

TWENTIETH QUARTERLY REPORT ON THE
EXCAVATION OF GEZER.

Seventh of the Second Series.

11 August—10 November, 1908.

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As I promised in the previous report, I have been able to join the two pits, that of the Central Valley and that of the Eastern Hill, at their northern ends during the past quarter. Had it not been for the delay caused by the clearance of an enormous cistern, which not only occupied time in itself, but hindered the work by making it necessary to carry waste earth to an inconvenient distance, a little more might have been done. Although this quarter has not been so successful as some others, antiquities continue to be found in unabated quantities—but they are for the greater part duplicates of what has already been sufficiently described, either in previous reports from Gezer, or in the accounts of other Palestinian excavations. Very few objects of exceptional type or interest have come to light.

§ I.—ANOTHER CAVE-CEMETERY.

Just at the southern limit of one of the trenches opened this quarter a cave was found which at first sight promised a rich deposit. Owing to an accumulation of lumps of limestone about the door it was difficult to enter; but once that obstacle was past, the visitor found himself in a low chamber, about 25 feet each way, and when finally cleared of all its contents, 7 feet in height. At the left-hand (western) side was a platform of cement, on which were stretched the much decayed remains of four persons: a bronze

spear-head lay on the breast of one of them. Round about them were grouped about twenty-five pottery vessels, large jars, bowls, and jugs, all of which were quite empty—though one of the jars had a bowl or saucer placed in its mouth as though to close it. Recollection of the great cemetery cave found at the end of the first permit, with the rich stores of deposits that had been found within it, raised hopes of similar discoveries from this new tomb: but these hopes were disappointed; except the jars and the spear-head, and one vase of alabaster, no objects had been deposited with the dead. In clearing the chamber the mouth of a tunnel was found that led in a southerly direction for 17 feet, after which it was blocked by an ancient collapse of its rock-roof; a small chamber opened at the side of this tunnel, which contained nothing of interest. Further, at some later (but still early) time a cistern had been dug right through the threshold of the entrance to the main chamber (at which time we may assume with tolerable probability that any treasures deposited with the interments would have been stolen). This cistern was found to be 24 feet deep: when it was cleared out it effectually blocked access to the chamber. Indeed it is a possible alternative theory that this pit was not originally meant for a water cistern, but was a crude device for hindering the entrance of thieves.

As for the pottery deposited in the cave, it may be said that all belonged to the normal early Second Semitic types, and that there were no exceptional forms calling for illustration at present. Save as a good series of contemporary forms the deposit had no particular interest.

§ II.—A NEW FORM OF "ASTARTE-PLAQUE."

I have now accumulated a considerable collection of drawings of the various types of plaques bearing the Hathor-like Ashtoreth figures impressed upon them in low relief: and I hope that the study and classification of these types will be accepted as a not unimportant section of the forthcoming Memoir. Into such special details this is not the place to enter: but I may call attention to a peculiar type of which three copies were found during this quarter—two of them in their proper place in the Third Semitic level, and one by some odd chance in the Hellenistic. An enlarged photograph of one of these specimens is sent herewith (fig. 1); the original is $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches high.

There are several points of interest about this figure. The first is the very strongly marked and peculiar features, contrasting notably with the childishly sketched faces of the majority of the plaques. A second and very remarkable detail is the veil with embroidered border, which the artist represents as resting on the head and flowing behind the body over the shoulders; such a covering has not been previously found on plaques from Gezer.



Fig. 1.—Astarte Plaque of Peculiar Type.

Otherwise, however, the figure is, as usual, undraped, and another fragment shows that its nudity was grossly emphasized. The third feature of interest is the profusion of ornament which it bears: indeed the statuette has some value in enabling us to figure to ourselves the appearance of a great Canaanite lady when decked out in her jewellery. There are bracelets on the wrists, and, we cannot doubt, anklets on the feet (which are missing from all three

specimens). These are found in almost all the plaques. In addition, there are armlets on the upper arms, which are much less common; earrings of a well-known type, often found in the excavations (such as Plate IV, Fig. 10 in the last report); a collar of two strings of beads; a pectoral, resembling nothing so much as the stock picture of the High Priest's breast-plate in illustrated family bibles; above this, not very clearly marked in the photograph, a crescentic ornament that may be a fibula, but is more likely one of the common silver pendent crescents (such as Plate IV, Fig. 11 in the last report). The double ribbons of the wig, evidently of contrasted material, also call for observation. Fourthly, it is worth a passing notice that the artist, though he displays a skill in modelling and an instinct for anatomical precision far superior to the majority of the manufacturers of these crude images, has by a curious oversight endowed his goddess with six fingers on each hand. And fifthly, we have to note the circular object with ornamented edge which the figure is holding against its left breast. A similar detail is introduced into a goddess figure found at Tell Mutesellim, and is explained by its discoverer as a tambourine.¹ Though I am not satisfied with this interpretation I have no alternative to offer.²

§ III.—INSCRIBED TABLETS.

Probably the most important object discovered during the quarter was that of which a brief preliminary notice was inserted on p. 271 of the last *Quarterly Statement*. This was the upper fragment of a tablet of limestone $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches high, $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches across, and $\frac{5}{8}$ inch thick. The lower part is broken off by an oblique fracture and lost; the fracture passes through a square hole, apparently meant for a peg by which the stone was affixed to a wall. The reverse side of the tablet, except for one or two meaningless and perhaps accidental tool-marks, is plain, as is also the right-hand edge. The left-hand edge is covered with a fret of diagonal lines, five or six to the inch. The front bears an inscription, rudely scratched, in eight lines of old Hebrew script. As copies of the inscription have been sent to specialists, from whom an authoritative analysis of its contents may be expected, I need not trouble the reader with the speculations in which I indulged

¹ Schumacher, *Tell Mutesellim*, p. 102: compare Fig. 71 on p. 61.

² [May not the object be a mirror?—J. D. C.]

myself, rather in the endeavour to satisfy a natural personal curiosity as to its purport, than in the hope of making any permanent contribution towards its interpretation.¹

Another, but a more tantalising, inscribed tablet is represented in Fig. 2. This is in red clay, hard baked, of an irregular oval shape, from $3\frac{5}{8}$ to $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter. The inscribed surface is contained within a rudely scratched line, following the margin of the tablet, and is divided by vertical and horizontal lines into



Fig. 2.—Clay Tablet with Geometrical Pattern.

squares, each of which contains two vertical strokes.² In the middle a circular space has been marked out and smoothed by the potter with the end of his right thumb; this has been done after the chequers were marked on the tablet, for though almost effaced, they are still traceable on the smooth surface. With the first joint of the thumb the adjacent parts of the design on the right-hand side have been smudged. There are notches at each end of the major axis of the oval in the edge of the tablet, as though for receiving a cord

¹ See below, pp. 26-34.

² The long axis of the oval being assumed *horizontal*.

with which it was bound to something; but no trace or mark of a cord can be detected on either face of the tablet.

The regularity of the design precludes the theory which naturally comes first to the mind that this design—obviously not any form of *writing*—is a map of streets or of fields. It may simply be a jar-stopper, the elaborate design taking the place of a seal; it may also have a magical purpose.

Rhodian jar-handles continue to be found in considerable numbers: over three hundred different inscriptions from the stamps upon them—exclusive of duplicates, of which there are many—have already been catalogued. Beside this perennial harvest, and the Hebrew seal presently to be mentioned, the only other inscribed object found during the quarter has been a fragment of a potsherd, bearing the lower attachment of the handle, with underneath, in red paint, the letters . . . [P]OMOY, probably the end of the potter's name.

§ IV.—ANOTHER "VOTIVE ALTAR."

One more of the curious little limestone boxes which, in the last report, I tentatively called "Votive Altars" has come to light. It is shown in Fig. 3. This differs in type from the others already described, being cylindrical. It is $2\frac{7}{8}$ inches high, and 3 inches in diameter at the top: the bottom expands, with a moulding round the foot, as the drawing shows, so that it is $3\frac{1}{8}$ inches in diameter. The bottom surface is convex, but the middle of the convexity is sufficiently plane to allow the object to stand steadily. The upper surface bears a cylindrical depression $\frac{5}{8}$ inch deep, with an edge just under $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in breadth all round. The vertical side of the object is smooth, and the greater part of it is quite plain; on one side, however, is scratched one of those quaint enigmatical animal scenes that appear to be characteristic of this class of object. By the usual perversity of chance, while the plain side of the "altar" is uninjured, a fracture has carried off the middle of the side containing the figures, so that between one-third and one-half of the scene is lost. A drawing of the two extreme parts, which alone survive, is added to the figure; the missing section, in the original, is about $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the length of the surviving part of the hinder animal.

The scene represents, first, a human figure—perhaps, as the curves of the body suggest, a woman—riding upon a horse. The mouth of the rider is open, as is that of the dancers on the altar previously described (facing p. 282, *Q.S.*, Oct., 1908). The figure is not a little

suggestive of the well-known vase-painting of the Libyan horse-woman from Daphnae,¹ and possibly is an artistic descendant of some such original. The horse is not saddled, nor does it appear to be controlled by a bit: instead, a rope is bound round its nose, to which the reins are attached. This is still a common method of controlling horses in the country, and to judge from rude figurines of horses, which I hope to analyse in detail in the memoir of the excavations, it seems to have been the normal method in ancient Palestine.² There is also a headstall between the eyes and ears of

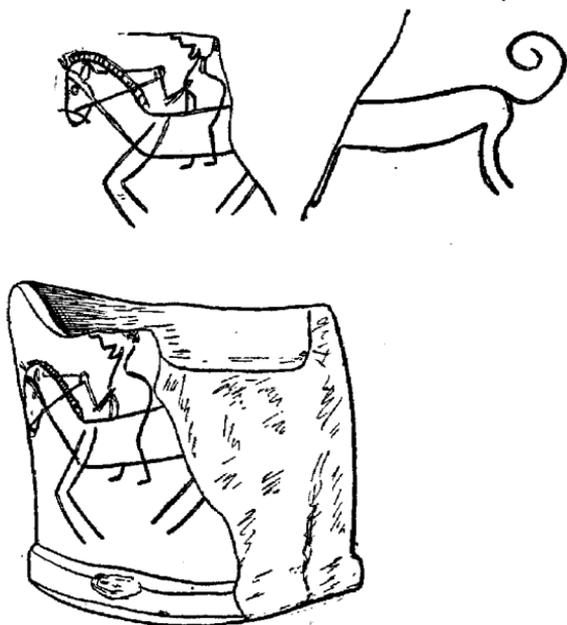


Fig. 3.—Design upon Supposed "Votive Altar."

the horse, adorned with a knot on the forehead: this was also a normal part of the horse-trappings, and was frequently ornamented with metal bosses. Among smaller points to notice in this interesting figure are the close-cropped mane of the horse, in which it contrasts notably with the flowing neck-hair of the Libyan woman's mount; and the poise of the rider's hand. The rider, we may note in passing, appears to have learned to control the horse with one hand; the Libyan prototype is holding the reins in both hands.

¹ See Ridgeway's *Origin and Influence of the Thoroughbred Horse*, p. 243.

² See Ridgeway, *op. cit.*, p. 480.

Secondly there is, behind, an animal, whose spirally curled tail is its only characteristic, but whose species can hardly be identified with certainty. Analogy with the similar scenes on the other altars suggests that this is a savage wild beast attacking the horse from the rear: there is just about room in the fracture for a restoration in which the animal's head is stretched forward and biting the hind-quarters of the horse. Of course this can only be a matter for conjecture.¹ Careful special search was made for the missing fragment all round where the object was found, but in vain.

The date and associations of this altar are the same as that of the others: in the topmost stratum, in connection with pottery of the Hellenistic period.

On the assumption that this is a votive object dedicated in some temple, it seems not inconceivable that the scene may represent an actual escape from a wild beast, in thanksgiving for which the altar was dedicated. Against this easy theory of course must be set the fact that animal figures seem to be a normal form of decoration of these objects.

The only break in the monotony of the plain side of the cylinder is a vertical row of little horizontal strokes, resembling the graduations of a foot-rule, twenty-four in number, $\frac{1}{16}$ inch long, and about $\frac{1}{32}$ inch apart. When I noticed these first I thought they might be an inscription in very fine characters, but close examination under a powerful magnifying glass quite dispelled this hope.

§ V.—INLAYS.

At all periods, one of the commonest types of objects are ivory inlays, intended for the decoration of wooden or metal objects. These are flat slips, usually rectangular, though sometimes special shapes and patterns are found. They are decorated with simple devices of incised lines and punched circles. The ordinary forms are for the present sufficiently illustrated in *Excavations in Palestine*, Plate 76, Fig. 18, though I must withdraw, unreservedly, the suggestion in the footnote to the accompanying letterpress, p. 147, with regard to their purpose.

As a rule these objects are of small artistic interest, and their complete dissociation from their ancient settings makes them rather

¹ The curl of the tail has a canine appearance and suggests that the representation may merely be that of a dog following its owner.

unsatisfactory to deal with. Once or twice groups have been found which had evidently decorated some elaborate object of wood that had decomposed to nothing: but all attempts at reconstructing the original objects proved hopeless. The series here figured (Fig. 4) is however less unpromising. They were found in early Third Semitic *débris*, and were laid in the earth in the disposition in which they are here drawn; except that the two longer slips, ornamented with punched circles, were on edge. This has every

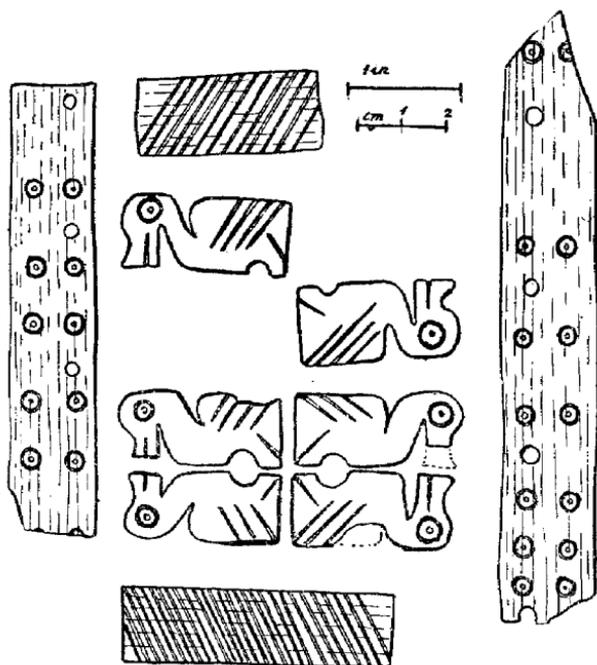


Fig. 4.—Set of Ivory Inlays.

appearance of having been the adornment of the lid of a wooden casket or some such object. There were eight bird figures, two of which had perished, facing one another in symmetrically disposed pairs; above and below were slips with oblique lines, while vertically, on the edges of the lid, were longer slips with punched circlets. The slips had, no doubt, been inserted in sinkings prepared for them, and were not improbably fixed with wooden pins, as metal would have left some trace behind.

§ VI.—ANOTHER OLD-HEBREW JAR SEAL.

It will be remembered that an enigmatical jar-handle seal, inscribed apparently הירמ , was found last year and described in the Fifteenth Report (see *Q.S.*, 1907, pp. 264, 319 *sq.*; 1908, p. 76 *sq.*). Not far from where this was found a similar stamp came to light during the past quarter. I dare not say that it throws light on the

first—perhaps if anything it introduces complicating elements into its study. It is shown in fig. 5. The letters are the same as in the other, but they are differently arranged, thus :—



Fig. 5.—Hebrew Jar-Seal.

מ
ר
ז

The top of the seal is injured by a smudge. It is to be noticed that though the letter י seems uninjured, its Z form, with only one upper horizontal bar, is certain; were it not for the other jar-handle, which as certainly has the normal two bars, we would undoubtedly have read the letter as ן . The ר might in the new handle conceivably be an ס , as the top oblique stroke seems to be carried past the upright; here again the handle first discovered determines the true reading. The new handle suggests that we may have to read מ' ר' ה' , where ה' is an abbreviation for the potter's name, and מ' ר' abbreviations for two words qualifying him—*e.g.* his parentage and domicile. The seals reported from Jericho, with יה upon them, appear to present some analogy with the Gezer seals as thus interpreted. They might indeed, possibly, belong to the same potter: the reversal of the letters being a mistake due to the forgotten necessity of reversing the order of letters on the seal.

§ VII.—MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTS.

(1.) It will be remembered that in a Byzantine tomb, opened during the summer of 1907, a die, with the points distributed as in modern dice, was found (*Q.S.*, 1907, p. 257). The history of dicing in Palestine was brought back two steps further by discoveries during this quarter. One die, cut from soft limestone, similar in appearance to, but considerably larger than, those in

modern use, was found in the Hellenistic stratum. More remarkable is another, of ivory, belonging at latest to the Persian period of Palestinian history. It is noteworthy for being oblique, not a rectangular cube as in modern dice; this, however, as I have proved by experiment, does not prevent its falling indifferently on any one of the six faces. The vertical height of the object is half an inch. The top face has four points, the bottom three: the side faces are in order, five, six, deuce, and ace. In describing the first die found (*Q.S. loc. cit.*) I noted that modern gamblers use the Persian numerals in reckoning the points: this may be a traditional custom reaching back to the date of the die before us. The points are narrow and deep depressions, apparently drilled with a rotary drill: they are disposed in the symmetrical figures still in use on

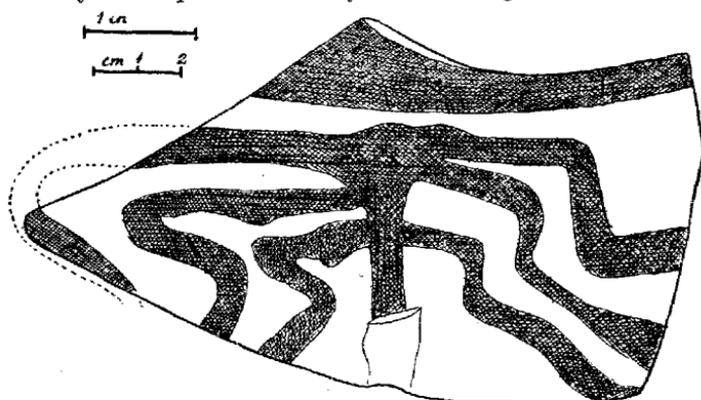


Fig. 6.—Pottery Fragment with Painted Octopus.

dice, but are rather irregularly laid out. They are not filled with enamel or otherwise decorated in any way. The angle between the ace and the deuce, however, bears traces of a red colour, with which possibly the whole was originally covered.

(2.) The fragment of painted pottery (the design is brownish-black on a dark reddish-buff ground), from the Fourth Semitic period (fig. 6), is noteworthy as being the most realistic of all the conventionalised figures of the *octopus* found as yet in Palestinian pottery. It is interesting to observe the clumsiness with which the native potter imitated a motive that in the hands of the Aegean artificers had shown itself capable of such striking decorative effect.

(3.) In a cistern which contained a number of potsherds and bronze objects, as well as some human bones—including those of a

man of the unusual stature of 6 feet 5 inches—were found two specimens of the object here figured (Fig. 7). The second was identical with that illustrated, but was broken. They consist of two bars, each of them a stout twist of bronze, $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, terminating at one end in a loop interlacing with the corresponding loop of its fellow, and at the other in a shoe fitted on the end of the twist. This shoe bears at its extremity an expansion through which runs a hole, semicircular in section. On the twisted part of each bar is a flat arm, which apparently was movable before it was

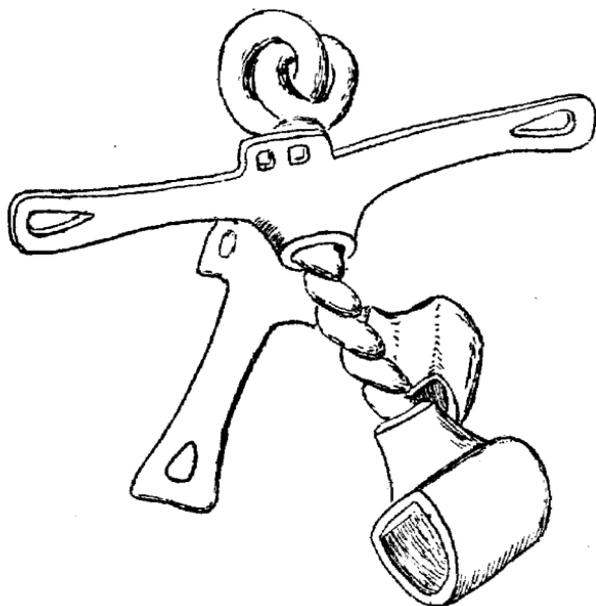


Fig. 7.—Bronze Object of Unknown Use.

fixed by corrosion. These arms are also $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches long. Their extremities expand slightly, and are perforated; there is also a narrow projection at the side, just at the middle, with two perforations.

It is suggestive in connection with these objects that two fine bronze pots, resembling cooking pots, each with two vertical loop handles rising above the rim, were found in the cistern: and possibly these objects may have been attached to the handles for the suspension of the pots. One of the pots was smashed into pieces: the other, which could be moved, in a fairly sound condition, was

10 inches in diameter. I do not, however, see how to explain the movable cross-bars, if this be the function of the object.

§ VIII.—A NOTE ON THE POTTER'S WHEEL.

Some observations have been made during the last few months on the *direction of rotation* adopted in turning vessels when being formed on the wheel. The direction of the small spirals formed in the upper side of the rotating base, and also an examination of the point at which horizontal bands surrounding the vessel are closed, indicate the direction of rotation accurately. The result has been that, invariably, vessels are rotated in the direction contrary to the hands of a clock, except during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries B.C., when either direction was adopted indifferently. These centuries coincide with the high-water mark of the Aegean influence on Palestinian art.

The influence to be deduced from this observation I take to be this. The oldest form of the potter's wheel in use in the country was a small rotating table, turned by the left hand. This continued in use till a more convenient form was introduced, by contact with Aegean culture, in which the pivot was prolonged to the ground and there fitted with a horizontal disc that could be turned by the foot. This left both hands free for modelling and painting, and evidently the direction of rotation was indifferent, as either the right or the left foot could be used indifferently. The old traditional habit of turning counter-clockwise, however, survived the disturbance produced by the introduction of the foot-wheel, and potters settled down in time to the exclusive use of the left foot, as previously they had naturally used the left hand, for turning the wheel.

CONCLUSION.

To-day (16th November) the first considerable break in the weather has taken place, so that for the rest of the available time we must expect to have the work much interrupted by storms. It is, however, being pressed on with a larger staff of labourers than have ever before been engaged in the work of the Fund. A soon as the trench now being dug—the last trench between the Central and Eastern pits—is complete, I hope to transfer the work back to the Western Hill and to dig at least one more trench there before the permit expires.

AN OLD HEBREW CALENDAR-INSCRIPTION FROM GEZER.

1.—By PROFESSOR MARK LIDZBARSKI, Greifswald.

IN the last *Quarterly Statement*, p. 271, reference was made to the discovery of a Hebrew inscription at Gezer; photographs of which have since been kindly sent to me by the Fund. These were very clear, and gave a good representation of all that the tablet contains. I do not know in what stratum the tablet was found. Mr. Macalister placed the date in the sixth century, B.C., but I take the inscription to be much older. The characters throughout have archaic forms, and there are no traces of the characteristics of the later Hebrew script: the lengthening and the curving of the shafts of the letters, which turn to the left, the secondary and supplementary additions, the overlapping, intersection, and prolongation of the strokes. The last-mentioned certainly appears in some signs, but is probably not intentional, but due to the hasty execution of the writing. There is a great difference between the forms of **ב**, **ב**, **ב**, and **ב**, here, and in the Siloam inscription (see my *Handbuch d. Nordsemit. Epigraphik*, p. 184 above). Not less noteworthy is the marked "defective" writing, specially noticeable in **ק** (l. 7). We have, perhaps, the oldest Hebrew inscription, at all events, one of the oldest of the Semitic inscriptions.

In the preliminary notice it was remarked that the stone contains "some kind of calendar." This is correct. The tablet presents a collection of months, not according to adopted terms, but it is the attempt of someone, probably a peasant, to group and name the months according to their agricultural importance. The names approach the Canaanite month-names Abib, Bul, but, in contrast to these, regularly designate the occupations of the peasantry. There are points of contact with the calendar-notice in *Tosefta* (ed. Zuckermann), p. 215, l. 15 *sq.*

The tablet perhaps represents the writer's original effort. It has not a monumental character, but only that of a piece of writing. The characters would be easily cut upon the limestone with a knife or a pointed instrument, and as easily scratched off in order to make room for another writing. From various marks which do not belong to the present text, it even seems to me that the surface had been formerly written upon, the writing then lightly erased, and the surface again

polished. Hence some traces of the earlier writing still remain, and the stone would thus be really a palimpsest. However, it is possible that the surface bore merely meaningless scratches (as also now on the reverse side) when the author, or copyist, first proceeded to inscribe the text.

I read the inscription as follows:—

יֵז יֵרַח יָאֶסֶף אֶיֶרַח (1)

רַע אֶיֶרַח יָלֶקֶשׁ (2)

יֵרַח עֶזְרַת פֶּשֶׁת (3)

יֵרַח קֶצֶר שְׁעָרִים (4)

יֵרַח קֶצֶר אֶבֶל (5)

יֵרַח אֶזְמֵר (6)

אֶיֶרַח קֶץ (7)

:

The sign after יֵרַח in l. 1, which reappears on the stone in other similar forms, graphically most resembles אֶ, which, however, would not be in place either here or elsewhere. From the context the article אֶ would be especially expected, particularly as it, where it is certain, stands only before a simple noun, not before a construct state.

But it is impossible to derive the sign graphically from the old Semitic אֶ. As the same sign appears in the South Semitic writing as a אֶ, it could be supposed that in olden times אֶ and אֶ fluctuated in Canaan for אֶ and אֶ. The South Semitic character for אֶ, too, can be more easily derived from אֶ than אֶ, and even the appearance of אֶ and אֶ in Greek writing for *w* could be connected with that supposition. But the new inscription is not sufficient for such conclusions. The sign might be due to some confusion on the part of the writer, who was perhaps a simple peasant. It might otherwise be a separating sign.¹

I have also asked myself whether the signs after יֵרַח, which do not correspond identically with one another, may not be numeral-signs for the reckoning of the months or symbols. But this is forbidden by the position of the mark in l. 5, and moreover the sign is not found in ll. 3, 4, and 7.

From the form of the אֶ in the margin it is seen that the cross-strokes in the אֶ in l. 1 do not belong to it; and consequently one cannot (*cp.* Praetorius, *Ueber den Ursprung des Kanaanäischen Alphabets*, p. 9) connect

¹ [Prof. Lidzbarski also points out (privately) that if the sign as אֶ was *waw compaginis* (*cp.* אֶתוֹ אֶרֶץ etc.), it would presumably have been used throughout.—*Ed.*]

it with the α of the Cypriote script. Noteworthy is the very old form of ס ; the פ has apparently been added. It is scarcely likely that another line stood over the present, and hence the writer began his enumeration with the month of *Asiph* (אֶסִיפִּה) corresponding to the beginning of the Palestinian year (Ex. xxiii, 16; xxxiv, 22).

Before the next month is a stroke |, a word- or clause-separator, possibly even the sign Υ . The small strokes below the lower horizontal bar of the ו do not belong to the letter. At the end of the line is certainly ן , it may be preceded by a separating-mark with some letter, or perhaps again Υ .

At the beginning of the next line the first letter is ר rather than ב ; it seems to be corrected from ו . After the ע stands probably a separating line | or Υ ; the horizontal stroke at the bottom does not belong to it. Consequently we have to read זרע, preceded by | or Υ . The important month of seed-sowing (\pm November) should not be wanting in the calendar. In the passage from the *Tosefta*, to זרע is ascribed half of Tishri, Markhešwân and half of Kislev. After this comes ירח (ה) לַקֶּשׁ, by which \pm March is meant—the winter months being passed over. It is doubtful whether the circle at the foot of ל or the horizontal stroke belongs to the letter.

Line 3.—It is uncertain what precedes the ו . The line reads ירח עזר פֶּשֶׁת. עזר should mean “to hew” after the Hebrew מַעְצָד, or “to cut or lop off” after the Arabic عَصَد. I have been unable to obtain precise information regarding the flax-harvest in Palestine; but in Egypt it comes in March and April, which is very suitable for our passage¹. Certainly, in ancient times, and even at the present day, flax is not cut but plucked, though Heer (*op. cit.* 15 sq.) seeks to show that the occupants of the pile-dwellings cut or hewed down flax. This question must be left for experts to decide.

Line 4.—ירח קצר שעורים. The מ is placed under the line through lack of space. On the growth of flax and barley in Egypt compare Ex. ix, 31. The barley-harvest in Palestine (apart from the Ghôr) takes place in April—May². In North Germany about three weeks elapse between the plucking of the flax and the barley-harvest.

Line 5.—ירח קצר יפֶל, or ירח קצר יפל. The Month May-June. The left outer stroke of the head of the ב is prolonged far beyond the limits.

¹ Cp. *Description de l'Égypte*, xvii, p. 98 sq., and Osw. Heer, *Flachs und Flachskultur im Altertum*, p. 4. (Zurich, 1872.)

² Cp. H. Vogelstein, *Die Landwirtschaft in Palästina*, p. 58.

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FIG. 1.—HEBREW INSCRIBED TABLET FROM GEZER.

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FIG. 2.—REVERSE OF HEBREW INSCRIBED TABLET.

In line 6 the reading is again certain, apart from ך, but one does not expect the pruning of vine-plants (זָמַר) in summer—perhaps June–July.

In line 7, קָץ = קָץ יָבֵן, the harvest of the summer-fruit, perhaps especially the fig-harvest (*cp.* Levy, *Neuhebr. Wörterbuch*, iv, 300). The time is July–August. In the *Tosefta* (*loc. cit.*) to קָצִיר are ascribed half of Nisan, Iyyar, and the half of Sivan, to קָרִיץ half of Sivan, Tammuz, and half of Ab. Below line 7 are some traces of letters; one or two lines may have followed—the month of vintage can scarcely have been wanting.

Of the vertical line to the left of the foot of the tablet, the first two letters are certainly א and ב. The third, in its present form, does not resemble any old Semitic character. To treat it as a young and secondary form of ה is precluded by the archaic appearance of the other letters. It is probable that some of the strokes do not really belong to the letter, and that it may be ר or י. Further to the left is a trace of a horizontal line which runs to the right, like ו or ז. Apparently some name with or without a patronymic stood here, *e.g.*, [אֲבִיר] or . . . אֲבִיר, perhaps [אֲבִיר]רָק. The reverse of the tablet contains merely some meaningless scratches.

The inscription runs, therefore :—

- (1) Month of the fruit-harvest.—Month of
- (2) the sowing.—Month of the after-grass.
- (3) Month of the flax-harvest.
- (4) Month of the barley-harvest.
- (5) Month of the harvest of all [the rest].
- (6) Month of the pruning of vine-plants.
- (7) Month of the fig-harvest (?).
- (8)

2.—By the Rev. G. B. GRAY, D.D., D.Litt.

I. I DECIPHER the inscription as follows, placing dots over the letters which appear to me more doubtful :—

- (1) ירה ואסף | ירה ח[ח]
 (2) מע | ירה ולקש
 (3) ירה עצר פשת
 (4) ירה קצר שער
 (5) ירה קצר ותל
 (6) ירה וזמר
 (7) ירה קץ
 ז
 ה
 .

The sign at the beginning of line 3, to the right of the י (in the facsimile) I take to be a false start. Thus each of the seven lines, except the second, begins with ירה, and, except in lines 1 and 2, ירה never occurs but at the beginning of a line. To mark these exceptional cases, the simple downstroke | is used as a mark of interpunctuation—it is doubtful if the mark of interpunctuation occurs elsewhere. For the detection of the two instances of this mark before the word ירה, standing in the middle of the line, I am indebted to Dr. Cowley.

The first letter of the second line is most probably a badly formed ט. The internal × is clear, but the circle round it is partially defaced. In the drawing of the inscription which I saw before I received the photograph, I took the letter for ב, but with the photograph before me this seems most improbable; nor is it probable that the letter is ר; it is decidedly unlike other instances of ר. At the end of line 1, we seem to have a badly executed waw and space for another letter, which, before מע in line 2, can scarcely be anything but נ. A possible enough word in the context would be זרע, but this is ruled out by the fact that the first letter of line 2 is not ר.

Owing, possibly, to some defect in the stone rather than to the obvious lack of space, the final letter in line 4 is written perpendicularly. I think there is no doubt that it is מ, and the plural שערים after קצר agrees with Biblical usage.

The last three letters of line 5 are more like ותל than anything else, but the ת is suspiciously unlike the same letter at the end of line 3.

2. I translate tentatively :—

- (1) A month and in-gathering | A month and [pl]
- (2) anting | A month and the spring-gathering.
- (3) The month of the pulling up (?) of flax.
- (4) The month of the reaping of barley.
- (5) The month of the reaping of ?
- (6) A month and pruning.
- (7) The month of summer fruits

A b i

It will be seen that the clauses are of two types ; in each type the clause opens with the word "month," and in each case the clause also contains a word denoting an agricultural process or feature of the year, but in one type this second word is joined with "month" by the copula ; in the other it is a genitive defining month. In the first type it is possible that the second word is a verb, *e.g.*, "a month—then he gathers in" ; *cp.* S. R. Driver, *Hebrew Tenses*, § 123, β.

Of the eight terms defining the agricultural events, all but one (עֶצֶד) and the second part of another (קִצְר וְתֵל) are found in the Bible. But the word לָקַשׁ occurs only in Amos vii, 1. If the order of the processes mentioned follows the course of the year, as it is natural to expect, the לָקַשׁ is most probably a process that took place in very early spring. This new inscription thus casts light on the disputed meaning of the word (see the commentaries on Amos vii, 1).

The new word עֶצֶד, in line 3, is interesting. Flax is not reaped, but pulled up. Consequently עֶצֶר should be the technical term for this treatment of flax as contrasted with the reaping (קִצְר) of barley. But we must infer this from the context, and rather against what we know of the root עֶצֶר, which appears in the Old Testament only in the noun form מַעְצָד, a term for an instrument, such as an axe (Jer. x, 3 ; Is. xlix, 12). In Arabic and Ethiopic the root עֶצֶר seems mostly associated with the sense of "cutting"—in Arabic, for example, عَصَد may mean "to lop a tree."

The "calendar," if we may call it so, though it seems to be completely preserved, mentions only eight months, and not twelve. The first three events cover the time from the approach of autumn to the commencement of spring ; the last five fall in the summer half of the year.

Perhaps the chief difficulty in the way of treating the order in which the processes are mentioned as consistently chronological is the place occupied by "pruning." The interpretation of זִמִּיר in Cant. ii, 12, has occasioned difficulty, but עַת הַזִּמְיָר there appears to be spring-time. Here זִמְר stands last but one, immediately before the month of קִץ, and מְזֵי, *summer-fruits*, may perhaps be used here as in Amos viii, 2, with

a pun on קץ, *end*. For קץ, *summer fruits*, as characteristic of the *end* of summer, *cp.* also Jer. xlvi, 32; Micah, vii, 1 (parallel with the *vintage* בציר, but with קציר in Is. xvi, 9). Thus the calendar opens with אסף, *in-gathering*, which marks the close of one year (*cp.* Ex. xxiii, 16; xxxiv, 32), and ends with קץ, which is the last crop of the next. It is curious that the calendar contains no reference to viticulture, unless it is contained in זמר.

3. *Date*.—In the brief reference to the inscription in the last *Quarterly Statement*, the sixth century B.C. was suggested, tentatively, for the date of the inscription. A careful examination of the writing leads me to the conclusion that it is earlier. The inscription more probably belongs to the eighth than the sixth century.

The workmanship is rough, but the type of the letters is closely akin to the earliest inscriptions in the North Semitic alphabet that we possess—to the Moabite stone (ninth century), the Zinjerli inscriptions (eighth century), and the inscription of Zakir (ninth-eighth century) recently published by M. Pognon. Judging by the writing I should conclude that the inscription is later than the Moabite stone and earlier than the Siloam inscription.

That the inscription is prior to the Fall of the Monarchy is suggested by the series of facts that the ׀ and the tops of the ׀ and ׀ are closed, not open, that ׀ and the top of the ׀ retain the zig-zag form, by the generally upright form of the letters, and the absence of any tendency in the down strokes to drag round to the left.

The letters which weigh with me most in connecting the inscription somewhat closely in time with those of the ninth and eighth centuries just enumerated are the ׀ and the ׀. I add notes on these letters and some others which present strikingly early forms.

Few letters of the North Semitic alphabet have had a more varied development than the ׀. The earliest known form of this letter consists of three horizontal strokes with a perpendicular stroke starting from the topmost horizontal, passing through the two lower horizontals, and continuing below the lowest, thus 𐤀. This form occurs in the Moabite inscription of Mesha (ninth century), the Aramaic inscriptions of Zakir (ninth-eighth century), and Hadad (Zinjerli, early eighth century), and the Phoenician Baal-Lebanon inscription (*C.I.S.* i, 5), less decisively dated but probably not later than the ninth century. I am not aware that this form of the letter has been found in any inscription later than the eighth century. The first stage in the development of this letter took place *within the eighth century*, for in the Panammu inscription from Zinjerli, a generation or more later than the Hadad inscription, the perpendicular stroke starts from the *lowest* horizontal 𐤁. The ׀ of the Gezer inscription is of the earliest type, with this

peculiarity, that the perpendicular stroke starts from above the top horizontal ⚡ . Whether this peculiarity represents a still earlier type than the D of the Moabite stone, or is a local variation of that type, may be left an open question. But, failing good reasons to the contrary, the presence of this type of D in the inscription favours a date as early as the eighth century.

The form of the 7 points to the same conclusion. The earliest type of this letter is a simple triangle (Moabite stone, Baal Lebanon). But by the beginning of the eighth century in North Syria the right-hand side of the triangle is continued *downwards*, so as to provide the letter with a shank 4 , and this form subsequently prevailed, or was the starting point of other developments. In the Gezer inscription the 7 is a triangle with a slight prolongation of the right side *upwards* (possibly due to rough workmanship).

The P with the complete semi-circle, or segment, on each side of the perpendicular (P) is the early type found in the Moabite stone and the earliest Zinjerli inscriptions. This continued in use into the seventh century, if the Nerab inscriptions are rightly referred to that date, and even later if certain Hebrew seals are rightly adjudged later. On the other hand, the development away from the early type began early and may be traced not only in the Siloam inscription, but also in the later Zinjerli inscription (latter half of eighth century).

The 7 seems to be an early type. As in the Moabite stone, the shank descends from the *middle* of the letter, and not, as later and already in the Zinjerli inscriptions and the inscription of Zakir (ninth–eighth centuries), from the right-hand side. The nearest parallel to the *waw* of the inscription is to be found, apart from the Moabite stone, on certain Hebrew seals of uncertain date.

The S again is an early type generally resembling the S of the Moabite stone or the Zinjerli inscriptions. It neither inclines as much from the upright as many of the later types, nor is its snout broken as in the Siloam inscription and some later examples.

There are many points raised by the inscription which call for fuller discussion. But others are likely to discuss some of them in the present number, and to avoid the possibility of undue repetition, I confine myself to the foregoing notes.

3.—By MR. E. J. PILCHER.

THE new Gezer text is probably pre-Exilic; but we know too little of the history of the changes in the Old Hebrew alphabet to be able to date any inscription by its palaeography. In the present instance D has a very early form, but y is debased; and the other characters have no special features to guide us.

An examination of the piece of stone shows that it is a fragment of a larger slab, and therefore it only gives us the ends of the lines of writing. This is clear from the appearance of the letters at the right-hand side; and also from the fact that the second line commences with **מע** which are most probably the conclusion of the word **ממע** or **נמע**. It is further to be remarked that the inscription was divided into sections by vertical strokes, which may be seen in the first three lines; although the mutilation of the text prevents us from understanding the object of these divisions.

Transcribed into modern Hebrew characters, the inscription reads :—

- ירח ואסף | ירח (1)
 [מ]מע | ירח מקש (2)
 ירח עצר פשת | (3)
 ירח קצר שער(ה) (4)
 ירח קצר - - ל (5)
 ירח נזר (6)
 ירח קץ (7)

- (1) Month and gathering-in. Month
 (2) planting. Month of cucumber field.
 (3) Month of cutting of flax.
 (4) Month of reaping of barley.
 (5) Month of reaping of ?
 (6) Month of winnowing.
 (7) Month end.

Line 2.—The final word seems to be the much-debated **מקשה** of Is. i, 8, and Jer. x, 5.

Line 5.—The actual third and fourth characters are **ק** which are apparently cancelled by a second **ק** cut over them. The last letter in the line is undoubtedly **ל**; but the two before it are quite anomalous in form. The group might be read **נתל** which is unintelligible; or **וכל** “and all,” which would carry us forward to the next line.

Line 6.—Between the **ן** and the **ר** is a zigzag, which probably marks an erasure. The word **נזר** is peculiar: we should have expected **נורה**.