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THE ROCK TOMBS OF EL MEDYEH.

DEAR CAPTAIN WARREN,—When I told you of the rock-tombs near El Médyeh (not as Van de Velde has it, “El Medīyeh”), which I believe to be the tombs over which Simon erected the mausoleum with the seven pyramids, &c., for his parents and brothers (*v.* I Maccab. 13, 27 *seqq.*, and Joseph. Ant. XIII. 6), and of the other rock-tombs near ‘Abūd, which, like those of El Médyeh, had never, for aught I know, been visited, nor at least mentioned, by travellers, you desired me to give you a description of those tombs which you might communicate to your Committee, and I am most willing to comply with this wish of yours.

I had visited El Médyeh, and seen the tombs there before, but only *en passant*; yet even then the site of El Médyeh and the name of the tombs, “Kubūr el Yahūd,” *i.e.*, “Tombs of the Jews,” strongly impressed me with the opinion that El Médyeh occupies the place of Modin, and that the “Tombs of the Jews” are the remnants of the Maccabean mausoleum; and you will remember that I spoke to you of this *discovery* as soon as I had returned from my tour. This time (in October, 1869) I spent nearly two days at El Médyeh, and found leisure to inspect the *kubūr* more closely.

Just opposite to the village, which lies on the top of a considerably high hill or ridge, on another ridge, forming the west side of the deep and narrow wady between the two ridges, at a distance of about 1,100 yards in a straight line, you come to a kind of terrace from fifty to to sixty paces long (east-west) and some forty paces broad (north-south), slightly sloping towards the east, and with a noble prospect towards the west, comprehending the whole tract between that ridge and the coast, with a wide expanse of the sea.

On this terrace I counted about twenty-four tombs. Along its south ledge there was a row of ten or eleven of them. On its south-west end, but advancing somewhat towards the middle, I found two, one smaller; and in the same line, a little downward, again two. More downward still there was a large one, which I shall more particularly describe hereafter. Farther down still again a large one, and then three small ones, and below them one more as large as the other large ones. In the north-west corner there was another of the same size, and some feet above it, on a prominent mass of rock, I saw an old wine-press scooped out of the rock. Some feet below the south border, or ledge, of the terrace, and fronting the west, extends the fore-court of two tombs, one in the perpendicular rock of the west side, the other in that of the north side, *i.e.*, in the ledge, which forms with the ten or eleven above-mentioned tombs the south border of the terrace. The entrances to these two tombs were thoroughly obstructed. But I must now describe the tombs on the terrace.

They were all of them scooped out of the horizontal rock, in the shape of coffins, or sarcophagi; but, although they were nearly filled up with earth, one could discover in their longitudinal sides flat-vaulted niches (*loculi*, *θήκαι*), so that it was evident that the coffin-like excavations were but entrances of a length which only in one or two cases exceeded 1·50 metres. All these entrances were originally covered with very massy stone lids, the largest of which was 2·20 metres long and 1·5 metres broad, and 0·70 metres thick. But most of the lids were either broken or pushed off.

The large tomb, of which I promised a particular description, had its lid still *in situ*, but it had been so far smashed at its bottom (the lid) that one could creep through the aperture. On the east side of this tomb or entrance there were a few steps (three ?), and on the opposite (west) side was the entrance to a chamber with five niches. There was no door visible; its fragments were probably buried in the rubbish.

Now, before I enter into an exposition of the arguments which I have to adduce on behalf of my opinion respecting Modin and the Maccabæan mausoleum, I must still mention that at a distance of about 200 yards east-south-east of the terrace of the just-described tombs, on a level stretch at the foot of a slope leading from it to the terrace, I found a block of a rock, whose front side was hewn out in the shape of a bevelled free-stone, apparently prepared for the basement of some monument, but with no trace of a tomb beneath or under it. Near this stone and a solitary fig-tree I found six tombs, hewn out of the level rock, like those of the upper terrace, and of similar dimensions. The wrought surface of the bevelled block was 1·20 metres long.

In 1 Macc. 13, 27 *seqq.* (I must quote from the Vulgate) we read:—
"Et aedificavit Simon super sepulchrum patris sui et fratrum suorum aedificium altum visu, lapide polito retro et ante; et statuit septem pyramidas, unam contra unam, patri et matri, et quatuor fratribus; et his circumposuit columnas magnas, et super columnas arma, ad memoriam æternam, et juxta arma naves sculptas, quæ viderentur ab omnibus navigantibus mare. Hoc est sepulchrum, quod fecit in Modin, usque in hunc diem."

The description given by Josephus is nearly the same. Ant. xiii. 6.

According to Eusebius and Hieronymus, Modin was situated near Diospolis, or Lydda. As you know it has been in later times shifted from place to place, not to Latrûn (*castellum boni latronis*) only, but to Soba, far up in the hills, at a distance of about fourteen miles from Lidda in a straight line; nay, to a place south of Anathoth (!).

At all events, as regards nearness to Lydda, El Médyeh has the strongest claim to identity with the Modin of Eusebius, &c. From Soba, to be sure, the sea is in full view; but nobody will say that it is near Lydda, and there, as well as far more still on the low hill of Latrûn, the pyramids, in order to be discerned by seafaring people, ought to have been of an extraordinary height—at Latrûn much higher

than the highest Egyptian pyramid. On the contrary, the prospect from the Kubûr el Yahûd is commanding both land and sea, and not intercepted by the intervention of hills, which would cover it to observers from a distance of about thirteen miles (Soba is about twenty-four miles distant from the sea in a straight line). Hence the superstructure of the tombs, and the pyramids upon, or by the side, or in front of, that superstructure need not have been of a giddy height, in order to be discernible to people out at sea near the coast, in the afternoon and evening hours, when the rays of the sun must have illuminated the splendid erections of polished stone; and the Kubûr were not only near Lydda (one mile nearer than even Latrûn), but so situated as not to belie that part of the old description which seemed to involve an exaggeration.

But there are no remains either of the superstructure and the pyramids, or of the columns; the number of the tombs surpasses that of seven three times; and the name of El Médyeh, which we have to derive from Mada, has nothing in common with the Hebrew *yada* (according to Rosenmüller's explanation of the name).

These objections are very serious, yet I will try to show that they may be removed without taking too much liberty.

As regards the absence of all traces of the constituent parts of the Mausoleum above ground, we must consider that such monumental structures are much more than other edifices exposed to a radical eversion, as their columns and polished stones are not only very alluring, but may be got to and cleared away with far less effort than those of other more complicated buildings. Moreover, it is well known that sepulchral monuments, and especially so magnificent ones as the Maccabæan Mausoleum must have been, always were, and still are, considered a kind of treasuries, a circumstance which all over Greece, Egypt, and the countries of anterior Asia, has so much contributed to their being so frequently utterly demolished. As regards the number of the tombs, everybody will admit that, after the *seven* had received their occupants, other members of the family or the kindred may have chosen the place next to the mausoleum as fitted for their last dwelling. Finally, concerning the discrepancy between the names, I, too, must confess that it appears irremediable, if Rosenmüller's derivation and interpretation of *Modin* (מִדְיָן or מִדְיָעִים, they who give notice as from a watch-tower or look-out) must be accepted as correct, because the Arabic words for plough-share, boundary, term, &c., exhibit not a single point for reconciliation.

However, I waive all support from the names of the ancient town and modern village. To me the designation of the tombs as "Kubûr el Yahûd" (Tombs of the Jews) seems to be a very strong argument in favour of my view. The whole of Palestine, to be sure, is full of Jewish tombs, yet they are not distinguished by that name, except at places where, beside the Jewish burying-grounds, there are those of Christians or Moslems also—all still in use—when the name of "Tombs of the

Jews" is given in contradistinction. Consequently we have to consider the tombs near El Médyeh as bearing the name "Kubûr el Yahûd," *κατ'ἐξοχήν*, and are justified in concluding from this *κατ'ἐξοχήν* designation, that the Jews there buried must have been peculiarly eminent Jews, whose family name fell into oblivion as soon as the Jews themselves were cast out of their country, whilst the memory of those eminent Jews was preserved in the name, "Tombs of the Jews," and in the tombs themselves, which, far and near, were the only ones of distinguished Jews.

But I must still refer to another circumstance which, in my opinion, is not less pregnant. Do not tombs excavated in the level rock, and that beside other tombs hewn out of the perpendicular rock, indicate that they were in this way fashioned for the erection of a monumental superstructure of some kind or other? It cannot occur to our mind that such tombs were destined for the poor, since the expenditure required by them was certainly considerable enough, and quite sufficient to achieve the purpose in a more tasteful and durable way, by excavating a perpendicular rock, as those flat tombs were far more exposed to destruction by undermining rains and resurrectionist jackals. The massy and unhandsome stone lids, too, whilst they may have been placed over the tombs as a last protection against profanation or sacrilege, almost compel us to believe that their shapeless aspect was concealed from sight by some covering of a more graceful or dignified form.

I hope the "Kubûr el Yahûd" will soon be visited by more competent judges, and the much-ventilated Modin question conclusively solved by them.

But I must now enter upon another question, which I am afraid will prove, as we Germans say, a very hard nut to crack.

From El Médyeh I went to 'Abûd, another village, north-east of the former. Since the Frenchman, M. V. Guérin, has discovered (in 1865) the identical tomb of Joshua, near Tibneh (Timnath Cheres or Timnath Serach), Abûd, which is but three-quarters of an hour distant from Tibneh (W.N.W.), has been visited by some very few travellers. Robinson, Thomson, Van de Velde—in fact, none of the travellers who have written books on Palestine—speak of 'Abûd, as far as I recollect; nor have you or Captain Wilson been there, for aught I know.* Well, it is just such out-of-the-way places that belong to my line of travelling, and to me they frequently are the most interesting virgin soil in more than one respect.

Of course I would not leave 'Abûd without having seen the tomb of Joshua and the other rock tombs near Tibneh; but after I came back to

* The tombs at 'Abûd were examined by Capt. Wilson, R.E., and Lieut. Anderson, R.E., in 1866, when plans and drawings of the most important were made for the Palestine Fund. On an old hotel in the village was found the following Greek inscription:—
ΑΡΤΥΠΙΟΝΤΑΝΟΤ.

Jerusalem I discovered that Joshua's tomb, which I had seen and taken for it, is not the one which Dr. Hermann Zschokke, the rector of the Austrian Hospice in Jerusalem, has described in his "*Beitraege zur Topographie der Westlichen Jordan's Au.*," Jerusalem, 1866. I showed you my sketches of those tombs. Yet, it is not of them that I will now speak, but of another discovery of mine, the reward of my not pursuing the track of the tourists.

Soon after my arrival at 'Abûd, I asked for the way to Tibach, whither I intended to go the next day. "If you want to see tombs," said one of the people, "you may see plenty of them here in the neighbourhood;" and he pointed to the peak of a steep basement of rocks forming the north extremity of a ridge or spur running west of the village, at the distance of about a half mile from it. No doubt I went thither as soon as I was at leisure, and found all along a terrace extending at the foot of the rocks and below it, rock-tombs which reminded me both of the tombs in the valley of Hinnom, and of the so-called tombs of the judges. For those in the steep cliff itself (south side of the terrace) the terrace formed the fore-court, and two of the tombs there had ante-chambers. That of the more distinguished was 600 metres long and 300 metres broad. On the architrave of this tomb were sculptured ornaments: a bunch of grapes in the middle, rosettes, triglyphs. In its chamber there were twelve niches. The other was plainer, i.e., without ornaments. At the foot of the peak and near its middle were small entrances to tombs of an artless description. The length of the terrace was from 170 to 180 paces. On its north and east sides were other tombs of a plain kind, with fore-courts. The one next to the east side of the terrace had a very large fore-court, about 100 paces long: the entrance to its tomb was on the south side, and in a rock receding a little from the line of that side, there was another tomb or chamber, down to the entrance of which led a few steps. This chamber contained five niches; but as I had to make my survey in a hurry, I am not quite sure whether my statements, as regards the interior of the tombs, are correct. It was after sunset that I began to examine them, because I had spent the short time left to me before sunset in walking over the whole ground and sketching the principal tombs. The place may have been a burying-ground for centuries before, and during the times of the Seleucides and Romans; and there can be no doubt but that a town of some note must have occupied the site of the village 'Abûd. But which? The name 'Abûd affords no key for tracing it to an antique original. In the times of the Crusaders—and perhaps before them already—'Abûd and the surrounding country must have been one of the chief allotments of the Church, as there are no less than six deirs round about it, in two of which divine service seems to be still continued, occasionally at least; and 'Abûd itself, being inhabited at equal parts by Christians (Greeks) and Moslems, has an old church—El 'Abûdiyeh—which is the name of a ruined deir also, quite near the village. As Van de Velde has discovered here the traces of the Roman

road leading from Jerusalem by Tifneh (Gophna) to Antipatris, this circumstance is rather favourable to my supposition that there may have been a place of note hereabout. Well, there is Tibneh, whose identity with Timnath Cheres and Timnath Serach cannot be questioned, as the other Timnah, too, on the borders of Judah and Dan, has been changed by the mouth or tongue of the Arab into Tibneh; and our Tibneh here certainly lies in one of the mountainous regions of Ephraim. But Tibneh had a burying-ground of its own, and that of 'Abûd would have been too distant—three miles.

That Timnath Cheres or Serach and the Thamna of Josephus are all one, I have no doubt; yet, I think that the Thamna (*Θαμνα*) of Josephus was a second edition of Joshua's *Timnah*, i.e., that old Timnah had been deserted for some reason or other—perhaps on account of the Roman road—and rebuilt on the site of 'Abûd. In the course of time, this Thamna or Timnah, more exposed to the invasions of all the successively conflicting powers, may have lost both the original and the transmuted names, through long desolation; whilst the latter pertinaciously clung to the primitive Timnah, or the village which sprung from it, and is at present a heap of ruins only. 'Abûd, which thus would represent the second Timnah, or the Thamna of Josephus, did not recall the old name to life again.

But I feel I cannot get a solid footing, and will therefore leave this question also to be solved by a more penetrating sagacity and the judgment of those whose profession is archæological research.

Before I conclude my somewhat lengthy epistle, I must mention a few other discoveries which may be interesting enough to one so sedulously inquiring after the vestiges of by-gones as you are. It is very little what I have still to say, and will not take much of your time.

From the hills I went down into the plain to places I had often visited in former years.

On my way to Kefr Saba (Antipatris?) I passed by Mejdal Yâba (Mirabel), near which—between it and Mezraâh—I had many years ago discovered that ruin, which was afterwards visited and photographed by Captain Wilson (No. 110), to whom I had pointed it out as most remarkable. Robinson had been very near it—half a mile perhaps—but then struck into a more west road.

As to Kefr Saba, I am quite sure now that it does not represent Antipatris, which must be looked out for between Kalat Ras el Ain and the mills of El Mîa, or perhaps in the depth of the Aujeh marshes at the foot of the castle hill. I shall another time give you my reasons for this opinion. Between Kefr Saba and the sea-coast—in a straight line—I found two khirbehs. The first, about one and a-half miles west of Kefr Saba, did not show forth any trace of antiquity; its name is Khirbet Sebyi. The other, Khirbet Tûbsur, half a mile farther west, presented a curious relic—the only one visible above ground. It showed between broken remnants of walls what I must call two small apartments; the inside plastering, an indestructible red cement, was

still smooth, and there were in one of the rooms pretty large fragments of a tessellated pavement. The upper part of those rooms was utterly destroyed, and of their ceiling or roof not a vestige left. To me it occurred that it might have been the villa of a Roman. You have seen my sketch of it.

On my way back to Jerusalem, between Gimzo and Beth Horon, at a place about three or four miles east of Gimzo, and one mile distant from Khirbet Shilta farther onward, I saw a rock-tomb underneath a long ledge of rocks, which, with a natural pillar, formed the roof of the ante-chamber. The entrance to the tomb, two chambers, was a few feet above the bottom. Not far from it, and near the road, there was a ruined open cistern (pool) of antique appearance.

It was impossible to take bearings, and before I met people to ask for names, more than one hour had elapsed, a lapse of time which you know forbids a circumspect traveller to ask questions still about what is so far behind.

The postscript is finished, and therewithal

I remain, my dear Captain Warren,

Very faithfully yours,

Jerusalem, December 28, 1869.

CH. SANDBECZKI.

THE STONE OF ZOHELETH, EN-ROGEL AND THE KING'S GARDENS.*

Jérusalem, 22 Février, 1870.

A PEU près au centre de la ligne suivant laquelle se développe le village de Siloam, il existe un plateau rocheux surmonté de constructions Arabes, qui en masquent la véritable forme et l'étendue; la face occidentale coupée à pic surplombe légèrement la vallée. Des degrés grossièrement taillés dans le roc permettent de le gravir, non sans peine, et de pénétrer ainsi directement de la vallée au milieu du village; c'est le chemin, malaisé et même dangereux, mais direct, qui suivent habituellement les femmes de Siloam qui viennent remplir leurs outres à la source dite de la Vierge (*Ain Sitti Mariam, Immed-deraj*). Or ce passage et le banc de rocher dans lequel il est pratiqué sont appelés par les *fellahin* EZ-ZEHWELE. Il est impossible de ne pas être frappé de l'identité absolue qu'offre ce nom avec celui de la *Pierre de Zohemoth*, que la Bible (1 Rois i. 9) place près (אצל) de Aïn Rogel. Il suffit, en effet, de comparer זחל to à pour constater avec quelle précision les éléments phonétiques se correspondent. Le type vocalique lui-même est exactement reproduit, à part une intervention insignifiante du son o, qui, en hébreu, précède, et en arabe suit la consonne ط. Une transcription homogène nous présentera d'une manière encore plus nette cette identité: hébreu: ZOHELET—arabe construit: ZEHOELET.

Je crois donc pouvoir considérer l'emplacement de la pierre de Zohemoth

* This paper has already appeared in *The Athenæum*.