

dated, ecclesiastical remains, and also a large cave adapted as a columbarium. The font is cylindrical below, quatrefoiled above, and on the lip (Fig. 3) bears in five ornamental capitals the inscription— $\Upsilon\pi\epsilon\rho\ \sigma\omicron\tau\epsilon\text{---}\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma\ \text{Ma}\theta\text{---}\acute{\epsilon}\omicron\nu\ \kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}\ \text{T}\text{---}\epsilon\omega\rho\gamma\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu.$ ¹

NOTE ON THE INSCRIBED JAR-HANDLE AND WEIGHT FOUND AT TELL ZAKARĪYA.²

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THE excavations recently undertaken by the Palestine Exploration Fund at Tell Zakariya do not yet seem to have settled the question of the site of Gath.² At least, however, they have established the fact that an important Biblical city was erected there, the identity of which has still to be determined, and they have brought to light some objects of interest, two of which are of exceptional value, by reason of the Hebrew inscriptions in Phœnician characters which are engraved upon them. I beg to offer a few words of explanation upon these two objects.

I. THE HANDLE OF THE ROYAL JAR OF HEBRON.

The enigmatic symbol accompanying the inscription is nothing but the *Egyptian scarab with four wings expanded*, seen from behind, with head on high. To be convinced of this it is sufficient to compare it with that which is engraved on the seal of Abd Hadad, which I have published

¹ See "Revue Biblique Internationale," 1896, p. 273.

² See *Quarterly Statement*, April, 1899, pp. 104 and 107.

³ This topographical problem, as is well known, has given rise to numerous hypothetical and very divergent solutions. There is one that I do not remember to have met with before and which may, perhaps, be worthy of consideration. May not Gath possibly be, quite simply, Beit Jibrin? Certainly a serious preliminary objection presents itself at once: Gath is clearly distinguished from Eleutheropolis—Beit Jibrin—by the Onomasticon. But is this a sufficient reason for rejecting the hypothesis? The contradictions and halting attempts of the authors of the Onomasticon on this point show that they did not exactly know where to locate Gath. Beit Jibrin was certainly the site of an important town; now, the equivalent of the site and name of Betogabra does not occur again in the Bible, and, on the other hand, the name of Gath disappeared early. May not the second name have replaced the first, just as, during the Greek period, it was itself replaced by Eleutheropolis? May not Gath, the home of Goliath ("the giant") subsequently have been called "the city of giants" (Betogabra). The proximity of Moreshat and Beit Jibrin and the expressive determinative added to the name of the former city—Moreshat Gath—are to be observed.

in my "Recueil d'Archéologie Orientale," vol. i, p. 167. This establishes a primary and close connection between this handle and those formerly discovered by Sir Charles Warren at Jerusalem, at the south-east angle of the Haram, which exhibit, by the side of the inscriptions, a symbol also of Egyptian origin and of an equally popular character, the winged disc with a bird's tail.¹

As to the explanation of the inscription **למלך חברן** L-M-L-K H-B-R-N, there is little doubt that we must, in this case, regard Hebron not as a man's name, but as the very name of the well-known city. This seems partly to lend force to the opinion formerly expressed by Professor Sayce (*Quarterly Statement*, 1893, p. 240) as to the interpretation of the similar stamps upon the other jar-handles just alluded to: viz., that Z-PH, in the inscription L-M-L-K Z-PH, must be the name of the city of *Ziph*, and that [SH ?]-K-H, in the inscription L-M-L-K [SH ?]-K-H (if this restoration of the last letter but one be correct) might be the name of the city of *Soko*, belonging to the same district. We should, in this case, be obliged to abandon definitely the idea of proper names of persons, compounded with the element *Molech*. As for the third inscription in the same group, I think we must not read (as has hitherto been done) L-M-L-K SH-T, nor follow Professor Sayce in looking for the name of the God *Seth* in the last element SH-T; the truth is, account has not been taken of a very important material fact, viz., that the inscription is not complete. The two last characters were certainly preceded by one or two letters which have disappeared, and of which the place may still be seen. This is clearly shown by the arrangement itself of the inscription, symmetrically divided into the four angles formed by the symbol:—

למ	לך
ש	ת
??	??

Under these circumstances, SH-T accordingly cannot be regarded as forming a complete word: it can only be the termination of a longer word, perhaps (to judge by analogy) another name of a city: *Moreshat*? ש[מר]??

As for the word M-L-K, preceded by the possessive *Lamed*, with which all these congeneric inscriptions commence, we can hardly follow Professor Sayce in seeing in it the name of the God *Molech* or *Moloch* ("to the *Molech* of this or that city"). On the other hand, if we assign to M-L-K the usual sense of "King" (*melek*), it is just as difficult to admit that there could be any question of a *King of Hebron*, a *King of Ziph*, &c. According to palæographical considerations, all these seals cannot be older than the Kings of Judah. Now, it is historically impossible to admit at such a period the existence of petty kingdoms analogous to

¹ For reasons which would be too long to state here, I am inclined to believe that this symbol is really that which the Israelites called the *Kabod*.

those into which Palestine was parcelled out at the time of Joshua's conquest. At most it could only be a question of "governors," but the title *melek*, applied to mere governors, would be too high-sounding.

Perhaps the solution of the question may be that which was suggested to one of my pupils, M. Daveluy, by the discussion to which I submitted these inscriptions in my lectures at the Collège de France. This would consist in isolating the two parts of these short inscriptions, suppressing any grammatical relation between them, and interpreting לְמֶלֶךְ "to the King," taken absolutely, and not לְמֶלֶךְ, "to the King of"; that is to say, "belonging to the King" [of Judah]. The name of the city would follow, quite independent of the word "King," and varying according to the country of the vases and indicating their origin:—

To the King.—Hebron,
 To the King.—Ziph,
 To the King.—Socho,
 &c., &c.

Following this order of ideas, we may imagine that these vases were intended to contain products—of oil, for example, of wine, or, perhaps, flour or grain—representing the tributes furnished in kind to the royal storehouses by the chief cities of the kingdom. This would adequately explain the presence at Jerusalem of those vases stamped with the names of different cities, all characterised by the general official expression: (belonging) *to the King*. From this point of view, it is well to take account of the significant material fact that the handles of Jerusalem were found at the very approaches to the royal palace. M. Daveluy has ingeniously reminded us in regard to this (*see* 1 Kings iv, 7–19, 22, 23, 27, 28) of the 12 commissaries (*nissābīm*) of Solomon, whose duty was to collect month by month in turns throughout the kingdom, the dues in kind of every class, and, in particular, the provisions necessary for the royal table. We may add 1 Chron. xvii, 25–31, referring to the reign of David, and, above all, 2 Chron. xxxii, 28, where mention is made of the royal storehouses of Hezekiah for wheat, wine, oil, &c.¹

If this was the case, we can understand that it was to the interest of the royal authority that the jars intended for this purpose should be under control to prevent all fraud in regard to the amounts to be delivered. Evidently the most practical method was to require that delivery should be made in receptacles gauged beforehand and officially stamped with the royal seal; hence the first inscription, L-M-L-K, equivalent, in short, to our formula, *His Majesty's service*. The cities being each taxed at so many jars, a second inscription indicated respec-

¹ Cp. Ezekiel xlv, 14–16: the tithe of oil due to the *nasi* in Israel by "the people of the country."

tively the name of the city to which these jars were apportioned. The stamps being impressed upon the clay before the baking, we may presume that the vessels were made in advance at the royal manufactories, the existence of which appears to be indicated by the rather obscure passage in 1 Chron. iv, 23.

As for the presence at Tell Zakariya of a handle stamped with the name of Hebron, it may be readily explained in various ways. For instance, jars from Hebron destined for the capital (or *vice versa*) might have been temporarily transported to the city represented by Tell Zakariya to be sent on to Jerusalem, together with other jars coming from different towns in the district, and deposited here as a central point. Or again, an order might have been given to Hebron to deliver at the neighbouring city a certain portion of the dues in kind, at a time when the towns of the district were being put on a war footing and supplied with victuals and munitions, by way of precaution against an invasion from the South. On this point 2 Chron. xi, 6-10, is very instructive, since it shows us Rehoboam fortifying a whole group of the cities of Judah, naming the military commanders, collecting stores of shields and javelins, and, above all, forming depôts for provisions (*otsrot maakâl*), in particular, *oil* and *wine*. It is a striking fact that amongst these cities we find three of those the names of which we read upon our jar-handles: Hebron, Ziph, Socho. Who knows whether, amongst the others enumerated in this passage, the name of the city which was built upon Tell Zakariya may not be concealed? I do not mean to say that this would render it necessary to date the handle which has been found as far back as the age of Rehoboam; the form of the letters seems to indicate a considerably later period. But the same alarms and preparations must have been repeated several times during the history of the kingdom of Judah, that is to say, whenever an invasion from the South was feared, and consequently almost as long as the kingdom of Judah lasted.

If this interpretation has any foundation, it leads us to hope that we may find in the future, in the form of handles and jars stamped by the royal authority in the name of the principal cities of Judah, a series of brief documents, which would be of the highest importance for the historical geography of the Bible. It is a new branch of Semitic epigraphy from which more than one precious result may be looked for.

2. THE WEIGHT OF TELL ZAKARIYA.

After a further and minute examination of the inscription engraved upon the weight, I think we must abandon the idea of reading K-S-PH. From a strictly palæographical point of view the reading seems to be neither K-S-PH nor N-Z-PH, but N-TŞ-PH. The same reading appears to me to be the result of a comparison with the "bead" formerly found by Mr. Clark in a tomb at 'Anâta; the inscription engraved upon it presents the most striking points of similitude to the latter, and even the

form of the object is almost the same. I had formerly thought that it might have been read K-S-PH (*Quarterly Statement*, 1893, p. 257), and it is perhaps this that decided Père Lagrange to adopt this same reading for the weight of Tell Zakariya. But in this case, also, I incline now to read N-TS-PH, and not N-TŞ-G as proposed by Professor Sayce (*Quarterly Statement*, 1893, p. 32).

Lastly, it is the same word which is found again, according to all appearance, upon Dr. Chaplin's weight, but in more archaic characters and more decided forms. I do not exactly know how to explain it; it reminds one remarkably of the Arabic *Nisf* ("half"),¹ a comparison which led M. Euting (certainly wrongly) to suspect the authenticity of Dr. Chaplin's weight, which has been so much discussed. Whatever may be the origin and real meaning of the word employed, which recalls the Hebrew *Khatsi* ("half") on Jewish coins, for *Khatsi sheqel* ("half shekel"), and the Biblical *beqa'* (same meaning), it certainly seems to designate a specific noun of weight. It is this that tends to show the agreement of these three little congeneric objects.

For these three weights, so closely related from the epigraphical point of view, are equally so from the metrological. In fact, the weight of Tell Zakariya weighs *about* 154 grains; now, Mr. Clark's "bead" weighs, *in its present state*, 134 grains; but, as I have already remarked (*Quarterly Statement*, *l.c.*), it has been at a later period converted into an amulet, and *pierced* so as to be worn in a necklace, and the loss of matter sustained in consequence of this operation must be taken into account. The estimate of this loss, which I desired to know, has been made, and has been fixed, in a note by the Editor, at 22 grains, which would bring the original integral weight to 156 grains. These two weights, that of Tell Zakariya and that of Mr. Clark, are thus practically equal, the difference being only two grains, and even this difference may be due to a slight error in the estimate of the loss sustained by the second. Now, each is qualified by N-TŞ-PH. On the other hand, Dr. Chaplin's weight weighs 39·2 grains, and, according to the inscription carved upon it,² it is a *quarter* of N-TŞ-PH. The other part of the inscription is in a bad state of preservation and obscure, but I do not think we ought to read it, as has been proposed, רבע של רבע נצג, "quarter of a quarter (*viz.*, one-sixteenth) of N." This would be a very unusual and clumsy mode of expression, not to mention the improbability of the existence of the particle של at so remote a period. Possibly this other portion is grammatically independent of the first and simply רבע שקל (רבע של שקל), "quarter of a shekel," which would imply the metrological identity of shekel and N-TS-PH.

¹ The etymology of the Arabic root, N-S-F, is obscure, but it may well be a very ancient root, although isolated in the Semitic family: *cp.* *nasif*, the specific name of a certain measure of capacity.

² רבע נצג "quarter of N-TS-PH."

Now, $39\cdot2$ grains $\times 4 = 156\cdot8$ grains, a figure very little removed from those of the two entire N-TS-PH, that of Tell Zakariya and that of Mr. Clark, especially if we admit that they have not reached us in an absolutely perfect state.

With reference to the inscriptions on the jar-handles, Professor H. V. Hilprecht, writing in the "Sunday School Times" of Philadelphia, May 27th, 1899, remarks:—"I do not think that Dr. Bliss has determined the age of this object and the meaning of its inscription correctly. It is entirely impossible to assign this jar-handle to the period commencing with the Hebrew conquest and ending with the establishment of the kingdom of Saul. Paleographical reasons forbid it. A careful comparison of this jar-handle with those excavated by Sir Charles Warren in 1869 (compare Pilcher's articles in the 'Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology,' and my own note in the 'Sunday School Times,' January 28th, 1899), and the characteristic forms of the Hebrew letters 'm' and 'k,' force us to the conclusion that this object belongs to the period 300 to 1 B.C., and therefore is considerably later than is assumed by Dr. Bliss. The inscription is not to be translated 'Belonging to the King of Hebron,' or 'Belonging to King Hebron,' but 'To the King—Hebron'; that is, 'Hebron has devoted it to the king,' or 'made it for the king.' The verb is to be supplemented as very commonly in Semitic votive inscriptions, letters, despatches, and similar texts. Hebron is known from 1 Chron. ii, 42, *et seq.*, and vi, 2, as a personal proper name. Hebron in our inscription is probably the name of the potter who made the jar."
