

THE OLD HEBREW CALENDAR-INSCRIPTION FROM
GEZER.

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THE Hebrew inscription from Gezer is the subject of a lengthy study by Father Vincent in the *Revue Biblique*, April, 1909, pp. 243 *et seq.*, whose attitude towards his predecessors contrasts with the value of his own conclusions. He explains the much discussed character as a *nûn*, and reads **אסף ירון**, etc. This is out of the question. The writer of the tablet was very inexperienced in the script. He had no style of his own, and the same characters take different forms. The character under discussion, too, has a different shape on every occasion. The forms are quite clear in lines 2, 5 *sq.*, and *all* can be shown from the oldest Semitic alphabet on the inscriptions of the IXth–VIIIth century B.C., to be *wâw*: װ (line 2) from old Hebrew seals (Levy, *Siegel und Gemmen*, Tafel III, 7, 6); װ (line 5), from the inscription of Mesha; װ (line 6), from the old Aramaic inscription of Z-k-r. None of these forms are found as *nûn* throughout the entire history of the alphabet. In the first line the sign before ן, at the end, is almost entirely destroyed. Before **אסף** I can perceive, in the photograph, the form װ. This also is certainly *wâw*. It is a transitional form between the character of the Moabite stone and that on the Siloam inscription, and finds a resemblance in the seal, Levy, Tafel III, 9. That this is not *nûn* is shown also by the direction of the shaft, which slants from left to right, whereas the shaft of the *nûn* has the contrary direction.

I had already assumed that the letter graphically corresponds best of all to the old Semitic *wâw*. In a letter to the Editor¹ I had, however, pointed out the possibility that it was to be read as *wâw*, and connected with the so-called *wâw compaginis*, as in **חִתְרוֹ אָרָץ**, etc. (*cp.* p. 27, note).² This conception of the reading (*viz.*,

¹ [Dated December 8th.—*Ed.*]

² My meaning is not quite correctly rendered in this note; in the reprint it runs, "that the sign could be ן; as *wâw compaginis*, but then it would presumably have been used throughout."

קָצְרוּ לֵל יָרְחוֹ אָסָף has, in the meanwhile appeared to me to be very probable, in fact almost certain. The construction comes in the Old Testament only in elevated address, but naturally was not invented by the writers in question, but is an older or dialectical usage. Prof. G. Hoffmann now draws my attention to the fact that the construction with this binding *wāw* makes the second noun definite, and the parallel between הִיתוּ אֲרֵץ (Gen. i, 24) and הִיתָ אֲרֵץ (v. 25), shows that both constructions are syntactically alike. In the Gezer inscription the *wāw* is wanting in those cases where the following noun could not have the definite article. That, on the other hand, the *wāw* is wanting in line 7 is simply an inconsistency which is not altogether strange in dealing with an inexperienced writer.

The assumption of a plural or dual יִרְדֹּן is also already excluded by קָצְרָ שְׁעָרִים. This term is to be expected on *a priori* grounds, and an examination of the position of the מ in זָמַר shows that the מ further above, belongs to the line above, and not to the one below it. The writer puts מ lower than the other letters, and in the word זָמַר it is so low that the shaft stands in the next line. The מ in line 4 is scarcely lower, and, besides, it is possible that the presence of a flaw in the stone caused him to put it where it now stands.

I confine myself here to these few remarks because the value of Father Vincent's lengthy article depends entirely upon his reading of the letter in question.

REMAINS AT KHURBET SHEM'A, NEAR SAFED.¹

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THE megalithic structure known as *Sarir Nebi Shem'a*, "The Throne (or Bedstead) of the Prophet Shammai" (*Q.S.*, 1907, p. 113) consists of the following members: the photograph (Fig. 1) with the plans and sections (Plate I) will help to make this description clear:—

(1) A foundation of small stones, sunk in the ground to their tops.

¹ [Held over from the "Diary of a Visit to Safed," *Q.S.*, April, 1907.—*Ed.*]