

WHERE IT HAPPENED

A GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL
TRIP IN BIBLE LANDS
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
OF ALL AGES

by

ISLIP COLLYER

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JERUSALEM FROM THE AIR

THE FRONTISPIECE EXPLAINED

THE "Dome of the Rock" and the Temple area are easily identified just to the right of the centre of the picture. Opposite, on the slope of the Mount of Olives, a patch of trees shows the Garden of Gethsemane. The steep Kedron ("Black") Valley, its western side in dark shadow, follows a twisting course between. Lit by the afternoon sun is the village of Silwan (Siloam) in the foreground.

The southern side of the hill slopes down in the foreground to the Valley of Hinnom, which curves round to the west. The terraces where vegetables are grown can be clearly seen.

The present city wall can be traced westwards from the Temple area. The old wall extended lower down the hillside. David's city was on the south-east hill called Ophel, between the Kedron and the Tyropoean Valleys. The shallow Tyropoean Valley which divided the hill-top, has now become almost filled with debris from successive destructions of the city.

In the Western wall is the Jaffa Gate. The present wall to the north can also be traced in the photograph. Outside the wall to the north-east a road crosses the upper part of the Kedron Valley, and skirts the lower part of the Mount of Olives. This is the road to Jericho. Jesus coming this way from Bethany on his ride into Jerusalem, would see Herod's Temple high up on Mount Moriah, gleaming above the dark valley; and when he looked on it, he wept.



JERUSALEM FROM THE AIR

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CHAPTER I

The Chariot of Fancy

PERHAPS some of you who are very young would prefer to read a story of adventure. You may think of geography as a very uninteresting study, reminding you of the class room and the school-master. But if you were members of a party wrecked on a South Sea island and for a year or two you had to live far from ordinary civilization, you would not need any story books to interest you, for life itself would be adventure enough. As for geography, it would be the most fascinating of all possible studies. You would want to explore the island and find all you possibly could about it : its hills, its streams, its valleys and woods, and all the animals and birds which made their home there.

Well, are you not in effect cast upon an island ? By the accident of birth you are living upon a very wonderful island, floating in space, and with many other islands in view on a clear night. Finding out the truth about this island on which we live is more interesting than any story could be.

In some schools geography is now taught more in this manner. Boys are shown how to

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find the Polar star and so to know which direction is north. All know the constellation called the Great Bear. The two stars at the head of this group are called "the pointers" because they point to the Polar star, the one light in all the heavens which does not appear to move. Our astronomers tell us that the axis of the earth is in line with the Polar star. This is the tip of the tail of the "Little Bear", a kind of miniature imitation of the Great Bear. It can easily be found on a clear night. The earth turns on its axis once every twenty-four hours, and that is why sun, moon and stars seem to move across the heavens, the one exception being the Polar star which alone seems stationary. Those who have read Shakespeare will perhaps remember that Julius Caesar likened himself to the immovable Polar star—rather an extreme bit of pride even for him.

I can remember one very clear night when the Great Bear shone out brilliantly in the heavens. While looking at this northern constellation it occurred to me that if the scientists were right in saying that the earth turns on its axis, with the axis always pointing to the Polar star, not only would the stars above us seem to move from east to west, but those in the north would change their relative positions, appearing to twist round the Polar star. In four hours time, I said to myself, the earth will have completed a sixth part of its revolution. The Great Bear will then not appear on its present level,

but will be reared up sixty degrees. I tried to move my head to the right position for obtaining this view. Four hours later I went out again, and the Great Bear was rearing just as had been anticipated. All the stars in the north appeared to be circling round the unmoving centre, the Little Bear behaving as if the end of his tail was nailed to the Polar star, and all he could do was to move round it.

This is only one of many interesting experiments and simple tests one can make in the study of the stars. For the study of geography the Polar star is one of the most important of the heavenly bodies. In the northern hemisphere it reveals to us the points of the compass so that without an instrument we can take our bearings. Some boys, having learned how to find this star, have proceeded to make maps of the country round their homes, maps to scale and with all important objects marked. Some have gone further, using geometrical principles, and learning the elements of navigation. They have found such study absorbingly interesting, and at the same time have been preparing for serious work to be taken up in later years. It has been a game, and yet of enduring value.

For the moment we propose a game in some ways much easier and yet more ambitious. We are going to survey the most important of all lands : most important and most interesting not only because of its history, but also for its destiny. It is assumed that readers are well

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acquainted with Bible history, and the many incidents which are recorded with far more detail and dramatic movement than is to be found in ordinary histories. We propose to link up the well known incidents, and show where they happened. Repeatedly we shall find that the geography of a locality throws light on the history. The experiences of some of the Israelites which seem strange as we read of them become perfectly intelligible when we know something of the land in which they lived. We remember the ambush set by Joshua to overwhelm the men of Ai, and we can find the rocks which made the move possible. We remember the extraordinary description of the attack on the Philistines by Jonathan and his armour bearer at Michmash, and we find that a little knowledge of the locality renders the record so graphic that the incident seems to come to life again. Even the lion in a pit in time of snow—an extraordinary association of ideas—becomes easy to understand when we know why Palestine is the one country in all the world where the lion, a lover of warmth, might find himself in such an uncomfortable position.

We propose, then, starting from England, to take our seats in a chariot far faster than any aeroplane, the chariot of fancy, and to have a look at some of these places. Our object all the time is to find a simple and natural way of remembering. Our first fanciful flight may impress the memory of the position of Palestine

THE CHARIOT OF FANCY

in relation to the countries of Europe, and the position of Ur of the Chaldees in relation to Palestine. When we have found the city from which Abram came, we will dismiss the fast moving chariot, and follow the course taken by the patriarch when he was first called out from his kindred. We will take a general survey of the land of Palestine from north to south as Abram did when he moved from Haran right down into Egypt. Then just as the patriarch turned back with instructions to go through the land in the length and breadth of it, so we will make a more leisurely survey from south to north, taking note of the main geographical features, and calling to mind the various incidents of the history associated with each locality.

If you have such knowledge of Bible history as ought to be found in every Sunday School, there will be no confusion between incidents far removed from each other in time. If in mentioning the river Jordan we remember that the children of Israel crossed the river when they first entered the land, that Naaman the Syrian captain was cleansed in Jordan, and that John the Baptist used the same river for his work, you will remember that Naaman's cleansing was about six hundred years after the days of Joshua, and that John's baptismal ministry was about nine hundred years after the days of Naaman. The incidents are far better known than the localities in which they occurred. Our inquiry therefore is as to where it happened. The final

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survey in sections should enable a student to connect every part of the country with a well known incident, and thus help in the understanding and the memory of both land and history.

CHAPTER II

BEGINNING OF OUR TRIP

WE have taken off quite smoothly as we always do in the air liner of Imagination : across the English Channel, over the Bay of Biscay without feeling any of its rough waves, down by the coast of Portugal, until, when about a thousand miles from home, we reach the entrance of the Mediterranean. This was regarded by ancient nations as being practically the end of the earth, but we have to remember that from their point of view, they were in the civilized world and we were outside. The cliffs on each side of the comparatively narrow entrance were called the Pillars of Hercules. Only very hardy and adventurous mariners ventured beyond this point into the unknown seas.

From the entrance we must travel eastward along the Mediterranean before we reach lands which figure in Bible incidents. When we come to Malta we have found something interesting. The island is famous now on account of the wonderful defence sustained against all attacks by enemy aircraft during the War of 1939-45. The General who was in command during the worst period, openly proclaimed his faith that God had saved them. Those who know something of Bible prophecy, and so realize that Great Britain is destined to play an important part in latter day

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events, can readily believe that God defended the island.

Malta is interesting to us apart from recent history. There can be no reasonable doubt that it was the island on which the apostle Paul and his companions were cast after that terrible storm had wrecked the ship that was bearing them toward Rome. It is called Melita in the Bible record (Acts 28 : 1). There have been some attempts to connect the incident with another island called Melida, but as the result of full discussion it is now generally agreed that Malta was the island where they found a bay in which to thrust the ship, and by swimming or clinging to broken pieces of the wrecked vessel all the men reached the shore. A bay on the north east coast is called after the name of the apostle, and it seems probable that this was the actual spot where he landed. You would need a special map of Malta to show this bay.

We hasten on more than another thousand miles before reaching the coast of Palestine. We do not need a port of landing, but we will look at the harbour which has recently been constructed at Haifa, for we find something interesting there. The Israelites were not a race of mariners. The sea rather repelled than attracted them, and the Bible narrative shows that they never did any good with ships except when they were associated with the Tyrians. If you consult some good maps, one showing how the land of Palestine was divided among the tribes of Israel and the other

BEGINNING OF OUR TRIP

showing modern names, you can find a very interesting connection between prophecy and modern developments. You will find that this part of the land where the harbour has been constructed was originally given to Zebulun. If you look at Jacob's prophecy regarding his sons (Gen. 49), a prophecy uttered just before the patriarch's death, you will find the following words: "Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea, and he shall be for a haven of ships" (Gen. 49:13). According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Haifa first began to be an important port in the year 1890. When the eleventh edition of the national work of reference was printed, no one knew what great developments there would be forty years later. The prediction of the old patriarch seems to have been fulfilled nearly four thousand years after his death. This is not a very definite or impressive prophecy as compared with many which can be cited, but it is interesting to note in passing.

Our airship of Imagination must take another flight of over six hundred miles to the east in order to reach the great river Euphrates. Then down the river toward its mouth, until within about one hundred and fifty miles of the Persian gulf, and we have found that part of the world in which Abram was born. Now we must leave our air ship and take a more leisurely survey, as if travelling with the camels of patriarchal times.

CHAPTER III

FIRST ROUGH SURVEY OF THE LAND WITH ABRAM

THE ruins of Ur are about ten miles from the present course of the Euphrates ; but in the days of Abram the river flowed past the western wall of the city, and the sea was about a hundred miles away, which is at least fifty miles nearer than it is today. It is known that there have been great changes in physical conditions. Ur was certainly a wealthy and prosperous city in a fertile part of Asia. The surrounding country was well watered by the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, and the city was equipped with all that the art and science of that day could give. The prospect of leaving such a centre of comfort and culture to go to an unknown land a thousand miles away must have seemed as formidable and chilling an undertaking as if we were ordered to the remotest part of the earth.

It was while he was in Ur of the Chaldees that the command came to Abram : " Get thee out of thy country, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee " (Gen. 12 : 1). From his later experience we gather a clear idea as to the manner in which this command reached him. Beings in human form but with powers obviously superhuman appeared to him, and gave the instructions by word of mouth. He

accepted the message as from God, and unlike so many of his descendants, his faith remained steadfast even though there were long intervals in which nothing was seen of the messengers, and the many trials of mortal life invited the weakness of human nature to feel doubt.

Abram's father went with him on the first stage of the journey. About six hundred miles to the north west there was another city similar to Ur in culture and religion. To this city they migrated, and there they remained until the death of Terah. Then Abram and Lot, his nephew, moved four or five hundred miles to the south, and entered the land we know as Palestine.

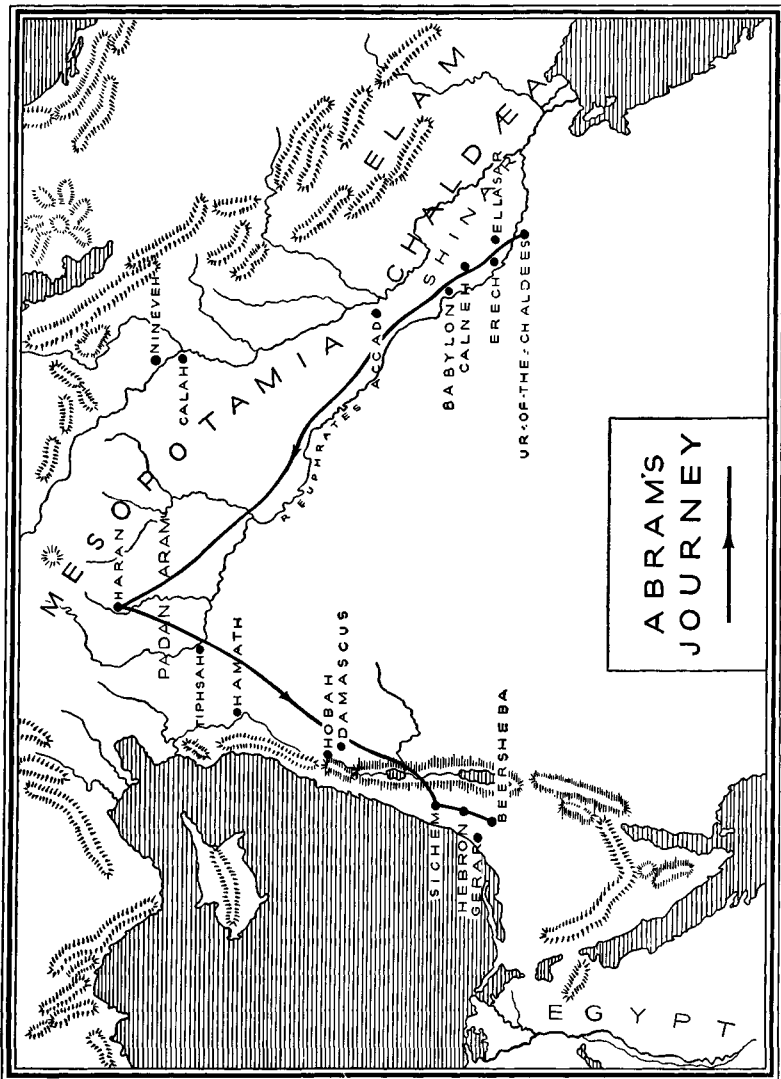
Some young readers may ask why they made the journey so long. A direct line from Ur to Palestine would only have been about six hundred miles. Why did they choose a route so indirect as to involve a journey of nearly twice the distance? Older readers would point out that a desert lay between Ur and Palestine. We would not venture to say, however, that a more direct course than that taken was impossible. There were trade routes even across parts of the desert, for the camel is a wonderful animal for traversing such inhospitable lands. Then it was not all desert between the Euphrates and Palestine. It was largely arid steppe land, in which even in the driest times there were vast quantities of ripe seed ready to grow at the magic touch of water. A short spell of rainy weather would clothe the land with verdure. A

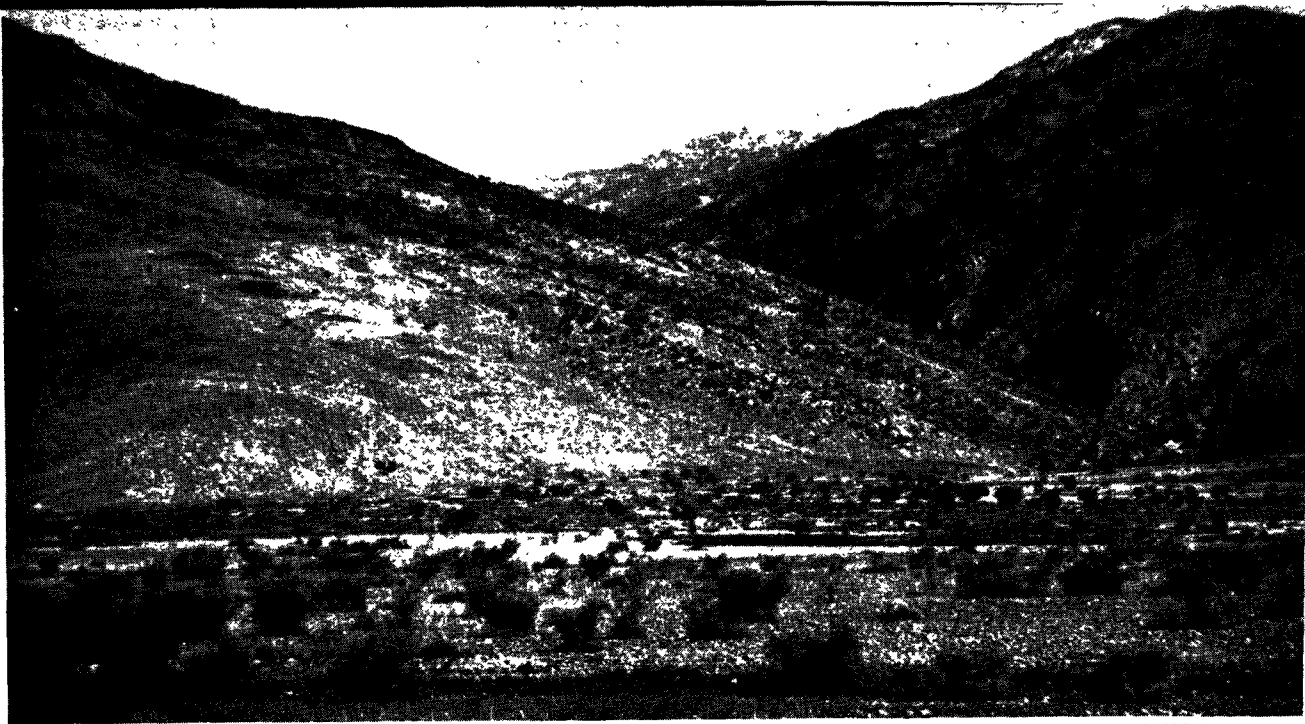
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period of dry heat would make the land like desert again, but it would ripen the seed ready for the next rain.

It is important to remember this fact, for it throws light on many parts of the Bible narrative. Readers have probably sometimes wondered why it was that Midianites and others sometimes invaded the land in great force, and then seemed to disappear from sight again. The answer is found in the habits of nomads and in the vast expanses of arid steppe land. People dwelling in tents and sustained mainly by their flocks and herds, were not tied to any locality. If a period of rainy weather gave them good pasturage they prospered and multiplied very rapidly. If the weather was unkind for a season and they could not find sufficient food for the increased number of mouths, they raided the cities of more settled nations. If they were successful in war they might take possession of the more favoured lands, and either drive out the former inhabitants or fuse with them. If defeated in war, the survivors would disappear again into the arid wastes, perhaps to recover strength in the course of a few years for a renewal of their attacks.

There were probably not so many of these warlike, thieving tribes in the time of Abram. Certainly he was unlike such people. He became a nomad of a very different kind, moving peacefully with his flocks and herds, menacing the interests of no one, but with a sufficient retinue of servants to guard his possessions from enemies





DISTANT VIEW OF SNOWCAPPED HERMON

of every kind (see Gen. 14 : 14). Even apart from the fact that his father was going to Haran in Mesopotamia, it was natural for him to travel slowly through country which could support his cattle, rather than try to cross the ill-favoured land immediately between Ur and Palestine.

After the death of his father, Abram, now seventy-five years old, started on his long journey to the south east. His route would take him through or near to Damascus. It may have been at this time that he found the faithful servant Eliezer of Damascus who was the steward of his house (Gen. 15 : 2). As Damascus figures largely in the Bible narrative it is well to have some idea of its geography.

Damascus is about sixty miles from the Mediterranean sea. If you drew a straight line from east to west from Damascus to the sea, it would reach the coast a little south of Zidon. The whole of the land occupied by the children of Israel at the time of their settlement under Joshua will be south of that line. A bright scholar might point out that even Damascus was within the promised possession of Abraham. We agree, and perhaps in this sense Abram was in the promised land when he was in Ur of the Chaldees, for it is written : " Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates " (Gen. 15 : 18). Before all this land can be inherited, however, there must be some great changes, including a transformation of the wilderness (Isa. 35 : 1, 2). The straight line from

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Damascus to the Mediterranean would be well north of the original settlement.

Damascus has been famous for its orchards and its swords. Probably orchards were there in Abram's day, but we must not suggest that they made swords of steel then, for there are scholars who deny that steel was known so early in history. It is certain, however, that in later times Damascus blades were the most famous in the world.

A thousand years after Abram's time Damascus, as the capital of the Syrian kingdom, came into painful collision with the nation of Israel. Two thousand years after Abram's day the apostle Paul was converted on his way to this city. It was in Damascus that his apostleship began, and he had his first experience of the malignity of the Jews. You will remember that he was let down in a basket from the city wall, and so escaped from men who sought to slay him. It is well therefore to have the position of this city clearly in mind. It is about sixty miles from the nearest part of the Mediterranean, nearly forty miles north east of the most northern part of Israel's original settlement, and about twenty miles from the foot of Mount Hermon.

CHAPTER IV

THE LAND

As Abram approached Palestine his attention would inevitably be drawn to Mount Hermon. This mountain rises to over nine thousand feet above sea level. At five thousand feet, or rather more, there is a ridge extending for more than twenty miles. Such a giant, capped with snow, would attract the attention of any traveller. We learn from the book of Joshua that Og the king of Bashan reigned in Hermon before the coming of Israel. From 1 Chronicles 5 : 23 we gather the rather surprising information that the children of the half tribe of Manasseh increased in Bashan and extended to Hermon. This was no doubt in later times. The district is not mentioned in connection with the original division of the land. It is probable that there was no great value in it as an inheritance. The importance of Hermon was in its effect on the entire country, to which it gave life. In Psalm 133 the dew of Hermon is likened to the blessing of brotherly unity, with the hope of eternal life. What was the dew of Hermon which suggested this thought of life? You do not need to be told that the atmosphere is colder at the higher levels, and that a mountain nearly three times the height of Snowdon in Wales would collect plenty of snow in winter. Millions of tons would form on that

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elongated head, and as the snow of the lower ranges would melt first with the warmth of spring, leaving the peak for the heat of summer, it is evident that streams of water would flow down into the valley just when they were most needed. Jordan was mainly supplied from Mount Hermon, and it will be remembered that this river overflowed its banks in time of harvest (Josh. 3 : 15). The dew of Hermon was of an importance which could hardly be exaggerated.

If Abram crossed over the upper reaches of the Jordan near to Hermon he would only be about twenty-five miles from the Mediterranean. His progress southward would then be between the sea and the main watercourse of Palestine. The breadth of the land gradually widens until it is nearly sixty miles from the sea to the mouth of the river Jordan.

If we follow the line of march, preferably with a good map before us, we may take note of the most important features in that broad and general survey which would be possible for Abram on his first passage through the land. From the upper reaches of the Jordan he might pass through a fertile valley with the river on his left hand and a wall of mountainous land on his right. About fifteen miles from the foot of Hermon he would come to the waters of Merom, where the river Jordan flows through a lake of about four miles in length. Another ten miles southward still through fertile land, and he would reach a far more important lake, variously

called the Sea of Chinnereth, the Sea of Galilee, the Lake of Gennesaret, and in later times the Lake of Tiberias. We know it best as the Sea of Galilee. It hardly enters into the Old Testament narrative, but it is constantly to the front in the Gospel records. The Lord Jesus Christ spent much of his time by its shores. There he chose disciples, taking them from their occupation as fishermen to become preachers of the Gospel. There he sat in a boat thrust out a little from the land, and using the water as sounding board, he taught the people gathered on the beach. It was on this sea of Galilee that he walked, and it was here that he calmed the storm which had terrified the disciples. It is important, therefore, that we should have clear and correct ideas as to the position and size of this lake.

Remember then that it is about twenty-five miles south of the foot of Hermon. It is little more than thirteen miles in length, and seven miles across at its broadest part. It may seem strange to speak of it as a sea when we know of so many lakes much larger. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that alarming storms would be unknown on such waters. Strong winds sometimes arise very quickly, lashing the waters to a fury which would be alarming enough for men in the frail craft used by the fishermen of the first century.

When Abram passed the sea of Galilee he would find that there was a break in the wall of hills on his right hand. He would be nearing

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the valley of Jezreel which joins the great plain of Esdraelon. If the traveller kept close to the river Jordan he would not have a clear view toward the Mediterranean even though no mountains stood in the way. The shores of the sea of Galilee are below ocean level, and a little further south the strip of land lying below the level of the Mediterranean widens so that a direct course southward would take the traveller into the depths. It is part of that extraordinary "fault", or break in the strata of the earth's surface, which falls continuously down the valley of the Jordan, till it reaches the Dead sea 1,300 feet below the surface of the Mediterranean. The "fault" extends to the Red Sea.

This unique geographical feature explains the lion in time of snow (2 Sam. 23 : 20). A zoologist might ask where in all the world you would find a lion amid snow, and the answer is "in Palestine". Lions frequently came into the land. Samson encountered one, and so did the unfortunate prophet who accepted hospitality which he should have declined (1 Kings 13 : 24). In summer the Jordan valley becomes very hot. It is not merely that the increased atmospheric pressure at this low level makes the air warm, a still more important factor is the complete protection from cold winds. This, with the slope towards the south, makes the Jordan valley a sun trap on a gigantic scale. All gardeners know that they can make a sun trap which will

give their plants considerable increase of warmth, if they can get ground with the correct slope—toward the south in the northern hemisphere—and with protection from all other directions. Imagine the effect, then, of such a sun trap with protecting walls a thousand feet high. The lion might be quite happy in the Jordan valley while summer continued and food was available. When summer was over, and probably the animals on which he might have preyed had fled, his troubles began. A move toward the south would end at the shores of the Dead Sea. He would be forced to ascend out of the valley, encountering bitter winds and a chilling, white substance, new to him and utterly distasteful. Apparently he slipped into a pit, and there David's man found him and slew him. We fear that the geographical explanation rather detracts from Benaiah's exploit, for the lion would probably not be in good fighting form.

There are two localities particularly mentioned in which Abram pitched his camp on that first journey through the land. The first halting place is described as "the place of Sichem unto the plain of Moreh". These places are not mentioned in the Palestine atlas edited by Dr. George Adam Smith, so we may assume that the locality is uncertain. The district can be identified, however, by comparison of Scripture. In Deut. 11 : 30 the plain of Moreh is connected with Mount Gerizim. We easily find this famous mountain on the map, and then we

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discover that Shechem and Sychar are only a few miles away. This suggests the strong probability that one of these places is the Sichern of Genesis 12 : 6. From Sychar there is a valley falling north east. If this was the plain of Moreh, it was about half way between the sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. It was near to Jacob's well and the burying place of Joseph.

The next resting place mentioned is easier to identify. It was between Bethel and Hai (Gen. 12 : 8), about twenty miles further south. The narrative of the first journey through the land is condensed into one chapter, so that there is not room for much detail. Immediately after the record of the altar built between Bethel and Hai, we are told that Abram moved further south, and experienced a famine which drove him into Egypt.

Readers may remember a repetition of the phrase, "there was a famine in the land". Twice we find those words apart from the grievous dearth which affected so many people in the days of Joseph, but we should be wrong to assume that famines on a serious scale were of such common occurrence. The "famine in the land" which drove Abram into Egypt was in the same locality as that which later drove Isaac into the land of the Philistines. This district south of Beersheba was undoubtedly subject to dearth, and probably through a diminishing rainfall which affected a great part of Asia, was gradually becoming desert. An

unusually dry season would make life impossible. Nomads with flocks and herds would need to move on quickly, for the animals could not long be sustained by the scanty pasturage even if water were available for them to drink. Abram may have moved to the south of Beersheba before being overtaken by famine. It is more than a hundred miles from Beersheba into Egypt, and the journey would not be undertaken lightly by a nomad who possessed much cattle. It is probable that the fertile maritime plain of Palestine extended further south than in later days, and as this was one of the most important of early trade routes, some provision would be made for travellers. A newcomer to the land who ventured too far south and encountered famine might well seek the trade route, even if he had to part with much of his cattle in exchange for essential food. The Bible narrative is so brief and with so little of detail that a reader may get a wrong impression of the time involved and the changes effected in the patriarchal camp. Twenty-five years elapsed from the departure of Abram from Haran to the birth of Isaac. The movements were all leisurely, and no doubt there were many changes of conditions and of possessions.

CHAPTER V

A MORE THOROUGH SURVEY FROM THE SOUTH

SO FAR we have only attempted to get a rough general impression of the land such as Abram himself would gain in that first long journey from north to south. We will remember that Palestine proper was about one hundred and eighty miles in length. The width of the land from the river Jordan to the Mediterranean is only about twenty-five miles in the north and nearly sixty miles in the south. There is a fertile coastal plain of varying width by the Mediterranean, a central backbone of hills and even mountains, and then on the eastern side a drop into the Jordan valley which finally sinks to more than twelve hundred feet below sea level. There is a break in the hills where the plain of Esdraelon runs through the land. We shall have more to say regarding this, for it has been one of the most famous battlefields in the world. The backbone of hills begins again with Samaria and runs through to the south. From Jerusalem a journey of twelve miles or so to the east may take a traveller from 2,590 feet above sea level to 1,280 feet below, giving the quickest change of temperature to be found in any land—from chilly heights into the world's greatest sun trap in little more than twelve miles. Palestine is

A MORE THOROUGH SURVEY

certainly a land of much variety and many interests.

After Abram's experience in Egypt he returned to the place between Bethel and Hai where he built the altar at the first. This would probably involve a journey of two hundred miles, and we may be sure that it was taken slowly. He was now told to go through the land in its length and breadth. Hitherto he had only made a rough survey. He was now to examine it in detail.

We want to make a thorough survey too, but we cannot follow Abram any further, for we are not given sufficient detail of his movements. We have the great advantage, however, of modern maps, and we have the full range of Bible history to assist memory.

In this little work it is assumed that readers have a fair knowledge of Bible history such as should be taught in every Sunday School. If this assumption is correct there will be no serious danger of confusion as to the time when events occurred.

We would like so far as possible to take the land section by section, finding historical illustrations for each part. Often, however, the movement of the narrative will lead us from one section to another. Then we must try to remember the course taken and the principal physical features of the land traversed.

Before beginning the methodical survey it is well to be prepared for great changes which

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are often indicated in the narratives of different ages. Even the physical features of a country change to some extent through the centuries. Political boundaries are continually moving, while the changes in the conditions of human life may be more remarkable still.

Over four hundred years elapsed between the coming of Abram and the entry of his descendants into the land under the leadership of Joshua. Need we wonder that conditions in the country had altered? What changes have been wrought in the last four hundred years in England, on the continent of Europe, and in America? The four hundred years from the days of Abraham made changes for the worse: a great increase in the numbers of the people, and a still greater increase of wickedness. As the Scripture tells us, they were left until they had filled up the cup of their iniquity. Instead of courteous and dignified men who could treat Abraham with neighbourly consideration, there were in the days of Joshua many selfish and sinful savages, grouped in towns, and sinking to a level too low to be tolerated even for mortal life.

SINAI

If you look at our sketch map, or better still if you have a larger, coloured map of the same locality, you will have before you a plan illustrating the national beginnings of Israel. From the extreme south of the peninsula it is over two hundred miles to the south of Palestine.

Another measurement of two hundred miles would take us to the north beyond the northernmost part of Israel's inheritance. There is a great difference in the land covered by these two measurements. The peninsula of Sinai is mostly desert. It is one of the most secluded and repellent lands in the world—an excellent arena for the presentation of a law and the testing of a people, but certainly not for an inheritance. It would be hardly possible for a nation to live there apart from a divine providence.

You will notice the two arms of the sea, one each side of the peninsula like a giant V. On the western arm one of the great miracles of history was wrought at the birth of the nation of Israel. Take your impressions from the Bible narrative, and not from pictures which you may have seen in days of childhood. The Bible tells us that “the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided”. We have sometimes seen the effect of a strong and sustained wind in driving forward or holding back the waters of the sea, but probably there has never been such a heaping up of water as when the Lord caused an east wind to play upon that arm of the sea all through that night in the days of Moses. When the people of Israel were safely on the Peninsula of Sinai, “the sea returned to his strength, and the Egyptians fled against it”. They had followed the people of Israel, thinking the way safe, and quite unconscious of the far-

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flung walls of water on each side of them. They fled from this returning tide, but they were overwhelmed by waves.

Very soon the testing barrenness of Sinai proved too much for Israel's faith. All readers will remember the waters of Marah, too bitter to drink until they were "made sweet". Elim will also be remembered as the next halting place, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees. If these names are correctly placed, they offer a hint as to the part where the waters of the sea were divided.

From the comparatively fertile locality of Elim the people moved toward Mount Sinai through the wilderness of Sin. If the map is approximately accurate it is about eighty miles from Elim to the "Mount of God". Even making full allowance for a margin of error, the distance could not be much less than this. Imagine the march of such a great company for eighty miles through this grim and forbidding wilderness. It was so different from the promised land they had expected to see. The way was hard, there were only very occasional patches of fertile soil, and when they pitched in Rephidim there was no water for them to drink.

Young readers may say that if God had made a way through the sea for Israel and had given them a regular supply of manna to eat, surely they would realize that the disappointments and hardships of the way were part of a necessary training, and God would not forsake

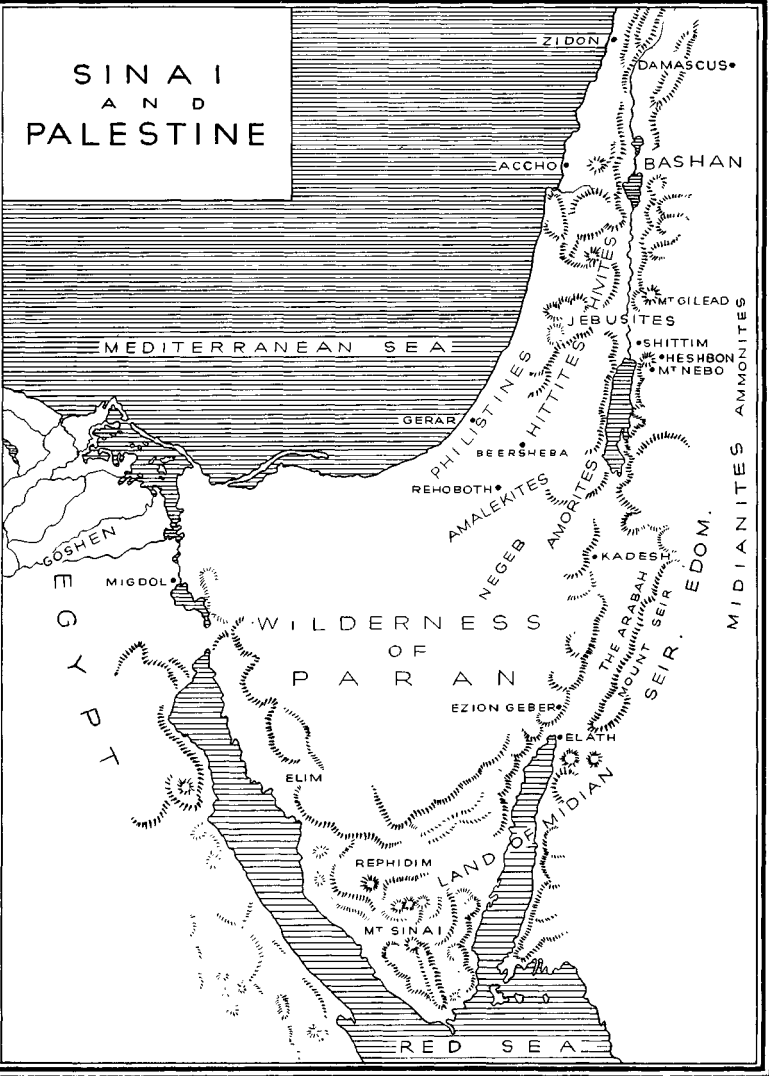
them if they remained faithful to Him. The reasoning is sound and logical, but are you free from human weakness and forgetfulness? We must not expect to have such privileges as were given to Israel added to all the tremendous advantages enjoyed in the twentieth century. The circumstances of life are very different. Tests of faith come to us in a manner suited to the age in which we live, and in spite of all our privileges and educational advantages sometimes we fail. There have been young people in modern times who had full knowledge of the divine purpose and of the confirmations of that purpose all through history. They have had some knowledge of times and seasons, and have looked forward to some expected political developments with a feeling that when these events came they would prove absolutely the truth of prophecy and the reality of divine rule in the kingdoms of men. The expected developments have come, but in a manner so gradual and natural that they have attracted little attention. Some of the young disciples have drifted away into a faithlessness as complete as that of the men who rebelled against Moses. The delay, the disappointment, the bare rocks, the revolt against "light bread", and the desire for Egyptian flesh pots, all have their counterpart in our time. If you can remember the lessons learned and hold on now, you would probably have been with Joshua and Caleb had you lived in their days. If you fail now you would probably have

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failed then. There can be little doubt that the peoples of Israel thought that they were going straight from Egypt to the Land of Promise. They were probably as confident of their fitness for an immediate inheritance of all that God had offered as some very pious people of our own days feel in contemplating all that is offered through Christ. The necessary purging in the wilderness seemed unbearably hard to them.

God gave the people water at Rephidim in a manner which might seem strange to any reader who fails to see the symbolic meaning. Moses was told to smite the rock with his rod, and the life-giving water would flow. In view of the manner in which the Old Testament continually speaks of God as the Rock of Israel it seems strange that the rock should be smitten. When we learn from the New Testament that the rock represented Christ (1 Cor. 10 : 4), we can understand why it was smitten to bring forth the water of life. We can see too why it was smitten by the serpent rod (see Exod. 4 : 3 and 7 : 10), for the serpent is ever the symbol of sin. This rod had turned the river into blood and had brought forth many plagues. It had also opened up a way for God's people just as the wars of sinners have been repeatedly used in history. Finally, the serpent rod smote the rock, and water of life was brought forth. If in a later study you go into these matters more thoroughly you will find that there was another occasion when water came from the rock. It was a later time, at a different

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place, with different circumstances, and different instructions to Moses. It was another rod with another significance, and in the Hebrew another word was used for rock. All these matters are full of hidden meanings commanding faith and admiration from students who can understand.

For the moment, however, we are intent on the geography of Sinai. We must not be led into the consideration of other subjects except in so far as they tend to explain and impress on our memories the physical features of the country traversed.

In the narrative immediately after the record of this miracle we read : "Then came Amalek and fought with Israel". In his *Undesigned Coincidences of Scripture*, Blunt pointed out that although we are given no information as to the cause of this attack it is obvious that the gift of water was at the root of the matter. The Amalekites did not live in this barren region. Their country was in a more favoured part mainly to the north. No doubt adventurous spirits would move into the wilderness in search of any fertile spots. If such pioneers found a copious supply of water coming from the rock, and a multitude of people sustained by it, they would quickly report the discovery to their fellows in the more fertile regions where they usually lived. Perhaps it was the attempt to steal water of such significance which brought a special curse upon the warlike Amalekites.

There is another incident which may help in our study of geography. We all remember the

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flight of Moses to the land of Midian, and his marriage to Zipporah, the daughter of a Midianite priest. We all remember, too, that his father-in-law came to meet him at Mount Sinai and give him some excellent advice on sharing out the work. We may have had only very hazy ideas as to the locality of the land in which Moses had lived for so many years, or of how it was that Jethro, his father-in-law, suddenly turned up at Sinai. The map makes the incident intelligible, and the incident may help us to remember the map. They should rivet the facts upon our memories.

The land of Midian is shown as stretching across the south of the Sinaitic peninsula and the coast of Arabia, the other side of the eastern arm of the Red Sea. A fugitive from Egypt would be able to escape to the east without needing to cross any too formidable desert. Skirting the land of Edom, he would find a coastal strip of land by the eastern arm of the Red Sea, sufficiently fertile to sustain life. Moses was in this land, or at least he was away from Egypt, for about forty years. During part of this time he fed the sheep of his father-in-law. We cannot be sure whether Jethro lived on the Arabian coast or on the peninsula. The hardy nomads of those days roamed over considerable distances in search of pasturage for their flocks. In Exodus 3 : 1 we read that Moses led the flock "to the back side of the desert", and that "he came even to Horeb the Mount of God". Horeb is

another name for Mount Sinai. It was here that he had the great vision of the burning bush, and received his commission to deliver Israel. It is clear, therefore, that when he brought another kind of flock to Sinai he was on familiar ground, and it was natural for his father-in-law to meet him there, bringing his wife and children. We learn from Exodus 18 : 2 that Moses had sent his wife back to her father's house. If we compare with chapter 3 : 12 we can see that there was good reason for this course. Moses was commanded to go to Egypt, where the authorities had sought to slay him, and to bring the people of Israel "to serve God upon this mountain". From the land of Midian to the court of Egypt would be several hundred miles. It was a long journey for the travelling of those days, and the enterprise undertaken was hazardous. Moses therefore sent his wife back to her father ; then when the great work had been accomplished and Moses had brought the people to Horeb there was a family reunion.

Mount Sinai is thought to be the eastern peak of the range. It rises to 7,450 feet above sea level. There are two other peaks slightly higher, and several others not so high. It was a wonderful locality for a people to be separated from all others and to receive the judgments of God. There is Scriptural reason for believing that Sinai is again to be used for such a great purpose in the day of final judgment.

CHAPTER VI

THE APPROACH TO THE LAND WITH ISRAEL

AFTER having received the law, and having witnessed such demonstration of divine power that they should have been ready for a great test of faith, the people of Israel moved from Sinai toward the Land of Promise. Some of the halting places are named, but it is impossible to identify them now. The line of march was certainly through the wilderness of Paran, a great expanse of inhospitable land between Mount Sinai and Edom. The first locality which has been placed with any reasonable degree of certainty is Kadesh-barnea. This, as the crow flies is over one hundred miles north of Mount Horeb. There was time enough in accomplishing this journey for faith to fail again, and for the "murmuring" of which we read. When we think of the people complaining of the monotonous food and clamouring for flesh to eat, it is well for us to remember the length and the character of the journey, or we cannot understand their perversity.

Kadesh was evidently a more favoured locality, and for the moment free from the alarm of war. From here Moses sent out spies to search the Promised Land. They were

absent from the camp for forty days. We cannot be sure what places were visited beyond Hebron, but it is evident that they went further than this. We read of their going to "Rehob as men come to Hamath" (Num. 13 : 21). Hamath is a well known place, and with a reputation in very early days, but as it is two hundred miles north of the most northern part of Palestine we cannot suppose that the spies went there. The narrative does not convey such an idea, but rather suggests that Rehob was the farthest place reached, and that this was on the way—probably an ancient trade route—to Hamath. Comparison with the narrative in the book of Joshua confirms this thought. We must note that in later times there was a Hamath in Galilee, but it is improbable that the reference is to this place. Hamath in the far north was a well known centre, and Rehob was on the Hamath road, just as in our day many villages may be described as on the London road although far away from London.

For the moment we want particularly to remember Kadesh-barnea. It is situated on the border of Edom more than a hundred miles south of Beersheba. The spies would have to traverse seventy miles or more before reaching Hebron, the first place mentioned in connection with their survey of the land. Hebron would naturally attract them, for it was here that Abraham had lived.

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Before we survey any part of Palestine we must take note of the movements of the Israelites as a means of impressing on memory the southern borders of the land and the extent of the Dead Sea. In thinking of the Dead Sea picture in your minds an oblong lake of intensely salt water about forty-six miles in length and averaging under ten miles in breadth. It is in an extraordinary basin of rock more than twelve hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean. Obviously the water cannot escape from this basin except by evaporation, and evaporation does not remove minerals. That is why the Dead Sea is so salt. All the soluble minerals brought down to it by the river Jordan have been accumulating there for ages. It is too salt for fish to live in it, and that is one of the reasons for it to be called the Dead Sea. It was regarded as completely useless until in our day it has been discovered to contain most valuable minerals, especially potash, one of the most important elements in the growth of fruit. This reminds us of a prophecy which used to be a puzzle. It is predicted that as the result of a great earthquake and upheaval in the time of the restoration, the waters of the Dead Sea will be healed (Ezek. 47 : 8). Then we find a surprising exception, there will still be marshy places given to salt (verse 11).

It is easy for us to see that with a great geographical change such as would be involved in the healing of the Dead Sea, there might

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follow a change in the climate of Arabia. We are informed that this will be so. In a literal sense "the glory of Lebanon" will be brought to the wilderness, making it "rejoice and blossom as the rose" (Isa. 35). But with such a tremendous upheaval healing the waters of the Salt Sea we used to wonder why the healing should not be complete, and why some parts should still be left to salt. We know the answer to the question now, for it has been proved how valuable some of that "salt" will be in turning the wilderness into a fertile field.

We remember that the spies returned to Kadesh-barnea, and it was there that rebellion broke out with such sad results for the nation. They were turned back into the wilderness and told that they would wander there for forty years. The principle of a day representing a year, so prominent in prophecy, is here first stated. The spies had taken forty days to search the land and bring back their evil report, and the faithless nation would wander in the wilderness for forty years until all the rebels had died. A belated repentance and readiness to go against the nations of Canaan was of no avail. Moses warned the people that God was not with them. Those who presumed to make an attack were repulsed decisively. We cannot trace the places mentioned in the record of this defeat, but it seems clear that the majority of the people were still at Kadesh.

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The next incident throwing light on the geography of the land is in the request that they might pass through the land of Edom. As we have already noted, Kadesh-barnea is on the border of Edom, but we have also noted the fact that in those days national frontiers were very uncertain. They changed according to the strength of a people and that of their enemies. It is certain, however, that the inhabited parts of Edom presented an effective obstacle to anyone who wanted to pass from Kadesh to the land of Moab. Edom was south of Palestine, and it included all the land round the southern end of the Dead Sea.

It will be remembered that Esau, the cunning hunter, established himself in Edom. When Jacob returned from Padan-aram, Esau came to meet him with a company of four hundred men. That was on the east of Jordan, before Jacob passed over the river to Shechem. It is clear, then, that Esau could move east or west of the Dead Sea. More than two hundred years had elapsed when Moses brought the children of Israel to Kadesh. Moab had been established as a kingdom, while in the south Edom had developed and increased in strength. It was not possible now for an army peacefully to pass through either land without permission. Near the southern end of the Dead Sea the land is more fertile than it is further south, and so it is probable that much of the strength of Edom was concentrated there.

Moses, desiring to get to the east of Jordan, asked permission to pass through the land of Edom. Both nations had come from Abraham and Isaac, so it was reasonable to claim brotherhood. Permission was refused, however, and the Edomites came out to resist any encroachment by force. The Israelites turned back into the wilderness to skirt the land of Edom.

If you consult the map you will see that this would involve a very long march. The strength of Edom guarded the whole of Mount Seir, and you will see that this range extends to seventy miles south of the Dead Sea. We read that the people came to Mount Hor, and there Aaron died. We must not confuse Hor with Horeb. Hor is described as on the border of Edom, and so would be seventy or eighty miles from Horeb. Hor means mount, and it may have been one of the peaks of the Seir range which the people reached after they had crossed the wilderness of Zin.

We are on firmer ground when we find a mention of Ezion-geber. We read that the people encamped at this place just before the death of Aaron. Whatever difficulty there may be in finding the exact locality of Ezion-geber, there can be no doubt that it was south of Edom, and that its influence extended to the sea, that eastern arm of the Red Sea between Sinai and Arabia. Ezion-geber appears to have been a little distance from the coast, while Eloth was the port from which ships might

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sail. Both places are named in 11 Chron. 8 : 17 in connection with the navy established by Solomon, but we read in 1 Kings 22 : 48 that the ships of Jehoshaphat were broken at Ezion-geber, which shows that this name was also used for the port.

This suggests an interesting inquiry in which the narrative may greatly assist our understanding of the geography. In the days of Moses, Edom was strong enough to bar the direct way to the east side of Jordan. Little more than four hundred years later, David was on the throne of Israel, and Edom was among the adjacent nations which had been subdued. Solomon, on receiving this rich inheritance, set to work on the building of the temple for which his father David had made great preparations. The need for timber and for skilful carpenters brought Israel into touch with the Tyrians in the north, and the Tyrians, who were the greatest mariners of their day, taught the Israelites how to sail the ocean and bring wealth from far. So we read : " Then went Solomon to Ezion-geber, and to Eloth, at the sea side in the land of Edom. And Hiram sent him by the hands of his servants ships, and servants that had knowledge of the sea ; and they went with the servants of Solomon to Ophir, and took thence four hundred and fifty talents of gold, and brought them to king Solomon " (11 Chron. 8 : 17, 18). Many years later Jehoshaphat the king of Judah tried to revive this lucrative trade,

but without the help of Tyrians. As we have previously noted, his ships were "broken at Ezion-geber".

The facts related show how strong the kingdom of Israel had become in the days of Solomon. He was able to establish a navy right at the south of the land of Edom, nearly a hundred miles away from the country over which he reigned. He was able to bring gold from afar, and have it safely conveyed to his capital city.

Returning to the time of Israel's birth as a nation, we note that after much wandering in the neighbourhood of Kadesh and in the wilderness of Zin, it was somewhere near Ezion-geber that the people passed to the south of Edom and reached the east side of Mount Seir. From thence, with many turns that are difficult to follow, they made their way through desert, and through the land of Moab, until after forty years of wandering they reached the river Jordan opposite the city of Jericho. This would be considerably more than a hundred miles from Ezion-geber in a direct line.

Perhaps we now have the general features of this part of the land well in mind: (1) the great pear shaped peninsula of Sinai stretching southward to a distance of one hundred and seventy miles from the Mediterranean; (2) the two great arms of the Red Sea like a giant V; (3) the land of Edom extending for fifty miles or more from the south of the Dead Sea toward

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the eastern arm of the Red Sea where Ezion-geber and Eloth were situated. The extent of the land claimed by the Edomites would no doubt change as time went on.

The great "fault" in the earth's surface which runs through the Jordan valley and the Dead Sea continues for many miles to the south, but the land gradually rises from more than a thousand feet below sea level to some hundreds above. There is a valley, however, all the way from the Dead Sea to Eloth, where Solomon's ships were built. On the west of the valley is the high land of the peninsula ; on the east the still higher range of Mount Seir. From the extreme south of the peninsula to Mount Seir is a distance of about two hundred miles. From that southern point to Palestine is over two hundred miles. There is little really fertile soil in the whole of the peninsula. It is a country of arid steppe land, desert and mountains. It does not appeal to the greed of nations, and yet through the part it plays in history and in prophecy it is one of the most interesting countries in the world.

CHAPTER VII

THE SOUTH OF THE LAND OF PROMISE

WE now come to a detailed examination of Palestine proper. For the convenience of students we have marked our sketch map with lines drawn from east to west at a distance of twenty miles. It will be seen that about one hundred and eighty miles cover the distance from the south to Mount Hermon in the north. The division of this into strips of twenty miles in width may help in the identification of localities as we associate them with incidents in the well-known narrative of Scripture. By noting the physical features of the land we shall often find that history and geography assist each other.

The first twenty miles will not detain us for long. We start with the southern end of the coastal plain on our left hand and the land of Edom on our right. Only one place is marked in this section and that is the name of a well. It was in this dry part that the patriarch Isaac spent a considerable part of his life. We have already noted that it was subject to periods of famine. In Genesis 26 we read that famine came and Isaac went to the land of the Philistines to find sustenance. He dwelt for some time at Gerar, which was to the north east of the part we are now surveying. Then trouble arose. The Philistines claimed a well which had been digged

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by Isaac's servants. The patriarch moved away and found water in another place, but the Philistines claimed that too. Instead of resisting them and fighting for his rights, the peaceful patriarch moved away, and went to the labour of digging for a third time. The Philistines did not claim this, and so he called it Rehoboth, which means room, for he said: "Now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land". There is much behind the words of this brief narrative. Rehoboth is about thirty miles from Gerar, so we get some idea of the trouble and labour caused by the greed of the Philistines. This, however, is not the complete picture. Isaac suffered a much greater loss than the labour of digging wells and moving thirty miles from the land in which he had attempted to settle. Can you think what it was? Here is one of those matters in which a little knowledge of geography throws light on the history.

Do you remember a passage of Scripture which states that "Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year a hundred fold"? Now a hundred fold is an extraordinary crop. If a farmer sowed a bushel of wheat, and then at harvest garnered a hundred bushels, he would think that he had done extraordinarily well, even with modern ploughing and cultivating. In Isaac's time, with the primitive implements in use, it must have seemed phenomenal. What of the geography of this record? This agricultural success was not achieved in the arid south country

in which Isaac had dwelt previous to the famine. It was not near Rehoboth or Beersheba. It was in the land of the Philistines, marked on maps now as cultivable soil. The Philistines had seized the fertile coastal plain where good crops could be grown if men had the initiative and industry to cultivate them. The story in Genesis 26, combined with a little knowledge of the geographical features, makes the whole matter quite clear. Isaac evidently lived in the locality of Gerar for some years. As he had been driven there by famine he had probably been obliged to part with much cattle in order to purchase food. While he only possessed flocks and herds of moderate size the Philistines were content that he should dwell among them. Isaac, however, perceived that the land could be cultivated. He sowed grain, and achieved extraordinary success. This was of course no menace to the interests of his neighbours. Rather did it add to their wealth, and set them an example which they might have followed with much advantage. Scripture, however, tells us that "Isaac became very great, and the Philistines envied him". That is a terrible word, explaining the whole matter. Envy is defined as grief at the good fortune of another, or at his superior qualities. Envious men may have received nothing but benefit from the labours of the one who arouses their envy, but that does not make them hate him the less.

Envyng Isaac, the Philistines proceeded to make life in their country intolerable for him.

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They forcibly seized the supplies of water gained by his industry, and they were not content until they had driven him back to the arid south country, where in normal times the pastoral life was possible, but where there could be no hope of success in growing grain. Isaac was content to accept the situation. God had made room for them, and so he called the place Rehoboth. A modern map showing the character of the soil makes the matter very clear to the student, and reveals the extent of Isaac's sacrifice in the interests of peace. He was driven from fertile land, and had to live on the edge of the desert.

Four centuries after Isaac's time, when the land was divided among the tribes, this dry south district fell to the tribe of Simeon. It was probably the worst portion of all the land, the soil of poor quality, and enemies near. Edom was to the east, and Philistines and Amalekites to the north and west. There is a scriptural reason why Simeon should be given a poor inheritance. Just before the children of Israel went into the land they committed a sin which resulted in many thousands of men being slain. The only sinner mentioned by name was a prince of the house of Simeon. Blunt, in *Undesigned Coincidences*, points out that this at least suggests that the tribe of Simeon was chiefly guilty, and in harmony with this idea we find that in the renumbering of the tribes described in the next chapter (Numbers 26) Simeon had suffered a severe decline, the number of men being less than half its former





THE DESERT OF JUDEA

SOUTH OF THE LAND OF PROMISE

strength. Simeon, therefore, now the smallest of the tribes and clearly under a cloud, was given a portion left over from the inheritance of Judah (Josh. 19 : 9).

The inheritance of Simeon extended well to the north of our first strip of twenty miles. It was not a comfortable portion of the land, for where it was at all fertile it was most exposed to the attacks of enemies.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DIVISION OF THE TRIBES

SIMEON

THE most interesting place in Simeon's portion is Beersheba. This is sometimes regarded as the southern limit of the land, although Simeon's portion went far south of it. Most of this part was too dry to be of much value.

Beer means well, a fact which might suggest an obvious riddle to some young people, for all the wells in Palestine were beer. Even such a jest might prove a good means of impressing memory. This famous well in the south, which gave the name to the city Beersheba, was digged by the servants of Abraham when he made a covenant with Abimelech the king of the Philistines. It was recognized as belonging to Abraham. It is possible that this covenant influenced the Philistines even centuries later, for in early days national memories were long, and the spoken oath was sometimes better observed than the elaborately drawn up treaties of our days.

Simeon's portion extended southward into the desert and northward into the land of the Philistines ; but as with some of the other tribes, much of the land given was either never properly colonized, or it passed into other hands through

the misfortunes of war. Ziklag is one of the places named as belonging to Simeon, but this was in the hands of the Philistines in the days of Saul. It is about fifteen miles to the north west of Beersheba, and only about ten miles from Gaza, one of the five cities of the Philistines. Clearly the Simeonites were unable to hold it, and the Philistines took possession. Ziklag was given to David by Achish, king of Gath (1 Sam. 27 : 6). It was on returning to Ziklag that David and his men found that the Amalekites had burned the town and had taken the women and children captive. After recovering these captives, it was from Ziklag that David went to Hebron, and was there made king of Judah.

In many ways the portion of Simeon is difficult to understand. The original inheritance was only a part of the lot which fell to Judah. It was mainly to the south, stretching out into the wilderness. When it seemed to include more favourable land, there were serious encroachments by Philistines, Amalekites and Canaanites. There seems to have been no access to the northern tribes except through the land of Judah. It seems impossible that Ishbosheth the son of Saul can ever have reigned over Simeon. It is difficult to see how Simeon can have been under the rule of Jeroboam in the division of later years, but it was certainly reckoned as one of the ten tribes who followed him. Here is an interesting problem for the

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student. How could the tribe of Simeon maintain contact with the northern kingdom except through the land of enemies? It was in the south with Beersheba its most famous centre. To the west were Philistines, to the north the land of Judah, while at least in early days any passage between the inheritance of Judah and the Philistines was blocked by Canaanites. In the time of David, when Israel's coast was widened at the expense of the Philistines, it was assuredly Judah rather than Simeon which gained the additional territory. How then did Jeroboam reign over the tribe of Simeon? An inquiry into this matter would fix on the mind the main geographical features involved.

We know of no outstanding peculiarities in the land of Simeon. There were neither rivers nor mountains of any importance. It is possible that some parts of the land were better watered in early days than in more recent times.

As we have previously mentioned, Simeon had a portion left over by Judah. Originally this portion was described as going far to the south, including Kadesh-barnea, and passing to the sea at "the river of Egypt". This wady which marked the end of Egyptian territory is thirty miles to the south of Beersheba, but we cannot suppose that the Simeonites ever inherited or tried to colonize all this land. It was largely desert.

THE DIVISION OF THE TRIBES

One other matter may be mentioned in connection with the inheritance of Simeon. There was an ancient caravan route from Egypt to Hebron running through Beersheba. It seems therefore that even in the arid south land men were in touch with the outer world, and it was possible for some of the amenities of civilization to be brought to those who lived on the fringe of the desert.

JUDAH

THE portion actually inherited by Judah is more important and much more interesting than that of Simeon. There are mountains rising to three thousand five hundred feet above the level of the Mediterranean, while from these uplands less than twenty miles to the east the land drops to the Dead Sea more than twelve hundred feet below ocean level. We do not read of boats plying the waters of the Dead Sea. There was little to attract such ventures. No fish could live in such strong brine, and probably boats would so soon be encrusted with mineral matter as to need constant attention. In most places the final drop to the Dead Sea is very steep, not at all favourable for ports even if ports had been needed.

There is some cultivable land in Judah, and many hilly sheep runs. There are parts described as wilderness, the names Maon, Engedi and Ziph figuring prominently in Scripture history.

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If we survey the land of Judah from the south, we find on a map showing the political geography of the time of the Judges, that four names figure in rather mysterious prominence, Jerameelites, Cherathites, Kenites and Calebites. In 1 Chron. 2 : 9 we read of Jerameel as one of the descendants of Judah, but there does not seem to be any recorded reason for him to impress his name on this part of the land. It is easier to understand the name of Caleb figuring in the south of the land. Caleb was outstandingly faithful, holding with Joshua and Moses when the nation was in rebellion. We are informed in Joshua 14 that because of this faithfulness Caleb was given Hebron as his inheritance. We gather inferentially that his influence extended far afield, for we read of him promising to give his daughter in marriage to the man who should capture Kirjath-sepher. Othniel, a nephew of Caleb, was the successful warrior. We read of him later as a judge and a deliverer (Judges 3 : 9). In connection with his marriage to the daughter of Caleb (or it may have been the grand-daughter, for the same word is used in the Hebrew) we read of a request for a "field", and then, having been given a south land, Caleb's daughter asked for water, and he gave her "the upper springs and the nether springs". It seems then that Caleb had much land at his disposal, and this presumably is the explanation of the people being called Calebites many miles away from Hebron.

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The Cherethites are said to have been Philistines. If this is correct, they had evidently severed themselves from the main body of their people, and were able to live peacefully with the Israelites. In the days of David the Cherethites were officers of power and importance supporting the throne. Here we have another interesting inquiry as to whether they were the same people. There have been instances in history of kings being guarded by soldiers of alien race. There is perhaps less danger of serious revolt if the bodyguard is formed of men so isolated—tied to the king by self-interest, and held apart from his other subjects by difference of race.

The Kenites are said to have been Canaanites. We have some interesting information as to some of the people who lived in the south of Judah and were called by this name. We read that when the father-in-law of Moses intended to leave the children of Israel and return to his own land, Moses urged him to remain with them. We infer that after a second plea he agreed, for we read in Judges 1 : 16 : "The children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went from the city of palm trees (Jericho) with Judah to the wilderness south of Arad, and there dwelt among the people". Arad was a place about eighteen miles to the south of Hebron. It was possibly named after the Canaanite king who attacked Israel in the wilderness and took some prisoners (Num.

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21 : 1). The descendants of Jethro were called Kenites. We read in Judges 4, in the record of a later incident, that Heber the Kenite had separated himself from his brethren, and had removed to the north of the land of Israel.

A little to the north of the part we have been considering is the wilderness of Maon. Further north, but still south of Hebron, is the wilderness of Ziph. You will remember these names in connection with one of the most interesting parts of Scripture history. David came to this wild part when he fled from Saul, and on more than one occasion the jealous king followed him with an army, trying to kill him. The wilderness of Engedi is also mentioned in this connection. Engedi is near the shore of the Dead Sea to the east of the wilderness of Maon. We will follow the course taken by David in his flight from Saul, and then we shall remember the geography of this part of Judah.

From the land of Benjamin, where Saul had his headquarters, David fled to Nob. This was a city of the priests two miles north of Jerusalem. There he secured a sword and bread for himself and his followers. From Nob David fled westward to the land of the Philistines, a distance of over forty miles. He came to Achish, the king of Gath, the city from whence Goliath the giant had come. David found that there was grave danger here, but he escaped by feigning madness, a device which

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on more than one occasion has saved the lives of men in the east. From the region of Gath, David went to the cave of Adullam, a distance of about thirty miles. Adullam is fifteen miles to the south west of Jerusalem. From Adullam David and his men went to Keilah, only a few miles away, where the Philistines were attacking and robbing the threshing floors. David and his men saved the people of Keilah but brought trouble on themselves. David's presence was reported to Saul, and the ungrateful men of Keilah were ready to give him up to the jealous king. So from Keilah the fugitives moved further east, passing by Hebron, and reaching the wilderness of Ziph.

Nearly all this journey of fifty miles or more from Gath would be uphill. The sea-coast plain where the Philistines dwelt rises from sea level to a height of about five hundred feet. Then on leaving the plain there is a more rapid rise, so that the district of Keilah is nearly two thousand feet above the sea. Still ascending, the fugitives would no doubt pass to the south of Hebron, avoiding the highest mountain which is over three thousand feet, and halting in the wilderness of Ziph. Saul, however, still pursued, and David passed on to the wilderness of Maon. David moved to the north east of this wilderness, and made toward Engedi on the shore of the Dead Sea. He passed one side of a mountain while Saul moved the other side. "Therefore they called the place Sela Hammahlekoth",

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which means the rock of division. There is a wady which runs through the valley to Engedi. The mount or rock where David thus avoided his enemy is probably about eight miles south east of Hebron.

News that the Philistines had invaded the land turned back Saul from the pursuit, and David found opportunity to establish a stronghold in the neighbourhood of Engedi. The very rapid descent of nearly three thousand feet in a few miles made this an excellent hiding place for a fugitive. It is a locality where there have been many volcanic changes, causing many hills, rocks and caves.

THE WILDERNESS ENGEDI, MAON, ZIPH AND TEKOA

It is well for the student to have a clear mental picture of this wild part of Judah, for it was the scene of some interesting episodes in history. The future king, the chosen of God, and his companions, must have lived in this inhospitable part of the land for some years. The four names associated with the word wilderness, Maon, Ziph, Engedi and Tekoa, describe localities which might be taken together as the wilderness of Judea. We must remember that Jerusalem is at the extreme north of the land of Judah, properly belonging to Benjamin, and Hebron is nearly twenty miles south of this point. The wilderness of Maon extends to

about eight miles south of Hebron ; Ziph is nearer to Caleb's city ; Engedi is toward the shore of the Dead Sea ; and the wilderness of Tekoah is further north. The parts described in the Bible as wilderness covered some hundreds of square miles, but although wild and largely uninhabited, we must not think of this land as desert. Sheep could find some pasturage in this wilderness, and there were many parts where shepherds could live.

An incident in the life of David while he was an exile may provide a geographical question which will test the knowledge of many veteran readers of Scripture, and quite probably find them at fault. You will remember the adventure with Nabal and Abigail. Nabal, we are informed, was a wealthy man of Maon whose possessions were in Carmel. At sheep-shearing time David sent some of his young men to Carmel with a courteous message, asking that in his time of prosperity Nabal should make some acknowledgement of the manner in which his sheep had been protected. Nabal gave an insolent answer, and but for the timely intervention of Abigail, his wife, there would probably have been bloodshed.

Now in connection with this narrative, ask the veteran student where is Carmel where Nabal had his main possessions, and it is quite probable that the too ready answer will be, "Mount Carmel on the coast of the Mediterranean, near to Haifa". This answer is

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quite incorrect, and a moment's reflection will show that there is something wrong. In the first place, the student should remember that although the maritime plain was part of the promised inheritance, and although the coast land, including Mount Carmel, came into Israel's possession in the days of David, the Philistines held it in the reign of Saul when David had his encounter with Nabal. Moreover, Mount Carmel is at least eighty miles from the wilderness of Maon, and so would not fit in with the narrative. We gather that the whole of the time that David and his men were in their "hold"—that is, the stronghold they had made in the Judean wilderness—they were a "wall" of protection to Nabal's sheep. Obviously they could have been no protection in the land of the Philistines, eighty miles to the north. If you examine a good scale map of Judah you will find that not only is there a wilderness of Maon but there is a town of that name. About a mile to the north of Maon there is a place called Carmel. The name means "a fruitful field", and so might well be used more than once. Nabal was a descendant of Caleb, and it was in the Judean Carmel to the south of Hebron that he had his possessions.

There are some further points of interest in which the experience of David is illuminated by a study of the geography, and in turn our memory of this study is helped by the history.

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Three times Saul brought an army of men to the south of Hebron in search for David. The first time, as we have already noted, he chased the fugitive from Keilah into the wilderness of Maon, and only turned back to fight the Philistines, while David and his men moved further east. A little later it was reported that David was in the wilderness of Engedi, and Saul came after him with three thousand men (1 Sam. 24 : 1). Travellers who have visited the land are enthusiastic about the oasis of Engedi, where moisture drains from the hills and the air is always warm. In the Song of Solomon (1 : 14) the vineyards of Engedi are used symbolically in a manner which suggests luxuriance. As we have already noted, the slope to the Dead Sea is steep, and where rocks slip and fold in such a region, caves are often formed. This was a district where "the rocks of the wild goats" were abundant, and where small mountain sheep could live.

It was in this region that Saul went into a cave "to cover his feet". He was delivered to the mercy of his enemy, for the fugitives knew every inch of the ground, and could reach the cave without Saul's men knowing that they were anywhere near. David followed into the cave and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe which the king had laid aside. David's men would expect him to kill Saul, and if he hesitated they were quite ready to play the part of executioner themselves. By cutting off a piece of

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Saul's robe and then being repentant, or pretending to be repentant, at such treatment of the Lord's anointed, the idea of violence was effectively ruled out. "He stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul." Then, calling after the king, he showed the portion of robe as a demonstration of the fact that with every opportunity to strike and slay, he had refused to touch the Lord's anointed.

It is a convincing and most interesting feature of the narrative which shows the complex character of Saul. He had loved David when as an obscure young musician the youth had charmed away those depressions which came with the first consciousness of failure. He had wanted to know the youth's lineage when David slew Goliath. That was the beginning of the jealous cancer which drove him mad. Had not Samuel paid a mysterious visit to Bethlehem and the house of Jesse? Had David been anointed as future king? Was not the delivery of Israel from Goliath a hint of David's destiny, and the song of the women a popular expression of national judgment? When a man half recognises that the hand of God is with his rival, and yet through the fierceness of his jealousy will not submit, he is heading for madness. Saul was not consistently evil. He had his better side, and when David presented himself as a humble servant, and showed the evidence that he had refused to strike even when such alluring oppor-

tunity had been presented, Saul was touched. There was a temporary renewal of his old affection for the young man ; a fuller recognition, too, that the hand of God was in the matter ; and Saul turned back from the pursuit.

It must have seemed that there was hope of peace after this. We can understand David and his men seeking more civilized parts. The incident with Nabal soon followed, and it was only a very short time before the churlish sheep owner reached his end. Then without any delay, such as modern ideas of decorum would demand, David proposed that the tactful widow should be his wife.

If we were thinking of history rather than geography it would be tempting to examine the words of Abigail with their subtlety and skilfulness. For the moment, however, we only want to take note of the changed circumstances as throwing light on the geography of the land.

With a feeling of greater security, and just after taking a new wife, David returned to the resort he had chosen when he first fled from Keilah—the hill of Hachilah, where there was a wood in which he had found a retreat, and where Jonathan had visited him (compare 1 Sam. 23 : 15, 19 with 26 : 1). History repeated itself ; the Ziphites reported his whereabouts to the king, and Saul, forgetful of his repentance, came again with his army on the old murderous errand. Again there came opportunity for David to show his reverence

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for divine appointments. Saul and his men slept in the open valley, "a deep sleep from the Lord" being upon them. Abishai, the brother of Joab, asked for permission to strike, and promised with grim humour that he would not strike a second time. David refused permission. Saul's spear was taken; and then, passing to the other side of the valley, and no doubt ascending the hill far enough to be safe, they shouted to the sleepers. There are valleys in which sound is conserved in a remarkable manner so that a voice can be heard from one side to the other. There is a valley with the familiar river bed or wady, running from the wilderness of Ziph in the direction of Engedi. The hills rise steeply on each side; and it may have been across part of this that David and his men shouted. Saul again acknowledged his error, and went so far as to promise that he would try to harm David no more. After past experience, such an assurance was not convincing. David felt that with the army blindly obeying the erratic king, and with neighbours ready to curry royal favour by betraying him, he was not safe anywhere in the land. He and his men made a trek of fifty miles or more to the country of the Philistines, to Achish, king of Gath. We may suppose that the possibilities were explored before embarking on this great venture. Achish, evidently well informed as to Saul's attitude, accepted this company of outlaws as an accession to his strength. As previously

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noted, he gave Ziklag to David, and this city came to be recognized as belonging to the kings of Judah. It was from Ziklag that Abigail and the other women had the great adventure of being captured by Amalekites, and only being rescued after a long chase. It was from Ziklag that David made the return journey to the land of Judah to be made king in Hebron when Saul was dead.

CHAPTER IX

THE NORTH OF JUDAH

IN our survey of the land of Judah, travelling northward, Hebron is the next place of note. It is about eighteen miles south of Jerusalem and about the same distance from the Dead Sea. It is in the Judean highlands more than three thousand feet above the level of the Mediterranean, and so something like 4,500 feet above the Dead Sea. On its south east is the wilderness of Ziph, and on the north west the plain of Mamre. This last name will awaken memories in the minds of all Bible readers. Abraham dwelt for a long time in this part of the land. His tomb is supposed to be in Hebron, and because of this it is a sacred city to the Mohammedans. Between twenty and thirty thousand people were living in this place at the end of the nineteenth century.

It was somewhere on the plain of Mamre that Abraham met the messengers of God and pleaded for the land of Sodom. It was from the same spot that he looked eastward on the following morning, and saw that "the smoke of the country went up like the smoke of a furnace" (Gen. 19 : 28).

This raises the interesting question as to where these "cities of the plain" were situated—Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim and Bela

(afterwards called Zoar). We will not linger long over this question, for there is no certain answer, and the only information which claims some authority seems to increase the difficulty rather than to solve it. We are told that a name radically the same as Sodom survives right at the south of the Dead Sea, and some authorities have been confident that this was the site or very near the site of the wicked city. Zoar is placed still farther south and in or near the land of Moab. This does not at first sight seem to agree with the implications of Genesis 13 : 10. When Abram and Lot came out of Egypt, Abram pitched between Hai and Bethel. This locality has certainly been identified as about ten miles north of Jerusalem, and between fifty and sixty miles from the supposed site of Sodom. The narrative reads as if it was from this locality that Lot looked toward the plain of Jordan and chose the most attractive land. This inference is not necessarily correct. Lot may have been taking note of this fertile land toward the east, during the whole of their leisurely journey from the south. The attractive land, however, was certainly described as the plain of Jordan, and we are informed that the plain was "well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord . . . as thou comest unto Zoar". This suggests that great changes took place when the cities of the plain were destroyed. If Zoar has been correctly placed at the south of the Dead

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Sea, the verse would seem to imply that the fertile Jordan valley extended far beyond its present limit. Possibly the Jordan broke into many streams and entered the Dead Sea at the end of a valley toward the south. A subsidence of the land might well follow the outburst of subterranean fires, and such a change of level might easily alter the course of the river.

There is clear reason for believing that the cities of the plain were in a fertile valley which was ruined by the convulsion which destroyed the sinners. As Sodom was the most important of the cities, it is at least possible that the whole of the plain would be called by the same name. This would furnish an explanation of that survival of the name in the south. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says that Jebel Usdom is only a salt ridge and cannot have been the site of a great city. It might, however, have been the beginning of a land named after its most important centre.

If the wicked cities stood in a fertile valley just to the west of the Dead Sea, the Bible narrative is perfectly intelligible. Abram dwelt near Hebron when Chedorlaomer invaded the land, and it was from thence that he, with all his retainers, pursued the invaders towards Damascus. Returning from this battle, he would pass near Jerusalem, and it was on this return journey that Melchizedek, described as "priest of the Most High" and king of Salem, met him with a priestly blessing. Later Abram looked

from the plain of Mamre and witnessed the destruction not only of a city but of a country.

The next reference to Hebron is in connection with the entrance of Israel into the land when the city and surrounding country were given to Caleb. Four centuries later David, after having lived in the wilderness near to Hebron, and then in the land of the Philistines, came to Hebron to be made king of Judah. From Hebron he was called to be king over all Israel, and after seven years from his first wearing the crown in Hebron, Jerusalem was captured from the Jebusites and became his royal city. Before the end of his reign, Hebron became a menace and the centre of a rebellion which gave the king the bitterest experience of his life, for it was in Hebron that Absalom planned his revolt.

In fancy, moving farther north, we come to Bethlehem, about twelve miles from Hebron. In early days this little town was called Bethlehem-Judah, the reason being that there was another Bethlehem in Zebulun. Now no such mark of identification is needed, for the Judean Bethlehem is one of the most famous towns in all the world, while few people know that there was another place of the same name in the north of the land.

The origin of Bethlehem's fame can be traced back to a famine which came in the days of the judges. We read in the book of Ruth that a native of Bethlehem named Elimelech, with his wife Naomi and two sons, was driven by

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famine into the land of Moab. The sons each took a wife of the daughters of Moab. Then Elimelech and his two sons died, and Naomi came back to the land of Judah. One of the daughters-in-law returned to her own people, but the other, Ruth, refused to go. She said : " Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God".

It was written that the Moabite should not come into the congregation of the Lord unto the tenth generation. If we consult the genealogy in Matthew 1, Ruth is shown as in the tenth generation from Abraham. She came into the nation for a great purpose, for she is in the direct line of David and of his greater son.

You will remember that when David fled from Saul he thought of his parents, and the possibility that Saul might ill-treat them. He brought them to the king of Moab, and arranged that they should dwell in the land of Moab until he should know " what God would do with him " (1 Sam. 22 : 3). This is one of those interesting instances of incidental harmony we find so often in the Scripture narrative. We may be sure that when David became famous as the conqueror of Goliath, and when there were already whispers that he would be the next king of Israel, the Moabites would remember that he was descended from Ruth. It was natural that the king of Moab should be willing to give protection to Ruth's grandson.

A little to the north east of Bethlehem is the brook Kedron, which flows from the east of

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Jerusalem to the Dead Sea. There are many water courses in the land of Judah making their contributions to the salt lake which forms the eastern boundary of the land, but there is nothing which could be described as a river. We should not expect to find a river in such country. When we remember that the highlands of Judah are from two to three thousand feet or more above sea level, and that the Dead Sea is more than twelve hundred feet below, a rough calculation shows that the average drop might be anything between one in fifteen and one in twenty. Streams would drain quickly on such slopes. The prophets, however, clearly indicate that a great change is coming. In Zech. 14 we read that the Mount of Olives will cleave in the midst, and make a great valley, so that men will flee as they fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah. Then in verse 8 there is reference to living waters which will flow from Jerusalem to the sea. In the prophecy of Ezekiel which we previously cited, the same idea is presented, and associated with the healing of the waters of the Dead Sea (Ezekiel 47 : 2-8).

JERUSALEM

About five miles north of Bethlehem is the capital city of Israel, Jerusalem. It stands on high ground in a relatively fertile part of the land. Directly to the east at a distance of nearly twenty miles the river Jordan runs into the Dead Sea. The Mediterranean is about forty miles to the west.

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There are so many references to Jerusalem in the Bible that all our space might be exhausted in citing them. One or two outstanding incidents may serve our purpose especially well in revealing the qualities of the city and fixing them upon our memories. We read in the first chapter of Judges that the children of Israel had taken Jerusalem and burned it with fire. From the first chapter, however, we learn that the Jebusites who dwelt in this locality were not exterminated, but some of them were among the nations with whom Israel made affinity, with serious results. It seems that the value of Jerusalem was not properly appreciated in the days of Joshua. The Jebusites were allowed to dwell there, and apparently they took steps to improve the natural defences of Mount Zion, so that when Saul was on the throne of Israel their citadel was deemed impregnable.

The Jebusites were a degenerate people with many lame and blind, probably as the result of vices, for the whole land was vicious in the time of Joshua. They claimed that the lame and the blind could defend the city against any assault which David might make.

When we read of David fleeing from Saul and going to Nob, a city of the priests, it is perhaps natural for a young student to think of Jerusalem as the city from which he had fled. It is well to remember that this is a wrong impression. Saul made his headquarters in Gibeah of Benjamin, the locality of his birth. Neither he nor his son Ishbosheth ever possessed Jerusalem.

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While David reigned in Hebron, Joab, his nephew, was captain of his army, while Abner remained perversely loyal to the feeble son of Saul. When Abner and Ishbosheth had both been slain by treachery, the way was open for David to become king over all Israel. The position of the country was pitifully weak. Their forces had been divided, the Philistines acted as overlords, and other adjacent nations were ready to take advantage of Israel's misfortunes. David realized the urgent need for a strong, central city, and for a captain who would be obeyed by the entire nation. Jerusalem was just the city he wanted, and it would provide the supreme test of leadership. The man who could lead a successful assault and capture the stronghold of Zion would be accepted by all Israel. Hence the proclamation, "The man who shall climb the gutter and smite the Jebusites shall be chief and captain". Joab, who would run any personal risk or commit any crime rather than take a second place, accomplished the task, and so his leadership was confirmed, not only as captain of Judah but of the whole land. The strength of his position for many years is some measure of the magnitude of his feat in capturing the Jebusite stronghold.

Jerusalem remained an undisputed possession of the kings of Judah for over four hundred years. It was made stronger and larger by Solomon, and constituted as the religious centre of the nation by the building of the temple.

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This was erected to the north of the old stronghold. There were times when enemies invaded the land, and the kings of Judah bought inglorious peace by taking the gold from the temple, but despite these signs of weakness, Jerusalem remained a strong centre of government.

Another proof of the city's natural defences is revealed in the fact that in the days of Hezekiah, Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, made a determined effort to capture it. We learn from secular history that Sennacherib had dreams of an eastern empire. He realized that if he were not only to conquer but to hold certain lands, a strongly fortified city was essential. Jerusalem would have supplied this need, and no doubt in Assyrian hands could have been made stronger than ever before. His plan was frustrated by a great disaster which befel his army (2 Kings 19 : 35), and Jerusalem remained without further menace for more than a hundred years.

The facts which come out so plainly in scripture history illustrate the natural advantages of the city. On the east was the valley of the Kedron, and south and west the valley of Hinnom, while there were many hills which in the days of Sennacherib could have been turned into strong forts.

The original stronghold of the Jebusites was only a small part of the Jerusalem of later days, but in the time of David it was the key to the whole position.

CHAPTER X

THE INHERITANCE OF DAN

BEFORE continuing our journey northward, we must catch up arrears by taking note of the original inheritance of Dan. This was to the west of Judah, uncomfortably projecting into the land of the Philistines, and with other enemies to the north and south. The portion actually inherited by the Danites was relatively small. In Judges 1 : 34, 35 we read : " The Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains : for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley : but the Amorites would dwell in Mount Heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim : yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries " .

The two last-named places have been identified about thirteen and fifteen miles west, or rather north west of Jerusalem. They were in the middle of Dan's inheritance, at the beginning of the more rapid ascent from the maritime plain to the central mountains. It is clear, in fact, that in quite early days the Danites lost their most fertile land, and were driven into the hills. Their portion was practically cut in two. If the men of whom we read in Judges 18 were fair specimens of the tribe, we need not wonder that they did not receive any divine help to retain their inheritance.

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The original portion of land falling to Dan extended right into the land of the Philistines, for Ekron is mentioned as on their border, and even the coast town of Joppa (or Jaffa) is supposed to be meant by the Japho referred to in Joshua 19 : 46.

Two places which figure in the record of Samson may help the young student to visualize this part of the land in relation to Scripture history. Samson, who was of the tribe of Dan, dwelt between Zorah and Eshtaol. If we were to draw a straight line from east to west, from the northern extremity of the Dead Sea, through Jerusalem, and on to the Mediterranean, it would pass very near to Eshtaol and Zorah—Eshtaol at a distance of about thirteen miles from Jerusalem, and Zorah a mile farther. This locality in which Samson dwelt was as the crow flies approximately twenty miles from Ashdod, twenty-five from Ashkelon, and thirty from Gaza, which is on the coast farther south.

Beth-shemesh, only a mile or two south of Zorah, figures in an important phase of later history. In the very early days of Samuel the ark was captured by the Philistines, and readers will remember that it was found to be a very uncomfortable possession. The Philistines, concluding that the God of Israel had brought a plague upon them because they retained this sacred emblem, placed the ark on a cart drawn by two milking cows, and let the animals take their own course. We read that they took the

road described as the high way to Beth-shemesh. The people of this place brought an evil upon themselves by treating the ark as an interesting exhibit, and they were glad to hand it over to Kirjath-jearim, a few miles farther east. We gather inferentially that the population of Beth-shemesh was more under pagan influence than that of Kirjath-jearim. It was on the original border between Judah and Dan, and probably it was one of those localities where there was a harmful mingling with the people of the land. (Compare Judges 3 : 5, 6.)

The inability of the Danites to hold their inheritance led to an adventure which placed their name in the extreme north of the land. Some readers may have thought that there was a mistake when we placed the inheritance of Dan as west and north-west of Judah. They may have remembered the words "from Dan to Beersheba" as defining the limits of the land from north to south, and they may have noticed the name Dan figuring prominently on maps in the north near to Mount Hermon. The original inheritance of Dan, however, was as we have stated, west and north-west of Judah and Benjamin. The move of part of the tribe to the north came about in the days of the Judges. Driven from their most fertile land by their enemies, the men of Dan sent out spies to find another country with room for expansion. The spies went out from Eshtaol and Zorah, the locality in which Samson had dwelt. They passed through Mount

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Ephraim, and stayed at the house of a man named Micah. This man's household gives a hint as to prevailing conditions and the evil influence of the pagan remnants left in the land. Micah and his mother possessed a quantity of silver, and apparently their idea of dedicating it "to the Lord" was to make images in defiance of all that the Lord had commanded. A young Levite had settled in Micah's house as the priest of this unholy temple. The spies from Dan asked for guidance from the Levite, and, blessed by him, they went to Laish in the far north. It was a secluded settlement of Zidonians offering an easy prey to armed aggression. The spies returned to their home, a distance of eighty miles, and assembled a band of men to capture this northern land. On their way they pillaged the house of Micah in Mount Ephraim, stealing his images, and threatening violence if he protested. They persuaded the young Levite to go with them as the priest of the new colony. Thus with robbery and idolatry a portion of the tribe of Dan was planted in the north, and henceforth "from Dan to Beersheba" became a description of the whole land.

The original inheritance of Dan extended farther north than that of Judah, while in the south it should have joined that of Simeon. We cannot say how much of this portion was ever held by Danites, but it is clear from the narrative that there was no stability in their inheritance. We read that the people as a whole served the Lord

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all the days of Joshua and of the elders who outlived Joshua, but after this there was such decline as to bring punishment. It is clear, however, that even in the turbulent times of the judges there were periods of rest from war, forty years, even eighty years, at a stretch. No doubt during some of these times of peace there was an insidious penetration by heathen nations, more dangerous than the violence of armed aggression. When the children of Israel attempted a reform they would find enemies in their land as well as on their borders. The political geography was thus subject to frequent changes.

The Philistines gradually became the most formidable enemies until, in the days of Saul, the Israelites were driven into the hills, the fertile coastal plain and fertile valleys running inland were in the possession of Philistines, and the Israelites were dependent on their oppressors even for their weapons of war (1 Sam. 13 : 19). In the reign of David a tremendous change took place, and the land was extended nearer to the bounds of the original description than ever before. The more southern portion of the coastal plain, however, remained in the hands of the Philistines. Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod and Ekron were their principal cities. The reader can remember the locality of these places by associating them with the adventures of Samson, who came from the original inheritance of Dan. We have already noted that a straight line drawn

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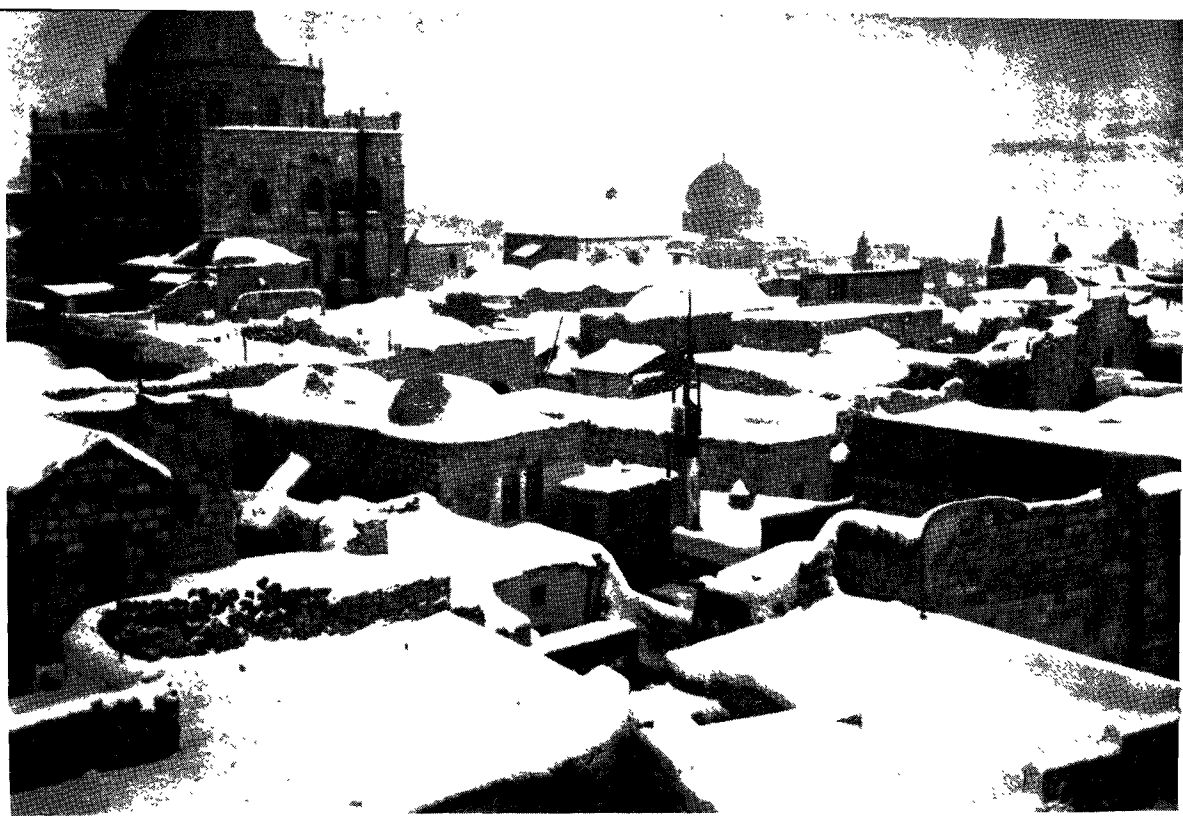
from the northern end of the Dead Sea, through Jerusalem and on to the Mediterranean, would pass very near to the birthplace of Samson. It would reach the sea near to Ashdod nearly forty miles from Jerusalem. Ekron was about ten miles to the north east, Ashkelon a similar distance to the south. Still farther south, another ten miles, was Gaza, where Samson carried away the gate and posts of the city, and where he eventually died.

You will remember that the Philistines put Samson on the stage in their place of amusement that he might "make sport" for them, and he "brought down the house" more effectively than any other maker of mirth of whom the world holds any record.



THE VALLEY
OF THE
DEAD SEA

JERUSALEM
IN
SNOW



CHAPTER XI

THE LAND OF GILEAD

Now for a little while let us concentrate attention on the east side of the river Jordan. We have already noted the lands of Edom and Moab, which countries were skirted by the Israelites in their march under the leadership of Moses. When they neared the north of Moab and the northern extremity of the Dead Sea, and were ready to cross the river, they were in a locality bearing some famous names. To the east, about ten miles from the northern shores of the Dead Sea, is Mount Pisgah, with Nebo its highest peak 2,643 feet above sea level. This was the mount from which Moses was able to survey the land, and where he died. It is in the land of Moab, and although it was of course within the limits of the inheritance promised to Abraham, it was never in the possession of the nation. Nearer to the Jordan, and exactly north of the Dead Sea, is the valley of Shittim, where the people lingered for a time before crossing the Jordan, and where they transgressed the Divine law by mingling with the Midianites. The valley of Shittim is a broad depression more than a thousand feet below the level of the Mediterranean, and naturally very hot. It is in fact the hottest end of what we have called the gigantic sun trap of the Jordan valley.

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A little to the north east of Mount Nebo is Heshbon, another well-known name. This became part of Israel's eastern inheritance in the portion claimed by the tribes of Reuben and Gad. It is possible that a student might find some difficulty in understanding some of the allusions to this place, and might ask many questions as to whose land it was in. Other questions might arise as to the course taken by Israel after skirting the land of Edom, and the various nations encountered. Much light is thrown on these problems by three passages of Scripture. In Deuteronomy 2 : 9 we read : " Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle : for I will not give thee of their land for a possession, because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot ". In verse 19 there is a similar admonition regarding the Ammonites. Then if we turn to Numbers 21 : 26 we read : " For Heshbon was the city of Sihon the king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and had taken all his land out of his hand, even unto Arnon ". This explains why the Israelites moved to the east of Moab, and why they took Heshbon. It also helps to elucidate the reference to Midianites and other people who seemed to appear in localities far removed from their proper borders. As we have previously pointed out, there were many nomadic and warlike people who in time of want raided the possessions of their more settled neighbours, so that cities often passed from one tribe to another.

It is evident that the children of Israel pushed a long way north on the east side of Jordan, inflicting such defeat on Sihon king of the Amorites and Og the king of Bashan that the land seemed safe from enemies. Then it was that the tribes of Reuben and Gad, perceiving that this was a favourable land for their cattle, of which they had great possessions, asked that they might have their inheritance on the east side of Jordan. If we consult a modern map showing economic conditions, it is interesting to note that cattle breeding is given as one of the appropriate industries for this eastern part of the land. In the days of Moses it seemed such good land for cattle that the tribes of Reuben and Gad were anxious to have their possession there even without seeing what lay on the other side of Jordan. The victory over Og and other hostile kings seemed so complete that the Reubenites and Gadites did not fear to leave their cattle and their families while all the fighting men passed over Jordan to help in the conquest of the land for the possession of other tribes. When the war was over, they returned to the east side of Jordan to develop their inheritance.

In later years the Israelites who settled on the east side of Jordan were more exposed to enemies than their brethren in the west. In the early days of Saul, the Ammonites, completely forgetful of their kinship with Israel, and of the manner in which Moses had spared them, made war against Jabesh-gilead, and revealed excep-

WHERE IT HAPPENED

tional cruelty in dealing with a helpless people. We shall take note of this a little later.

If we can get the general features of this part of the land in mind, some of the well-known incidents of Scripture history will help us to remember the details.

From the north of the Dead Sea to the sea of Galilee is a distance of about sixty-five miles. If we survey this distance, taking a tract of country about twenty miles wide on the east side of Jordan, we find several places which figure prominently in the narrative. This part of the country is called Gilead, a name which appears to have been given to it by Jacob when he returned from Padan-aram. It is considered by some travellers to be the most beautiful part of the land, with many hills rising to one thousand or even two thousand feet above sea level, seeming higher by contrast with the Jordan valley. The hills are intersected by numerous ravines with wadies draining away the water. On the west side, Gilead is well wooded, with a good supply of oaks such as were famous in the land of Bashan farther to the north.

We have noted that twelve miles east from the mouth of the river Jordan is Mount Nebo, where Moses died. Beyond this, and stretching some twenty miles to the north, was the land of Ammon. Twenty miles north of the Dead Sea, between the river Jordan and the northern part of Ammon, is the mountain Jebel Gilead, rising to three thousand five hundred feet. It would

not be safe to assume that this was the site of the famous city Jabesh-gilead of which we read in Bible history, although its proximity to the land of Ammon might suggest such a thought to those who remember the events recorded in the first book of Samuel. Jabesh-gilead was probably about twenty-five miles farther north. The great mountain Jebel Gilead, however, does figure in a stirring Bible record, for there is good reason to believe that the tower of Penuel, mentioned in Judges 8, was on this elevation. The story of Gideon's chase after the kings of Midian will enable the reader to make a survey of the land of Gilead with a stirring narrative to assist the memory. Gideon lived nearly two hundred years before the time of Saul. In his days Midianites were the worst enemies, for they had overrun the land and were taking the grain which the children of Israel had harvested.

You will remember that God would not allow Gideon to go against the invading Midianites with a large army, lest the people should take to themselves the credit of effecting a deliverance. Gideon's force was reduced to three hundred. These men with lanterns concealed in earthenware pitchers and with "trumpets"—literally short horns with a tone probably higher and more piercing than a modern bugle—crept in the darkness into the host of the invaders. At a given signal they broke the pitchers and sounded their horns. Three hundred lights suddenly flashed in the darkness, three hundred horns

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screamed, and then followed the thunderous shout: "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" The Midianites fled to the south in disorder. The people of Asher and Naphtali, tribes which had their inheritance in the north, joined in the chase. Manasseh followed, and then Gideon sent messages, possibly trumpet messages, through Mount Ephraim, calling upon the men of Ephraim to seize the fords of Jordan and destroy the fugitives as they tried to cross the river. With a map before us the record comes to life. We can follow the course of the flight from the north, through the half tribe of Manasseh on the west side of Jordan, and into the land of Ephraim, where they would try to cross the river. Many were slain by the men of Ephraim, including two of the leaders, Oreb and Zeeb. Two other kings, Zebah and Zalmunna, escaped, but Gideon was not content to let them go. He had grasped the fact so often forgotten that war-like leaders are a greater menace than many thousands of followers. With the three hundred men "faint but pursuing" Gideon crossed the Jordan and reached Succoth. This is apparently the place where Jacob halted for a little while on his return from Padan-aram, just before he crossed the Jordan into the land of Shechem. By this time Gideon had chased the enemy for forty or fifty miles. The men of Succoth evidently regarded the pursuit as a vain and foolish enterprise, and refused to give any help. Gideon went another ten miles or so south

east to Penuel. Here is one of the many instances of exact description in Scripture : " He went up thence to Penuel ". When the Bible says " up ", it is literally up. If the tower was anywhere near the summit of Jebel Gilead, it was a very stiff climb. The men of Penuel spoke in a manner similar to that of the men of Succoth, refusing help or sustenance. Gideon threatened them, and with his faithful three hundred passed on. From this point we cannot trace the course taken with any confident accuracy, but the mention of Jogbehah indicates that Gideon went another ten miles or so to the east before making contact with the Midianites.

On the face of the matter, it would seem to have been the maddest chase in all history, and we can understand the sarcasm of the men of Succoth and Penuel. The Midianites still had a host of fifteen thousand men. That three hundred men, after such a chase, should attack fifteen thousand, seems extraordinary ; and that the host should be defeated more extraordinary still. When men are imbued with a conviction that God is with them, however, they do not count costs or odds against them ; and when men have suffered an overthrow in which superstitious fears have been aroused they can easily be stampeded. We gather from the brief narrative that the fifteen thousand Midianites were dwelling in tents and feeling secure. They had encountered something terrible in the land of Israel, and had lost many of their fellows, but now

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they could rest securely in their tents. Then we imagine that suddenly in their midst there came the scream of horns and the thunderous shout, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" They would not pause to ask how many men were with Gideon. The narrative tells us that they were "discomfited", or as it says in the margin as a more accurate rendering of the Hebrew, they were "terrified". Zeba and Zalmunna fled, with Gideon still hard on their trail. He caught them; and then, having triumphed in his apparently mad enterprise, he proceeded to deal with the sarcastic men of Succoth and Penuel. He took briars and thorns such as grow plentifully on the steep slopes east of Jordan, and with them he "taught the men of Succoth". Then he beat down the tower of Penuel.

It is interesting to note this order of events. We should naturally expect him to reach Penuel before Succoth on the return journey. The map supplies an explanation of why Succoth should receive attention first. The Midianites were encamped somewhere near Jogbehah. This is on the border of a mountainous region which stretches away to the south, and in which flight would be difficult. Nearer to the Dead Sea the land of Moab would present an obstacle. It would be natural for the fugitive kings to flee northward, down hill toward the valley of the Jabbok. If it was in this region that Gideon overtook them, he would be nearer to Succoth than to Penuel. Hence the recorded order of his judgments.

JABESH-GILEAD IN THE DAYS OF SAUL

When Jacob came back from exile and gave Gilead its name, and when he crossed the Jordan into Shechem, the Canaanite had possession of the land. Gideon's time was nearly five hundred years later, when the Canaanites had been largely subdued, and the worst enemies were roving Midianites coming from the wilderness. About two hundred years after the days of Gideon, there was another adventure in Gilead which may help our study.

The city of Jabesh-gilead was some distance north of Penuel. It was probably about forty miles north of the Dead Sea and five or six miles east of Jordan. It was uncomfortably near to the enemy when the king of Ammon made his attack, as related in the first book of Samuel (I Sam. 11).

Nahash, the king of Ammon, evidently thought that the men of Jabesh-gilead were helpless. The city was on an eminence good for defence, but the people could not stand a siege. They wanted to come out and make peace, but the only terms this brutalized son of Lot would grant were that they should all have their right eyes put out, and this horrible act of cruelty should be a reproach to all Israel. The men of Jabesh managed to get a message through to Saul, and it was then that the recently anointed king for once in his life played a truly royal part. He sent out a peremptory command to all Israel to follow him. He led a

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forced march to Jabesh-gilead, and he inflicted such a decisive defeat upon the Ammonites that they gave no more trouble for some years.

Arising out of this incident there came a later adventure which should stir the blood of all young people, and should at the same time rivet certain geographical facts upon their minds. You have no doubt read of it : can you think of what it is to which we refer ? The Bible narrative gives the facts without any elaboration and without any explanation of the connection between one event and another, but a very little exercise of reconstructive imagination will reveal an epic condensed into a sentence, while it is easy to see the connection between two events separated by many years.

Saul departed from the right way more and more as he grew older, until his jealous instability must have become evident to all his people. There came a time when, forsaken of God, he was overcome by the Philistines in Mount Gilboa. There he and three of his sons died. The Philistines fastened the royal bodies to the wall of Beth-shan. Then we read in 1 Samuel 31 : 11 : " And when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul ; all the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there. And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days " .

JABESH-GILEAD IN THE DAYS OF SAUL

The men of Jabesh-gilead had not forgotten the deliverance Saul had wrought for them at the beginning of his reign. Others had forsaken him, but to them he was still a hero. Well might those who embarked on this adventure be called valiant men. It may be good for us in these practical and unchivalrous days to contemplate this incident with a map before us, and with some attempt to imagine the conditions which prevailed in the land. Beth-shan was at the eastern end of the valley of Jezreel. When the Philistines were powerful this city was one of their strongholds. Their penetration toward the Jordan almost cut the land of Israel in two, giving the Philistines that power as overlords which they enjoyed in the early days of Saul (see 1 Sam. 4 : 9 and 13 : 19 ; 20). We can imagine how the women of Jabesh-gilead might try to dissuade their husbands from this adventure into an enemy city. Saul and his sons were dead, and nothing could be done to help them. Beth-shan was at least twelve miles away and on the other side of Jordan. It might well be urged that the tremendous risks involved in this enterprise were too great for the object in view. The valiant men of Jabesh-gilead did not hesitate. They made the long journey through the night ! Down from their hill-side fortress into the Jordan valley, across the river at one of the fords, and then another journey moving north-west, with danger in every step they took, and the possibility of enemies in

WHERE IT HAPPENED

every shadow. They reached Beth-shan, took the bodies of Saul and his sons from the city wall, and carried them back to Jabesh-gilead. From below sea level they bore their burden up the hill to Jabesh-gilead, to give the royal bones decent interment. Then as a final tribute to the fallen king they fasted for a week. Valiant men indeed, and living in a more heroic age than ours.

CHAPTER XII

MAHANAIM, AND THE WOOD OF EPHRAIM

MAHANAIM is another interesting place on the east side of Jordan. It was named by Jacob when he had returned from Padan-aram and while he was journeying towards the land of Shechem. It signifies the company of two armies, and we may assume that it referred to the men with Jacob and the army of angels protecting him. This throws a revealing light on the use of the name to describe the bride in the Song of Solomon. (See Song 6 : 10-13. Refer to marginal citation of Mahanaim.)

The exact position of Mahanaim is uncertain, but it has been doubtfully marked on some maps forty five miles north of the Dead Sea and fifteen miles east of Jordan. It was probably as far as this to the north, for Jacob reached it before meeting his brother, and before he came to Succoth. There may be reason for thinking that it lay a little farther to the east. The inquiry turns on an incident which should stir the imagination of all young people, and in trying to apply the argument, the geography of the locality may be fixed on the memory.

In the days when David was on the throne of Israel, his son Absalom formed a rebellion against his father. The conspiracy was so

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strong and so suddenly disclosed that David and his adherents fled. They passed over the river Jordan, and David took up his position at Mahanaim. It is clear from the narrative that this was well behind the position held by his army, for the people insisted that he should not expose himself in the coming battle (11 Sam. 18 : 3). Absalom and his followers also crossed to the east side of Jordan, and there the battle was joined. So far the narrative is quite clear. Then we read that the battle took place in the Wood of Ephraim, and this raises difficulties. Why should a wood on the east side of Jordan be so named in view of the fact that the entire inheritance of Ephraim was on the west side? Blunt in his *Undesigned Coincidences of Scripture* suggests that the name arose from the terrible slaughter of Ephraimites in the days of Jephthah (Judges 12). Men of Ephraim made a murderous and most unreasonable attack on Jephthah in Gilead. They were defeated, and many fugitives trying to return to their own land were stopped and slain at the fords of Jordan. You have heard of "the shibboleths of society", a description of anything that is used as a test of a man's education. The word shibboleth comes from the land of Gilead and the days of Jephthah. It was used as the password, and it proved most effective, for the Ephraimites could not pronounce it correctly. After suffering terrible losses in battle, fugitives who could not say "shibboleth" were slain at the fords of Jordan.

MAHANAIM, AND THE WOOD OF EPHRAIM

It was such a unique disaster to the tribe that the scene of their misfortune might well be called after their name. Whether this suggestion is accepted or not, it seems reasonable to suppose that a locality on the east side of Jordan called "the wood of Ephraim" would be somewhere near the inheritance of that tribe.

When the battle in the wood of Ephraim ended with the complete defeat of Absalom's army and the death of the rebel prince, Ahimaaz, a friend of David's, wanted to run with tidings. Joab refused permission, but directed Cushie, or the Cushite, to run instead. His reason for this decision probably lay in the fact that he had deliberately brought about the death of Absalom in defiance of the king's instructions, and it was not convenient that the first tidings of battle should come from a close friend of the bereaved monarch. A little later Joab gave way to the importunities of Ahimaaz, and allowed him to run, possibly thinking that by this time it would be impossible for him to overtake Cushie. Ahimaaz, however, was determined to get there first, his real object being to break the news gently to the King. We read that he ran by the way of the plain and over-ran Cushie.

Here we have an excellent basis for the exercise of a little reconstructive imagination, and for impressing the memory with the geographical features involved. Here is a race from the scene of battle to the watch tower of Mahanaim; a race so close at the finish that

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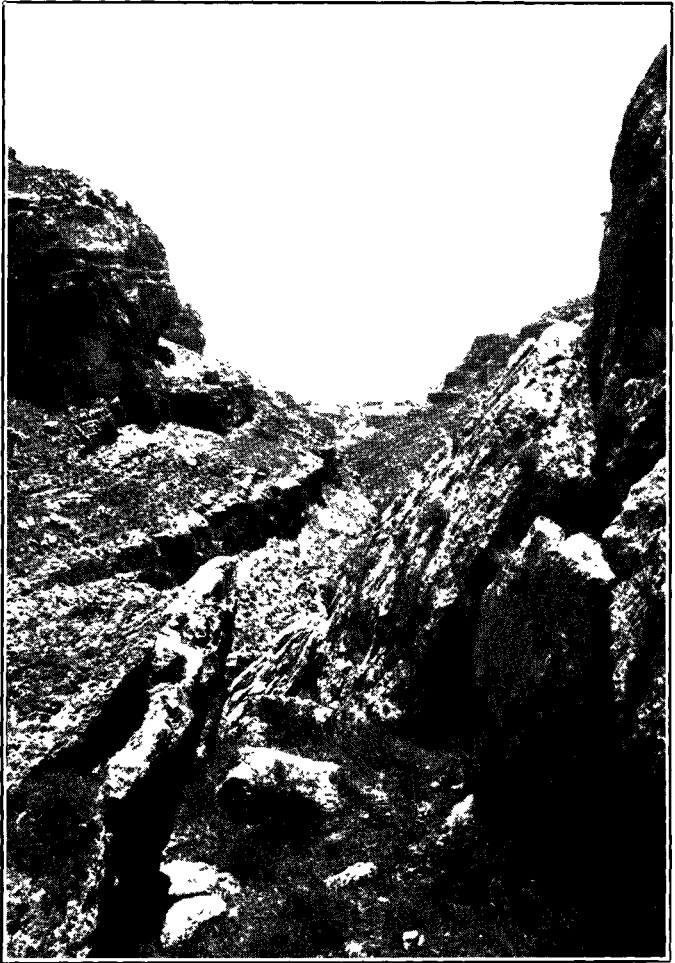
the second runner was in sight before the winner was near enough to be recognized. With a map before us showing the elevations, can we reconstruct the scene, and so fix the facts on our memories? To the north, where Mahanaim is placed on the map, the hills do not rise to much over a thousand feet, but there are greater elevations toward the south. "The way of the plain" almost certainly indicates the Jordan valley, for the word here rendered plain nearly always bears this meaning. The Wood of Ephraim would surely be south of the river Jabbok.

Mahanaim was sufficiently to the east for Cushi to think that a straight course over the hills would be best for him, but sufficiently near to the Jordan valley for the way of the plain to prove the quicker way, although it would no doubt be a little further. If Mahanaim was in the position indicated by the maps, would it not have been quite obvious that the way of the plain would have been the better course? A thoughtful young student would answer, "It depends on how far from the Jordan was the place from which the race began". We could not determine the exact position even if we were in the land surveying the district. Even forests can disappear in three thousand years.

Allowing imagination a little liberty, and knowing as we do something of the astuteness of Joab and the foolish vanity of Absalom, we may form the opinion that the misguided young



SPRING IN PALESTINE



GORGE AT MICHMASH

MAHANAIM, AND THE WOOD OF EPHRAIM

prince led his army into as bad an ambush as the history of war has ever known, resulting in a quick scattering of his forces. Apparently the animal on which Absalom rode fled, probably wounded and out of the rider's control. How far it went before reaching the oak where Absalom met his death, we have no means of knowing. Apparently Cushie thought that the straight line to Mahanaim would be the quick way. Ahimaaz chose the longer course with less climbing. If we are anywhere near correct in our understanding of the position, there would be the Jabbok and at least two other wadies to cross in the course taken by Cushie. Dipping down into these and climbing the hills again might well check his speed, while Ahimaaz was racing along the valley with a little strength reserved for the final climb. He cannot have been greatly distressed by his exertions, for his characteristic gait was recognized from the tower of Mahanaim as "he came apace and drew near".

Young people who are interested in running may with a good map before them gain a good knowledge of this district by trying to reconstruct that famous race, bearing to the king tidings of victory and of bereavement.

RAMOTH-GILEAD

Ramoth was another famous town in Gilead. It was about sixteen miles east of Jordan and twice that distance from Samaria, the capital

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of the kingdom of Israel as established by Omri. Ramoth was in the portion of land originally given to Gad, one of the two tribes which as you will no doubt remember chose to have their inheritance on the east side of Jordan. Ramoth was one of the cities given to the Levites, and it was established as a city of refuge. We will deal with these cities and explain their object a little later.

Probably the best known incident in connection with Ramoth-gilead was in the days of Jehoshaphat king of Judah and Ahab king of Israel. More than five hundred years had passed since the death of Moses, and great changes had come to the land. Where Og the king of Bashan had once reigned, and where his power had been so effectively destroyed, a new kingdom had arisen with Damascus as its centre. Much of the land east of Jordan, including Ramoth, had been overrun by the Syrians. Ahab, the sinful and feeble son of a wicked but strong king, was reigning in Samaria. He asked Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to go with him to war against the aggressive Syrians, pointing out that Ramoth-gilead properly belonged to Israel. The king of Judah was not satisfied with Ahab's prophets and advisers. At his request "a prophet of the Lord" was called. Micaiah, the prophet they consulted, at first appeared to confirm the words of Ahab's advisers, but when adjured to speak the whole truth, he declared that Ahab would be slain. The king of Israel tried to falsify

this prediction by laying aside his royal robes and astutely scheming to make Jehoshaphat run the full risk attaching to kingship. His subtlety was unavailing. A certain man "drew a bow at a venture" and the arrow flew straight to the weak part of Ahab's armour. Apparently the Israelites were successful in the battle, but as Micaiah had foretold, they lost their master.

The next incident in which Ramoth-gilead figures shows that the city had been taken from the Syrians, for the captains of Israel were there, although not engaged in war. Several of the captains of Israel's army were seated in Ramoth-gilead when a young man of the sons of the prophets came with a message from Elisha. "I have a secret errand to thee, O Captain", he said to Jehu. "To which of all of us?" Jehu asked. "To thee, O Captain", the young man answered. Jehu took the visitor into an inner room, and there the young man's credentials were disclosed in a most dramatic manner. An emphatic "Thus saith the Lord", a proclamation that Jehu was king of Israel, some instruction as to what he was to do, a flood of anointing oil over the captain's head—and then the young man threw open the door, and fled.

At first the other captains wanted to know what was the message brought by "this mad fellow". It is interesting to note how quickly and completely they accepted the facts when

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Jehu proclaimed them. The young man might be described as a "mad fellow", but he had been sent by Elisha, and that was authority enough. It is probable too that they would recognize the distinctive perfume of the anointing oil. Jehu was king, and they were ready to follow him.

Then followed the dramatic drive to Jezreel, where the kings of Israel and Judah were resting, the former recovering from wounds inflicted by the Syrians, the latter as his close companion. Jezreel was considerably to the north of Samaria, and it was probably between forty and fifty miles from Ramoth-gilead. The drive would involve a distance of at least sixteen miles to the river Jordan, even if the nearest route to the river were taken. The chariot would have to cross the water at one of the fords, and then there would be a longer drive to Jezreel. Jehu must have had relays of horses to draw his chariot, for he was driving "furiously", or "madly", when he was first seen from the watch tower of Jezreel. He sent an arrow through the heart of the king of Israel, who came out to meet him ; gave his servants instruction to kill the king of Judah ; went into the city, and slew Jezebel, the widow of Ahab ; and then he sat down to eat and drink, apparently with supreme disregard of any danger which might be attendant on such conduct.

It was one of the most sudden and complete changes of government recorded in history. We

RAMOTH-GILEAD

must not be too much intrigued with its dramatic qualities, however, for at the moment we are intent on noting the geography involved. Look at the map showing Ramoth-gilead and Jezreel, imagine that mad drive by Jehu the son of Nimshi, and you will remember the geographical features.

CHAPTER XIII

THE COUNTRY IMMEDIATELY TO THE NORTH OF JERUSALEM

IF we turn now to the west side of Jordan we may remember the position of Jerusalem by re-drawing the line we suggested when we were considering the life of Samson the Danite. A straight line from east to west from the northern extremity of the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean would run through Jerusalem. To the south of this line are the localities we have already considered, the uplands of Judah, the inheritances of Simeon and of Dan, and the southern part of the land of the Philistines. We are now to consider the country immediately to the north of Jerusalem.

It will be remembered that the children of Israel, when Moses brought them to the promised land, lingered for a time in the valley of Shittim. Two spies crossed the river Jordan and reached Jericho. This city was four or five miles north west of the Dead Sea and three or four miles from the river. The task of the spies would have been an easy one if the inhabitants of the land had been friendly. The Jordan is not a great river, although it is so famous. It flows through a deep depression called the Ghor, which for many miles is below sea level. The still deeper depression hollowed out by the water is some-

times called the Zor. This varies in width, as the flow of water is very uneven ; sometimes the river rises rapidly and spreads out in places far beyond its ordinary banks. When the river is low there have been as many as fifty fords between the Dead Sea and the sea of Galilee. When it is in flood, it spreads out to a considerable width in places. In most of its course, however, it is too rapid for flood waters to remain for long. It soon shrinks again to a stream which is not very impressive as a river even to English eyes.

You will remember that soon after the spies entered Jericho the inhabitants of that city realized that enemies were in their midst. A hue and cry was raised. Rahab hid the spies under some flax, and when pursuers had gone to search for them she let them out, warning them to hide for three days in the mountain, until the pursuers had given up the search. The pursuers would naturally go toward Jordan, for they knew that the people of Israel were on the other side of the river. If the spies went in the other direction they would make a rapid ascent, for only five or six miles would take them from eight hundred feet below sea level to one thousand feet or more above. After hiding "in the mountain" for three days, they went back across the river to make their report to Joshua.

In trying to follow the course probably taken by the spies when they hid in the mountain, we find some places with well-known names. In the land of Benjamin is Gibeah, where Saul had

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his headquarters in later years. A little farther north and about fifteen miles from the river Jordan there is a still more interesting place, which seems to link the remote past with our own time. This is Michmash, where the invading host of the Philistines encamped in the early days of king Saul (1 Sam. 13 : 16). The Israelites were so much under the domination of the Philistines at that time that they were prevented from having effective weapons of war. The Philistines had put garrisons in the land of Israel. One of them was in Geba. This name, variously rendered, means "the hill", and so is found in several parts of the land. There is reason to believe that the Geba mentioned in the text was in the heart of the land, an intolerable situation for a proud king. Saul and Jonathan smote this garrison, and thus provoked immediate war.

The men of Saul's body-guard were properly armed, but the majority of the people were without swords or spears. We gather inferentially that with the outbreak of war many of them went into hiding (1 Sam. 14 : 11, and verse 22). Jonathan and his armour bearer apparently found a way to climb up from Gibeah of Saul in the direction of Michmash. In a spirit of adventurous faith they ascended the cliff face and attacked a garrison of the Philistines with such vigour that an alarm was spread through the entire host, resulting in a complete rout of the invaders.

For this extraordinary overthrow there are some interesting geographical reasons to which we will return a little later. For the moment we may take note of an event three thousand years after the days of Saul in which history almost repeated itself. During the great war 1914-18 the Turks were driven out of Palestine by the forces under the command of Lord Allenby. Some of the British soldiers engaged in this work had a fairly good knowledge of Old Testament history, and they were able to make some use of Scripture to guide their movements in the chosen land. On one occasion the Turks were encamped at Michmash in a strong position. The British intended to make an attack on the morrow, and it was expected that casualties would be heavy. An officer had the name Michmash hammering at his brain with an insistent but vague suggestion that there was something remarkable connected with it. He told his Commanding officer, and by the light of a lamp they searched the Old Testament record. They found the narrative in 1 Sam. 14. They sent out scouts, and these presently returned with the information that they had found the gorge which exactly agreed with the scriptural description. The plan of battle was altered, they went along the narrow passage, climbed the cliff, and stampeded the Turks as completely as Jonathan had overthrown the Philistines three thousand years earlier. The strong position was taken almost without loss.

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Returning to the time of Saul, we may find a curious description of the battle and its effects. Without a knowledge of geographical features it would seem unintelligible. 1 Sam. 14 : 14-16—
“And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armour bearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plow. And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people ; the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked : so it was a very great trembling. And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked ; and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down one another.”

The Israelites rallied, men hidden in mount Ephraim followed in the battle (verse 22), and many who had been serving the Philistines turned to join with Saul and Jonathan. So the Philistines were driven back to their own borders.

It may be asked in what way the curious description quoted above is explained by a study of the geography? Well, first take note of two facts of which a reader may easily lose sight owing to the very brief manner in which they are presented. From chapter 13 we gather that when Saul smote the garrison which the Philistines as overlords had placed in the land, the invaders were so enraged at this rebellion that they came against Israel with thirty thousand chariots. The second fact is that just when the alarm was sounded at Jonathan's sudden attack

there was an earthquake (1 Sam. 14 : 15). Such tremors were not uncommon in the land. It is easy to realize what a "trembling" among the invaders might be caused even by a relatively mild earthquake just at that moment.

Now look at a map showing elevations, and ask yourself the question whether this was a country suited for chariots of war? We are not told whether these chariots had swords fixed to the wheels after the manner of some ancient devices of war, but whatever kind of chariot they might be, they were not suited for the hill country of Israel. A sudden alarm, some shouts of fear and perplexity, followed by an earthquake, and chariot horses might soon get out of control. Then the army would indeed "melt away", and with runaway chariots on such hills they would beat down one another just as is described in the record of that which was observed from the watch tower of Gibeah.

The coastal plain which was held by the Philistines only rose to about five hundred feet above sea level. Chariots would be effective here, and probably they played a considerable part in enabling the Philistines to hold so much of this favoured part of the country. The central ridge of hills and mountains called for different methods of warfare. The Philistines clearly suffered a very severe defeat at Michmash, but it was not the valour of Israel that overthrew them. It was the divinely directed answer to an outstanding act of faith.

AI, OR AIATH

About three miles north of Michmash is the site of another battle which took place five hundred years earlier, in the days of Joshua. You will remember that after the Israelites had taken Jericho, Achan committed a serious trespass in trying to secure for himself some of the treasures of the city. It was a deliberate sin in direct contravention of the most explicit instruction that all should be destroyed. The valley of Achor near Jericho was where Achan was slain and buried. Achor means "trouble", and the name was given because such trouble was brought to Israel by Achan's offence. From Jericho the people had gone to Ai, rather more than ten miles to the north-west of Jericho, and as we have observed, about three miles from Michmash. The men of Ai defeated the invaders and chased them away. The overthrow was stated to be the outcome of Achan's offence. When the sinner had been detected and slain, another attack was made on Ai. This time an ambush was placed between Ai and Bethel. The men detailed for this work went by night. In the morning others made an open and direct attack upon the city, and by pretending to flee as before, they drew the enemy out to chase them in overwhelming confidence. The result was that the city was taken by the men who had been in ambush, while the over-confident

warriors who had thought to chase the invaders were caught between two forces.

Professor Garstang in his book *Joshua—Judges* discusses this campaign with expert knowledge of the locality. He states that the total distance from old Jericho to Ai by the main road is thirteen miles, and the journey involves a climb of 3,200 feet. This is nearly the height of Snowdon in Wales, and it involves a longer walk than need be taken by those who venture on foot up the Welsh mountain. Professor Garstang states that the two main roads are of such a character that they could not be traversed by an army even at night without an alarm being raised. He details the peculiar difficulties of each way. He continues:

“All these difficulties could however, be avoided by taking a narrow track which follows up the middle of the ridge between the valley routes.”

If they took this course—and Professor Garstang’s argument seems conclusive—part of the way would be along the bed of a water course. The men might have to walk in single file, and progress would be slow, but they would avoid human habitations, and they would be led directly to the locality in the direction of Bethel where the ambush was to be placed. Here the conditions were ideal for the purpose: a hill side with innumerable boulders of varying size and fantastic shapes. In Professor Garstang’s book there is a photograph of stones on the west of the

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site of ancient Ai where many hundreds of men could be concealed so that their presence would not be detected even by those who passed quite near. The old narrative comes to life in these facts and photographs in Professor Garstang's book.

This locality between Bethel and Ai is famous for something more peaceful and pleasant than the ambush set in total war. It was the place where Abram halted on his first journey through the land and where he built an altar to the Lord, and it was the locality to which he returned when he came back from Egypt. His grandson Jacob also stayed at Bethel on his way to Padan-aram, and it was here that he dreamed of the great ladder joining earth and heaven. Much later, nearly a thousand years after the time of Abram, and five hundred years after Joshua, Bethel became a centre for idolatry under the corrupting influence of Jeroboam the son of Nebat "who made Israel to sin".

Before leaving the locality immediately north of Jerusalem, we may take note of a prophecy which mentions several of these places in language which would sound strange and meaningless if read in the expressionless, uncomprehending manner we sometimes hear, but which with a map before us becomes a most dramatic and vigorous description of a great event in Israel's history :

" He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron ; at Michmash he had laid up his

carriages : they are gone over the passage ; they have taken up their lodging at Geba ; Ramah is afraid ; Gibeah of Saul is fled. Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim : cause it to be heard unto Laish. O poor Anathoth ! ” (Isa. 10 : 28-30).

This passage, read aloud by one who had no idea what it meant, would sound very strange ; in fact it would almost seem to be sheer nonsense. When we realize that it is a description of the invasion by the Assyrians when the army of Sennacherib reached the gates of Jerusalem, the picture comes to life with all the places mentioned. The report is given as from Jerusalem while the army from the north comes nearer. Aiath is the same as Ai, where Joshua set the ambush. It is about ten miles north of Jerusalem. From Aiath the invader advanced another mile or two and laid up his baggage at the famous military centre of Michmash. Then through the passage to Geba. Ramah, only two miles to the west, was afraid, while the men of Saul’s hillside fortress, “ Gibeah of Saul ”, had fled. Then follows a reference to Gallim, in which there appears to be a certain literary allusiveness. There is a Gallim south of Jerusalem, but there was another place of the same name in the land of Benjamin near to Saul’s headquarters. Phalti was of Gallim, and he was evidently a close friend of Saul’s. To him the king gave his daughter Michal after David had been driven into exile. Phalti Gallim

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was the son of Laish (1 Sam. 25 : 44). The suggestion that "the daughter of Gallim" should call and make her voice heard even unto Laish thus seems to have a double meaning. Laish, it will be remembered, was the original name of the far northern city which was later called Dan, and regarded as the extreme north of the land. Clearly the Gallim here referred to was in Benjamin near to Gibeah of Saul, and its urgent need for help is expressed with a literary allusiveness which blends the historical and the geographical into a single message of hopelessness. Neither Laish the city nor Laish the man could possibly hear this despairing cry from the daughter of Gallim.

The next passage is only an exclamation. "O poor Anathoth!" This little place was a few miles nearer Jerusalem. Apparently it was overwhelmed by the invaders. The invading army reached Nob, that city of the priests quite near Jerusalem, the place where David first went to get food and arms when he fled from Saul. Here the aggressor was halted. The Lord "lopped the bough with terror", and the "haughty one was humbled". It was that tremendous reverse in the days of Hezekiah when a hundred and eighty-five thousand of the Assyrians were slain—by the angel of the Lord, according to the Bible; by a peculiar and deadly pestilence, according to secular records. Whatever the proximate cause of this disaster to Assyrian arms may have been, it is certain that Jerusalem was made safe from

Gentile aggression for more than a hundred years.

This pen-picture of the Assyrian advance may help to impress the mind with the places mentioned, from Ai more than ten miles to the north, to Nob at the very gates of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XIV

EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH

FOR a little while now we must make a more rapid survey as we travel northward. The land given to the children of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) was a goodly portion extending to a length of about thirty miles north from the borders of Benjamin, and with a similar width from the river Jordan to the coastal plain held by the Philistines. It is hardly possible to determine how much of this land fell to the half tribe of Manasseh. We know that the other half tribe which had its inheritance on the east side of Jordan at one time extended its borders far into the ancient land of Bashan. We read (1 Chron. 5 : 23) that they increased as far as Mount Hermon. This was sixty miles north of their original inheritance, and it illustrates the great changes in national boundaries which came with the fluctuating fortunes of the people. There seems to have been little stability in the inheritance of this eastern part of the land.

It is clear that the descendants of Joseph actually inherited and for a considerable period held something like nine hundred square miles of territory on the west side of Jordan. They might have had a still larger inheritance if they had been more worthy. They might have taken the coastal plain as far as Mount Carmel, for

this would not have interfered with any of the other tribes. It would have been entirely at the expense of the Philistines, to whom the land had never been promised.

The Canaanites possessed chariots even in the time of Joshua (Josh. 17 : 16 ; 18), and this gave them an advantage in the valleys. Not only did they hold the plain as far north as Mount Carmel, but as we have previously noted they pushed along the valley of Jezreel as far as Bethshan only a few miles from the river Jordan. The territory held by Ephraim and Manasseh was thus mainly hill country. To the east it dipped to below sea level in the valley of the Jordan. On the west it sloped down to the plain. In the central part much of this land is fifteen hundred feet or more above sea level, and there are many parts rising to two thousand feet. Mount Ebal is just over 3,000 feet. With a map before us we easily make this general survey, and then we may take note of a few details.

Approximately twenty miles north of Jerusalem was Shiloh, one of the most famous places in the early days of the nation. Joshua apparently made it his headquarters when the land was being divided, and the tabernacle of the congregation was set up there. Shiloh remained the religious centre all through the days of the judges, and it was here that the child Samuel was brought up.

It appears from 11 Sam. 7 : 2 that the sacred emblems of Israel's connection with God

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were still in a tent even in the days of David. When therefore in the story of Samuel's infancy we read of the temple (1 Sam. 3 : 3), we must not suppose that there was an ornate building of stone and cedars such as was erected at Jerusalem by Solomon. The centre of worship was still a tabernacle, as it had been in the wilderness. It seems certain, however, that there was a building of stability dedicated to the Lord at Shiloh, and that the tabernacle was in it or near it. When we read that Eli the priest sat on a seat by the post of the temple of the Lord (1 Sam. 1 : 9), the word rendered "temple" implies a solid structure. Fifteen times in the Old Testament it is rendered "palace", and there do not appear to be any passages in which the word is applied to a temporary covering of cloth or skin. In 1 Sam. 3 : 3 we are told that the incident to be recorded was "before the lamp went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was". It seems reasonable to suppose that when Shiloh became the religious centre a building was erected to give some protection to the tabernacle and to the priests who ministered.

It was in this city, twenty miles north of Jerusalem, that after a period of divine silence the word of God came to the child Samuel, and gave him the painful task of conveying a message of stern rebuke to the high priest. It was from here that rumour spread from Dan to Beersheba that the child growing up in the

sacred precincts was a divinely appointed judge and prophet. It was from Shiloh that the ark was carried out to the field of battle against the Philistines, and it was to Shiloh that tidings of disaster came, causing the aged priest to fall backward and break his neck. The ark was captured by the Philistines, and it never went to Shiloh again. The name Ichabod might be applied to the city as well as to the grandson of Eli, for the glory had departed (1 Sam. 4 : 21).

JOPPA

If we turn now from Shiloh to the west coast of Palestine, at a distance of approximately thirty miles but in the same latitude, we find a port of considerable importance in the history of the land. Joppa or Jaffa is about thirty-seven miles north west of Jerusalem. Readers will remember it as the port from which Jonah sailed when he tried to flee from unpleasant duty, and as the place in a much later age where the apostle Peter lived for many days, and from whence he went forth with the first message of salvation to the Gentiles. Looking forward nearly two thousand years still later, Joppa, now called Jaffa, became a famous centre for the export of oranges.

As a port, Joppa played an important part in the history of Israel. It seems reasonable to infer that it came closely into touch with Samaria. Can you think what was the basis of this con-

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nection? In the days when the tabernacle was at Shiloh the Israelites had no access to the sea anywhere near this port, for the coastal plain was firmly held by the Philistines. In the days of David the Philistines were defeated in a series of wars, and the borders of Israel were enlarged.

It is illuminating in this connection to look up the name "Philistine" in a concordance. They are mentioned in hundreds of passages, especially in the books of Judges and of Samuel. After the time of David they figured very little in the history. True, they proved troublesome when the kings of Israel and Judah were so wicked as to call for chastening, yet even Uzziah, who could not be described as a righteous man, was so successful against the decadent people of the plain that he broke down the walls of Gath and Ashdod, two of the most important centres of Philistine strength, and built cities in this part of the land (11 Chron. 26 : 6). It seems safe, therefore, to assume that from the later days of David the people of Israel had access to the northern part of the maritime plain, including the port of Joppa.

Readers will remember that Joppa is mentioned as a port when Solomon built the temple. Timber was cut down in Lebanon by the Tyrians, and floated down by sea to Joppa (11 Chron. 2 : 16). This was certainly an important work in the prime of Israel's history as a kingdom.

Now for the assumed connection with Samaria. It will be remembered that Omri built Samaria. A little later we find that there was a close and disastrous relationship between Omri and Ethbaal, the king of Tyre, Ahab, the son of Omri, marrying Jezebel, the daughter of the Tyrian king. No doubt this connection was first made by the need for Tyrian help with timber (see 1 Kings 5, 6) in the construction of the new capital city. Surely it is at least very probable that the timber would be brought in the same way as in the days of Solomon. Joppa was rather nearer to Samaria than to Jerusalem, and with no serious natural obstacles in the way.

It will be helpful for a young student to raise the question whether there was a nearer port which may have been used. At least the position of Joppa will be fixed on the memory.

Leaving the coast, and turning back to the hills of Ephraim, we find that ten miles north of Shiloh there are several places of interest figuring in the history. One is Shechem, where Jacob bought a parcel of land when he returned from Padan-aram. This incident furnishes a remarkable illustration of the fact that the patriarchs did not inherit the land—"not so much as to set foot on" (Acts 7 : 5). Jacob, after being an exile for many years, bought this estate in the centre of the Land of Promise, but even when he had bought it and paid for it, he was not permitted to inherit it. Circum-

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stances arose which made him a fugitive again, and to the end of his life he was a sojourner and a stranger in the short and evil days of his pilgrimage (Gen. 47 : 9).

Just about ten miles due north of Shiloh is Sychar, where Jacob's well was situated. We need hardly remind readers of the most interesting of all incidents connected with Sychar. It was here that the Lord Jesus presented such important truths to the woman of Samaria, telling her of living water which he could give. But while all readers will remember this incident, they may not have noticed that Sychar is situated in a locality which seems to give additional significance to the words of life spoken by the Lord. It is between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. Moses commanded that this should be a place to commemorate the blessing and the curse which he put before the people, the blessing upon Mount Gerizim and the curse upon Mount Ebal : a blessing if they would obey the statutes given to them ; a curse if they disobeyed (Deut. 27). Joshua built an altar upon Mount Ebal, an altar of unhewn stones, according to the Law. The people were assembled between the mountains, and the words of the Law, with the blessing and the curse, were read to them. It was appropriate that the famous well of pure water should be here situated, for water, more than any other of nature's gifts, suggests the blessing which may come to human life through obedience.

It was appropriate, too, that the teaching of Christ should be here presented regarding the enduring water of life, and the true form of worship. Here was a real hope of the curse being removed, and the blessing secured.

As we have already noted, Mount Ebal is just over 3,000 feet above sea level. Mount Gerizim is two hundred feet less. From here the land slopes down to a level of less than 1,500 feet at Samaria seven miles to the north west.

Samaria is approximately thirty-five miles to the north of Jerusalem. It is well to have the positions of these cities well in mind, for in the later days of Israel's history they were the rival centres of the two kingdoms. It will be remembered that Jeroboam the son of Nebat led a revolt against Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. They were both unrighteous men, but Jeroboam was a worse king than the son of Solomon against whom he rebelled. He feared that if the people went to Jerusalem to worship, their hearts might be turned in favour of the king of Judah ; so he suggested that the journey was too far for them, and that a more convenient form of worship in a more accessible centre would be an improvement. There is something quite modern in this consideration for human convenience. Jeroboam was modern, too, in the fact that his new religion was really a very old one, even the golden calf which led Israel into sin in the wilderness. He brought this evil

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idea from Egypt, where he had lived for many years during the reign of Solomon. As we have previously noted, Jeroboam made shrines for this unholy worship at Bethel, a few miles west of Ai, and at Dan in the far north.

Fifty years after this apostasy Omri was on the throne of Israel. He too was wicked, but he was a man of vigour and ability. He made such an impression on the surrounding nations that for a hundred years after his death the kingdom of Israel was spoken of as "the house of Omri". Although the scriptural record is very brief, enough is related to explain this fame in the Gentile world. Omri was captain of Baasha's army in a time of turmoil. He quickly overthrew Zimri and Tibni. When he was established as king, he conceived the idea of building a fenced city in the centre of his dominions. The brief record mentions his wickedness, but it also refers to his wars and the "might" that he showed (1 Kings 16 : 27). He contracted a marriage for his son with a Tyrian princess just when Tyre was at the height of its fame and power. So we can easily understand the impression made on godless nations, and we can perceive the significance of a reference in the prophecy of Micah nearly two hundred years later. It was a reproach to the house of Israel that while the commandments of God were often forgotten, the "statutes of Omri" were remembered so long after his death (Micah 6 : 16). From the human point of view Omri

was clearly a great king, but like many other great men of the earth he "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord".

SAMARIA

Find Samaria on the map, for a few minutes contemplate the position and character of the city, and then let memory bring pictures from the history of Israel. First note the well chosen position. In Omri's time the worst enemy was to the east, with Damascus as head quarters. See how the hills gave protection on this side, so that if an army of Syrians came against the land they would have to cross the river Jordan, and then have such difficult country to traverse that long before they could reach Samaria the alarm would be sounded and preparations made. Note too that the locality was well watered and fruitful, an excellent centre for a capital city.

Then think of the dark side of the picture : the festivities when Ahab, the feeble son of Omri, brought Jezebel, the princess of Tyre, home as his bride. Worse still, the unholy ceremonies when a temple for Baal worship was erected in this centre of the kingdom.

Let the consequences of this declension be our next picture. A terrible famine dominates the whole district of Samaria. There is no rain for three years. Under Tyrian influence the people have worshipped the sun, and now the sun pitilessly scorches them until they long for

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cloud and rain. Then comes the dramatic reappearance of Elijah the prophet with the proposal to make a final test at Mount Carmel, thirty-five miles north west of Samaria. There is no fear of Philistines in this part of the land in these days. The leaders of the opposing faiths go to Carmel, and Elijah proposes an easy test, as it would seem, for the priests of Baal. With everything scorched up, surely the sun they worshipped would give them an answer by fire, for fire sometimes comes unbidden in such dry times, the igniting heat produced by the friction of dry twigs moved by the wind. No such fortune comes to the priests of Baal with their altar and offering. Then Elijah invites them to drench the sacrifice with water. The sea is not far away, so there is no difficulty in getting water for this purpose. God answered by a miracle which should have been conclusive to the minds of all, not merely of seven thousand men. Then see the clouds forming with a promise of abundance of rain, and Elijah with girded loins running before the chariot of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel. Trace the journey on the map, and it will help the memory of both incident and locality. Jezreel was about thirty miles from Carmel. It had become a pleasure resort of the kings of Israel, and Ahab had a palace there. About twenty miles north of Samaria, Jezreel was no doubt warmer than Samaria, being at a lower level, and better protected from cold winds. You will remember

that in the next reign the kings of Israel and Judah were both at Jezreel, and it was to this pleasure resort that Jehu drove furiously to execute vengeance and to claim the crown. Think of that drive from Ramoth-gilead, and of Elijah's run from Carmel : and the position of Jezreel will be fixed on the mind.

Next picture Samaria in the days of Elisha the prophet, the city besieged by Syrians, the people starving, and the price of food exorbitant. Elisha makes the sudden proclamation that on the morrow the prices will be normal. Remember the sarcastic and sceptical lord who did not believe, and the cryptic answer of the prophet : "Thou shalt see it, but not eat thereof". See the Syrians round the city that night, a panic seizing them because they think that they can hear great hosts approaching from the north and south. Only the chariots of the Hittites and the Egyptians could make such sound. The Syrians flee in frantic haste, forsaking garments and provisions. So with the morning light abundance of food is brought into Samaria. The sceptical lord sees it, but he does not eat thereof. He is knocked down and trampled to death by the rush of a starving mob, clamouring for food at the gate of the city. You might find many other pictures in the storehouse of memory helpful in the study of this part of the land.

Look at the map seven miles to the north of Samaria, and then from the same centre measure about twenty-five miles north west to

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the coast, and you will find two places which connect in our minds with two righteous characters separated from each other by nearly two thousand years, but alike in being beloved of God and hated by men. The first place is Dothan, where Joseph found his unworthy brethren. The second is Caesarea, where the apostle Paul was held in bonds.

CHAPTER XV

NORTH OF EPHRAIM

NORTH of Mount Carmel and by the northern borders of Ephraim is a celebrated valley making a break in the hills toward the river Jordan. The names of Megiddo and Esdraelon are well known, with associations of war. There were possibilities of defence in those hills to the south of the famous plain to put a check on any northern aggressor. A united Palestine under one king could make a strong line of defence here, even if tribes farther to the north were defeated. The land was not properly united until the days of David.

When the Philistines were strong, as in the reign of Saul, they came through the valley to Bethshan, and sometimes attacked the Israelites in their hill positions. Mount Gilboa, where Saul was slain, was close to this valley. The Philistines had learned not to use chariots of war in the hills. In archery they had found a weapon far better suited to such warfare. You will remember that the archers were particularly mentioned in connection with the overthrow of Saul. David, while lamenting the death of his rival, took note of the way in which he was defeated, and urged the men of Israel to learn the use of the bow. Archery was not unknown in the land before this time, for you will remember

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that Jonathan practised it. Evidently its full value had not been properly appreciated until that fateful day when Saul and his sons fell in Mount Gilboa.

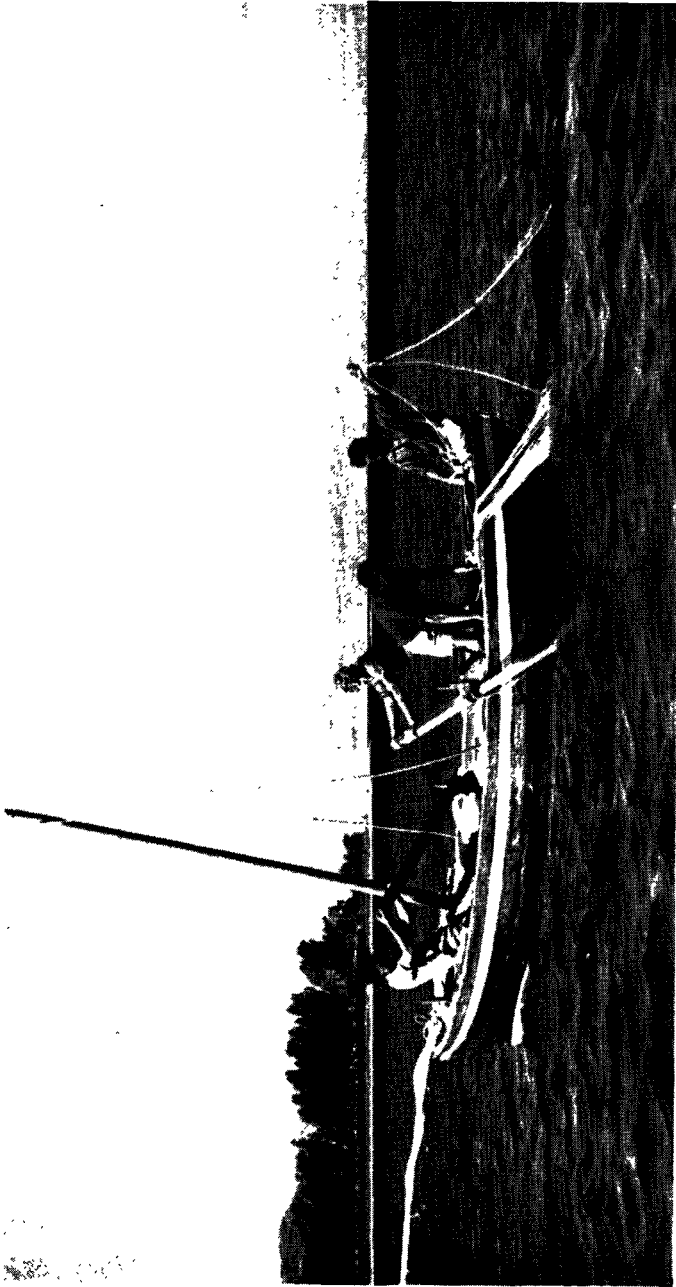
One of the most interesting illustrations of geographical light on a well-known incident of history is in connection with the attack made by king Jabin and the adventures of Sisera, the captain of his host. The incident happened only a little further to the north than this part that we have been surveying. It mainly affected some of the northern tribes which do not figure so prominently in the greater part of the history.

Deborah the prophetess dwelt between Ramah and Bethel in Mount Ephraim. The Ramah here mentioned is where in later days Samuel lived and died. Barak, the man whom Deborah called to lead the army, was of the tribe of Naphtali, and the men he led were from Naphtali and Zebulun. You will remember Jacob's prophecy that "Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea, and he shall be for a haven of ships" (Gen. 49 : 13). Zebulun's portion was just north of Mount Carmel where the great harbour has been constructed in these latter days, thus completely realizing Jacob's forecast. Naphtali was still farther north.

Barak established his headquarters in Mount Tabor, 1,800 feet above sea level and about ten miles north of the plain of Esdraelon. With ten thousand men he went down from Mount Tabor and attacked the Canaanites in the plain. We



SAMARIA



ON THE SEA OF GALILEE

read that the Lord discomfited Sisera and all his chariots, so that Sisera lighted down from off his chariot and fled away on foot (Judges 4 : 15). At first sight this seems an extraordinary act. Whatever kind of chariots the Canaanites used, they would surely give some protection. Indeed, when we remember the fear that chariots inspired in the minds of Israelites (Josh. 17 : 16), we may well suppose that these implements of war were as formidable in their time as the more elaborate inventions of later days. Why then forsake them, and flee on foot? Then in Judges 5, there is the remarkable song of Deborah, in which acknowledgment is made of the help received from Heaven, and in the immediate context there is a reference to the river Kishon sweeping away the enemy (Judges 5 : 20-21). Now the Kishon is only a wady which practically dries up in summer. Certainly it was near this watercourse that the battle was joined, but it is difficult at first sight to see how this wady could help the people, and the language used in the song of Deborah seems mysterious.

A knowledge of the geography makes the matter absolutely plain, and we can see the manner in which God "discomfited" the army of Sisera. The explanation partly turns on the fact that the Kishon is such a little river, easily failing in the dry weather. You probably know that there is very little tide on the shores of Palestine. The Mediterranean is almost like an inland sea. The one opening to the ocean is very

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narrow in proportion to the size of the sea, and the coast of Palestine is two thousand miles away. A little reflection will tell any young student of science why there is only such a slight tide on the shores of Palestine. The result is that in periods of drought the mouth of the Kishon gets clogged with seaweed and sand. There is not sufficient tide to keep it clear. When a rainy season turns the wady into a real river, the swollen waters cannot get away quickly, and they flood the surrounding country. After the flood waters have receded they leave much of the land soft and boggy.

Now we have all the facts to make the narrative clear to us. We can see the manner in which Deborah the prophetess tempted the Canaanites into the valley at the right time for God to "discomfit" them; why Sisera left his chariot and fled on foot; and why in the song of triumph the recognition of divine aid is associated with the river Kishon.

The men from Tabor came down into the valley at the right time. Sisera led his chariots against them in an overwhelming charge, and got the chariots bogged in the treacherous soil left by the flood waters of the Kishon. Chariots stuck fast in mud were no good to anyone, and they had to be deserted. Sisera escaped from the sword only to meet an inglorious end in the tent of one who, coming from his own stock, was regarded as a friend.

Here we may remind you that in chapter 8 we showed that the Kenites to the south of Judah were really Canaanites, and we quoted the statement of Scripture that Heber the Kenite had separated himself from his brethren and removed to the north. Jael was Heber's wife, and it was in her tent that Sisera thought to find safety. He may have been at peace with the house of Heber, but clearly he was not at peace with Heber's wife.

From Mount Tabor, where Barak made his headquarters, we may survey some interesting places which figure in the Bible narrative. Four miles to the south is Endor, ever associated in our minds with witchcraft. It was to this place that Saul went when God had forsaken him. Here he consulted with a witch in defiance of God's commands, and from here he went on the following day to be slain by the Philistines on Mount Gilboa, ten miles to the south.

Taking another measurement from Mount Tabor, five miles to south west, we find Nain, a place with much pleasanter associations. It makes us think of the great gift of life from the One who abolished the power of death and "brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel". Taking a similar distance—about five miles—due west from Mount Tabor, we find the most famous of all the little cities of Galilee, Nazareth, where Jesus lived and from whence he went forth on his ministry. You will remember that on one occasion some of the

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people of Nazareth were very angry with Jesus, and tried to throw him down from the top of the hill on which their city was built (Luke 4 : 29). Nazareth is on the slope of a hill which rises sharply, and not far from the town reaches an altitude nearly equal to that of Mount Tabor.

Do you remember what it was that so enraged the people of Nazareth on that occasion ? Two matters of geography are involved in the incident. The people had heard of great miracles performed by Jesus in other places. They were sceptical, and raised the question in their minds why Jesus should not perform such works in his own city, if indeed he had the powers attributed to him. His answer was that a prophet is not honoured in his own city, a saying which has often been noted as true in connection with many matters. Jesus went on to give two illustrations from Israel's history ; and it was the appositeness of these citations which so enraged the men of Nazareth. There were many needy widows in the land when Elijah was among them, but the only widow to whom he was sent was at Sarepta. There were many lepers in the days of Elisha, but the only one cleansed was Naaman the Syrian. Now Sarepta is a city of Sidon, many miles to the north, and not reckoned as in the land of Israel. Naaman was the captain of the Syrian host, which at that time was the worst of Israel's enemies, and with headquarters at Damascus. The Jews had not been favoured by their two

great prophets. There was no escape from the historical facts, and the implications were perfectly logical, but they were most offensive to the men of Nazareth.

Another measurement of about ten miles from Mount Tabor, this time to the north west, would bring us to Cana of Galilee, where the beginning of miracles gave a blessing to a marriage feast. The bridegroom was probably a poor man who could not provide the luxuries demanded by the occasion, and Jesus helped him. The incident is not without its lessons.

One more measurement from Tabor, ten or twelve miles to the east, and we reach the southern end of the most famous lake in the world. It bears four names, given at various times, and it is well to have them in mind so as to avoid confusion: the sea of Chinnereth, the sea of Galilee, the lake of Gennesaret, and the lake of Tiberias. These are all names for the same sheet of water.

We took note of the main features of this lake in our first general survey as we traced the course taken by Abram when he first entered the land. We mentioned then that the water receives very little notice in the Old Testament. The district is mentioned under the name Chinnereth, but apart from figuring as a boundary for certain measurements this district only comes once into the history. This was in the days of Asa, king of Judah, and Baasha, king of Israel. Baasha, clearly intent on pursuing the

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policy of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, built defences at Ramah (presumably the Ramah in the land of Benjamin) to prevent his people from associating with Judah. As Blunt proved, there is evidence that in those days there was considerable movement of people from one part of the land to another. Life was becoming more artificial and complex. Some men were content to leave their inheritance of land, and seek a living in other localities. The temple in Jerusalem attracted and the open idolatry at Dan and Bethel repelled all the best elements of the northern kingdom, with the result, as shown in the numbers of the rival armies, that the population of Judah was increasing at the expense of Israel. The king of Israel wanted to stop this movement, while the king of Judah would rather encourage it. The king of Israel went against Asa in battle, and built Ramah with the idea of stopping men from entering in or coming out from Judah. The king of Judah called upon all his people to frustrate this work by removing the stones of the new fortification, and taking them for the construction of Geba of Benjamin and of Mizpah. It will be remembered that Geba of Benjamin is only a mile or two from Ramah. There appears to have been a Mizpah a few miles to the north, but this has not been so well identified.

The association of this interesting incident with the district of Chinnereth lies in the fact that before Asa could clear away the fortifications

built at Ramah he had to buy the help of the Syrians to draw away the forces of Baasha. Benhadad accepted the gift, and came against the northern part of Baasha's kingdom, Dan—the northern Dan—Ijon, Abel-beth-maachah, all Chinnereth, and the land of Naphtali (1 Kings 15 : 20). We read of some of these places in connection with a later invasion from the north, when Tiglath-Pileser came against the land (2 Kings 15 : 29). Abel-beth-maachah is only about ten miles from the foot of Hermon, and only a few miles from the northern Dan. The land of Naphtali comes next, between the waters of Merom and the northern end of the Sea of Chinnereth, so we can see how naturally the captains of the Syrian army would come from Damascus and attack these localities. Baasha hastened north to meet this raid, and took up his abode at Tirzah. This was the centre in Mount Ephraim where he began to reign, and where his successor, Omri, reigned previous to the building of Samaria.

It will be noticed that in these references to Chinnereth in the Old Testament there is nothing about the water. No mention is made of fishermen or of boats. It may be that during the greater part of Old Testament times nations dwelling on the eastern side of the lake claimed the use of the waters. The Jews were not good seamen, and possibly lacked even such boats as would sail on the lake of Galilee. When the Tyrians instructed them in the time of Solomon,

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the aims were far beyond the use of fishing boats. The men of Tyre would probably despise the little Sea of Galilee.

In New Testament times this lake is mentioned many times under its more modern names. Usually it is referred to as the Sea of Galilee. Here Simon Peter and other fishermen plied their craft until they were called by the Lord Jesus to a nobler kind of fishing. By the shores of this lake the Lord often walked. In a boat pushed out a little way from the land he gave some of his most important teaching to the people assembled on the beach. In a boat tossed by the waves of this little sea, he once slept until his disciples were so terrified by the storm that they awakened him. If we desire to allow imagination a little liberty in reconstructing the adventures of the Lord Jesus and his disciples, we need to have the main geographical features clearly in mind.

In our rapid survey when we followed the course taken by Abram on his first entry into the land, we noted that the Sea of Galilee is only about thirteen miles in length and varying from three to seven miles in width. It is well to bear this measurement in mind. Lake Windermere, the largest of English lakes, is ten miles in length, but less than two miles at its widest part. The total surface of the Sea of Galilee is probably at least ten times greater than that of Lake Windermere. Even then it is very small as compared with many other lakes in the world. In

one geographical feature, however, it is unique. It is nearly seven hundred feet below the surface of the Mediterranean, and yet a river flows right through and its waters are continually replenished from Lebanon. The river Jordan, which has its source even north of Hermon, receives regular contributions of melted snow from the heights of the northern giant, and the water flowing through the little Lake of Merom and then through the Sea of Galilee, brings the "dew of Hermon" even to Samaria and Judea. It ends in the great distillery of the Dead Sea, where the heat evaporates all the water, and with infinite complexity, through wind and cloud, the process is repeated.

There is a strip of land below ocean level all round the Sea of Galilee. The city of Tiberias on the western shore is some hundreds of feet below ocean level. A little to the north of this city we reach the coast of Magdala, where the belt of land is broader.

In Matthew 15 we read that Jesus departed from the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee, and went up into a mountain. Here he taught and then fed over four thousand people. Then we read in the last verse of the chapter, he sent the multitude away and taking a ship came into the borders of Magdala. Even if we insist on the word "mountain" having the meaning we now attach to it, there is no difficulty in tracing a course which would harmonize with this description.

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From Tyre and Sidon the way to the Sea of Galilee would be south east. It would involve a journey of about forty miles, but there is a break in the hills through which travelling would be relatively easy. If Jesus took the nearest course, he would come near to the Sea of Galilee at its northern end. Only about five miles north east of the coast there is a mountain rising to 2,000 feet above sea level. From thence to the nearest part of the coast one would pass between two cities with famous names : Chorazin on the left hand, only a few miles from the sea ; and on the right hand Capernaum, built on the shore. A few miles by boat would bring the traveller to the coasts of Magdala.

Tiberias, Magdala, Capernaum, Chorazin ; these are familiar names to all students of the New Testament. Magdala may perhaps impress memory most, for it is perpetuated in the name of a very faithful disciple. Mary Magdalene was Mary of Magdala.

CHAPTER XVI

THE EXTREME NORTH

THERE is not much in Scripture history regarding the land still farther north. Asher, the tribe which had the northernmost part of the land, figured so little in history that some makers of maps do not mention the name, even when the inheritance of the other tribes is shown. There were of course many changes in boundaries as the time went on, and many infiltrations into other parts of the land. The movement of Danites to Laish in the extreme north was the most spectacular of these changes ; but there were many other movements which can be discovered by their effects.

We read of some men coming from Asher in the days of Hezekiah when he called them to the great passover. "The posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun." For the most part the messengers were mocked, but a few men responded even from Asher, where apparently the posts did not go (11 Chron. 30 : 10).

Even before this time the northern part of the land, which had endured many raids from Damascus, began to feel a far more serious menace from distant Nineveh. Assyrian armies came in a succession of invasions, captives were taken, tribute was imposed, the northern tribe

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ceased to have any corporate existence ; and finally the whole of the northern kingdom down to Ephraim and Benjamin fell to the invaders. Gentiles came to settle in the land from which Israelites had been removed into captivity. Many people perished in the prolonged wars through Persian, Grecian and on to Roman times. Gradually the land which had been divided among the tribes of Israel came to have five main divisions, Phoenicia, Galilee, Samaria, Judea and Idumea. The part immediately north of Samaria was called "Galilee of the nations" because so many Gentiles had settled there. At the time of Christ's appearance it was a thickly peopled part of the Roman empire where many cities had been built. It had become a meeting point of divergent minds, and thus was a wonderful school for the Saviour of mankind.

CITIES OF THE LEVITES AND CITIES OF REFUGE

In the division of the land among the tribes of Israel there were two distinctive features which call for separate mention, although they may only give a little help in our study of the geography. The first is that the Levites were given no separate inheritance of land, but were given "cities" and their "suburbs", scattered in various parts. The object of this arrangement was obviously to keep the whole of the

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people in touch with members of the priestly tribe. From no part of the land would it be far to the nearest of these Levitical cities.

No doubt the reader has grasped the fact that the word "city" was often applied to very small places. A city meant an enclosure which might give some protection at least from wild animals. The suburbs meant the land immediately surrounding such an enclosure. We learn from Joshua 21 that forty-eight cities with their suburbs were given to the Levites. Not many of them can be identified now.

The provision of cities of refuge was a distinctive feature of the law given through Moses. They were cities of sanctuary where a man who had accidentally killed another might find protection from the friends of the victim. You are probably aware that in many countries there have been feuds, sometimes continuing for many generations, and growing more bitter with each attempt to have revenge for the last outrage. The Corsican word *vendetta* has been used to describe these horrible feuds. At one time such things were not unknown in Great Britain.

The origin of such blood feuds has often been in an accident. Someone has been killed, and his friends maintain that the wrong must be avenged. The friends of the offender claim that it was an accident, and that the act of vengeance is an outrage. If then matters are dealt with in hot-headed haste, before any

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judicial inquiry can be held, it is easy to see what a series of murderous assaults could be made, bringing new family connections into the quarrel, until it might develop into civil war. The cities of refuge guarded against this evil. An offender could flee to the nearest place of sanctuary, and there he was safe from the peremptory action of aggrieved men. He would have a fair trial before the elders of the priestly tribe, and he would be condemned only if it could be proved that he was guilty of malicious action.

Six cities of refuge were appointed, three on the west side of Jordan and three on the east. They were all Levitical cities. Elders of this tribe were there to judge the merits of a slayer's defence. The Levites were supposed to be teachers of justice and righteousness. With a map of Palestine before you it will be easy to find the cities of refuge on the west side of Jordan, and to form some idea as to the position of those in the east. Taking the names from north to south, first on the west side of Jordan we find Kadesh in Naphtali, about five miles west of the waters of Merom. It is impossible to determine the exact boundaries of the tribe, but it is clear that Kadesh was in the north of Naphtali. Only Asher and the new colony of Danites were to the north of this city.

In the centre of the land another city of refuge was Shechem in Mount Ephraim. This city was only a few miles west of Sychar, where you will remember that Jacob's well is situated.

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It is near to the famous mountains of blessing and cursing, Gerizim and Ebal.

You will probably remember Shechem in connection with Abimelech the son of Gideon. After Gideon's success in defeating the Midianites and putting an end to the activities of Oreb, Zeeb, Zebah and Zalmunna, the people suggested making him their king. Gideon answered: "I will not reign over you, neither shall my son. The Lord shall reign over you". Abimelech, however, was of different calibre, and with different ambitions. He established himself as a king in Shechem. Later, when rebellion arose, he went to live at Arumah, which is about seven miles to the south-east. He went against the rebels in Shechem, and later against others at Thebez, a place ten miles to the north east. Two towers or strongholds figure in the narrative, one at Shechem and the other at Thebez. Can you remember what happened? At Shechem Abimelech and his men with him heaped branches of trees round the tower, and set fire to them, destroying the building and all the men in it. Shechem did not prove a city of refuge for these unfortunate people, but in time of war all the rules of peace are broken. At the tower of Thebez Abimelech was not so successful. He was given a most convincing demonstration that it is possible for a woman to throw a stone effectively. The missile she threw from the tower was a piece of a mill stone, how large a piece we are not informed, but it was enough

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to end the career of this degenerate son of Gideon. With so many landmarks that have been identified in Ephraim, it should be easy to remember Shechem, the central city of refuge.

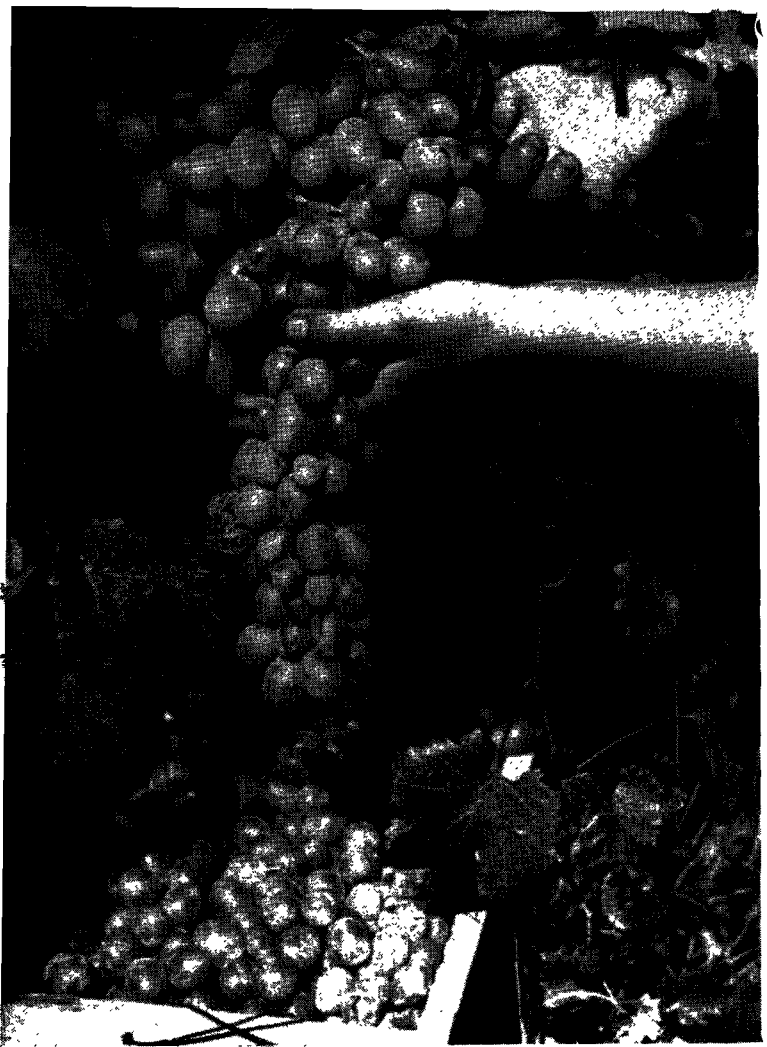
The third city on the west of Jordan was Hebron, in the uplands of Judah. You will remember this place, which figures so prominently in the Bible narrative: where Abram dwelt, where Caleb received his inheritance, where David first reigned as king, and where Absalom planned his rebellion. Hebron was perhaps the most important of all the cities of the Levites.

On the east of Jordan it is more difficult to identify the places named. They were overwhelmed by enemies so long ago that we cannot be sure of the exact localities. In the north, Golan was a city of refuge. It is described as in the land of Bashan, and in the territory pertaining to the half tribe of Manasseh. If you were to draw a straight line on the map from west to east, through the centre of the sea of Galilee, and then extend it for another seventeen miles towards the east, you might find Golan marked on the map. That was probably its location, but it is impossible to speak with any degree of assurance.

Next on the east side of Jordan, we remember that Ramoth-gilead was the second city of refuge. This was in the portion given to Gad. You will remember its position by reference



TIBERIAS AND THE SEA OF GALILEE



IN THE VINEYARD

CITIES OF THE LEVITES AND CITIES OF REFUGE

to the anointing of Jehu as king and his furious drive to Jezreel thirty miles away.

The third city of refuge on the east of Jordan was "Bezer in the wilderness". Beyond the fact that it was in the territory given to Reuben, we know very little of Bezer. It does not figure in the history, and cannot now be identified with any reasonable degree of confidence.

CHAPTER XVII

WIDE RANGING INCIDENTS

THERE are some matters of Bible history which sweep over a wide field. They might not have been much help is our survey of the land stage by stage but if we have a good general outline of the country well in mind, they may help to confirm our reconstructions. Certainly the incidents gain much added significance from a knowledge of the geography.

Arising out of the attacks by Philistines, and especially the one in which Michmash figured as a centre, there is a matter of historical and geographical interest which directs us back a little to the south of Judah, and from thence to the north of Ephraim. This is one of those historical developments which cannot be localized, but with such obvious geographical reasons for the course taken that the movements ought to assist our study.

It will be remembered that in the early days of Samuel's judgeship, the Philistines came against the land when the Israelites were totally unprepared for battle. Samuel prayed for deliverance, and the Philistines were "discomfited", or terrified by a great thunderstorm. Evidently they were not troublesome for some years after this. They feared the prophet who had arisen in the land ; and so far as we can determine

the matter, the land had rest for nearly forty years.

When Samuel had grown old, and in the early days of Saul's reign, the Philistines pushed against Israel again, putting garrisons in selected places, and sending forth spoilers to plunder. It is clear from such passages as 1 Sam. 14 : 21 that in normal circumstances there were many Israelites who mingled with the Philistines, so that the movements in the land would be reported at Philistine headquarters. It would be known that a king had been established, and that Samuel's influence had waned. When Saul and Jonathan smote the garrison at Geba, the Philistines, as we have previously noted, came against the land with many chariots, evidently determined to establish their supremacy beyond dispute. They suffered a very serious overthrow, in which an earthquake played a part in stampeding their chariot horses. What would be likely to happen after this? The Philistines would be sure to know that conditions were not happy in Israel, the king and Samuel being at variance. This would invite further attacks, but we might be sure that they would not bring chariots into the hill country again. An astute observer might form another confident anticipation : they would keep away from that part of the land near to Shiloh and the dwelling place of Samuel. There has been a little difficulty in identifying the place where Samuel lived and died. We know that the name was

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Ramah, but there were several places of that name in the land. There was one in Benjamin near to "Gibeah of Saul", and there was another far to the north. Dr. Young states that the Ramah where Samuel lived was in Ephraim, not very far from Bethel. He says that Ramathaim Zophim was another name for the same place. This seems very probable, for it was here that Samuel's parents lived (1 Sam. 1 : 1). It is clear that Shiloh, where the ark was kept, was in Mount Ephraim, and that Mizpeh, from whence the Israelites went out to chase the Philistines after that terrible thunderstorm, was in the north of Benjamin.

We may suppose that the Philistines would reason in this way : " In the early days of Samuel, when we approached his domain our army was terrified by the worst thunderstorm we ever experienced. Forty years later, when we thought that Samuel's power had gone, our attack in the same locality was overwhelmed by something else quite beyond human calculation, including an earthquake. Now all reports show that Samuel and Saul are at variance. We will attack again, but not in the direction of Mount Ephraim. We will not use chariots, and we will not venture into the mountains ". The Philistines must have reasoned in some such manner, for their next attack was in the south west of Judah, just at the beginning of the higher land rising from the coastal plain ; and instead of chariots they brought a giant who proposed to settle the

question of racial superiority by single combat. The appearance of this champion was enough to terrify the warriors of Israel, and so there was good opportunity for the preliminary exchange of taunts in which all the advantage seemed to be with the aggressors. This continued for forty days. Such wordy battles often preceded the clash of arms, it was the primitive counterpart of the war of nerves which has become so familiar a feature of modern struggles.

It is evident that the morale of the Israelites was fast sinking to zero when David appeared, and transformed the situation. The valley in which this famous incident occurred is nearly twenty miles south west of Jerusalem. You can find Azekah and Shochoh on the map, and you will see that there is a valley in between, now called the Valley of Elah, with the familiar wady running through it. There would be plenty of pebbles here to serve David for ammunition.

After the overthrow of Goliath there might have been peace for a long time but for the growing jealousy of Saul. Soon the Philistines would know that Samuel was dead, and that David was a fugitive. They could make many attacks without fearing a repetition of former disasters. There came a time when David and his men were outcasts, and apparently in the service of the king of Gath. Then the Philistines attacked the land of Israel in a new way which reveals considerable military astuteness. In an earlier chapter we have taken note of the battle in

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Mount Gilboa when Saul and his sons were slain, but you may well consider the matter again with the map in front of you. The Philistines went along the famous valley of Esdraelon, and established themselves strongly at Bethshan. This cut the land of Israel in two. Asher, Naphtali, Zebulun and Issachar would all be cut off from giving effective support to the king. Saul was overwhelmed in Mount Gilboa.

You will note, too, how the geography throws light on the history in the fact that while Philistine strength had thus moved to the north, the Amalekites invaded the south and burnt Ziklag. At this juncture the army of the Philistines was seventy or eighty miles away from Ziklag. David and his men were probably at least thirty miles to the north, so the south of the land was unprotected.

ELIJAH

Another part of the history which ranges over a still wider field is in the life of Elijah. He came from Gilead, he was sent to Sarepta in the land of Sidon far to the north. Then after the overthrow of Baal worshippers at Mount Carmel, Elijah took a journey of forty days, and came to Horeb, the Mount of God (1 Kings 19 : 8). We may often have read of this passage without realizing that it would involve a distance of three hundred miles. From Horeb, Elijah returned to the wilderness of Damascus, a still longer journey. His instructions were to anoint

Hazael to be king over Syria, Jehu to be king over Israel, and Elisha to be prophet in his room. This furnishes an illustration of delegated work. Neither Elijah nor Elisha acted in person in the anointing of Jehu. As we have previously noted, an unnamed young prophet was sent by Elisha to Ramoth-gilead to perform this office. As for Hazael, it is probable that all that was implied in the instructions to Elijah was covered by the words of Elisha as recorded in 11 Kings 8 : 12.

In the final scenes before the removal of Elijah, several places are mentioned, but not very far from each other, Gilgal, Bethel and Jericho (11 Kings 2 : 2 ; 8). There are several places named Gilgal. Probably the one here referred to was in Mount Ephraim. It would be a journey of about eight miles to Jericho.

A SUGGESTION TO STUDENTS

Why should not young students continue this investigation, so increasing their knowledge both of the geography and the history of the Bible lands? Why not draw a map of Palestine? It is easy to draw a map of any size to scale if you have a good copy. The lines of latitude and longitude enable us to make a correct outline, whatever size of map we choose to draw. The map need not be big, although the larger the better. It need not be in colour, although if you have paints, colours would be a great advantage. They could be used to indicate elevations, as on many maps which have been

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published. When the outline and the general geographical features have been prepared, you can begin to insert the cities and localities, and show where incidents occurred. A group of students might make a model contour map; cutting ply wood to the shape of the contour lines, and filling in with putty or plasticine.

Do not be content to read of an incident in either Old or New Testament. Find out where it all happened, and indicate it on your map. Here, surely, is a hobby far more interesting than those pastimes which so often claim attention, and it will have the great advantage of increasing your knowledge and strengthening your memory in connection with matters of enduring importance. In the hands of some who are skilful and ambitious it might result in the production of something of enduring value. With a knowledge of geology and physiography the study might be extended. Some of the movements, experiences and wars can be better understood, the people often having their customs moulded, their adventures caused, and warfare enforced upon them by the physical features of the land in which they lived.

Such study may enhance the interest we ought to feel in that part of the world which figures so prominently in the divine purpose. It is written that this is a land for which God cares; "The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it" (Deut. 11 : 12).