

kets, were necessarily, in such a wall of hills, confined to a few more or less difficult passes. The Philistines were eager merchants, like their relations, the Canaanites, and would not submit to be barred out from the rich marts of Syria and western Asia by the poor hill-cotters of the Hebrew tribes. Hence the constant invasions by these lowlanders. One pass led, by Beit Jebrin, to Hebron; another, by the Wady Sunt, Michmas, and the Wady Kelt, to the Jordan and the regions beyond; a third, by Beth-Horon, to the central plateau, and thence to Damascus and the countries still farther off. To gain possession of these routes of trade was the object of the Philistines in their long wars with Israel. The pass up the Wady Kelt brings before us the strenuous climb of Joshua's force, sent to capture Ai; and the battle with the Philistines at Michmas, where they had a post to guard this line of trade; the contest for the northern trade-route by the plain of Esdraelon, from Beth-Horon, or Wady Sunt, explains the battle of Gilboa, in which Saul and Jonathan, with two other sons of Saul, perished, while it incidentally shows the bitter tenacity with which the struggle against these invaders was carried on through generations, till they were finally subdued and rendered harmless by David.

In the same way, the pass of Beth-Horon, on the west, explains why the seacoast confederates, when defeated by Joshua; the Philistines, when defeated by Samuel; the Syrians, when defeated by Judas Maccabeus; and the Romans, when defeated by the Jews, just before the campaign of Vespasian, fled by this one gorge to reach the open coast plains. The strength of the Philistines on these rich levels, at the time of their defeat by David in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, further shows why he did not pursue them beyond Gezer, which lay on the edge of the hills, looking down on the sea, the farthest he could then venture in that direction.

We read of Palestine that, even before the Hebrews made a good footing in the hills, the original inhabitants had filled the land with wells, or rather rain-pits, and we are told that the patriarchs were careful to imitate them, at the places where they fixed their permanent encampments. The physical geography of the country explains this, for the upper rocks of Palestine are soft limestone, through which the rain, tho in winter it falls in torrents, percolates easily, so that in the hills there would have been no water if cisterns carefully cemented had not been excavated, to retain part of the rainfall. These cisterns were, moreover, like huge bottles in shape, so that when dry they formed ready dungeons, from which a victim could not escape. It was into one of these that Joseph was put; the Hebrews often hid in them in times of calamity; forty-two "brethren of Ahaziah," King of Judah, were thrown by Jehu into one, when killed, thus anticipating the horrors of the well of Cawnpore; and one of them was made the prison of Jeremiah. The country, is, indeed, in many places well-nigh honeycombed with these excavations. Springs are rare, tho