

THE HISTORY AND SITE OF GEZER.

By R. A. STEWART MACALISTER, M.A., F.S.A.

It may be advantageous to supply a brief abstract of the history of Gezer, as at present known, and a short description of the site as it now exists; this will clear the way for references to historical events or surface indications which it may be necessary to make in future reports. For the historical portion of this communication I rely almost entirely on the work of Professor Clermont-Ganneau, who has studied the subject exhaustively in his *Recueil d'Archéologie Orientale*, I, pp. 351-391, and again in his *Archæological Researches in Palestine*, II, chap. v, pp. 224-275.¹ To these works reference should be made to fill in the outlines of the following conspectus.

I. *Gezer before the Israelite Occupation.*—Our sole authority for the history of this misty epoch, in which Gezer first makes its appearance, is, at present, the Tell el-Amarna correspondence. Three letters in this series of documents were written from Gezer itself, in the name of Yapahi, the Governor. These are to the effect that Gezer is hard pressed by the Ḥabiri; that Yapahi's brother has rebelled and joined the Ḥabiri, and seized the town of Mu**hazi; that the people called Suti are terrifying the inhabitants; let the king send a favourable answer and assistance.² In other letters, not apparently written from the town itself, reference is made to events connected with it. The bandit Lapaya excuses himself to the king for having entered the city, and deprecates the evil reports sent to the king concerning him.³ Two obscure writers, Arzaya and Addu-daijan-(šapat?), refer to Gezer, but on tablets so fragmentary that the context cannot be recovered.⁴ And Abd-ḥiba, of Jerusalem, complains to the king, in formulæ similar to those used by Yapahi,

¹ See also the *Recueil*, III, pp. 116-126 (epigraphical remains), 264-268 (Gezer and environs). Also *Quarterly Statement*, 1899, pp. 118-127; *Revue Biblique*, July, 1899, pp. 422-427.

² Winckler, *Keilinsch. Bibliothek*, V, Nos. 204-206. Knudtzon, *Beit. z. Assyr.*, IV, 113, reads Mu-uḥ-ḥa-zi.

³ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 177-239. The second of these seems to relate the destruction or injury of the town by Bifia, son of Gulati, whoever he may have been.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 180, 183.

accusing the Gezerites and others of disloyalty. "The neighbourhood of Gezer, of Askalon, and of Lachish, have given them (the rebels) food, oil, and every necessary." "Milki-il and Šuardata have bargained with the men of Gezer, of Gimti, and of Kilti, and have taken the surroundings of Rubuti. The king's land is lost to the Ḥabiri, and a town named Bit Ninib, near Jerusalem, is lost to the men of Kilti." The king is accordingly entreated for assistance.

II. *Gezer during the Israelite Immigration.*—A successor of Yapahi named הָרָם (Horam) in the Hebrew, Ἀλαμ or Ελαμ in the Septuagint version of Joshua,¹ came to the help of Lachish against Joshua, but was defeated and slain (Joshua x, 33). His Canaanite subjects were not driven out, but were reduced to servitude (xvi, 10). On the partition of the country, Gezer formed a link in the chain of towns along the south border of the territory of Ephraim (xvi, 3), but was assigned as a Levitical city to the sept of Kohath (xxi, 21).

III. *Gezer under David.*—In David's time it would appear that Gezer was in Philistine hands. That mysterious people, defeated by David in the Valley of Rephaim, near Jerusalem, were pursued "from Geba until thou come to Gezer" (2 Samuel v, 25); the latter being the terminus of the chase, presumably because it was within Philistine territory. An obscure story, describing the slaughter of certain Philistine giants, also refers, in one of its versions (1 Chronicles xx, 4), to Gezer—that being the scene of the slaying of Sippai or Saph by Sibbecai. The other version (2 Samuel xxi, 18) locates the same incident at an unknown place—Gob; this name is regarded by M. Clermont-Ganneau, with great probability, as a copyist's error (גור for גרב).

IV. *Gezer under Solomon.*—The Pharaoh who was Solomon's father-in-law burnt Gezer, and gave the site to his daughter, Solomon's wife. Solomon restored it (1 Kings ix, 16). The circumstances surrounding this curious incident are unknown, but from the point of view of the excavator it is of capital importance. The excavations at Tell el-Hesy and Tell ej-Judeideh have already illustrated the permanence of layers of ashes; and it is to be expected that the conflagration caused by the Pharaoh will be

¹ [The true name is, therefore, uncertain. The LXX gives the same forms for the equally obscure Hoham, King of Hebron, mentioned in the same chapter (v. 3).—ED.]

found to have left its mark in the stratification of the *débris*. This evidently would give a valuable date-level. It remains to be determined—and the excavation may enable us to determine—who this “Pharaoh” was, and whether he was actually an Egyptian king, or (as has recently been suggested) a ruler of the North Arabian land of *Musri* or *Musur*, the existence of which has been indicated by the Cuneiform tablets, and whose name could be easily confused with מצרים *Misraim*, the Hebrew name for Egypt. Apparently there had been a previous Egyptian conquest of Gezer, referred to on the great stele of Meren-Ptah, in the words *mlw m K'Er*, “Gezer, too, is taken.”¹

V. *Gezer in the Maccabean Period*.—During the later Jewish monarchy history is silent respecting Gezer; but (as *Gazara*) it reappears several times in the narrative of the wars between the Jews and the Seleucids. Thus we hear of it as being once more the terminus of the chase of a conquered enemy; Judas pursued Gorgias to “Gazara, and unto the plains of Idumaea, and Azotus, and Jamnia” (1 Macc. iv, 15). Again, Bacchides, after his defeat by Jonathan, fortified and provisioned Gazara among the other works he carried out “to vex the Jews” (ix, 52). This shows that the town, at the time, was out of Jewish hands: of its siege, capture, and purification we read a few chapters later (xiii, 43–48), though in the text “Gazara” has been corrupted to “Gaza.” (The English Revised Version has adopted the correction.) It would appear, however, from a letter of the Roman Senate to Hyrcanus,² that soon afterwards it had again passed out of Jewish possession and was under Antiochus.

VI. *Gezer in the Crusaders' and Arab Period*.—As yet the boundary inscriptions, giving us the name of (probably) a governor, Alkios, alone bridge the gap between the Hasmoneans and the Crusaders. “Mont Gisart” is of importance in the history of the Latin kingdom. A family took its name from the locality, and a castle was erected on the site. Here, too, a battle took place in 1177, in which Baldwin IV gained a great victory over Saladin. Saladin was again encamped here, in 1191, and conducted futile negotiations with Richard Cœur-de-Lion. After

¹ It appears also in the list of Palestinian cities subjugated by Thuthmosis III (*i.e.*, probably about the commencement of the fifteenth century).

² Josephus, *Ant. Jud.*, XIII, ix, 2.

the departure of the Crusaders, the place once more assumes a little importance in connexion with an encounter between the Governor of Jerusalem and a predatory tribe of Bedawin. This was in 1495.

While it is unprofitable to indulge in vague speculations upon what may or may not await the explorer of this mound, it is hardly possible to avoid reflecting that, as three letters of the Palestine side of the Tell el-Amarna correspondence come from Gezer, it is only reasonable to expect one or two letters of the Egyptian side of the correspondence within the site; and that traces of the early Levitical occupation; of the Philistines; of the destruction and restoration of the city under Solomon; of its fortification by Bacchides; and of its tenure by the Crusaders, should not be sought in vain. Besides these landmarks of local history, upon which light ought to be thrown, we have wider problems before us, to the solution of which the projected excavations should help us. In a brief paper, read at the General Meeting of the Fund (16th July, 1901), I have already indicated some of these: the disposal of the dead by the pre-Israelite tribes; the nature and extent of Mykenæan and Egyptian influence on Palestinian culture; the period of the introduction of iron; and the ethnological affinities of the Philistines and other coast-dwellers.

The identification of the mound beside the modern village of Abu Shûsheh with the ancient Gezer was put forward some thirty years ago by M. Clermont-Ganneau, and confirmed by the brilliant discovery of the boundary inscriptions set by Alkios—the circle of which will, it is hoped, be completed during the two years' occupation of the site to which the Palestine Exploration Fund is looking forward. We thus have epigraphic evidence of the correctness of this identification, such as is to be found in the case of no other ancient site in Palestine. The name of the mound appears on the map as *Tell Jezar*; but in speaking of it the people always refer to it as *Tell ej-Jezari*—with the definite article inserted and a vowel at the end.

The mound is in length about 1,700 feet, and in breadth, at the narrowest part, about 300¹; the long axis lies north of west by south of east. It is the largest *tell*, when the available

¹ These measurements are, of course, merely preliminary. Proper measurements and plans will be made as soon as the work commences.

surface is taken into account, that has yet been attacked by the Palestine Exploration Fund: for though Tell eš-Šâfi was considerably larger, its encumbered surface made it impossible to examine more than a very small portion of the *débris*. The western end of the present mound is occupied, first by a small mulberry plantation, then by the house and farmyard erected by the late Mr. Bergheim, and then by the village cemetery, and a small half-ruined wely or shrine of the local saint. I do not think, however, that more than one-tenth of the site is thus covered, and the remainder is quite open. Moreover, there is little or no *débris* under the house and farmyard: the rock crops out to the surface round about them, so that even were this end of the mound free we should not require to excavate there.

The depth of *débris* seems rather less than in other mounds that have been examined. So far as it is possible to judge, it does not appear to be more than 15 to 18 feet. But so much depends on the configuration of the concealed rock-surface that appearances are apt to be deceptive. The outline of the upper surface rises at each end of the mound to a hillock, with a saddle between crossing the middle. The occurrence of thick walls, just cropping out from the surface, in the eastern half, shows that the eastern hillock is composed of the *débris* of a large fortress or acropolis, like that discovered at Tell Zakariya. On the south side of the saddle the city wall is plainly traceable. At the eastern side of the western hillock are two stones, standing with their heads above ground, exactly resembling the three bætylic columns that were found in the "High Place" at Tell eš-Šâfi, and probably part of a similar structure.

Under the mulberry plantation were found many cut and dressed stones which were adapted for use when Mr. Bergheim's house was erected. I suspect that these are remains of the Crusaders' fortress. This mulberry plantation, situated at the west end of the mound, and commanding a wide view of the plain as far as the sea, is the most likely place for such a structure. It must be confessed, however, that a careful examination of the walls of the house and farmyard failed to reveal any stones with the characteristic masonry dressing of the Crusaders.

The pottery strewn over the surface of the mound is nearly all ancient, *i.e.*, belonging to the pre-Israelite period. This is curious when we consider the importance of the site in later times. There

were, however, one or two Rhodian jar-handles with stamps impressed upon them. Except a carnelian bead, nothing else calling for special remark has been found by me on the surface of the ground.

A curious system of aqueducts and waterworks seems to radiate from the copious springs round the *tell* which still call for examination: these appear to be of the Roman period, or later. And, in conclusion, I may remark that the fever for tomb-robbing which has recently spread over Palestine does not yet seem to have reached the immediate neighbourhood of Abu Shûsheh, so there is reason to hope that *one* cemetery may yet be rescued from the clutches of the syndicate of fellahin, pedlars, and tourists who are rapidly making Palestine archæologically a desert.

REPORTS BY R. A. STEWART MACALISTER, M.A., F.S.A.

I.—BIÂR ES-SEB'Â.

IN company with my friends, Dr. Paterson, of Hebron, and Messrs. Bergheim and Peters, of Jerusalem, I visited Biâr es Seb'a¹ (Beersheba) last April, and submit the following report on observations made at the time. This place, till recently deserted except by Bedawîn, is being "developed"; a large Government house and a Khân have been built, and barracks, shops, and houses are being rapidly erected. The population is said to number about 300 at present.

The materials for these new buildings are nearly all being taken from the ruins of a Byzantine town lying E.N.E. of the new site, and about a quarter to half a mile distant from it. Men are busily engaged in mining stones from the ancient foundations and in carrying them to the new sites, where they are being re-faced and built into the new houses.

If any antiquities are being found they are carefully concealed; the only object shown to any of our party was a defaced Byzantine

¹ I prefer to use the modern name, as the remains show that the biblical Beersheba cannot have been on this site—they are not old enough. Possibly the ancient town was at Tell es-Seb'a, about 2½ miles to the east.