

THE SEA OF TIBERIAS AND ITS ENVIRONS.

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THE whole district around the Sea of Tiberias is of great value and interest from the historical and literary point of view.

Though in Christ's work and ministry many places figure conspicuously, few of these sites have been definitely identified. The work that has been done is purely on the surface. No real work of excavation has been carried out, except at Tell Hum, at the ruins of the town of Tiberias of the Herodian Period and, recently, at the Great Cave in the Wady el Amûd. Yet the amount of material visible to the eye of an intelligent visitor is amazing, and promises great results of far-reaching interest to the excavator whose good fortune it may be to explore the sites of the Sea of Galilee. The main interest will centre on things belonging to the Roman and Herodian Period (47 B.C. to A.D. 30) and New Testament times; but there are not lacking evidences also of an Early Hebrew and Canaanite occupation. I propose to give a brief résumé of the things visible as well as the invisible possibilities of excavation of this region.

Chorazin.

Beginning at the north end of the Lake the most northern site of importance is that of Chorazin, now known as Kherbet Kerazeh, which seems to preserve the old name (Matt. xi, 21).

Accounts of these ruins written some twenty years ago imply that far more was visible then than can be seen now above ground. This is happening all over Palestine. Every available building-stone above ground, and a great many under ground, are being taken away for modern buildings.

Except for a very hurried exploration of the old synagogue no excavation has been done on this site; yet the ruins, which are as extensive as Tell Hum (Capernaum), and contain also the

richly ornamented synagogue, point to its having been a place of some importance.

Tell H̄um.

Coming south down the Wady Kerazeh to the Lake the next site of importance is Tell H̄um, which has been identified with Capernaum. The derivation of the modern name Tell H̄um from Kaphar Tankhum or Kaphar Nahum is a debated point.

Tell H̄um has been excavated by the Franciscans since about 1912. The work still continues.

This site is situated on the west side of the Jordan at the north end of the Lake. It is near the modern Tabighah, which is really the Greek words (επ)τα and πηγαι, or Seven Springs—the old name of the place, doubtless.

The chief discovery on Tell H̄um so far is the ruins of what seems to have been a synagogue built in Roman times and under Roman influence. This synagogue is by many regarded as that built by the Roman centurion and mentioned in Luke vii, 5. (See Fig. 1.)

The ornamentation of the building,¹ the designs carved on the stones, sufficiently attest the presence of both Hebrew and Roman influence. A Hebrew manna-pot, a Passover lamb, palm-tree heads, wreaths carved on the door lintels, a wreath and shell carved on the key-stone of the arch above the central of the three doors, are characteristic features of Hebrew ornamentation exhibited on the masonry of the original and older part of the synagogue.

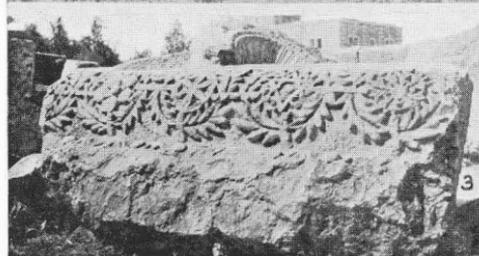
In other respects the massiveness of the masonry and the ornamentation are characteristically Roman.

The two Roman eagles carved facing each other on the key-stone above referred to, as well as other details, belong to the original structure.

This is one of the main arguments in favour of the identification of these ruins with the synagogue spoken of in Luke vii, 5, as having been built by a Roman centurion.

There is no mistaking the fact that here we have a mixture of Hebrew and Roman taste, skill, decoration and architecture. It is argued, and with reason, that only in such circumstances as

¹ For a full account of the archaeological remains at Tell H̄um see *Capernaum et ses ruines*, by P. G. Orfali, O.P.M. (Paris).



TELL HUM SYNAGOGUE REMAINS.

those suggested in that passage (Luke vii, 5) would such evidences of Roman domination have been tolerated.

In confirmation of this, Fig. 2 is interesting. It shows that Jews of a later period did not exhibit the same toleration of a dominating Roman influence. They resented every evidence of such, and showed it by roughly hammering away the two eagles from the key-stone of this arch of the central door, till they are now barely recognizable. The shell and the wreath are left unharmed. They are Hebrew emblems.

My friend Dr. Christie, of Tiberias, suggests as a suitable time when this may have happened the period when the Sanhedrin of Judaism was removed from Jamnia to Tiberias in the middle of the 2nd century A.D. (c. A.D. 135). Rabbinism would then have developed a strongly intolerant attitude to Roman influence in Galilee.

The main room of the original building faced south. The Ark for the scrolls must have stood at the north end. There were three doors—a large central door with a round arch over it, and two side doors. These side doors opened into porticoed aisles cut off by sixteen pillars running round the whole room—seven pillars on each side and four at the north end.

I believe this portico was the only portion roofed over in the original building, the centre being open to the sky.

It is quite clear that alterations were made on this synagogue at a later date. The different types of masonry and ornamentation bear this out. The evidences point both to an addition and an alteration.

1. The addition consisted of a women's gallery. This gallery in all probability ran round the west, north and east sides of the main room, and was supported in front by the sixteen pillars mentioned above. Here the women could sit and view from above the proceedings that went on below.

It is somewhat noticeable that only a few fragments of roof-tiles of the Roman period have been found in the ruins; but in a building which is consigned to decay the roof-tiles would be the first things to be stolen by builders in the vicinity.

2. The alteration consisted in the building of a piece of wall inside the central door of the portico, across the room and in line with the first two pillars. The purpose of this small piece of wall, which probably did not extend more than the width of the

central door itself, and stood thus isolated on the floor of the room, was to alter the *qibleh*, or the direction of prayer.

In the original building the Ark for the scrolls must have stood against the north wall. Worshippers, therefore, in the attitude of prayer, stood facing north, that is, looking away from Jerusalem.

Before A.D. 70 this was tolerated; but after that date and the dispersion of the Jews it became a recognized law, holding good to the present day, that prayer must be directed towards Jerusalem.

Accordingly this small piece of wall had been built across the doorway and the Ark had been placed against the inside face of it. Worshippers would now enter the main room as before, but after entering had to turn their faces toward the south to face the Ark, which now stood at the south end of the room, and thus prayed towards Jerusalem. The actual remains of this wall were found by the Franciscans.

The ornamentation on the stones of this *qibleh* wall is the same as that of the stones of the women's gallery. Both seem to belong to the 2nd century A.D. In this ornamentation (Fig. 3), pomegranate seeds (the symbol of life), arrow-heads (symbol of death), the Shield of David, the Seal of Solomon (pentacle), the Shield of Jacob (six points made by two complete triangles), grape bunches, palm leaves, debased Corinthian capitals are characteristically Hebrew, and point to a later date than the ornamentation of the original part of the building. On this later masonry, too, there is no evidence whatever of Roman influence in the carrying out of the work. The obliteration of the eagles above the doorway may have been a rough expression of public opinion about the same period. Masons armed with chisels could have removed them without leaving any trace whatever (*see* Fig. 2). As it is, they are very roughly defaced.

There is a strong presumption that this building is the actual synagogue built for the Jews by the Roman centurion of Luke vii, 5, and that Tell Hum is the site of Capernaum. The following are the main arguments in favour of this identification :

1. The mixture of Roman and Hebrew masonry and ornamentation on the original part of the building points to such circumstances as those of Luke vii, 5.

2. The fact that originally the worshippers must have prayed towards the north proves conclusively that the synagogue was built before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (*see above*).
3. Epiphanius says that in the time of Constantine a church was built on the place where Peter's house stood, just a few paces from the front door of the synagogue (Mark i, 29). A Byzantine basilica with a mosaic floor has been uncovered by the Franciscans in a position exactly corresponding with this indication of Epiphanius.

Further excavation will, it is hoped, result in evidence that leaves no doubt as to the identification of this site with Capernaum.

Fig. 4 is an interesting carving on a large block of limestone. It is supposed by some to be a representation of the Ark of the Covenant on wheels. The objection to this is the suggestion of a door on the end of it. The Ark had no such door; but these seem to be purely decorative panels. There is nothing to indicate where this stone was placed originally.

Fig. 5 is regarded by the Franciscans as a Laver of Purification belonging to the Synagogue, chiefly for hand washing. Such stones are referred to in John ii, 6, at the marriage feast in Cana as having been ordinarily used for purposes of purification, and on the occasion of the marriage used to contain the wine made by Jesus. The Franciscans consider that they ought to have found seven of these. They have found only three so far.

The Bay of the Preaching (from a boat) (Mark iv, 1).

Coming west from Tell Hum, before reaching the environs of modern Tabighah, is a small bay.

A boat floated in this bay would make an admirable platform in the centre of an amphitheatre of low hills. From every point one speaking on a boat there can be heard. The acoustics have been tested by Dr. Christie and proved perfect. The surroundings are so suitable that there is no doubt in my mind that it was from a boat in this little inlet that Christ addressed the people (Mark iv, 1).

The Call of Peter (Matt. iv, 18).

Just round the southern corner of this inlet is a larger bay, into which flows the water of several hot springs. These springs

were called by the Greeks (ἐπὶ τὰ πηγὰι, "Seven Springs," and the modern name Tabighah is derived from the last seven letters of these two words. This larger bay is probably the place where Peter was fishing when he was called by Jesus. It is well known that the fishes come up to it in shoals on account of the water from the springs, and there is no other place on the shore of the Lake where the ἀμφίβληστρον or "throw-net" could be used to greater advantage, since here the fishes are known to come close in in large shoals. In the passage (Matt. iv, 18) where the Call of Peter is recorded, it is expressly mentioned that he was fishing with the amphiblestron (Matt. iv, 18; Mark i, 16), a net which was only used for fishing from the shore.

It is an interesting instance of how the careful selection of the correct word in describing an incident has led to the identification of the spot where the incident occurred.

Mount of the Beatitudes.

The hill which separates these two bays is, by tradition, the Mount of the Beatitudes (Matt. v, 1). It is a likely identification. It is conveniently near Capernaum, and it was surrounded by small villages in those days—Capernaum, Magdala, Dalmanutha, etc.

It would not involve a long journey of eight miles for the people to go to hear Christ, as Kurn Hattin would demand.¹

Further, it is expressly stated that after the sermon, when He descended, His first act was to heal a leper on the plain at the foot of the hill (Matt. viii, 3). That leper may (as Dr. Christie suggests) have gone to these hot springs in the hope that the water would cure his skin disease; and Christ met him there by these hot springs and cured him. The hill slope and the small plain beneath it, also with the various villages that in those days existed in this vicinity, supply to my mind all the details necessary and suitable for the enacting of the scene depicted in Matt. v-vii.

The hill can now be identified by the house on the top of it and by its position immediately north of the great Tabighah spring.

Rock-cut Aqueduct South-west of Tabighah.

Coming south of Tabighah we strike the remains of the well-known Roman rock-cut aqueduct. It measures about four feet

¹ For explanation of the change of tradition from this site to Kurn Hattin see *Studies in Galilee*, p. 87.

broad and four feet deep, but whether it was originally covered in we cannot now tell. It seems to have been an open aqueduct.

Nor are we quite sure of the purpose which it served. This aqueduct was partly built and partly rock-hewn. It was made to bring water from the hot springs to the Roman baths,¹ the remains of which can still be seen a little south-west of Tabighah Hospice. The aqueduct began with a portion built on piers, and these piers were still visible within the last thirty years. When it reached the rock, the channel was cut in the rock. Where the rock was deficient portions were built in, and now these built portions have vanished.

Just opposite to and above the baths there is an artificial break in the side of the rock-hewn portion to allow the water to be drawn down to the baths,¹ which are about thirty feet under the rock cliff and on a level with the lake.

This aqueduct, however, continued beyond the baths, but where it led to is not known—probably to a mill, to another set of baths, or to irrigate the land (*see* Josephus).

Thirty years ago, when I rode from Safed to Tiberias, this aqueduct was used in parts as a bridle path.

Khan el-Minieh.

The ruins of the "Inn of the harbour" and Ain et-Tineh Spring.

Inland to the west of these Roman baths is the ruins known as Khan el-Minieh. This is the only other rival to Tell Hum as the site of Capernaum at this point. It is felt by some that this rock-hewn aqueduct must have led to a town of great importance in Roman times, and the aqueduct, after serving the baths, seems to have passed on to this town.

As no excavation has been done on the site there is no evidence whatever for this assertion. It would be interesting to excavate Khan el-Minieh. All the visible remains are Arab work, and belong to a mediaeval Khan.

The name el-Minieh is probably a corruption of Limen-iyeh, "the harbour town," from the Greek word λιμήν, a harbour; the ending "-iyeh" being added to λιμήν to denote "place of." Later on the Arabs mistook the initial letter L for the Arabic article "el," and called the place el-Minieh.

¹ These remains are considered to be those of a mill by some authorities.

Dr. Christie suggests that the name "Dalmanutha," mentioned only in Mark viii, 10, probably conceals the same name. According to his view it is the Aramaic "da-limen-utha," for Kephars or Migdol "d'limenutha," meaning "village or town of the harbour place," with the Aramaic termination "utha" added to the Greek word *λιμήν*.

For this Aramaic termination in noun-formation compare "Ellauth," "Ellahutha," coined to express the idea of "Divinity."

Khan el-Minieh and Dalmanutha may be therefore the same name, and Dalmanutha of Mark viii, 10, the town which stood on the site now known as Khan el-Minieh.

It is said that when the water is low the walls of the harbour can be seen at this point.

Between the baths and the sea, right on the sea-level, the powerful spring Ain et-Tineh can be seen.

Continuing down the west side of the lake we pass over the plain of Gennesaret to Mejdol, or Migdol, "the tower," where there is to-day a thriving young Jewish colony. At this point the Via Maris or Great Highway to the Western Sea enters the valley between the hills.

The study of the shores of the Sea of Galilee impresses one not only with the amount of material waiting to be worked up and information to be gleaned, but even more so with the small amount of research that has already been done. This latter fact is surprising when we consider what a great part the sea and its environs plays in the Gospel narrative.

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(To be continued.)
