

where it is connected with the adjacent hills by a low declivity; so that the place presents the appearance of a grand and magnificent amphitheatre.

There is every reason to conclude that the tabernacle was erected on the top of this hill, surrounded by its sacred courts; and the capacious plain spreading out southward to a considerable distance, together with the inclining slopes of the surrounding hills would afford ample scope for the congregated tribes of Israel to assemble on festival and other occasions. The fountain of Shiloh is situated about half a mile east from the same hill among the mountains. It is a never-failing spring of excellent water, from which there issues in summer, but a slender rill. During the rainy season, the waters from this fountain and the adjacent vallies, run west right past the hill of Shiloh on the north, and entering into the plain of Lebonah on the north-west, they pass through a break in the mountains of Ephraim, and find their way to the Mediterranean. Here then is everything conducing to render that spot a very eligible place for the residence of the tabernacle, and the assembling of the tribes,—an abundance of excellent water, a central position, and a beautiful and fertile landscape.

The tabernacle was first erected in the plains of Jericho, near Jordan, immediately after the Israelites crossed the river. There it remained for about six years, during the conquest of the land, when it was transferred to its more permanent abode in Shiloh, *Josh. xviii. 1*. This was doubtless done by divine authority. God claimed the sovereign right of appointing the place where the public ordinances of religion were to be observed. It was therefore called "the place where God recorded his name," and the people were strictly and solemnly charged to offer all their sanctuary services there, and no where else, *Deut. xii. 13, 14*. Here then was the divinely appointed centre of religious worship in Israel, for several successive centuries. Here the sacred ark reposed, and here God met with his people and communed with them "from above the mercy seat and from between the cherubims." Here all the solemn services of temple worship were carried on; here the great feasts of the Lord were held from year to year, and the devout Israelite presented his offering and paid his vows to the Most High. Here the people met to consult the oracle and receive the sacred response; and here God came down, as it were, to dwell with men, and deigned to hold gracious intercourse with his covenant people.

Some very important and memorable transactions took place in Shiloh towards the close of Joshua's life, such as the last and general division of the land, the appointment of the cities of refuge, and the allotment of cities to the Levites.

After the central portions had been subdued and partially divided, and five tribes had received their inheritance, the people relaxed their exertions and gave way to indolent inactivity. Joshua rebuked their unseasonable indulgence and hastened the final division of the land. A body of commissioners was appointed to go over the land and divide what remained into seven parts, and report. This done, the tribes assembled at Shiloh to receive their respective portions. It was a solemn occasion. Joshua commended the matter to God, and then proceeded to cast lots that every man's inheritance might be fixed by an authority from which there could be no appeal. We can easily conceive what expectations would be awakened, and what anxieties would be felt. The Israelites had been subjected to a long process of training, they had passed through a long series of trials and sore privations, during all which, the hope of the promised inheritance cheered their fainting hearts and animated their sinking spirits.