

region, extending for some ten or twelve miles in length. I visited it in the spring of 1873, and was much struck with one of its features, the full meaning of which I did not then realize. Along its southern boundary, where the river Jordan in its windings comes nearest to the mountains of Moab, are two lines of the remains of regularly formed pits extending across the greater part of the valley. Some two-and-a-half miles farther south is another shorter line of similar ruined pits.

The two lines of these pits farthest to the north meet at an angle, and the pit where they join is larger than any of the others. Each of these pits is merely marked now by a basin-like, circular mound, resembling the den of an ant-lion, which is only a few feet in height, but measures some thirty feet in diameter. The actual pits themselves which once yawned deep and wide within these protecting enclosures are now, in all instances, filled up. They are generally thirty feet apart, but in some instances are separated by a distance of from fifty to sixty feet. In the two lines, which meet at an angle in a large central basin, there are no less than fifty-two pits, thirty-one in the longest line and twenty-one in the other. At a distance the whole row resembles a string of huge molehills, only placed at regular intervals.

Though they are evidently very ancient, and have long been unused, I immediately recognized them as the remains of a very peculiar and interesting water system, with which I became familiar on a journey to Palmyra in 1872, and which is still in use on the plains of Damascus.

Since my visit to the Jordan Valley and discovery of the pits in 1873, the American Palestine Exploration Society have surveyed this part of the land of Moab, and Dr. Selah Merrill has carefully described these remains, but, strangely enough, declares that he has no idea of the purpose they served! To those who are acquainted with the plain of Damascus these circular basins are most familiar objects. There, as also right away to Central Asia,¹ they form the unmistakable mark on

¹ Mr. William Simpson has traced them as far as the Khyber, and tells us they are numerous at Jellalabad, and speaks of the Valley of Nishapur in Khôrassan as