

The *new* Church of Sion was the church built by the Emperor Justinian in the middle of the sixth century, and dedicated to the Virgin Mary. It stood *outside* the wall of the city and south of the House of Caiaphas, at the place now occupied by the building known as the Coenaculum (Site No. 5 on Plan 1). This church is mentioned for the first time by Antoninus, who visited Jerusalem shortly after it was built, and who is the only pilgrim to mention both the old and new churches on Sion.

After the new church was built, the holy places which had formerly been shown in the old church, were transferred to it, and the old church was gradually forgotten.

From time to time other holy places were transferred to the Church of St. Mary on Sion, as, for example, the place of the Last Supper, and the place of washing the feet of the Apostles, which were so transferred after the Church of St. Mary, in the valley of the Cedron, was destroyed by the Persians in A.D. 614.

If it is allowed that there were two churches of Sion, the old church inside the wall up to the time of Justinian, and the new church outside the wall after Justinian, then the accounts given by all the pilgrims are intelligible. If not, then it appears impossible to reconcile the accounts of the early and the later pilgrims.

THE PROPOSED EXCAVATION OF BETH-SHEMESH.

NOTES ON THE SITE AND ITS ENVIRONS.

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BETH-SHEMESH, "house of Shemesh (the sun)," the site which the *Palestine Exploration Fund* is about to excavate, lies about 19 miles east of Azotus (Ashdod), 16 miles west of Jerusalem, and 6 miles south-west of the now famous Gezer. The name is found also in the north, as that of a city on the border of Naphtali (Josh. xix, 38; Judg. i, 33), and also—unless the two are identical—as that of a city ascribed to Issachar (Josh. xix, 22). In Jer. xliii, 13, allusion is made to the pillars or obelisks of the Egyptian Beth-Shemesh, the renowned sun-temple of On, or Heliopolis, about 6 miles north-east of Cairo. Since it has been suggested that this great centre of the

MAP TO ILLUSTRATE
ARTICLE ON BETH-SHEMESH

0 1 2 3 4 5 10 15 20 MILES



MEDITERRANEAN SEA

JOPPA

JAMNIA

GEZER

• EKRON

• AJALON

ESHTAOL

• ZORAH

• BETH-SHEMESH

• JERUSALEM

• ASHDOD

• ZANOAH

• BETHLEHEM

• GATH

SOCOH

• ASHKELON

• KEILAH

• ELEUTHEROPOLIS

MARESHAH

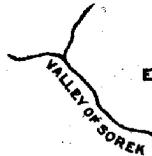
• LACHISH

• HEBRON

• GAZA

• ZIPH

DEAD SEA



sun-cult in Egypt was of Semitic or Asiatic origin, it is appropriate to notice the sun-temple of Abū Ghuraib (of the VIth dynasty) which, in turn, hints at foreign usage.¹ Here was found in 1900 an artificial mound on the eastern side of which was a great court. "On the mound was erected a truncated obelisk, the stone emblem of the sun-god. The worshippers in the court below looked towards the sun's stone erected upon its mound in the west, the quarter of the sun's setting; for the sun-god of Heliopolis was primarily the setting sun, Tum-Rā, not Rā Harmachis, the rising sun . . . which looks towards the east. The sacred emblem of the Heliopolitan sun-god reminds us forcibly of the Semitic *bethels* or *baetyli*, the sacred stones of Palestine, and may give yet another hint of the Semitic origin of the Heliopolitan cult. In the court of the temple is a huge circular altar of fine alabaster, several feet across, on which slain oxen were offered to the sun, and behind this, at the eastern end of the court, are six great basins of the same stone, over which the beasts were slain, with drains running out of them by which their blood was carried away."²

Our Beth-Shemesh is located on the border of Judah—although Eusebius and Jerome erroneously ascribe it to Benjamin—and is doubtless the same as the Danite border-city Ir-Shemesh which is mentioned with Eshtaol, Zorah, Aijalon, Timnah, Ekron, Eltekeh, Gibbethon, etc., names with whose history it is closely bound up (Josh. xix, 41–44).³ The old name still survives in the modern *Ain Shems*, "Well of the Sun," which is also the name given by Arab writers to the Egyptian Heliopolis. Robinson found here the ruins of a modern Arab village of moderate size with a sacred tomb, which, according to Clermont-Ganneau (*Archaeological Researches*), is the sanctuary of Abu Meizar, brother of the Sheikh es-Sāmet, whose shrine is at the neighbouring *Sar'a* (Zorah). These remains are all built of ancient material and lie to the east of a former extensive site, of which Robinson observes: "enough yet remains to make it one of the largest and most marked sites which we had anywhere seen."⁴

¹ King and Hall, *Egypt and Western Asia* (1907), pp. 40, 44, 102.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 103.

³ Cf. 1 Kings iv, 9, where one of the divisions of the kingdom includes Beth-Shemesh, Shaalvim (cf. Judg. i, 35, with Aijalon), Elon (Danite in Josh. xix, 43), and Beth-hanan (uncertain).

⁴ *Biblical Researches* (1841), III, p. 17 sq.

The history of Beth-Shemesh is that of the territory lying between the Philistine maritime plain and the central table-land of Samaria and Judah.¹ It lies on one of the five important routes which connected the two. Starting with the south, we have first the route, well-known for the fortress of Tell el-Hesy (Lachish), which runs from between Gaza and Ashkelon to the south-west of Hebron. Next, comes the course from Ashdod to Hebron, with Beit-Jibrin (Eleutheropolis) and the near-lying Mareshah or Marissa. After this we meet the Wady es-Sunt, the road marked by Tell es-Safiyeh (probably Gath) and Keilah. Passing over for a moment the fourth, we reach the road from Aijalon, which lies open to the roads from the north, and leads to Gezer and Gibeon. 'Ain Shems is situated on the fourth, the Wādy es-Surar, or Vale of Sorek, a good route from Ekron, Jamnia (Jabneh), and perhaps Ashdod, to Jerusalem. It is one of the most convenient of approaches, and the importance of the position can be best described in the words of Dr. George Adam Smith: "Just before the Wady es-Surar approaches the Judæan range, its width is increased by the entrance of the Wady Ghurab from the north-west, and by the Wady en-Najil from the south. A great basin is thus formed with the low hill of Artuf, and its village in the centre. Sura', the ancient Zorah, and Eshtua', perhaps Eshtaol, lie on the slopes to the north; 'Ain Shems, in all probability Beth-Shemesh, lies on the southern slope opposite Zorah. When you see this basin, you at once perceive its importance. Fertile and well-watered—a broad brook runs through it, with tributary streamlets—it lies immediately under the Judæan range, and at the head of a valley passing down to Philistia, while at right angles to this it is crossed by the great line of trench which separates the Shephelah from Judæa. Roads diverge from it in all directions. Two ascend the Judæan plateau by narrow defiles from the Wady en-Najil, another and greater defile, still under the name Wady es-Surar, runs up east to the plateau next Jerusalem, and others north-east into the rough hills known to the Old Testament as Mount Jearim, while the road from Beit-Jibrin comes down the Wady en-Najil, and continues by a broad and easy pass to Amwas and the Vale of Aijalon. As a centre, then, between the southern and northern valleys of the Shephelah, and between Judæa and Philistia, this basin was sure to become important. Immediately

¹ See the admirable description by G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, chaps. ix and x; also p. 182 above.

under the central range, it was generally held by Israel, who could swiftly pour down upon it by five or six different defiles. It was also open to Philistia, and had easy passage to the Vale of Aijalon, whose towns are often classed with its own."¹

Beth-Shemesh, lying about midway between the Mediterranean and Jerusalem, and off the main road running from north to south by the coast, was involved in all the political vicissitudes affecting the relations of Judah with its immediate neighbours. Although it is not mentioned in early historical records there can be little doubt that in general its career was very much the same as that of Lachish, Gath, and Gezer. That is to say, the district was, if not under Egyptian supremacy, at least fully exposed to Egyptian influence to the XIth and XIIth dynasties; at the Hyksos invasion (perhaps about 1700 B.C.) the political bond would be broken; and with the XVIIIth dynasty (*circa* 1580 B.C.), when Egypt once more pressed into Palestine and Syria, making the lands virtually an Egyptian province, it changed masters. Whoever the Hyksos may have been, it appears that the great states of Hittite connexion in the far north had exerted their sway, certainly as far south as Jerusalem, and when we reach the times of Amenhotep III and IV (*circa* 1410-1360 B.C.), the "Amarna letters" show that among the petty kings of Palestine there were some whose names clearly associate them with non-Semitic peoples of Asia Minor.² These letters make mention of Gezer, Keilah, Zanoah (Zunu, ed. Knudtzon, no. 220), Aijalon, Zorah (Şarha, no. 273 *sq.*), Manahath (Dhorme compares Wady el-Menāh to the west and south of 'Ain Shems), and perhaps Tell eş-Şafiyeh (Şabuma, no. 274).³ The suggestion has indeed been made that Beth-Shemesh lies concealed in Bit-Ninib (no. 290), Ninib being regarded as the morning sun.⁴ This, the "Amarna" age, was one of heavy pressure by land and by sea from the north, and Palestine was rent by internal intrigues and rivalries. Apart from the important coast-towns (Gaza, Joppa, Sidon, Tyre, etc.), and the city of Jerusalem (the centre of the southern

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 219 *sq.*

² See, for a recent study of the evidence, Father Dhorme, *Revue Biblique*, 1908, October.

³ Or, according to Clauss, Zeboim.

⁴ Cheyne (*Ency. Bib.*, col. 2019), identifying Har Heres (Judg. i, 34 *sq.*, "sun-mount," or rather city of H, *i.e.* the Sun) with Beth-Shemesh, suggests that H-r-s represents Uraš, a synonym of Ninib. Dhorme, however, conjectures that Ninib is Anath, and thinks of Anathoth, north of Jerusalem.

district), the political movements were controlled by the great states in Syria. The king of Jerusalem reports the falling away of the land to the enemy whose movements are apparently directed from the west. Lachish, Ashkelon, and Gezer are denounced, and there is perhaps an allusion to the capture of Mareshah.¹ Keilah, a bone of contention between two rival kings, falls, and with it Bit-Ninib and Rubute (? in the neighbourhood of Kirjath-jearim). A certain lady (Baalath-nēshē?) records that the "robbers" have laid hands upon Aijalon and Zorah, and mentions the fall of Gath (Ṣabuma), and Addu-dāni tells of the loss of Manahath (no. 292), and an attack upon Gezer.

In these movements and counter-movements the *Habiru* (who are mentioned only in the Jerusalem letters) play a prominent part—corresponding to that of the enemy in the other letters. That they are to be identified with the "Hebrews" is a very popular view; one, however, which is far from certain: their steps do not accord with the Israelites who invaded Palestine under Joshua, and their name may mean nothing more than "allies."

Subsequent events show that Egypt had to retake Palestine, and its constant struggles with the Hittites form the natural sequel to the downward movements which the Amarna letters describe. It is uncertain whether the name *Shamashana* in the lists of Ramses II and III refer to Beth-Shemesh; it is, nevertheless, certain that, as Egypt succeeded in regaining Palestine, this district would be visited by the invading armies. Thus, for example, although Merenptah (*circa* 1244 B.C.) happens to record his victory over Ashkelon, Gezer, the people (or land) of Israel, etc., other places were naturally involved.

The general circumstances of the "Amarna" period throw valuable light upon the political, social, and religious conditions, which, it should be observed, are not radically different a few centuries later. Politically, the district lay exposed to influences from the maritime coast, to the traders from the Delta, from Phoenicia and from other parts of the Levant. At the same time the long-enduring intercourse with Egypt and the wide-spread supremacy of early Babylonian kings, introduced other elements, with the result that it is very difficult to determine at every stage how much of the culture is indigenous and how much is due to external influence. The proximity of Egypt has shown itself

¹ No. 335, Dhorme, p. 515.

invariably in the course of excavation : in scarabs, figures of Egyptian deities, etc. ; while in the Amarna letters we find that Egyptian supremacy meant the recognition of the Egyptian national cult.¹ As regards Babylonia, opinion is at variance ; some writers finding evidence for a profound influence, others holding the opinion that this influence was more indirect, and was more immediately due to the political supremacy of North Syria and the Hittites, where again Babylonian influence may be recognized. As regards the Levant, the remarkable Aegean civilization naturally left its mark through traders, etc., and Aegean influence has been found in the pottery, in architectural details, and in other features. Nevertheless, in view of the position of Palestine between Egypt and the northern powers, it is always necessary to consider whether this Aegean influence in turn is not as much indirect as direct. In the time of Ramses III, when the Philistines are first mentioned, it is indeed natural to infer that these foreigners brought with them a foreign culture ; but one must not forget that then, as in the Amarna age, the movements with which they were associated were both by land and by sea, and that, since North Syria and Asia Minor had their own culture, a distinction must be made, where possible, between what is specifically Aegean and what is merely of northern origin.² Hence, all in all, in this cosmopolitan Palestine, exposed to so many external influences, and possessing, in the nature of things, some indigenous culture and thought, it is only too easy to be impressed by analogies and parallels which may be found now in Egypt, now in Babylonia, and now in the Aegean. Ancient Arabia, Syria, and the great Hittite kingdom all have claims to our consideration, and they are factors—even if little known ones—in the archaeological history of Palestine.

In continuing the history of this district, one must lament the paucity of external evidence which precludes the attempt to connect Palestine, the land which had been influenced politically by Egypt or by the Hittites, with the land which (towards the close of the eleventh century) possessed an independent monarchy, and, in

¹ See on this question the present writer's *Religion of Ancient Palestine*, pp. 74 *sqq.*

² In Cyprus, Aegean art appears to reach the island in a mature, not to say, decadent stage of its development (J. L. Myres, *Class. Rev.*, 1896, p. 352), and the same may possibly be true of Eastern Asia Minor (See Lehmann-Haupt, *Abhandlungen*, ix, 3, Berlin, 1907, p. 68).

place of its many deities, a national God. If the great movement which appears to have brought the Philistines (first part of the twelfth century) had widespread effects, Ramses III, at all events, to judge from the Papyrus Harris, regained his province, and the archaeological features do not at present suggest any fundamental change. Whatever the decay of Egypt may have meant for Palestine, the subsequent steps cannot be traced. One certainly gains the impression that Judah and Israel were in the hands of the Philistines, but this impression is gained by ignoring Biblical evidence which conflicts with this; and even if Saul, the first king of Israel, delivered the land from them the historical prelude to this cannot be traced. Nevertheless, the Biblical narratives clearly illustrate the significance of Beth-Shemesh and its district for the history. Zorah and Eshtaol, associated with Danite families in Judg. xviii, are familiar in the stories of the heroic Samson, whose name points to the "Sun," and recalls the "House of the Sun" which lay across the Valley of Sorek. Among the narratives of Philistine and Israelite disputes, particular interest is attached to that of the return of the ark from Ashdod to Ekron, thence to Beth-Shemesh and finally to Kirjath-jearim (1 Sam. vi-vii, 1). Here, with the help of the Septuagint, we can recover the story of the calamity which befell the sons of Jeconiah who did not join with the people of Beth-Shemesh in welcoming the sacred ark, and it is to be presumed that the story hints at rival religious sects. Interesting also is the statement that the ark stopped in the field of one Joshua, and it seems that the narrator knew of a great stone which still stood as a witness to the event.

The Egyptian campaign, of which the capture of Gezer was an event (1 Kings, ix, 16), doubtless touched Beth-Shemesh; and some decades later Sheshonk (Shishak) mentions, in the statement of his expedition, Socoh, Gibeon, and Aijalon. The Book of Chronicles records that Rehoboam fortified Zorah, Aijalon, Azekah, etc. (2 Chron. xi, 6 *sqq.*); but there is no evidence for associating this with Shishak's invasion. A little later we hear that the Israelites were laying siege to Gibbethon—one of the Danite cities (1 Kings, xv, 27; xvi, 15), and "since we find it still uncaptured twenty-four years later (xvi, 15), it must have played as great a part in the wars with the Philistines as Ramoth-Gilead afterwards did in those with Damascus."¹ The contemporary Judaeon king was Asa, to

whose reign is ascribed a great invasion from the south, which was beaten back at Mareshah (2 Chron. xiv). Of Asa's dealings with the Philistines nothing is said.

In the subsequent reigns Beth-Shemesh is closely bound up with the interrelated political movements. Jehoshaphat's successful reign was followed by revolts, when his successor Jehoram suffered from both Edom and Philistia, and, according to 2 Chron. xxi, another invasion came from the south and swept upon Jerusalem. In the days of the dynasty of Jehu, when the Aramaeans oppressed Israel, Judah did not escape. In the time of Jehoash, Hazael of Syria marched against Gath (2 Kings, xii, 17), and apparently took the land of the Philistines (2 Kings, xiii, 22, Lucian's recension). The Israelite king Jehoash defeated the Aramaeans, and his contemporary Amaziah of Judah conquered Edom and perhaps also Philistia. At all events when Jehoash came against Judah, the armies met at Beth-Shemesh (2 Kings, xiv, 13), and this suggests that Amaziah had extended his sway westwards. The defeat of Amaziah was followed by the sack of Jerusalem, and there is some lacuna in the history.

Both Uzziah and Jotham appear to have held the district, and in the time of Ahaz we find a great confederation against Judah. Syria and Israel (2 Kings, xvi, 5) pressed in the north; Edom recovered its port Elath (verse 6, see the commentaries); and it accords with this that the Philistines invaded the Shephelah and took Beth-Shemesh, Aijalon, and other cities (2 Chron. xxviii, 18). There follows a period of keen Assyrian and anti-Assyrian factions. Assyrian armies march down to Gaza (734 B.C.), and again to Raphia on the border of Egypt (720 B.C.); a few years later Ashdod and Gath are visited. Finally, in 701 B.C., Sennacherib, after defeating the allies at Eltekeh, overthrew Joppa, Bene-berak, Ekron, Ashkelon, Lachish, etc., and turned against Hezekiah at Jerusalem. The western Judaeac cities were divided off to Ekron, Ashdod, and Gaza, and consequently it is probable that Beth-Shemesh once more passed into the hands of the Philistines. This was the age of the Assyrian domination, the spread of Assyrian cults and ideas, and, to judge from the cuneiform tablets at Gezer, it probably meant the presence of Assyrian garrisons. Little historical information has survived. The Scythian invasion, the sack of Ashkelon, and the siege of Ashdod by Psammetik, suggest that henceforth one must rely upon the evidence for the greater political vicissitudes affecting

the district of which Beth-Shemesh formed part. Egypt, as we know, sought to take advantage of the growing decay of Assyria, and by defeating Josiah at Megiddo once more seemed likely to gain Palestine and Assyria; but the battle of Carchemish (605 B.C.) made Babylonia the possessor of the empire which Assyria had possessed, and Nabonidus (*circa* 555 B.C.) claims his vassals as far as Gaza.

In these vicissitudes Beth-Shemesh lay in a district which, apart from external forms of cult and culture, shared the same general characteristics. In the Old Testament, for example, the Philistines appear before us as a Semitic—an Oriental—folk, and although the popular stories chiefly represent contempt and hatred for these uncircumcised people, there are also stories of alliance and covenant, and the events of the latter part of the eighth century show very clearly that there was then no feeling of exclusiveness. Exposed as the maritime coast was to the sea-traders, there was, no doubt, a constant infiltration of foreign elements, the presence of which will not necessarily be due to the Philistines of some centuries previously, while the use which Psammetik made of mercenaries from Asia Minor, etc., towards the close of the seventh century, probably caused a more distinct imprint—the presence of Carians at Jerusalem in the royal bodyguard being a case in point.¹

The fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.) and the Exile, although of profound religious and political importance for the Jews, scarcely meant a complete reversal of conditions. Even on a liberal estimate it is clear "that a large majority of the Jewish people remained on their land. This conclusion may startle us, with our generally received notions of the whole nation as exiled. But there are facts which support it . . . upon a much diminished territory some scores of thousands of Jews remained in Judah through all the period of the Exile."² There was a pressure from all around, and Calebite and related groups of half-Edomite affinity who had been settled around Hebron, are now found about Kirjath-jearim, Bethlehem, and Beth-gader, with families at Zorah and Eshtaol (1 Chron. ii).³ Their presence can be traced in Jerusalem and in

¹ They are mentioned in the narratives of the time of David (2 Sam. xx, 23, marg.) and Joash (2 Kings, xi, 4, 19), and their exclusion from the Temple of Jerusalem would date from Ezekiel (xliv, 7-9).

² G. A. Smith, *Jerusalem*, II, 269.

³ See, e.g., W. R. Harvey-Jellie, *Century Bible*, *ad loc.*

the neighbourhood more than a century later, in the time of Nehemiah.¹ Meanwhile, with the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus, the whole of the Babylonian empire passed over into the hands of the Persians, who for a time at least appear to have treated Palestine with sympathy. In this Persian age there is reason to infer that we should place the inscribed pottery-stamps.² The mixed character of the culture of this period may be illustrated by the Babylonian-Assyrian elements at Teima in North Arabia, where an Aramaic inscription, probably of the fifth century, names as priest Şalm-shezeh (an Aramaic name), son of Pet-osiris (Egyptian), and represents the god and his minister in Assyrian style. Also in Egypt, as one may see from the Jewish papyri recently discovered at Elephantine, Jewish, Persian, Egyptian, and Babylonian names intermingle, and the business methods are associated with Babylonian-Assyrian usage.³ In so far as history is concerned, one is left to inferences from the political movements of Egypt and Phœnicia, and consequently when in the fourth century Egypt invaded Palestine, and Artaxerxes Ochus avenged himself upon the provinces which revolted, it is to be supposed that Egyptian and Persian armies alternately left their influence upon Judæa.

Although Greek influence began to make itself felt on the coast before the time of Alexander the Great (332 B.C.), it is uncertain whether it would be at all deep in the more inland districts until well on in the Greek age. As in the past, the maritime coast and Palestine itself was a bone of contention between Egypt and Syria. Antiochus IV Epiphanes endeavoured to unify his kingdom and extinguish Judaism, and in the ensuing wars Philistia was the base from which Lysias conducted war against Judæa. Here men of the land of the Philistines took part against the Jews, and some idea of the former limited extent of Jewish territory can be gained from the account of the victorious campaigns of Judas against Hebron, and, by way of Mareshah (1 Macc. v, 66, so the old Latin

¹ Eduard Meyer, *Entstehung des Judenthums* (1896), pp. 119, 147, 167, 177, 183 note 1.

² *Q.S.*, 1909, October, pp. 290 *sqq.*, cf. E. J. Pilcher, *Proceedings of Society of Biblical Archaeology*, 1910, pp. 93-101, 143-152, and the remarks in this issue, pp. 232-234 below.

³ Again at Tell-Defenneh was found a god (of heaven, a kind of Zeus-Marduk) in Asiatic costume, with high mitre and Egyptian sceptre, standing on a lion. What is not Egyptian seems to show Babylonian-Assyrian style (W. M. Müller, *Egyptian Researches*, 1904, pp. 30 *sqq.*, and Plate XL).

and Josephus), into Philistine territory, where he ravaged Ashdod and other cities. These successes were followed up by the other Maccabaeans (Jonathan and Simeon), and, after a repulse by Antiochus VI (135 B.C.), by Alexander Jannaeus. This extended Jewish supremacy to the maritime coast.

We now reach the age of the intervention of the Romans. Pompey, after taking Jerusalem, restored Mareshah, Ashdod, and Jamnia "to their own inhabitants" (62 B.C.). A few years later the Parthians invaded Palestine, capturing and destroying Mareshah. In 30 B.C. the Idumaeen Herod received from Augustus (who was then in Egypt) the coast towns, thus enlarging the Judaeen kingdom to its earlier limits. This age, with its very close relations between the Jews, the Philistine coast, and the Idumaeans of the south was also one when, through Herod's Hellenistic sympathies, Greek civilization became part of Jewish life. A striking example of the internal culture is afforded by the tombs at Mareshah, where Greek, Phoenician and Idumaeen names are borne by families whose art is Egypto-Phoenician, and whose language is Greek.¹ The Idumaeans, it appears, did not abandon their own rites, and not until the next century can they be said to become an integral portion of the Jewish people. During the Roman period proper, the political government was Roman; so much so that under Caracalla (A.D. 198-217) all the subjects of the Roman empire enjoyed the civil rights of the *Cives Romani*. The internal culture was Hellenistic, and Judaism, after the fall of Jerusalem, centred at Jabneh, about 17 miles north-west of Beth-Shemesh.²

Christian influence at any early date spread into the Shephelah district,³ while monks and hermits brought up from Egypt the habits of the ascetic life. In the times of persecution "we can understand," writes Dr. Smith, "how easily this land of caves, where David and his men had hid themselves from Saul, would be used by Christian fugitives from the Greek cities of the coast." The history of the district during the centuries previous to the Mohammedan invasion (A.D. 634) lies scattered in Christian sources

¹ J. P. Peters and H. Thiersch, *Painted Tombs in the Necropolis of Marissa*, (P.E.F., 1905).

² Bethar, or Bethar, which played an important part in the Bar-Kokbeba revolt, and which the Romans besieged for over three years (A.D. 136), has been placed at Bittir, about ten miles east of Beth-Shemesh.

³ See G. A. Smith, *Hist. Geog.*, pp. 240 sqq.

and in the numerous epigraphical remains, and presents a confused picture of Christian conflicts with Greek and indigenous heathenism, of Roman organization, and of the continued advances of the Arabs, who had regularly been in contact with the famous port of Gaza.¹ After falling into the hands of the Persian Chosroes for a few years (A.D. 611-4), Palestine was retaken by the Byzantines, but with the capture of Gaza in A.D. 634 by 'Amr ibn el-Âs, the era of Mohammedanism begins.

Henceforth, if we make an exception of the Crusading period, the history of the district is influenced by Oriental movements, and the inveterate characteristics of custom and thought which had undergone such manifold developments in the course of centuries, now display themselves below a veneer of Christianity and Mohammedanism. Thus, the history of the district of Beth-Shemesh, like that of Palestine itself, becomes the more profound when it is viewed in the light of modern knowledge of the vicissitudes and the fate of the old Oriental world. Looking back upon past millennia, we see constant waves from the south (Arabia and Egypt) and from the north (Hittites, Assyria, etc.); an intermingling of political and cultural influences, and a persistence—as excavation has shown—of the old semi-heathenism. The growing decay of the controlling empires of Assyria and Egypt paved the way for a greater extent of internal independence in Palestine, and the steps lead on through the reforming ideals of the Old Testament to the growth of Christianity. As these leave the land of their birth, the land becomes once more “primitive,” illustrating in a variety of forms those foundations upon which ancient life and thought had been erected.

¹ M. A. Meyer, *History of the City of Gaza* (New York, 1907).
