

## The Historical Background of the Lachish Letters

by S. YEIVIN

The author confirms the main points of Prof. Torczyner, viz. that: 1) all the letters were written by the officer Hoshayahu, stationed in one of the military posts outside of Lachish, to his superior Yaush, apparently the commander of the Lachish fortress. 2) the reason why the letters were found near the city gate and not in the military archives, is due to the fact that they probably served as evidence in the case against the writer of the letters. 3) the accusation against Hoshayahu involved also the Prophet. 4) the events referred to in the letters took place shortly before the final fall of Lachish (in 587 B. C.).

Prof. Torczyner further concludes that the Prophet is to be identified with Uriyah, the son of Shemayah, who, according to the Book of Jeremiah, was executed by order of king Jehoiakim. But as the events described in the ostraca happened at a later period, Prof. Torczyner maintains that "in the text of Jeremiah, the name of Jehoiakim has been erroneously put in, where originally Zedekiah had been written". What we know from the Bible about the character of Zedekiah prevents us from assuming that he, the weakling, should have ordered the killing of the Prophet. The letters do not seem to refer to Uriyah but to another prophet whose name we do not know.

It seems to the author that the order of the letters is as follows: a) Letter II is a general denial of the accusation against Hoshayahu. b) Letter III gives the contents of the accusation with a renewed denial. c) In Letter VI the accusation is again denied and a new subject is introduced, viz. the sending of the letters of the king and of the officers. d) Letter V, which resembles letter III. As to the latter there is a difference of opinion between the author and Prof. Torczyner: the former reads in line 19: "Nedabyahu, the nepos of the King", while the latter prefers "Tobyahu, the nepos of the king". e) The last letter is IV, as is shown by the final passage "for we do not see Azeka".

As for the two main figures mentioned in the correspondence, Hoshayahu and Ya'osh (this reading is preferable), the

author would like to bring them in relation with biblical personages. Hoshayahu may be the father of the two military officers Ya'azniyahu and 'Azaryahu, while Ya'osh may be identical with Yoash of I. Chron. IV, 22, who seems to be a local landed proprietor.

### The Ancient Water Supply of Jerusalem

by M. HECKER

#### 3. *The Course of the Siloam Tunnel.*

The Siloam water-tunnel built in the VIIIth cent. B.C., has a total length of 513 metres, while the actual distance between its two extreme points is only 320 m. The writer is of the opinion that the course of the tunnel is due to the geological formation of the rock. The Ophel through which the tunnel was cut consists mainly of three layers of limestone, of varying hardness. The layers are, from top to bottom: Mizzi ḥilu, Meleki and Mizzi Yahûdi. The lowest stratum, formed by the Mizzi Yahûdi stone is the hardest and most difficult to be worked, while the upper layers are more porous and softer. As may be seen readily from the plan, the builders intended at first to take the shortest way from the Gihon spring to the inside of the town where they would feel safer from the approaching enemy. But as they came nearer to the town, the miners found themselves working in the Mizzi Yahûdi layer which rises in correspondence with the slope. The same thing happened to the other group which worked its way through from the inside of the town.

The engineer who directed the works decided at this stage to change the original plan of the water-tunnel and to conduct the greater part of it not inside the town but outside of it, along the eastern slope, formed entirely of soft Meleki stone. The change can be recognized clearly on the plan where points 2 and 12 swerve suddenly in the direction of the outward slope.

#### 4. Χαφεναθα.

We are told in the Book of the Maccabees I, XII, 17 that in the time of Jonathan (ca. 142 B.C.) "the wall that was upon the brook towards the east, was broken down; and... repaired, that which is called Χαφεναθα".

According to Prof. J. N. Epstein, the expression indicates an arched construction which he identifies with an imaginary bridge

built on a series of arches. But the correct solution lies elsewhere. Χαφεναθα, it is true, indicates an arched construction, but we have to think of curves in plan and not in elevation. The expression can thus refer only to the external city wall excavated by Bliss. The portion of the wall situated in the Tyropoeon Valley had a special importance as it formed the exterior enclosure wall of the water cistern situated in the pomœrium. It is described by Bliss as consisting of a series of buttresses with rectangular niches in between. For constructional reasons we have to assume that the niches were not rectangular but round and thus had the function of horizontal curves resisting the pressure of the water stored in the cistern. To these round niches refers the expression Χαφεναθα, which we are told was rebuilt during the reign of Jonathan.

### Dallata, Kadesh, and Baneas

by S. ASSAF

The author offers some remarks on the two documents published by J. Braslavski in the last issue of the *Bulletin* (pp. 124 ff.).

The Oxford document does not consist of two letters, but forms a single one, which starts in Hebrew, continues in Arabic, and ends in Hebrew again. The author agrees with Neubauer that "Kds" does not refer to Kadesh, but to Jerusalem (el-Quds). The note is followed by the full publication of the document in question, from which it would appear that the Jewish community in Baneas was under the jurisdiction of Damascus.

### The Letter of R. Menahem of Hebron \*)

by S. KLEIN

The author adduces further proofs to support his first assertion that the Letter is apocryphal. He bases his arguments on the incorrect topographical statements of R. Menahem and shows the sources from which the errors arose.

1. The description of the route from Acre through Beisan to Tyre and Sidon is based on an incorrect reading of a Talmudic text, in which a town Meisan (spelled wrongly Beisan, now Qal'at Mis) is mentioned as being near Tyre and Sidon.

2. The mention of the Tomb of Joshua, the son of Nun, as being near Arbel in Galilee is due to a misinterpretation of a passage in a letter of R. Samuel, an earlier traveller who describes a tomb of Joshua at Arbel. But R. Samuel refers to Joshua, son of Perahia, and not to the Biblical Joshua, the son of Nun.

3. R. Menahem locates the tomb of the mother of Moses and of his wife on Mt. Carmel, while all other sources place the Tomb near Tiberias. The author concludes that R. Menahem

must have used the Talmudic passage according to which the well of Moses' sister may be seen from the top of Mt. Carmel.

In a similar way other topographical "theories" of the traveller may be readily explained.

\*) Cf. Ben-Zevi, *Bulletin* V (1938), pp. 119 foll.

### The Jewish Settlement at Hukok—Yaquq

by I. BEN-ZEVI

The village of Yaquq, to the southwest of Safed, lies in the neighbourhood of Jebel Habaqbûq, named after the Prophet Habaquq who is supposed to be buried there (Nabî Habquq). Both, Arabs and Jews uphold the tradition and frequently visit the tomb. Yaquq is identical with the ancient Hukok mentioned in the Bible.

The author believes that the name Hukok being similar in sound to Habakuk gave origin to the identification of the site with the birth place of the Prophet, and that the Jewish population which lived in this place during the Middle Ages, carried on this tradition. The above thesis is proved by descriptions and tales of various travellers who visited the site in the Middle Ages. Even until the XVIIth Century we find mentions of Jews from Yaquq.

### The Geographical Location of the Poem of *Krt*

by R. DE-VAUX

The Poem of *Krt* discovered among the Ras Shamra inscriptions, contains several place names which allow us to locate the events described in it.

Line 110 mentions the name of Šarna, which may be identified with Σαρωνᾶς, of Eusebius and would correspond to Šaru-na of the Tell el-<sup>c</sup>Amârna letters the name of which survives in the modern Sarûna, 10 km SW of the Lake of Tiberias.

A little to the North of Sarûna is Khirbet ed-Dâmîe, a name which recalls the Great 'Udm and the Little 'Udm of the Poem. As in other instances, Dâmîeh corresponds to a Hebrew Adamah or Adummim, and the Biblical name which would fit the case is Adami-Hanneqeb (Josh. 19, 33). Following the rendering of the Septuaginta and of the Vulgata, the masoretic text has to be corrected to Adummē-Hanneqeb, a status constructus of a plural Adummim. Adummim would thus correspond to the double city of 'Udm mentioned in the Ras Shamra text.

The third place which has to be sought in the same neighbourhood is S<sup>c</sup>t, identified with Khirbet Sa<sup>c</sup>d, some 10 km to the NW of Dâmîeh.

The Ras Shamra text contains further a passage, which may be rendered „at the fountain Š'ebt, at the spring Mimlat”.

These are to be identified with Kfar Sabt and with Khirbet Mamelia, which lie in the same neighbourhood.

Conclusion: The itinerary prescribed by the god El to *Krt* starts at Tyre and Sidon, and after a journey of four days *Krt* arrives at 'Udmu. The road is an ancient one, known from Biblical indications and from Egyptian sources. The same road was used by the Crusaders, and is known to-day as *Darb el-Hawârna*, the „Road of the Hauranis”.

### A Canaanite Inscription from Shechem

by B. MAISLER

A fragment of a small stele was discovered in 1934 at Balâta, among the ruins of a middle Bronze Age building. The fragment shows part of a human figure and seven clear signs in Canaanite script. The inscription has been published by Prof. Böhl who proposes the reading **ראש שַׁעֲרָא** = „The Head of the Gate”.

The above reading cannot be accepted because of the following reasons: a) The ending **א** of the second word is unusual; b) the reading “head of the gate” has no connection with the votive stele; c) the third and fourth sign represent a **מ** and not an inverted **ש**.

The author suggests the reading **ירחממ ירה** = „Have mercy, o Yerah!” The stele would thus be dedicated to the Canaanite god Yerah (Yerah), who is known to have been worshipped in the IIIrd and in the IIInd millennium B.C.; the carved figure probably represents the god himself.

### Plesheth, Philistines

by N. H. TORCZYNER

The name of the Philistines is derived from the country in which they settled, i. e. from Plesheth. This country is called in the Bible “Shephelah” and the name **פלשת**, is nothing else but a metathesis of the name **שפלה** (שפלה). Such changes frequently occur in words with sibilant sounds.

### On Plesheth — Shephelah

by S. Y.

The thesis of Prof. Torczyner is acceptable on philological grounds, but has the difficulty that the Purasati (Philistines) are mentioned in Egyptian inscriptions of Ramesses III, i.e. in a period prior to their settlement in the Shephelah.

### Further on Dalata, Kadesh, and Baneas

J. Braslawsky refers to the note of S. Assaf (pp. 16 ff.) and adduces more arguments to prove that “Qds” is identical with Kadesh in Upper Galilee.