

DAVID AND GOLIATH.

Ver. 1-3: "Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which belongeth to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah . . . and the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and there was a valley between them." Ver. 52: "And the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to Shaaraim, even unto Gath, and unto Ekron" (1 Sam. xvii.)

Few events in Scripture have the site more definitely indicated. The valley of Elah has long been known, but the interesting attempt to fix the very spot where David slew Goliath has been rendered difficult by the fact that Shochoh alone of all the sites enumerated-(not including Ekron) has been definitely identified.

I propose to consider each of these sites in turn, with the indications known as to their position, and to put forward new identifications for Azekah, Ephes-dammim, and Shaaraim; these will, I think, very clearly indicate the position of the two armies, and the meaning of certain details in the description not hitherto illustrated.

Shochoh.—There were two places of the name, one in the Debir district, far away from the scenes of combat with the Philistines, the other in the district of the Shephelah, or low hill country on the south side of Wady Sumt, as identified by Robinson with the modern Shuweikeh, a position fully in accord with its mention in the topographical lists as between Adullam ('Aid el Mieh) and other northern towns of the district.

Azekah.—This town occurs in the same list with Shochoh (Josh. xv. 35), as in the Shephelah. The only other indication of its position is to be found in the account of the flight of the defeated Canaanites from Ajalon to Makkedah and Azekah (Josh. x. 10). In the topographical list Azekah stands between Shochoh and Shaaraim. It must therefore be sought in the Shephelah, but the same reasons which induce us to place Makkedah at El Meghar—namely, the distance from Gibeon, and the relative position with the mouth of the valley of Ajalon—would point to Azekah being near the north boundary of Judah, and close to the plain. Azekah has been placed by some writers at Tell Zekaria, but to this there is the objection of an important difference in name. Vandevelde speaks of a place called Ahbek, near Beit Nettif, as being both Aphek and Azekah. In the same neighbourhood M. Ganneau tells me he heard the name El Azek. Vandevelde's Ahbek is applied to a prominent peak, but on his map the name is written Akbek. The true name as collected by us is El Salah. Akbeh is no doubt merely '*Akabe*h,' "the ascent," a title generally applied to such hills. As to El Azek, we have been unable to obtain the name, although a special expedition was made, and the camp fixed for two days close to the site. The Sheikh of Beit 'Atab,

one of the best guides we have ever had, and well acquainted with this part of the country, denied that such a name existed, but gave me the name which I afterwards have verified and consider to represent the true site.

There is a great objection to placing Azekah so far east in the hills, which is that it supposes the defeated Canaanites to have fled across some thirty miles of the most difficult hill country, intersected by three or four impassable valleys. A position near the plain is the only one natural to the interpretation of the flight from Ajalon.

The site which I should propose for Azekah bears the name of Deir el 'Aashek ("the monastery of the lover"), a somewhat extraordinary title, according to its significance in modern Arabic. The change of the name to one having a similar sound but a distinct meaning in Arabic, is only another case of the well-known law of which Tibnah (straw) for Timnah, El Semak (the fish) for Sycaminum, Aid el Mieh (feast of the hundred) for Adullam, Er Rameh (the reservoir) for Ramah (the hill, in Hebrew), and many others, are instances. It is situated on the south side of the valley of Sorek, eight miles north of Shochoh. A main road leads to it from the valley of Elah. It may be thought that the distance from Shuweikeh is too great, but it must be remembered that *no known ancient site* exists between the two. The position agrees perfectly with the other indication, as it would immediately confront the Canaanites flying southward from the valley of 'Ajalon. The distance from El Moghar is rather greater than that from Shochoh.

The site itself has undoubtedly been at one time crowned by a convent. A very large square reservoir of rubble masonry, resembling that at Tell Jezer, supplied the inhabitants. The remains of a chapel, an apse fifteen feet diameter, exists north of this birket, and the northern wall, twenty-six feet from the north side of the apse, shows that the building was of some size. At present all is overgrown with weeds and tall thistles, so that the time is unfavourable for exploration. Cisterns and caves, however, occur, and the site is considerably larger than would be required for a religious edifice only. Another very large ruined site, Khirbet Ferred, exists just south of Deir el Aashek. A main road from T. Zakeria to Tell Jezer leads close by the site which looks northward to the broad plain of the Valley of Sorek, and this is a natural line of flight for the Canaanites, who we read "entered into fenced cities," such as Makkedah, Azekah, Gath, Shaaraim, and, no doubt, Gezer also. The existence of the convent shows the origin of the term Deir, but there is nothing against the antiquity of the site in the fact of its subsequent occupation by Christians.

Ephes-dammim.—What and where Ephes-dammim may be is a difficult question. The translation offered for the word in the Bible Dictionary is "boundary of blood," in which case it may be taken to apply to some great natural boundary, the scene of frequent fights between the Jews and the Philistines. In another account, apparently of this same battle, the word is shortened to Pas-dammim (1 Chron. xi. 13).

In Josephus it is given as Arasam (Ant. vii. 12, § 4). Vandeveldt speaks of a ruin called Dámún on the north side of Wady Sumt east of the Roman road to Beit Nettif, but for this ruin we have obtained a different name, nor have we as yet been able to ascertain for certain whether the name Dámún really exists, though, according to some of the peasantry, it applies to a site nearer the high hills. The memory of ancient engagements in the Shephelah may reasonably be thought traceable in such titles as "springs of the warrior," "well of the hero's mother," unusual names applying to natural features, and therefore undeniably ancient. The only traces of the title, "boundary of blood," which we have met, may perhaps be found in the name Beit Fased applied to a ruin close to Shuweikeh; both in sound and meaning this approaches Pas-dammim, for the S in Hebrew being a *Samech* is represented by the Arabic '*Sad*, whilst the meaning, "house of bleeding," is cognate to the Hebrew "boundary of blood." It was, no doubt, the great valley itself separating the possessions of the Philistine from the country belonging to Judah which was the real boundary of blood, and as the expression "in Ephes-dammim" might be supposed to indicate, the title is that of a district of country rather than of a single site.

Valley of Elah.—The valley itself is well known to be the great valley rising near Hebron, and running northwards by Keilah, Nezib, and Adullam to Shochoh, and thence westwards to the sea by Gath and Ashdod. The Hebrew "Valley of Terebinths" receives the name of Wady Súr in the upper part of its course, and Wady Sumt (the acacia) in the lower, becoming finally a deep gully under the name of Nahr Sukereir. Nevertheless the cause of its original title is still traceable in the number of huge terebinths which occur along its course. That at Adullam I have had occasion already to notice; one almost equal to it exists south; near Tell Zekaría is another of great antiquity, which we have photographed. On the sides of the tell just mentioned are others, and small terebinths exist on the low hills bounding the valley. This great natural division of the Shephelah is still the highway from Hebron to the plain, and seems in all the early periods of Jewish history to have been the scene of constant fighting. Holding Gath and Shaaraim the Philistines held the key to the plains, and a strong outpost for attack upon the Shephelah.

There is a point with regard to the valley which has always been considered to require investigation on the spot. Saul camped in the Emek, "broad or deep valley," whilst between him and the Philistines was the Gai, generally translated *ravine*. The valley is, however, of uniform breadth, nor does a gorge of any kind exist in its lower course, as the usual interpretation supposes; the derivation of the latter word is, however, according to Dean Stanley, from *Gih*, "to break out, used of water bursting forth." It may be very well applied, therefore, I should suggest, to the trench or *ghor* dug out by the winter torrent. This bed, some ten to twenty feet wide, with banks over ten feet high, would form a natural barrier between the hosts, and a formidable obstacle to the

flight of the defeated. It was in this that David found the five smooth stones of the brook which, according to tradition, cried out, "By us thou shalt defeat the giant." The gleaming torrent bed, and the steep water-worn banks, consist of pebbles of every size worn smooth by the great winter brook which has brought them from the hills.

Shaaraim.—No identification has ever been proposed, I believe, for this town. Like Shochoh, it belonged to Judah, and was evidently east of Gath. In the topographical list it occurs next after Azekah. The Septuagint version of our text renders it by its meaning "the two gates," as if referring to the gates of Gath. The Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel on the Hagiographa, however, carefully preserves the word Shaaraim, though in expression "gates of Ekron" in the same verse it replaces the Shaari of the Hebrew by an Aramaic equivalent meaning gates. In the topographical notice (Josh. xv. 36) the two principal LXX. versions give *Σακαρίμ* and *Σαργαρεμ*, which naturally suggests to one who attaches importance to these variations the identity with Tell Zekaria. Such a position for Shaaraim would be in exact accordance with the site proposed for the combat, for Tell Zekaria is close above the south bank of the valley, and must be passed in escaping to Gath. It is a huge hill, with steep terraced sides and caves; on the south is a sort of citadel or raised terrace, and beneath, in the valley, is a fine ancient well. The old sites in this part of the country bear a wonderful resemblance to one another. Keilah, Adullam, Shaaraim, and even Gath and Gezer, might be described in almost the same words. Positions naturally of immense strength, they show in their terraces, caves, and crumbling mounds the traces of their ancient importance, and a good water-supply exists in each case near these cities. Shaaraim, if in the hands of Judah, would have formed an important outpost against Gath; but though, unlike the latter, it occurs in the lists of Joshua, it had probably fallen into the hands of the Philistines, who, in the time of Saul, seem to have reached the plenitude of their power.

Gath.—As regards Gath, it is only necessary to say that the requirements of the narrative seem fully met by the Tell el Sâfi site advocated by Dr. Porter, and which alone fits with the description of the Onomasticon. Gath so placed guards the entrance of the valley of Elah into the plain, and is about six miles from the scene of the conflict.

The sites thus proposed serve considerably to elucidate the account of the battle. Saul, coming down from the hills by the ancient road from Jerusalem to Gaza, which passes near Shochoh, must have encountered the Philistines very near the great bend in the valley. Thus the two forces divided by the torrent bed are placed in a natural relative position: Saul on the *east*, coming from the east; the Philistines on the *west*, coming from the west, having Shochoh south of them and Shaaraim behind them. The position usually assigned north and south has no such strategical significance as the one thus advocated.

The photographs of Lieut. Kitchener, showing on the one hand the sweep of the valley, its broad extent of cornfields, flanked with low hills

of rock and brushwood, and on the other the great hill of Shaaraim and the olives and terebinths at its feet, will give a far better idea of the scene than any I can convey in words; but to one standing on the spot and looking across to the high and broken line of the hills of Judah, and at the broad vale in which a great host might easily have encamped, there will appear to be a perfect fitness in the site to the famous events occurring in it.

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In Command Survey of Palestine.

THE SAFED ATTACK.

MOUNT CARMEL, 15th July, 1875.

BEING placed in command of the expedition, owing to the temporary illness of Lieutenant Conder, I write by his wish to inform the Committee that the survey is at present entirely suspended in consequence of two causes—the first being a murderous and unprovoked attack on the party by Moslem inhabitants of Safed (particulars enclosed); the second the gradual spread of cholera over the north of Palestine. Lieutenant Conder and myself consider, under these circumstances, that we cannot take the responsibility of conducting the party again into the field till a very severe punishment has been awarded to the inhabitants of Safed, and until the steady advance of the cholera is checked. I feel certain that neither of these obstacles will be removed under two or three months.

Dr. Varton, who is at present in attendance on Lieutenant Conder, with Dr. Chaplin, and other medical men, predict an unusually unhealthy autumn, which will be followed by the two or three months of winter, during which work is impossible.

The non-commissioned officers, though ready to go through any amount of work or danger, are much discouraged at the prospect of an indefinite delay without employment, which, in my opinion, is more trying in this climate than work. The south country is also closed, as the Arabs have refused to lay down their arms, and are, I believe, still engaged with the Government.

Under these circumstances, Lieutenant Conder and myself both consider it our duty to recommend the Committee to break up the expedition for a time, and recall the non-commissioned officers, empowering Lieutenant Conder and myself to remain as long as the legal proceedings require our presence. In case of any delay or difficulty in obtaining justice, we feel we have a right to expect that the Committee will give us their strongest support. Lieutenant Conder has considered it his duty to report the facts of the case to the Deputy Adjutant-General, Royal Engineers. He has telegraphed to Constantinople, and placed himself in communication with the Consul-General at Beyrout.