israelite, Abaz and Pekhai, are in juxtaposition, without being preceded by the *lamed possessoris*, as in the newly discovered seal.