

have said in a previous paper. about twelve miles north of Jerusalem. Six miles further north the modern village of Seilum unmistakably occupies the site of ancient Shiloh, a place—as the historian of judges accurately informs us—“which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah.” This is one of the specially sacred places of Palestine, next to Jerusalem, one of the most sacred spots in the whole land. It was to Shiloh that the Tabernacle and the Ark were conveyed after the conquest of the land by Joshua and the Israelites, and here they remained during the time of all the judges until the Ark was captured by the Philistines. It was at Shiloh that the venerable Eli, well-meaning but weak-minded, failed sadly in discharging the duties of the priesthood, and failed yet more sadly in training up his sons Hophni and Phinehas in the way they should go. It was at the sanctuary in Shiloh that Samuel was dedicated to God in his childhood, and spent the early years of his noble and useful life. Situated, as it was, on a gentle elevation, of easy access, at once central and secluded with an extensive valley stretching away southward and charming little fertile vales opening into the higher hills by which it is surrounded on the other sides, it must have been a most delightful place when the tribes of Israel went up there to worship God in his public ordinances. The site of the ancient city is now however, thickly strewn with heaps of loose stones and traces of old streets, and foundations of houses. In a little vale to the east there are several rock-hewn sepulchres in which in all probability the priests who ministered in this ancient sanctuary were buried. I can never forget the impression made on my mind as I stood as near as possible on the site of the ancient Tabernacle and read these words of doom from my pocket Bible: “Go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel.” Every old stone around seemed to me to be a preacher saying to the passing traveller: “It is an evil thing and bitter to forsake the Lord thy God.”

The little village of El-Lubban, evidently the modern representative of the Lebonah

of inspired history, is situated pleasantly on the slope of a hill side about two miles northwest of Shiloh. In the immediate neighbourhood of the village I noticed a plentiful fountain of water, and some rock-hewn sepulchres like those near Shiloh. Beyond Lebonah we traversed the entire extent of a magnificent upland plain, referred to in Scripture and known in uninspired history as the great Plain of Mukhna, “the encampment.” It is nine miles long, and has an average breadth of four miles. After travelling nearly two days through “waste cities, the desolations of many generations,” it was truly refreshing to see this flourishing plain dotted all over with thriving villages, and in several parts covered with orchards of fig trees and olive trees, and fine fields of wheat and other kinds of grain. From the northern extremity of this spacious plain we passed with bounding hearts into the well-watered, verdant vale of Shechem, the Eden of Palestine as it has been, not inaptly, designated. The vale is comparatively limited in extent, varying in breadth from one hundred to five hundred yards. But its scenery is charmingly beautiful, and it is full of interesting, undying associations of by-gone days. Every appreciative traveller speaks in rapturous strains of its grassy glade, and waving corn fields, its pear, and plum, and pomegranate, and orange and olive orchards, and its fine old almond, and mulberry, and palm and walnut trees. It was somewhat curious and very interesting to notice, as I did, in the place modern representatives of every tree mentioned in Jotham’s famous parable to the men of Shechem, if the prickly pear which here grows luxuriantly corresponds to his bramble. Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim from which of old the curses and the blessings were proclaimed in the hearing of the assembled tribes of Israel rise up abruptly between seven and eight hundred feet respectively on the north and south side of the valley, and add grandeur as well as beauty to the scene. At the south-east entrance of this verdant vale the old historic well of Jacob is situated. Originally it was over a hundred feet deep dug principally in the solid rock. But every traveller who visited it for centuries threw a stone into it, and loose stones detached by the influence of natural forces have fallen into it.