

A JEWISH TOMB-STONE.

By SAMUEL DAICHES, Ph.D.

IN an interesting article under the above heading in the last *Quarterly Statement* of the Palestine Exploration Fund (October, 1925), pp. 207-210, Dr. Cowley gives the text and translation of an Aramaic inscription on an ancient Jewish tomb-stone. The first two words Dr. Cowley reads, תתניה נפשה, and translates "Rested be the soul." In the note on the first line, which contains these two words, Dr. Cowley remarks: "תתניה is unusual. The common formula is נה נפש." Dr. Cowley feels the difficulty of a form תתניה. But there is another difficulty. נה נפש would not fit in here either. נה נפש does not mean "the soul rests" in the sense of "may the soul be rested." נה נפש means "the soul (of A) rests, is at rest" in the sense of "(A) died." נה נפשיה or — נה נפשיה ד— occurs very frequently in the Talmudic literature in the sense of "he died" (see Levy, *Neuhebräisches und Chaldäisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 3, p. 355, col. 2). It was a formula for "he died." It is never used in the sense of "may his soul be rested," or "rest in peace." נה נפשיה is the finer phrase for מית or מית, and is used only in the case of the death of a well-known scholar or otherwise great man. When the person is not named, the verb מית is used (cf. Talmud Babli, *Moed Katan*, 22^b). נה נפשיה and מית are therefore identical terms. In this tombstone-inscription the word מית occurs in line 3: דמית "who died." We cannot have "died" twice in this short text. "Peace" (= "may he rest in peace") we have in the last line (l. 8): שלם "Peace!". The first two words of the inscription which Dr. Cowley reads תתניה נפשה must therefore have another meaning.

I suggest the reading of תתנית instead of תתניה. I am of the opinion that, as a matter of fact, in the facsimile (Plate I) the second letter in the first word looks much more like a ה, and the last letter looks more like a ת. The left stroke of the ת glides off more to the left while the left stroke of the ה is more straight.

I also suggest that we have here the same word as in 2 Kings vi, 8: תַּחְנוּת "resting place." Whether the fourth letter in this word is a י or a ך does not matter very much. תַּחְנוּת (see Gesenius-Buhl, *s.v.*) means "resting place." תַּחְנוּתִי (2 Kings vi, 8) means "my resting place." תַּחְנוּת (or תַּחְנוּת) in the inscription means "the resting place of." In 2 Kings vi, 8, the resting place is the camp, in the inscription it is the grave.

נפש in נפשה, I submit, does not mean "soul," but "the dead body," as in Leviticus xxi, 1, and frequently in Leviticus and Numbers. The meaning of תַּחְנוּת נפשה would therefore be "*the resting place of the (dead) body* (of Saul, son of . . . who died, etc.)." This meaning is very appropriate for the inscription on a tombstone.

I may mention that in Mishnaic Hebrew נפש also means "a monument," "a grave-memorial" (see Levy, *l.c.*, p. 426). But "the (resting) place of the monument" does not give such good sense as "the resting place of the body."

Incidentally תַּחְנוּת in this inscription confirms the Massoretic reading of תַּחְנוּתִי in 2 Kings vi, 8, and does away with the emendations (see Commentaries, especially Burney, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Book of Kings*, p. 285).