

## THE "HOLY PLACE" OF 'AIN DŪK.

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TOWARDS the middle of September of 1918, a Turkish shell fired from a battery at El-Ghôranyeh against the British trenches at 'Ain Dūk, north-west of Jericho, laid bare a part of an inscribed mosaic which, as the inscription itself testified, was part of an old Jewish "Holy Place." An Australian regiment on the spot succeeded in opening out what the shell had unearthed, but under the circumstances could do little to the further excavation or even to the protection of the spot. During May, 1919, the British military authorities took steps to safeguard all archaeological remains of interest, and Captain Engelbach and Lieutenant Mackay rediscovered the mosaic, and, although it had deteriorated somewhat in the interval, were able to protect it more adequately. They enlisted the help of the Dominican School of Biblical Studies, and Fathers Lagrange and Vincent were carried off to the spot on June 2nd by Lieutenant Mackay in order to examine the remains. As a result of this, Father Vincent was able to give an exhaustive account of the mosaic in the *Revue Biblique*, July-Oct., 1919, pp. 532-563. In addition to this, Major A. M. Furber, who had taken a photograph († in September, 1918), on his return to England, sent it to the Paris Academy, where it was submitted to Prof. Clermont-Ganneau. The latter gave some account of it at a meeting of the Oriental Societies in London, September, 1919, and also contributed a popular account to the *Times* (Oct. 10th). The paragraphs that follow are entirely indebted to the studies of these two renowned archaeologists, and must be regarded merely as a hasty account of this new addition to our knowledge of Jewish Palestine.

The inscribed mosaic of 'Ain Dūk has an immediate resemblance to the inscribed mosaics of the Galilean synagogues at Kefr Kenna (Cana) and Sefuriyeh (Sepphoris). The locality itself is the site of an ancient town, and the name Dūk is usually identified with the Dok of 1 Macc. xvi, 15, the fortress near Jericho where Simon the Maccabee was murdered by his son-in-law Ptolemy. Josephus (*Ant.*, XIII, viii, 1, *B.J.*, I, ii, 3) calls the place Dagon (Δαγών), a name

which, though associated with the Philistines, also occurs in the place-names Beth-dagon (? Beit-Dejan, six miles south-east from Joppa, or Dājūn, one and a half miles further south), and Beit Dejan, nearly seven miles east of Nablus—both places, as Sir George Adam



THE JEWISH INSCRIPTION FROM 'AIN DŪK.

(From Father Vincent's reproduction in the *Revue Biblique*, 1919.)

Smith points out, lay "on an important trade route from Philistia to the Jordan Valley" (*Ency. Bib.*, col. 551).

The evidence of Josephus is not to be pressed too far, but the question has arisen whether the "holy place" was that of an orthodox Jewish synagogue, or whether it was not that of some

sect. It is noteworthy that the inscription refers to the "holy place," for, this, as Philo tells us, was the term used by the Essenes (*ἱεροὶ τόποι*), and "it is known that the Essenes lived in precisely those parts around the mouth of the Jordan and the Dead Sea" (Clermont-Ganneau). Further, there are indications of animal and human representations, and the *motifs*, accordingly, recall Galilean rather than strictly Jewish usage.<sup>1</sup> It is conceivable, therefore, that Dūk, once named after one of the "strange" gods—though Dagon is not specifically Philistine—lay rather outside the border of orthodox Jewish usage.

The text may be read as follows (letters surmounted with dots are doubtful, those in brackets are restored):—

[fracture] לטב	1
כייר	2
בינימין פרנסה	3
בר יוסה	4
דכירין לטב כלמן	5
דמתחזק ויהב או	6
[ ] הבה בהדן אתרה	7
[ק]דישה בן דהב בן	8
[כ]סף בן כל מקמה	9
[ת]היא [fracture] ון חזקהון	10
בהדן אתרה קדישה	11
אמן	

This may be translated: "Honoured be the memory of Benjamin the Manager, son of Josah. Honoured be the memory of everyone who exerts himself and gave or shall give (?) in this holy place, gold or silver or any valuable . . . . in this Holy Place. Amen."

This appeal for funds is in Jewish-Aramaic, and language, script and style recall the inscription from Kefr Kenna published in the *Quarterly Statement*, 1901, p. 374 *sqq.*, 1902, pp. 132 *sqq.* The name Benjamin is curiously written fully, whereas in line 6 the demonstrative is defective (in the Talmud written *הדין*). The point is of some importance for lines 7, 8, where Father Vincent interprets בן as a possible defective writing for בני, and translates: "fils d'or

<sup>1</sup> Among the designs can be recognised a hare, a pheasant, a jackal, and a lion.

= gens fortunes, riches." On the other hand, the Rabbinic use of  $\text{בין} \dots \text{בין}$ , "both . . . as well as," may be noticed, and Prof. Clermont-Ganneau translates: "whether gold or silver, or any other valuable" ( $\text{מְקַמָּא}$ ). At the beginning of line 6 there is some difficulty. Father Vincent conjectures some form of  $\sqrt{\text{הב}}$  in the sense of collaborating; but Prof. Clermont-Ganneau's translation has much in its favour. The imperfect  $\text{יהב}$  (written like the perfect) is met with in Nabataean (*C.I.S.*, II, 199, line 6; G. A. Cooke, *North Semitic Inscriptions*, No. 81, p. 224); and the combination  $\text{יהב} \dots \text{יהב}$  would find an excellent analogy also in Nabataean (*e.g.*, *C.I.S.*, II, 197, line 6, Cooke, No. 79),  $\text{כלמן די יובן} \dots \text{או יובן}$ , "every one who shall *sell* . . . or *buy*."<sup>1</sup> The meaning of line 9 *sqq.*, eludes satisfactory explanation. Clermont-Ganneau translates: "be not backward in giving to this Holy Place"; Vincent: "que leur soit (accordée), s'il plaît à Dieu, leur part dans ce lieu saint." There may be some reference to a "right" (*cf.* Targ. and Talm.  $\text{חוקה}$ ) granted to contributors. At all events, it is to be noticed that the inscribed mosaic at Kefr Kenna ends with a wish: "May it be a blessing to them. Amen" ( $\text{תהי להן ברכתה אמן}$ ).

The term, the "Holy Place," corresponds, as pointed out by Father Vincent (p. 560), to the Hebrew "place" ( $\text{מְקוֹם}$ , *mākōm*), in the sense of "place of cult." Fathers Vincent and Lagrange suggest that this use of the Aramaic *athrā* applies to certain rather obscure references in the Elephantine papyri (p. 560 *seq.*). It is à propos to observe that the Hebrew *mākōm* is used in the inscription on the synagogue at Kefr Bir'im in Galilee: "May there be peace in this place, and in all the places of Israel! Yosah the Levite, son of Levi, made this lintel, may a blessing come upon his works."<sup>2</sup> To the present day the locality of 'Ain Dūk preserves the recollection of sacred associations, and some years ago Prof. Clermont-Ganneau investigated the current religious and other legends in his admirable *Archaeological Researches* (III, pp. 20 *sqq.*, 40 *sqq.*) The region is called *ard makām el-Imām 'Alī*, "the land of the sanctuary of the Imām 'Ali." To-day, the *Makām* is, in fact, the holy place, *par*

<sup>1</sup> The two forms (corresponding to the Pael and Peal [Syriac] or the Piel and Qal [Hebrew]) are pronounced differently.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth noticing, also, that  $\text{במעו'ו}$ , the last word in the Kefr Bir'im inscription, is merely an error for  $\text{במעש'ו}$  ("on his works"). The possible presence of actual mistakes in the 'Ain Dūk inscription cannot, therefore, be dismissed.

*excellence*, of the Imām, and the traditions appear to be the lineal descendants of those in ancient times, when Joshua, standing upon the holy place (*mākōm*) and close by Jericho, saw the angel of the Lord (Josh. v, 13-15).

Strange to say, later traditions associated with the locality the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim. The data are discussed learnedly and at length by Father Vincent; for a concise statement reference may be made to Sir George Adam Smith's article on "Gilgal" in the *Ency. Bib.*, vol. II, col. 1731 *seq.* It appears, on the one hand, that there is reason to believe that there has been a confusion of a Gilgal near Shechem (*Juleijil*, two and a half miles south-east of Shechem) with that by Jericho. Indeed, other Gilgals are also known. But, in addition to this, the actual conquest of Central Palestine is not definitely indicated; Joshua (Josh. viii, 30 *sqq.*) builds his altar on Mount Ebal in accordance with the command of Moses (Deut. xxvii, 4, cf. xi, 30), but this is territory which has not yet been conquered. The Septuagint (B), feeling the difficulty, introduced the passage in the next chapter (after Josh. ix, 2); and Josephus and the Samaritan Book of Joshua placed it after the completion of the account of the conquests. Either it is out of place and must come in at a later part of the book, or it belongs to a tradition of an entry of the tribes into Central Palestine, and in the latter case it is parallel to that of the entry of Jacob to Shechem (Gen. xxxiii, 18; cf. Abraham, Gen. xii, 6), and has been ignored in favour of the crossing further south.

As regards the date, there is wide divergence between the two authorities. Clermont-Ganneau is "inclined on various grounds to place the date of the inscription" as late as historical conditions will permit. "The very fact," he says, "that we are dealing with a mosaic pavement is not the least of these considerations, for the ancient synagogues of Galilee, which go back to the second century A.D., had not as yet mosaic pavements, all their pavements were made of big stone flags." He argues, further, that there is evidence for Jewish settlements to the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., right into the Byzantine period; and Eusebius and Jerome tell of fanatical Jews settled in the locality who used to attack the monks on the mountain.

On the other hand, Vincent urges that the inscription is not later than the age of Herod the Great. His arguments are partly epigraphical, partly archaeological. As regards the palaeography

we have not sufficient dated material for a criterion; it does not give one the impression of being so late as Clermont-Ganneau would wish to make it. Yet the "jots" and "tittles" may be an argument against too early a date. On the other hand, if, as can be suspected, the locality always had a certain independence of its own (cf. Vincent, p. 554), the history of its script may be somewhat independent of that of other parts of Palestine. Vincent himself draws attention to the interest of the Idumeans in the Jordan Valley, and emphasizes the important fact that while the inscription indicates the religious character of the "holy place," the art—the representation of animals, and even of the human figure—offers a contrast which throws light upon the date. At what age, he asks, can we find this blend of Jewish settlers and free artistic energy? Only in the last quarter of the century before the Christian era does "the political and moral situation of the Jewish communities of the Jordan Valley harmonise with the artistic conditions that would best account for the monument" (p. 558). Thus, he ascribes the pavement to the Herodian period (p. 559 *seq.*), a date with which the palaeography, as he contends, does not disagree.

Father Vincent's elaborate article raises many points which cannot be dealt with here; and I restrict myself to these rough notes in order that the inscription may be laid before the readers of the *Quarterly Statement* with a few preliminary details on some of the features of importance.

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#### REVIEWS AND NOTICES OF PUBLICATIONS.

*A Brief Description of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem, and other Christian Churches in the Holy City, with some account of the Mediaeval copies of the Holy Sepulchre surviving in Europe*, by George Jeffrey, F.S.A. Demy 8vo, with 59 illustrations and plans. Cambridge University Press.

The book is made up of four parts: (1) History; (2) Description of the Monuments; (3) Lesser Shrines of the Holy City; (4) The Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem reproduced as a Pilgrim Shrine in Europe. The first two parts, which deal with the Holy Sepulchre, cover about one half of the whole volume of 228 pages.