

Mr. Merrill seems inclined to think that the five cities of the plain were situated on Tells, and that the five Tells already named exactly suit the position required. As, however, "Lot beheld all the plain of Jordan . . . until thou comest unto Zoar," *i.e.*, as far as Zoar, which was therefore the limit of the "plain," *i.e.*, of the Ciccar, it seems to me that Suweimeh, several miles farther south, could not be one of the five cities. We must accordingly examine the "plain" for another probable site, and extend our search, if necessary, at least as far as "the oasis of Wady Shaib or Nimrin" ("the waters of Nimrin," Isa. xv. 6), "which really belongs to the Shittim plain," in order to take in some other Tell to complete the required five. From Wady Shaib northwards to the Jabbok, near Tell Damia, the plain is "desolate and barren, owing to the fact that there are no fountains or streams flowing down upon it from the hills" (*Quarterly Statement*, 1876, p. 177).

It formerly seemed to me that the Damieh fords represented the name and general position of Admah, one of the five cities of the plain, but the interposition of this large barren tract renders this impossible. The plain, or Ciccar, which Lot beheld was "well watered *everywhere*," and must therefore have been limited on the north by this "real desert" region.

In finding Zoar we had the help of many indications, and we know for certain that Sodom was near it.

Towards fixing the precise position of the three remaining cities, all we have to guide us is that (1) they were *in the* "plain," *i.e.*, the Shittim oasis from Wady Shaib to Wady Hesbân, or to the Dead Sea; and (2) possibly, the *order* in which they are named, "Sodom and Gomorrah, and Admah and Zeboim, even unto Lasha" (? Laish). Zoar does not appear in the first list (Gen. x. 19).

This second point might lead us to conjecture that as Sodom was to the south, Zeboim, the last named, must have been the most northern city in the plain. Is there any Tell in this part bearing a name at all like Zeboim?

ZEBOIM.

ABOUT seven miles north-west from Tell esh Shâghur is a hill marked on Van de Velde's map as Tell esh Sha'ib. There seem to be good reasons for regarding this as Zeboim.

As the Z of Zoar has become "Sh" in Shâghur, we should expect the same change in Zeboim, and so we have above *Sha'ib*.

Zeboim (Auth. V.) seems to stand for two different Hebrew words, one meaning "hyænas" (Neh. xi. 34, and valley of Zeboim, 1 Sam. xiii. 18); the other "gazelles" (in Genesis Zeboim), from the Hebrew Tzebi (whence Tabitha), a gazelle. I consider, therefore, the essential part of the word Zeboim is preserved in Sha'ib. Thus as to position and name the identification seems to be sound.

But further there is a special reason why a city in this region should be called *Zeboim* or *gazelles*.

David fleeing from Jerusalem must have crossed the Jordan, near Jericho on his way to Mahanaim. Abner with his men retreating from Gibeon would, we may assert, have crossed about the same spot. (2 Sam. ii. 29.) "They walked through the plain (*arabah*), and passed over Jordan, and went through *all Bithron*, and came to Mahanaim." Wherever the last place may have been, there can be little doubt that the road to it passed near Tell esh Sha'ib, and (as at the present day) led up Wady Sha'ib. This part, then, of the country would seem to be described as *Bithron*.

In Song of Sol. ii. 17 we read: "Be thou like a roe (*i.e.*, gazelle) or a young hart upon the mountains of *Bether*." As *Bether* and *Bithron* are so much alike, and have been taken to be the same, why should one hesitate to consider "the mountains of *Bether* to be the district "*all Bithron*" through which Abner went, or, at any rate, the mountains above it, if *Bithron* was entirely in the plain? That the mountains of *Bether* were in Gilead seems next to certain from Song of Sol. viii. 14, "Be thou like to a roe (gazelle) or to a young hart upon the mountains of *spices*," or of the *balsam bushes*, producing the *balm* for which Gilead was renowned.

Thus, as in western Palestine, the Ayal (hart) gave its name to the valley and city of Ajjalon, so in the territory of Gad the Tzebi, or fleetly bounding (1 Chron. xii. 8, roes) gazelle, may have preserved its memory in Wady Sha'ib, and Tell esh Sha'ib, which I would thus recognise as *Zeboim*, on account of its name, general position, and proximity to the gushing streams from Nimrin (Isa. xv. 6), doubtless the favourite resort of the gazelle's natural enemy, the *nim'r*, or leopard.

As, however, the *Z* (*Tzade*) in *Zeboim* becomes *T* in the Aramaic *Tabittha*, and the Arabic for gazelle is *Dhebi* (Lieut. Conder, *Quarterly Statement*, 1876, p. 153), it might seem that *Shaib* after all can have nothing to do with *Zeboim*, and that the proposed identification fails on philological grounds. Yet the Hebrew *Tzur* becomes in Greek *Tyre* and in Arabic *Sur*. Here is variety in pronunciation. In Greek it cannot be determined whether σ or δ was more strongly marked in pronouncing ζ , while in the LXX. *Zeboim* is rendered $\Sigma\beta\omega\epsilon\iota\mu$. There are several instances (*e.g.*, *Zarephath*, *Zemaraim*, *Zorah*) in which the Hebrew ז (*Tsade*) is represented now by *S*; but I am not aware of any case except *Zeboim* in which it becomes *Dh*. *Shaib* would seem to be the natural form of the word if no meaning were attached to it, or even if it were slightly altered to have a meaning, just as *Ramah* has been changed into *Er Ram* (the tank); for possibly *Shaib* may signify "brooks" (*Quarterly Statement*, 1872, p. 140. *Yaskub fi Sh'aafb* = "it pours into the brooks").

It may be mentioned that Mr. Merrill says that an older name for Tell Kefrein is Tell esh Sharab ("Tell of drinking," or the place where good water is abundant). This is somewhat similar to *Shaib*, and so of course to *Zeboim*. On his map Tell *Shaib* seems to be called Tell *Churba*.

It is curious that east of Acre is a valley marked on Van de Velde's as Wady *Shagghir* or *Shā'ab*, and a district in Galilee is called Esh Shāghur.

Ayal (the hart) is mentioned in Psa. xlii. 1, which is allowed to have been composed on the eastern side of the Jordan, and why not, I would ask, by David, while he lay at Mahanaim? If this city be identified with Mahneh, it is a remarkable coincidence that close to it is a village named el-Mesar (Van de Velde) or Mezer (Finn's "Byeways," p. 67), recalling "the hill (really *mountain*) *Mizar*," while not far off a fine view is obtained of Mount *Hermon*, and probably of the *Jordan* valley, answering to the words, "the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites" (Psa. xlii. 6).

W. F. BIRCH.

AI.

TRULY Ai is like a will-o'-the-wisp. It has been seen at Et-Tel, Haiyan, Kh. Haiy, and Rummon; yet still it eludes unanimous identification.

On the new map Et Tell is marked E.S.E., and Michmash, near Kh. Haiy, a little S. of S.E. from Beitin (Bethel). Thus the expression, "Ai, on the east side of Bethel" (Josh vii. 2), does not exclude any of the above-named sites. Michmash was *eastward* from Beth-aven (1 Sam. xiii. 5 = to the east of Bethaven.—Sp. Comm.), which again, apparently, was "on the east side of Bethel" (Josh. vii. 2). The words "east side" fail, therefore, to help us in choosing between the four places already specified, while, if Deir Diwan be Bethaven (as first proposed by Mr. Finn), then *eastward* in 1 Sam. xiii. means something very little east of due south.

In Josh. vii., viii., and Neh. vii. 32, Bethel is so closely connected with Ai, that it seems to me that Aija (Neh. xi. 31) and Avim (Josh. xviii. 23) must be allowed to be Ai, which I regard as also being Aiath (Isa. x. 28).

The cliff Rimmon (Judg. xx. 45) appears to me to be identical with the Rimmon (Auth. V. translated "pomegranate") of 1 Sam. xiv. 2; and the boundary of Benjamin I take to have been drawn south of Rummon, which in this case cannot have been the site of Ai, though it is visible from Geba.

As the height of Almit is 2,089 feet, of Hizmah 2,020 feet, and of Geba 2,220 feet, the first of these must be visible from the last, as the intermediate distance is about two miles. Thus all the places named in Isa. x. 28-32 (as supposed to be identified on p. 58, *Quarterly Statement*, 1877, and p. 133, 1878) have been *ascertained* to be visible from Geba, except three—viz., Gallim, which has not been tested, Ramah, which I still hope will prove to be visible, as Almit and Laish have done (*Quarterly Statement*, 1877, p. 205), and lastly Ai (or Aiath), which is visible if it be Et Tel or Kh. Haiy, or Rummon, and probably so if it be Haiyan.

Ai must have had a good supply of water close at hand, as was the case at Jericho, Bethel, Gibeon, &c. To help us, then, in identifying its site, we have (1) a spring, (2) an open valley (*emek*), (3) another valley (*gai*), not to speak of ruins or a position commanding the road from Jericho. Surely we may hope that the new map will solve the difficulty.