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NEHEMIAH'S JERUSALEM.

HAVING in the last of this series of papers examined the documents upon the period, and seen that recent objections to the authenticity of Ezra's Memoirs are insufficient, but that we cannot form exact conclusions as to his relations with Nehemiah and the dates of his appearances in Jerusalem, we proceed now to an account of the events which happened during the governorship of Nehemiah and a description of Jerusalem as he found her.

The policy of Nehemiah and Ezra may be regarded as twofold, but the end it pursued was virtually one. *First*, there was the Rebuilding of the Walls which had lain breached since Nebuchadrezzar's overthrow of the City in 586; and *second*, there became evident to the leaders during their operations on these the necessity of building a Fence of Law about the community itself: bulwarks to keep the blood, the language, the worship and the morals of Israel pure.

First: Nehemiah himself tells us that it was an account of the ruin of the Walls and of *the affliction and reproach* to which in consequence his returned countrymen were exposed that moved him to crave leave from Artaxerxes to go to Judah and *rebuild the place of my fathers' sepulchres: it lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire.*¹ The petition was granted, and in 445 Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem under military escort and with letters royal to the *Keeper of the King's Forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the castle which appertaineth to the House, and for the wall of the City, and for the house that I shall enter into.*² The Aramaic document in the Book of Ezra reports earlier attempts to rebuild the walls and their

¹ Neh. i.-ii. 5.

² ii. 8, 9.

frustration by Samaritan intrigue¹; these attempts (the account of which the compiler has obviously misplaced in his arrangement of the Book of Ezra) have been attributed by several moderns to Ezra himself.² Whether they actually took place under Ezra or not, Nehemiah alludes neither to them nor to him. After a survey of the ruins he induced a large number of his fellow-Jews to begin the restoration, which he carefully describes as not an entire rebuilding, but a *strengthening*, a "*pointing*" or *cementing*, a *healing*, and a *sealing* or *stopping of the breaches*.³ The restoration, which took fifty-two days, was finished by September 444, and the gates set up.⁴ Jerusalem, after an interval of 142 years, was again a *fenced city*. Gatekeepers and police were appointed with Hanani, Nehemiah's brother, and Hananiah, the governor of the castle, in charge of the whole Town.⁵

Second: During the process of rebuilding Nehemiah encountered opposition from the same quarters, from which the earlier attempts are said to have been frustrated. *Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the servant or slave, the Ammonite,*⁶ had been alarmed at his coming to *seek the welfare of the children of Israel*, and unable to stop his operations, along with *Gashmu the Arab, began to laugh us to scorn*, and to spread the old story that by rebuilding the walls the Jews intended rebellion against the king.⁶ The

¹ Aramaic document = Ezr. iv. 8-vi. 18. The account of the building of the Walls is given in iv. 6-23 (verses 6, 7 are in Hebrew).

² See above, pp. 9, 14, 18.

³ *Strengthening* (Hiphil of the verb פָּיַן to be strong, and once, iii. 19. Piel), throughout ch. iii. E.V. *repairing*. "*Pointing*" or *cementing* (Kal of כָּוַע , probably a technical term, for which see the Lexicons), iii. 8, E.V. *fortified*. *Healing and sealing of the breaches*, A.V. *that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped*; R.V. *that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem went forward, etc.*, iv. 7 (Eng.) iv. 1 (Heb.).

⁴ Neh. iii. 1, 3, 6, 13 ff.; vi. 15, vii. 1; cf. Ecclus. xlix. 13.

⁵ vii. 1, 2.

⁶ ii. 10, 19; iv. 1 ff.

names of these persons, if they have been accurately transmitted, reflect the curious mixture of *the peoples of the land* which had taken place during the Jewish exile. Sanballat is a Ḥoronite, that is, from Beth-ḥoron, then a Samaritan town; for according to a probable emendation of the text he is described as *saying before his brethren, Is this the power of Samaria, that these Jews are fortifying their city?*¹ and with a Samaritan nationality his Assyrian name, "The Moon-god gives life," would agree. Tobiah, on the other hand, like his son Jôhanan, has a name compounded of that of the God of Israel; he is called *the Ammonite*, but this may mean from Chephar Haammoni, or "Village of the Ammonite," which lay in the territory of Benjamin. Gashmu is an Arabian name; these nomads have always been scattered across Judah. It is true that other meanings, as well as different readings, of those names have been suggested; but the latter are mere conjectures, and as the meanings just given suit the conditions of the time it is reasonable to accept them.² Samaritans, Jews, probably of that poorer class who had never left Judæa,³ and Arabs, whose assistance rival political powers in Judæa have always been eager to enlist—the trio represent an alliance, frequent in the history of Syria, between persons of different tribes and cults, all of them Semitic, and there-

¹ So the LXX. version, cod. B in Ἐσδρας B xiv. 4; the Greek of the Hebr. Neh. iii. 34 = Eng. iv. 2; cf. Guthe.

² For other meanings that *Ḥoronite* is from Ḥoronaim in Moab, and that *Ammonite* means one of the neighbouring children of Ammon, see Schlatter, *Zur Topogr. u. Gesch. Paläst.* 4, and Winckler, *Alt-Orient-Forschungen*, ii. 228 ff.; for other readings Cheyne, artt. "Sanballat" and "Tobiah" in *Enc. Bib.*, and the present writer's "Beth-ḥoron" in the same.

³ Winckler, *KAT*³ 296, takes Sanballat and Tobiah as father and son, "representatives," whether authentic or not, "of that branch of the royal family which had remained in the land," and now claimants for the leadership. There are no grounds for either of these hypotheses—not even in the fact that later the "Tobiades" appear in opposition to the high priests.

fore more or less merging into each other, but bound only by a temporary community of material interests. The attempt has been made to impute to them some nobility of aim by representing them as a racial league, eclectic in faith, and ambitious to create a common national cause among the many factions of the land. But their eclecticism was obviously of that petty sort, which, without either strong intellectual force or sense of the supremacy of ethics in religion, or conscience of the moral unity of mankind, maintains its alliances and mixtures upon merely local or family considerations, or motives of gain, or sometimes only by the hostility of all its ingredients to the adherents of a higher moral standard. The attempt to argue that Nehemiah has misrepresented his opponents is futile, and its conclusions are disproved, first by the fact that Nehemiah and the allies faced each other from the beginning with an instinctive feeling on both sides of their essential hostility, and, secondly, by the knowledge which the subsequent fortunes of the tribes and cults of Palestine outside of Israel affords to us. In the alarm of the allies at Nehemiah's arrival *to seek the welfare of the children of Israel*, and in his retort to them, *You have no portion nor right nor memorial in Jerusalem*,¹ we touch those ultimate elements of human consciousness, in which Nehemiah was not rash in feeling the inspiration of God Himself; while the low moral character of the popular cults of Syria, which recent excavations have revealed to us, and the ease with which those cults allowed themselves to be absorbed afterwards by Hellenism, prove that for Nehemiah and Ezra to have yielded to the attempts to mingle the Jews with *the peoples of the land* would have been fatal both to the people and the religion of Israel.

During his operations upon the Walls, Nehemiah learned,

¹ ii. 10, 19, 20.

from Jews living outside, of the plan of his enemies to attack the builders ; whom, therefore, in one of the most gallant scenes in all the drama of Jerusalem's history, he armed as they built, and supported by a force of bowmen and lancers drawn up behind the Walls.¹ He soon discovered that such assaults from the outside were not all he had to fear. The alliance against him, with its right wing merging into Judaism, had friends within the Walls, such as we shall find every heathen power hereafter able to reckon upon in Jerusalem. They hired prophets, Nehemiah says, to work upon his fears, and seduce him to discredit himself with his people by taking refuge in the Temple from plans for his assassination.² Tōbiah, of the Jewish name, was in close correspondence with the *nobles of Judah*,³ that is, with some of the returned and orthodox Jews, for no nobles had been left in the land after the Babylonian deportations and the flight into Egypt. He and his son Jōhanan were married to the daughters of such families, and were thus related to the high priest Eliashib,⁴ who allowed Tōbiah, even after the Walls were built, but during Nehemiah's absence from the City, to occupy with his household stuff a chamber in the Temple courts.⁵ The Jews themselves had not recovered command of the trade of the country, and held close commerce with Syrians for fish, and with travelling dealers in all other kinds of wares, who found quarters within the walls.⁶ Consequently, as in later days from the same cause, the Sabbath was profaned equally with the Temple. Commerce nearly always implies *connubium* ; the blood of the Jews was mixed with that of other tribes, and the children grew up ignorant even of the Hebrew tongue. *In those days also I saw Jews who had married wives of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab, and their children spake half in*

¹ iv. 7-23.² vi. 10-14.³ vi. 17.⁴ vi. 18 ; xiii. 4.⁵ xiii. 4-9.⁶ xiii. 15-22.

*the dialect of Ashdod, and could not speak the Jewish language, but according to the language of each people.*¹ These evils are the same as Ezra reports having encountered upon his arrival at Jerusalem, either before or after Nehemiah²; and as having infected likewise the newly arrived Jews, fresh from the more orthodox atmosphere of Babylonian Jewry.³ But in addition, Nehemiah the governor discovered among the noble and ruling Jews a cruel oppression of their poorer brethren, whose lands they mortgaged and whose persons they enslaved for debt.⁴ From all these things experienced after their arrival in Jerusalem, Ezra, whose mission had been to enrich the Temple with gifts, and Nehemiah, who had set out to build the Walls, developed that wider policy, whose success constituted them the founders of Judaism. To men of such a conscience towards God and their race such a policy was inevitable in the conditions we have sketched. The mere Walls of the City and the Temple were not enough; the circumstances revealed in their construction demanded the more effectual "Fence of the Law."

Nor is it less natural to believe that, as his singularly candid Memoirs testify, Nehemiah achieved the beginnings of this wider policy largely on the strength of his own personality. By his immediate recognition of the wrongs of the poor, by his unselfish example and resignation of his rights as governor, by casting the household stuff of Tobiah out of the Temple Courts, by regulating the Temple organization and the distribution of tithes to the Levites, by shutting the City gates on the Sabbath, by contending with the men who had married foreign wives and even using (as he confesses) personal violence to them, Nehemiah, upon his own strength of spirit and body, started the necessary

¹ xiii. 24.

² See above, p. 16.

³ Ezr. ix. f.

⁴ Neh. v.

reforms.¹ The "Memoirs" reveal a strong individuality, full of piety towards God and his people ; with a power both of sincere prayer and the persuading of men ; cut to the quick by the thought of *the place of the graves of his fathers* lying waste, but more concerned for the affliction and reproach of his living brethren, and with a conscience, too, of their sins, especially towards the poor and the easily defrauded Levites. Without Isaiah's vision or Jeremiah's later patience, he fulfils the prophetic ideal of the ruler, whose chief qualities shall be that he draws breath in the fear of the Lord, that he defends the cause of the poor, that he has gifts of persuasion and inspiration, that he is quick to distinguish between the worthy and the evil, and that he does not spare the evil in their way. Nehemiah is everywhere dependent upon God, and conscious of *the good hand of his God upon him*. He has the strong man's power of keeping things to himself, but when the proper time comes he can persuade and lift the people to their work. He has a keen discernment of character and motive. He is intolerant of the indulgent, the compromising and the lazy, even when they are nobles—who, as he expresses it, *put not their necks to the work of the Lord*.² In the preparations for his mission and its first stages at Jerusalem he is thoroughly practical ; and in his account of his building, as we have seen, careful and true to detail. As he becomes familiar with the conditions on which he has been called to act, and gradually realizes how much he must do beyond the mere building of walls, the growth of his sense of the grandeur of his work is very beautiful ; his sense of his loneliness not less pathetic. *I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down : why should the work cease, whilst I leave it and come down to you ?*³ There were few whom he could trust in the charge of the City and its gates ; he had to draw his police from the

¹ i.-vii., xii. 31, 37-40 ; xiii. 4-31.

² iii. 5.

³ vi. 3.

bands of Levites and musicians whose rights he had defended.¹ If sometimes his loneliness made him too suspicious of his opponents or of his own people, this was but the defect of his qualities or inevitable in the atmosphere of intrigue that he had to breathe. To be able to criticize the personal violence which he confesses, *his smiting of some of those who had married foreign wives, and his plucking of their hair*, we would need to have stood by him through all his troubles. The surmise is reasonable that such extreme measures may have been the best for the lax and self-indulgent among his contemporaries ; with Orientals treatment of this kind from a man they believe in more often enhances respect than induces resentment.² By the followers of Him Who in that same desecrated City overturned the tables of the money-changers, and scourged with a scourge of cords, much may be forgiven to an anger which is not roused by selfish disappointments or the sense of weakness, but by sins against national ideals, and which means expense to those who display it. Anger is often selfish, but may also be one of the purest and most costly forms of sacrifice. His disciples, who saw the exhaustion to which it put our Lord, said of Him, *the zeal of Thine House hath eaten me up*. Had we been present with this lonely governor, aware of the poorness of the best of the material he had to work with, and conscious, as we are to-day, of the age-long issues of his action, we might be ready to accord to his passion the same character of devotion and self-sacrifice. Such an "Apologia pro Nehemiâ" is necessary in face of recent criticisms on his conduct, all the materials for which have been supplied by his own candour. One of not the least faults of a merely academic criticism is that it never appeals to Christian standards except when it would disparage the men of the Old Covenant ; who at least under-

¹ vii. 1.

² Witness John Nicholson and the Punjaubees.

stood as we cannot the practical conditions and ethical issues of the situations on which God set them to work.

In the great work which was then achieved at Jerusalem the presence of Ezra by Nehemiah's side is, as we have seen,¹ natural and authentic ; but it is impossible to date Ezra's appearances and difficult to relate the two men, who almost never allude to each other. Ezra's contributions to the work were the large reinforcement which he brought out of Babylonia to the loyal Jewish population of the land, his own zeal for reform, and above all his learning in the Law, without which the layman Nehemiah could hardly have succeeded in organizing the community. Ezra the man is scarcely so clear to our eyes as Nehemiah ; his own Memoirs are more overlaid with the work of the Chronicler. Yet we can see in him certain differences, some of which at least are natural to the priest as distinguished from the governor. Nehemiah came to Jerusalem with a military escort, and, as he had prayed to God to move the king's heart to this request, so he saw nothing in these Persian guards inconsistent with the Divine protection. Ezra, on the contrary, tells us : *I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them that seek Him for good, but His power and His wrath are against all who forsake Him ;* and instead Ezra proclaimed a fast at the river Ahava, from which his company started, *that we might humble ourselves before God and seek of Him a straight way.*² As some one has said, while Nehemiah smote and plucked the hair of those who had married foreign women, Ezra in face of the same sinners rent his clothes and plucked the hair of his own head and beard and sat down stunned.³ His dialect of Hebrew is legal and priestly ; Nehemiah's is his own. Ezra has not, at first at

¹ Above, pp. 5 ff.

² Ezr. viii. 21-23.

³ ix. 2.

least, the governor's powers of persuasion and inspiration ; the people put him off from month to month.¹ When Nehemiah speaks they act at once. Still, if, as the Compiler says, Ezra came to Jerusalem before Nehemiah, his labours and failures no doubt prepared the way for the latter's success. What is hard to understand is that the two scarcely if at all mention one another. Would this mutual silence have been explained to us if we had had the rest of their Memoirs ? Was it due to the differences of their temperaments ? Or was Nehemiah, who found his only reliable officers, beyond his kinsfolk, among the Levites and musicians, suspicious of all priests ; and did the priest Ezra take the other side from him in his efforts to get the Levites their tithes ? These are questions, naturally rising from the materials at our disposal, but impossible to answer. Yet this is certain, that it was Ezra who brought and expounded the Law to Jerusalem. It is not necessary here to discuss the origins of that Law : all we need to keep in mind is that (as we have seen) the life and worship of the community had hitherto been regulated by the Deuteronomic Code, and that most of the reforms effected by Ezra and Nehemiah were on the lines of the Priestly Code. The Book which Ezra brought to the people was, besides, new to them.² We can have little doubt, therefore, that the Priestly Code was what Ezra introduced, and what he and Nehemiah moved the people to adopt. Except for a few later additions the Pentateuch was complete, and Jerusalem in possession of the Law-book which was to govern her life, till she ceased to be Jewish.

THE TOPOGRAPHY. THE VALLEY AND DUNG GATES AND THE DRAGON'S FOUNTAIN.

In this article it is not possible to deal with the wealth

¹ Ezr. ix. x.

² Ezr. vii. 14, 25 ; Neh. viii. 9 ff.

of topographical details furnished by Nehemiah.¹ I confine my remarks to the south-west section of the walls and to the position of the Valley and Dung Gates and of the Dragon Fountain, both because these form a starting point for all the rest and because I have some fresh considerations to bring to bear on them.

The Valley-Gate, *Sha'ar ha-Gai*, was, it is agreed, a Gate in the City Wall opening into the *Gai*, or *Gorge of the Sons of Hinnom*. We have already seen² that the only valley possible for this on the Old Testament evidence is the present Wâdy er Rabâbi, which in fact is the commonly accepted identification. The "Valley-Gate," therefore, opened in the west or south-west Wall of the City, above the W. er Rabâbi. Till recently it was placed at or near the present Jaffa Gate. Not only is such a position rather too far up the Wâdy for the Gate to be called by the name of *Gai*, because *Gai* means gorge and the Wâdy is shallow there, but it is at too great a distance from the Fountain Gate at the south-east corner of the City to suit Nehemiah's data. Professor Stade, therefore, in 1888, suggested a position for it near the south-west corner³ of the hill, where the Wâdy below is really a *Gai*. Here in 1894 Dr. Bliss began his celebrated excavations, which revealed a line of wall running south-east from the end of the Protestant Cemetery, and then, still on the edge of the hill, all the way east to the south-east corner of the City. In this wall just before it turns east, that is practically at the south-west corner, he laid bare an ancient gateway, with four sills, one above the other, and representing four different periods; and from there he traced north-east into the ancient City a line of street.⁴ On the first reports of this Gate, Professor Guthe

¹ ii. 13 ff.; iii.; xii. 31 ff.

² *EXPOSITOR*, Feb. 1906, 108 ff.

³ *Gesch.* ii. 167.

⁴ *Excav. at Jerus.* 1894-1897, 16 ff., London, 1898.

in 1895¹ identified it with the "Valley-Gate." In the spring of 1901, with Dr. Bliss' book before me, I twice carefully examined the course of the excavations, once under the guidance of Dr. Bliss himself, and, ignorant of Dr. Guthe's identification, I came to the same conclusion. In 1901-2 Professor Mitchell, of Boston, then in residence as head of the American Archaeological School, also independently reached this identification.² To these observations and the arguments built on them, which every visitor to the spot will find conclusive, I need add only the following. In the present shrunken walls of the City, the south Gate, which corresponds to this ancient one, is the Bab en-Nebi Daûd, or Şion Gate, the Bab-Sihyûn of the Arab geographers. It terminates what was a main line of street in Crusading times and is so still; and a pathway used by men and laden animals passes from it, not far from the Gate unearthed by Dr. Bliss, down into Hinnom, the bed of which is here from 130 to 170 feet below the sills of the Gate. In the bed it meets a path up and down the valley and another which crosses southward the opposite hill. There is no other gate on the line of wall traced by Dr. Bliss for about 1,800 feet, when one opens not far from the south-east corner; and 1,800 feet is approximately the 1,000 cubits which Nehemiah gives presumably (but not necessarily) as the distance from the "Valley-Gate" to the "Dung-Gate." In any case the Dung-Gate must have lain close to the south-east corner.

When Nehemiah issued by the "Valley-Gate" and before he came to the "Dung-Gate," he proceeded, he tells us, *towards the face of* [east of ?] *the Spring or Fountain of the Dragon—'Ain hat-Tannîn.* There is now no spring in Hinnom between the "Valley" and the "Dung-Gates" nor elsewhere; and the proposal to identify the Dragon's Spring with the Bîr Eiyûb, hence called "Nehemiah's Well,"

¹ *M u D P V.*

² *Journ. of Bibl. Liter.* 1903, 108 ff., with plan.

is impracticable, for the Bir Eiyûb lies not in Hinnom, but much beyond the Dung-Gate and out in the Kidron Valley. The difficulty seems to me to be solvable only on the hypothesis which I advanced in a previous paper,¹ that we cannot always determine the ancient springs of Jerusalem by the position of the real or reputed springs of to-day, because of the heavy earthquakes which have visited the City. I now find a confirmation of this hypothesis in the name, "The Dragon Well." Professor Cheyne has taken it as an instance of the habit of folklore to identify serpents, in their friendly aspect towards man, with wells or springs. But it is not a serpent but a dragon we have to do with here, and dragons were not regarded as "friendly." I have collected and will publish, in a chapter entitled "Earthquakes, Springs and Dragons" in my forthcoming volume on Jerusalem, the evidence that both by the Semites and Greeks the dragon was identified with the earthquake, and with the springs which earthquakes sometimes bring to the surface. It is indeed singular how recent writers on Semitic religion and mythology, even when treating of springs, have left untouched the subject of earthquakes and their mythology; notwithstanding that earthquakes have been frequent and violent in Syria and that, as we see from the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, and the Greek geographers, they have powerfully impressed the religious imagination of all her peoples. The Dragon, *Hat-Tannîn*, was, it is true, a sea monster, the embodiment of the turbulent arrogance which the ocean had inherited from primeval chaos; but when we remember how by the Semites the ocean was imagined to roll under the whole earth and contain the reservoirs of the springs, and that both Poseidon with the Greeks and Typhon with the Hellenized Semites were equally powers of the ocean and shakers of the earth; we

¹ EXPOSITOR, March 1903.

will not be surprised to find the Dragon, Hat-Tannin, also associated in the Old Testament with the earth and with the deeps, from which the fountains of earth arise,¹ or that in the Apocryphal Esther,² *thunderings and earthquake, uproar upon the earth, and two great dragons issuing forth* are closely put together. The religious imagery of this book further associates dragons and springs.³ The bed of the Orontes and its springs were supposed to be the work of a dragon; to Typhon the Greek myths attribute the issue of many springs.

But now I come to the point of my argument. From the analogies quoted, and there are scores of others, Nehemiah's "Dragon Spring" in Hinnom ought to be derived from the observation that it first appeared after an earthquake. But this inference is strengthened by the fact that neither the name of the spring nor the presence of a spring in Hinnom is recorded either before or after Nehemiah's time; for it is well known that many springs caused by earthquakes have only a short life. Some disappear in a few months, some after a few years.

One therefore, inclines with reason to the conclusion that in Nehemiah's *Dragon's Spring* we have the case of a temporary spring opened by earthquake and afterwards disappearing. But this confirms the opinion I have stated that earthquakes may have affected others of the real or reputed springs about Jerusalem, and have therefore introduced an element of uncertainty into the topography, to which almost no attention has been paid by those who have written on the subject. And, further, all this opens up an almost untouched field in Semitic mythology. Stark, in his instructive work on Gaza and the Philistine Coast (1852), is the only writer I know who has even hinted it.

GEORGE ADAM SMITH.

¹ Ps. cxlviii. 7. ² xi. 5 f. ³ x. 6; compare xi. 5 ff. with 10.