

patience" (possibly a child born after long waiting or prolonged labour); 'Awazah, "Need"; Fattaḥ, "Opening victory"; Ġamhūr, "Multitude," but very probably from a place near Damascus; Faraġ, "Relieved from trouble"; Fariwah, "A happy child"; Marḥabah, "Welcome"; Nāḡri, "My helper"; Naḡr, "Guarded victory"; Sasson (Heb.), "Happiness"; Hephaz (Heb.), "Guarded"; Cheim (Heb.), Vida (Span.); Yahyah (among Moslems equivalent to Yohannah); Aish and Aisheh, all meaning life or living.

(e) Words of Endearment; Names Derived from Precious Objects.—\*Habôbeh "Beloved"; Habîb (mas.), "Beloved"; Rafîk, "Partner"; \*Azîzah, "Beloved, dear"; \*Ghâliyah, "Expensive, precious"; Fahri, "My pride"; \*Faridah, "Unequaled"; Nûry, "My light" (or more probably gipsy); \*Lâlû, "Pearl"; \*Mircady from Mircado (Span.), meaning "Bought" (*i.e.*, a child bought by prayer); Amado (Span.), "Beloved"; \*Diddîya (Heb.), "Darling."

(f) Names Expressive of Displeasure at the Child's Birth.—\*Ḥasîbah, "Sufficient"; \*Ḥâlûna, "Our emptiness"; Shaba', "Enough" (enough children); Kusur, "Broken fracture"; \*Makto', "Cut off, forsaken"; \*Mazal (Span.), "Chance" (probably referring to the bad luck of getting a girl).

(g) Names Expressive of Relationship.—\*Imm Zakkai, "Mother of Zaki" (a family name); Ba'li, "My husband"; "Giddi, "Grandfather"; Yabo, Ya Abu (lit.), "Oh! father" (the man we know with this name was so called because he habitually uses it in addressing people).

It is noteworthy that comparatively few of the names in the above list are genuinely Hebrew, most of them being Asiatic, Spanish, or whatever the modern tongue of the bearer may be. We could easily add many names from other sources to each of the sections into which the above lists have been classified. We thought it better, however, to confine ourselves to a complete analysis of the sources at our disposal, as these were sufficiently extensive to illustrate all the common types, and the relative frequency of the several classes.

## THE BIRTHPLACE OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

By the late Dr. CONRAD SCHICK.

SINCE Robinson's work on Palestine, the traditions relating to sites have received comparatively little attention at the hands of scholars, who have too often considered them to be merely the sayings of later monks. From time to time, when studying a locality in the light of its history carefully and minutely, I have, however, often

reached the conclusion that the traditions are, after all, often entirely correct. This was the case whilst investigating the old question of the birthplace of St. John the Baptist, and I beg, accordingly, to present my evidence in the following pages.

## I.

For about 180 years Juttah, a village a few hours south of Hebron, has been considered to be the native town of John the Baptist, whereas tradition has placed it at 'Ain Kârim, a village one and a half hours west of Jerusalem, where there is a Convent St. John and a remarkable ruin called Mar Zacharias. Which is the true site ?

Zacharias, the father of John, was a priest of the order of Abijah (Luke i, 5). In the Temple of Jerusalem the birth of a son was announced to him, and the child was born in the priest's home. In what place was his home ?

Now, in Luke i, 39, it is said: "And Mary arose in these days, and went into the hill country with haste into a city of Judah, and entered into the house of Zacharias and saluted Elizabeth." Reland, the pioneer of the modern geography of the Holy Land, put forward as his opinion (about 180 years ago) that Juttah might be the city of Judah, regarding it as a proper name.<sup>1</sup> Juttah is mentioned in Joshua xv, 55, as a city of the tribe of Judah, but afterwards allotted to the priests (Joshua xxi, 13-16). The conjecture of Reland was adopted by many others. Even Robinson, the hero of later geographical study, says, in his *Palestine* (iii, p. 193), that there is no ground to doubt the soundness of Reland's opinion; and his authority was followed by nearly all subsequent writers, who rejected the tradition which locates the home of Zacharias at 'Ain Kârim. But this view is untenable for several reasons:—

1. The name does not fully agree. The dentals in Juttah and Judah could scarcely be confused. Nor can we suppose that the hard *t* became softened to *d* in course of time, since the *t* in the form is still preserved. V. Stark (*Palestine and Syria*, Berlin, 1894, p. 96) says: "One cannot imagine that the copyists (or the Evangelist) wrote a T instead of Δ.

2. After the Captivity of the Jews, Juttah was no longer a priestly city, but Idumæan. A large proportion of the Israelites

<sup>1</sup> Blaikie, *Bible History*, p. 354 (London, 1873).

was brought by Nebuchadnezzar into Chaldea (2 Chron. xxxvi, 17-21), and the bulk of the people went with Jeremiah to Egypt (Jer. xliii, 1-8), and the country became empty and nearly void of inhabitants, as Isaiah had predicted (xxiv, 1-4). After the Captivity, we learn that the returned Jews settled not only in Jerusalem, but also in their former cities (as far as they were not already inhabited by Idumæans). From Neh. xi, 20, and vii, 73 it is clear that they reoccupied not only Jerusalem, but also the country places. In Neh. ii, 30 we read: "They dwelt from Beersheba unto the valley of Hinnom." Juttah is located within this district, and it might be thought that it was re peopled by priests again; but this was not the case, for among all the cities in which the Jews settled Juttah is not mentioned. Those priests who were not able to settle in their former cities had to find other places, and doubtless selected sites nearer to Jerusalem, where there were no Idumæans. They would naturally prefer to live amongst their own people than with strangers, and so the ancestors of Zacharias might very well have settled in 'Ain Kârim with the consent of the leaders in Jerusalem.

3. That the greater part of the priests were settled near Jerusalem we perceive from Neh. xii, 27, where it is said, "And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness." The priests were near at hand, and so perhaps the ancestors of Zacharias dwelt in 'Ain Kârim, certainly not in Juttah. But the question may be asked, why not at some other city—for instance, at Hebron?

4. Now Jerusalem is called, in 2 Chron. 25, 28, "City of Judah," and so it has even been supposed that Mary saluted Elizabeth in *Jerusalem*. But this cannot be, for here it is only said that Amaziah was buried in that part of Jerusalem situated in the territory of Judah. Priests had certainly not lived near tombs. Further, as Bethlehem so often bears the additional name Judah (Ruth i, 1, 2, Judges xvii, 7, 9, xix, 1, 2, and 1 Samuel xvii, 12), so Bethlehem might be meant. But Bethlehem was not a city of priests, and hence cannot be considered. Others, again, have thought of Hebron, which had been originally a priestly city, and remained so after the Captivity. So Sepp, who, however, has no valid reasons to support his view. His references to Rabbinical views are weak, and it is noteworthy that although there are to-day many

ancient sites in Hebron itself, none are called after St. John, or Zacharias, or Elizabeth.

5. When the Jews had become more powerful, Hyrcanus conquered the whole land of Idumæa, and forced them either to be circumcised or to leave the country. But where could they go? So they yielded to become outwardly Jews, but inwardly they were their enemies! The Roman governor Gobinus confirmed Hyrcanus in his rule, and the country became divided in five parts, each with a high court. But Idumæa was ruled separately, and Herod (the Great), by birth half an Idumæan, when king of the Jews, made his brother-in-law, Kostobarus, a real Idumæan, ruler of the whole of Idumæa, including Gaza. As the Idumæans hated the Jews, Jewish priests would scarcely find a tolerable life in Idumæa, and one may conclude that Hebron would be the last place for Jewish priests to reside in, much less Juttah, and so Zacharias, not only a priest, but a pious Jew, like his wife, would probably live nearer to Jerusalem.

6. So important a place as the home of St. John the Baptist and his pious parents, the scene of those solemn psalms<sup>1</sup> of the New Testament, would always have been esteemed and kept in memory by tradition. Surely, we may suppose, something—a place of prayer, a church, &c.—was erected by Jews or by Christians to mark the site with which the Saint's name would always be associated. But we find no tradition either in Hebron or in Juttah, but only at 'Ain Kârim. Robinson describes Juttah as a large modern Mohammedan village on a low eminence, with trees round about, but he mentions no mosque, church, ruin, &c. Indeed, neither the present condition of Juttah nor tradition (before Reland), nor even the name nor its history bears witness to its having been the birthplace of John the Baptist, and in these circumstances it remains to consider the arguments in favour of locating it at 'Ain Kârim.

## II.

According to tradition 'Ain Kârim, a village one and a-half hours' walk west of Jerusalem, was the home of Zacharias and Elizabeth. It is fully described in the *Memoirs*, and I would only add the following remarks:—

<sup>1</sup> Luke, i, 46-55, and i, 68-79.

1. 'Ain Kârim is an ancient site, and takes its name from the many vineyards in the neighbourhood. It is not mentioned in our Bibles among the cities conquered by Joshua (Josh. xv, 21-63), but it appears in the Septuagint with eight other cities—all of them in this district. It was allotted to the tribe of Judah, and as Ain appears as a city of Judah allotted afterwards to the priests, Liévin de Hamme (*Guide to the Holy Places*, Ghent, 1875, p. 252) regards 'Ain Kârim as the ancient Ain, a sacerdotal village of the tribe of Judah (Josh. xv, 32; xxi, 9-16). But this 'Ain was apparently situated in the south of the country, and is always connected with Rimmon, so that this supposition cannot be correct. What we know is that after the Captivity and the Return of the Jews from Babylon the children of Hârîm are mentioned in Nehemiah vii, 35, and the question arises: May this refer to Kârim? Personally I doubt it. We may feel sure that 'Ain Kârim became repopulated by Jews and probably by priests, as they were obliged to look for new places on account of the Idumæans. There was a natural preference for Jewish territory near to Jerusalem, where there were no Edomites.

2. There is near to the present village 'Ain Kârim a church and convent, dating back before Crusading times, and about 10 minutes distance on the hillside beyond the ravine and its copious spring is a remarkable ruin, bearing the name *Mar Zacharias*, the country house of this priest, as tradition tells us, where Mary saluted Elizabeth, and where the latter hid herself with her son from the soldiers of Herod when they were sent to kill the children. Having, therefore, two clues I am of opinion that the tradition is correct, for if at any later time the site was created on the strength of later theories, only *one* place would have been established as the "house of Zacharias" mentioned by the Gospel,<sup>1</sup> and not two places. Sepp calls it a "riddle." This riddle existed already in Crusading times. The Abbot Daniel (1106 A.D.) speaks of two different places, and all subsequent pilgrims follow him. Concerning the ruin of *Mar Zacharias*, Tobler (*Topog.* 1862, II, p. 355) remarks that the view of this remarkable ruin causes in the mind of the Christian painful feelings. The place, he says, is surrounded by a wall, and the chief building was 24 metres long and 15 wide; the walls are very thick, and some vaultings and arches are very strong, so that they might have stood more than 1,500 years.

<sup>1</sup> Luke, i, 40.

According to Tobler they were built between Constantine and Chosroes II. The place is now cleared of débris, the lower church has been restored, and a bell tower and a convent built over it. As with so many churches in this country the building of this also was ascribed to Helena. In 'Ain Kârim we have, therefore, old remains just as one is led to expect, and in addition to this the names of St. John and Zacharias, together with the tradition, have been carefully preserved.

3. But in regard to the *name* it has been contended that there were other places bearing the name of Zacharias, so that one is entitled to ask which of them is really the authentic site. As far as I know there is one near the plain,<sup>1</sup> and another near the old Hebron road, three hours south of 'Ain Kârim, but not a house remains. It is a ruined and desolated city on the top of a hill, and is called Bêt Iskaria, which may mean House of Zacharias; it is mentioned in 1 Macc. vi, 32. I have visited the place and found no feature or name which one would expect to find had it really been the true site of John the Baptist's home. In this country it often happens that several villages bear the same name.

4. From Luke i, 39, we learn that the house of Zacharias was in the "hill country," hence some special district is meant. In Jer. xxxi, 15 and Matt. ii, 18 this hill country is mentioned under the name *Ramah*, "height," and means the neighbourhood of Bethlehem. Josephus in *Bell. Jud.* iii, 3, tells us that in his time the land of Judea was divided into 11 toparchies, Idumæa included, and gives us their names. Pliny, a few years later, gives 10 toparchies, but without Idumæa. Comparing the two lists we find that the latter gives *Orine*, for which Josephus has Engedi, but Engedi being an isolated place on the shore of the Dead Sea, could never have been a toparchy, and must have been included in Herodion. It seems to me, therefore, that Josephus, knowing that Engedi had celebrated vineyards and an 'Ain, or spring, and 'Ain Kârim, meaning the "vineyard spring," made some error, and wrote down 'Ain-gedi (Engedi) instead of 'Ain Kârim. To this view I was brought when reading the pilgrimage of the Russian Abbot Daniel (A.D. 1106), where he says that it is four versts from the monastery (the Convent of the Cross) to the house of Zacharias, which is situated at the foot of a mountain west of Jerusalem; in this house John the forerunner was born. He states that a church

<sup>1</sup> See *Memoir*, p. 27 (24).

now occupies this place, and half a verst thence, on the other side of a valley full of trees, is the mountain towards which Elizabeth ran with her son, and the mountain opened for an asylum. The place of this event was to be seen in the rock in his day. A small church is built there, and a spring of flowing water opens out hard by. The mountain lies west of Jerusalem, high, and covered with forests, and surrounded by numerous valleys, and its name, he observes, is called *Orine*, i.e., "hill country." From this we may see that this part of the environs of Jerusalem was always, and at all times, called the "hill country." We see, further, that after the destruction of Jerusalem, 'Ain Kârim was the chief place of this district, or the *Orine* toparchy, and was then, most probably, a priestly city. Even the Crusaders kept up the custom, and called this district the "hill country," viz., *Montana*. Baldwin gave the village of Bethafafa, about three-quarters of an hour south-west of Jerusalem, to the Knights of St. John. This village was situated in *Montana*, the ancient *Orine*. This concurrence of tradition regarding St. John and the home of Zacharias places its accuracy almost beyond all doubt.

5. The tradition placing the birthplace of John the Baptist at 'Ain Kârim goes back to the early Christian time without interruption. Eusebius and Jerome are, however, silent on this matter. Sepp (I, p. 652), says that Antonine (about 600 A.D.) mentions a fine church called Zacharias in the neighbourhood of Philip's Spring. Of Abbot Daniel I have already spoken. Eugesippus (A.D. 1140) also mentions this place, and places it four miles from Jerusalem and six from Bethlehem. Theodorich (A.D. 1172), after having described the Convent of the Cross, proceeds to state: "From here one comes to the place of St. John, in the wood (or forest) where Zacharias and Elizabeth the parents of John lived." These mountains were called *Belmont*, also (as already stated) *Montana*, thus keeping up the old idea throughout. From Brocardus in 1280 to Maundeville in 1697 the place is mentioned by several writers. Even the modern Russian name appears to me to preserve the ancient designation *Orine*.

6. The desert of St. John. About half an hour west of 'Ain Kârim, on the southern side of the large valley Surâr, opposite the village Şâtâf, is a cave in a rocky cliff, partly artificial, and below it a little spring called Habis. In the *Name Lists* (p. 295) it is explained *Habs*, "prison," or (and this is better) "religious

endowment" (*i.e.*, cell). Tradition makes it to be the place where John was living, meditating, and preaching in the desert. Above the cliff are the ruins of some buildings and of a little church. This indicates that the tradition is an old one. But people rightly ask, How can this be the wilderness in which St. John preached and baptised, as the site is no wilderness, but a very green and well-cultivated place? Sepp, for example, even calls the building a temple, and cannot imagine that pious Christians would so put aside all common sense as to locate the wilderness of the preacher here. But in Luke i, 80 we read: "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel." Here it is only said that as John grew up he did not mix with people, but preferred to be in solitude, studying and meditating, till he took up his call. It is, therefore, by no means improbable that he came here, living for days in the wood and in the cave. In the Bible the word "desert" does not always mean a wilderness in the full sense of the word. Thus, according to Matt. xiv, 13, 15, Mark vi, 31-36, Luke ix, 10-12, Christ fed the five thousand in a desert not far from Bethsaida; but, as John (vi, 10) says, there was much grass there.

7. In early days men filled with the spirit of reverence went for longer or shorter periods into a wilderness. Josephus says in his biography (ii, 1) that he being a son of a priest (like John) had a great desire for learning, and studied the three sects of the Jews (Pharisees, Saducees, and Essenes). Having heard of an eminent man living in the wilderness, clothed with a coat made of the bark of trees, and eating plants growing in the desert, and bathing in cold water, he went to him as his pupil, in order to study at his feet. So he was with him three years, and at the age of nineteen he went back to Jerusalem. It is not impossible that many men followed the example of John and Josephus from time to time. We do not know John's age when he went into the wilderness, but we may with good reason suggest he was over twenty. He went, apparently, to the wilderness of Judah (Joshua xv, 61, Judges i, 16), the western steep descent to the Dead Sea, with its numerous rocky and dry gorges and valleys. Those who advocate the view that Juttah was his birthplace think of that part of the wilderness east of Juttah; but as John was not only preaching, but also baptising, and hence was called "John the Baptist," he must have selected a part of the wilderness where there was water. Such a place is only



found in the Wâdy el-Kelt, possibly ancient Cherith, where also Elijah (the forerunner of John) lived for a time. Even when Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, tradition locates it in the same region. How long John stayed here we do not know, but it may have been several years. The reason that he left this place, it can only be suggested, was either that the brook became dry, or that the rulers in Jerusalem, whom he had pronounced to be a "generation of vipers," were about to take measures to stop his preaching. He went then to the other side of the Jordan, which was not under the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin, but under King Herod Archelaus, who "liked him and heard him gladly" (Mark vi, 20). At Bethabara (John i, 28), or at the ford of the Jordan, very many people passed there, so he could proclaim his message to many.

8. *Résumé* and conclusion. From the above paragraphs it will, I think, be clear that neither Jerusalem, nor Bethlehem, nor Hebron can be the city of Judah in which John the Baptist was born; moreover it cannot be Juttah, since neither its name nor its history lend any support. On the other hand, in 'Ain Kârim we have the support of the name, the tradition, the history, and the locality, viz., in the mountain or hill country. Hence in these circumstances there can be little question that the required site can only be 'Ain Kârim.

---

## NOTES ON BIBLE GEOGRAPHY.

By Colonel C. R. CONDER, R.E., D.C.L., LL.D.

(Continued from "Quarterly Statement," 1904, p. 388.)

### II.—ZARETAN.

THIS site, which seems to have given great difficulty to the later Hebrews and to the Greek translators, is important in connection with the question of the stoppage of the Jordan on the occasion of the first entry of the Hebrews, under Joshua, into Western Palestine. It is generally allowed that the passage must have occurred on the line between Shittim (*Ghôr es Seisabân*), and Gilgal (*Jiljâlieh*), opposite Jericho, and thus near the present ford called *Makhadet Hajlah*, from the town Beth Hoglah (near 'Ain *Hajlah*), or otherwise *El Mishr'ah* (or *El Mashr'ah*), which appears to mean