

mael, by their names, according to their generations: 'The first-born of Ishmael, Nebajoth, and Ledar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam, and Mishma, and Dumah, and Massah, Hadar, and Tema, Jetur, Napish, and Kedemah.' These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their towns, and by their castles: twelve princes according to their nations.* Their geographical residence is clearly ascertained in a subsequent verse. "And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt as thou goest towards Assyria."† Havilah and Shur, by the consent of the best sacred geographers, are allowed to have composed part of the region between the Euphrates and the Red Sea, denominated Arabia.‡ From causes now unknown, the tribes of Nebajoth and Kedar appear to have acquired an ascendancy over the rest, so that the whole country is sometimes designated from one, sometimes from the other of them, just as the entire nation of Israel is sometimes called Judah from the superier numbers, power, or influence of that tribe.—Among the ancient profane historians also we find the names of *Nobithians* and *Kedarenes* frequently employed as an appellation of the roving inhabitants of the Arabian deserts. This testimony is directly confirmed by that of Josephus. After reciting the names of the twelve sons of Ishmael, he adds:—"These inhabit all the country extending from the Euphrates to the Red Sea, giving it the name of the *Nabathæan* region. These are they who have given names to the whole race of the Arabs with their tribes."§ In the fourth century, Jerome, in his commentary on Jeremiah, describes Kedar as a country of the Arabian desert, inhabited by the Ishmaelites, who were then termed Saracens. The same father, in his commentary on Isaiah, again speaks of Kedar as the country of the Saracens, who in Scripture are called Ishmaelites; and observes of Nebajoth, that he was one of the sons of Ishmael, after whose names the Arabian desert is called.

Another source of evidence in relation to the national descent of the Arabs, is their having practised, from time immemorial, the rite of circumcision. Josephus has a very remarkable passage touching the origin of this rite among the Jews and Arabs, in which he first makes mention of the circumcision of Isaac; then introduces that of Ishmael; and states concerning each, as matter of universal and immemorial notoriety, that the Jews and the Arabians severally practised the rite, conformably with the precedents given them, in the persons of their respective fathers. His words are these:—"Now when Sarah had completed her ninetieth, and Abraham his hundred year, a son (Isaac) is born unto them: whom they forthwith circumcise on the eighth day; and from him the Jews derive their custom of circumcising children after the same interval. But the Arabians administer circumcision at the close of the thirteenth year: for Ishmael, the founder of their nation, the son of Abraham by his concubine, was circumcised at that time of life."|| Similar to this is the testimony of Origen, who wrote in the

* Genesis, xxv. 13—14.

† Ver. 18.

‡ Wells's Sac. Geogr. vol. i. p. 341.

§ Ant. Jud. b. i. ch. 12, §4.

Ant. Jud. b. i. ch. 10, §5.

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