

Theology on the *Web.org.uk*

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Palestine Exploration Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_peq_01.php

EBAL AND GERIZIM.

By HENRY A. HARPER, Esq.

IN the "Bible and Modern Discoveries," I wrote of Joshua and his reading the law that "the hills form a great amphitheatre, space and verge enough for all, a natural sounding gallery for Joshua's voice."

I have received two most interesting letters from Mr. Thomas Williams, Lay Missionary to Seamen at Liverpool; he is so kind as to speak in very flattering terms of my book, but he suggests what to me is a new explanation:—

"May I venture to ask what you think of my explanation of Deut. xxvii, 12, 13, and Joshua viii, 33. In these verses (12, 13) it is said the people were to stand on Mounts Ebal and Gerizim. But in Joshua viii, 33, it says they stood *over against* the mountains, *not on them*. If the people stood over against the mountains, and not really on them, then it does not appear to me to have been at all difficult to make the voice travel from one side of the Vale of Shechem to the other. . . . I suppose the Vale is not much more than a quarter of a mile wide, consequently the people were not far apart; follow on with 33rd verse, and it will be seen Joshua caused the Ark of the Covenant to be placed in the middle of the Vale. He then places the priests who bore the Ark, half of them on one side of it and the other half on the other side—perhaps halfway between the Ark and the people. If this were so, then the space between the priests and the people would be very small indeed: Joshua now reads the cursings and the blessings. The priests on the one side hear the blessings, and call over to the people near them; while the priests on the other side hear the cursings, and in like manner call over to the people on their side of the Ark."

I think the suggestion of this gentleman meets a difficulty, and one I have always felt myself. Quite true, I know the clearness of the air, and the distance the voice will carry in this Vale of Shechem; but I prefer the explanation given by Mr. Williams, which I do not think has appeared in print before.

[Dr. Chaplin sends the following remarks on this subject:—"I have little doubt that Mr. Williams is right. But his suggestion is by no means new. Josephus distinctly states that the altar which Moses commanded the Israelites to erect, was to be 'between the two mountains, that of Gerizim, situate on the right hand, and that called Ebal, on the left, and that the army should be so divided, that six tribes should stand upon (*ἐπὶ*) each of the two mountains, and with them the Levites and the priests' ('Ant.,' IV, viii, 44). As long ago as the year

1862, the Rev. Joseph Barclay, afterwards Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, and myself, when studying the question on the spot, were led to the same conclusion, and I am under the impression that this opinion is held by most persons familiar with the locality. It is strange if it has not found its way into our modern books, and readers of the *Quarterly Statement* will be indebted to Mr. Harper for calling attention to it. The notion that the people stood on the summits, or near the summits, of the mountains, arises from want of attention to the terms employed. If the *top* had been intended, the word רוש, *rosh*, would (probably) have been used, as in Exodus xxxiv, 2, and many other passages. על־הר and בהר (Deut. xxvii, 12, 13), mean *on*, but not necessarily *on the top*. The expression in Joshua viii, 33, אֶל מוֹלֵךְ, *over against*, is, as Mr. Williams points out, certainly *not on the top*. The Septuagint has here πλῆσιον, and in the Deuteronomy passage ἐν. As the assembly was very large, including 'all the congregation of Israel, with the women and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them,' it doubtless extended across the entire valley, and up the sides of the 'great amphitheatre' on the north and on the south."]

BIBLIOTHECA CURIOSA.

By HENRY A. HARPER, Esq.

IN a rare reprint of an interesting book entitled "Edward Webbe, Chief Master Gunner. His Trauailles. (A.D. 1590)," I met with the following (he had explained how it was that he saw so much of the East):—

"When I was at Ierusalem, I saw the Sepulchre wherein (it is said) Christ was buried: it is as it were in a Vault, and hath vij Dores, and vij Roes of marble steppes or stayres to go downe into the same, and then at the bottom of ye stayres, there is a faire Chapel, with an Altar and a Lamp burning continually day and night before it, and the Graue is full of white Earth, as white as Chalke, and a Toombe of ye same Earth made and laide vppon Stone wheron were sundry Letters written, but I could not read them.

"The Great Turk hath some profit comming by ye keeping thereof, and hath therefore builded at his owne charges an Hospital within Ierusalem which his Genezeries doe keepe: and this Hospitall is to receive all Pilgrims and traouellers to lodge in whensoever they come. And all that come to see the sepulchre doe pay ten Crowns a-peece, whereof the Turke hath but one, and the rest goes to the Church, and so they may stay there as long as they list to Lodge in that new Hospitall, and have lodging, bread, victuals and water so long as they will remaine there, but no wine: such as come hither for Pilgrims haue no beds at all, but lie vpon the ground on Turkey Carpets."