

## THE SITE OF CAPERNAUM.

It appears right that I should take an early opportunity to make public a change of mind on a point discussed at some length in my recently published book—*Sacred Sites of the Gospels*. I had hesitated a good deal between the two competing sites for Capernaum, *Khân Minyeh* and *Tell Hâm*. *Tell Hâm* has on the whole found the greater amount of favour with topographers; but it seemed as though of late opinion had rather been veering round to *Khân Minyeh*. I was particularly impressed by the fact that Father Biever, who is in charge of the German Hospice on the spot and has been settled there for some years, not only himself inclines to the *Khân Minyeh* site but had made a distinguished convert in Prof. von Soden. I went to Palestine with the hope of verifying this opinion; but a brief visit to the site left me still wavering, and during the months in which my book was written and printed I remained much of the same mind, slightly leaning to *Khân Minyeh*, but by no means confident that I was right in doing so.

It was not until the proofs had finally left my hand that a point occurred to me which I should no doubt have thought of before, but which, when once it was apprehended, altered the whole balance of the argument.

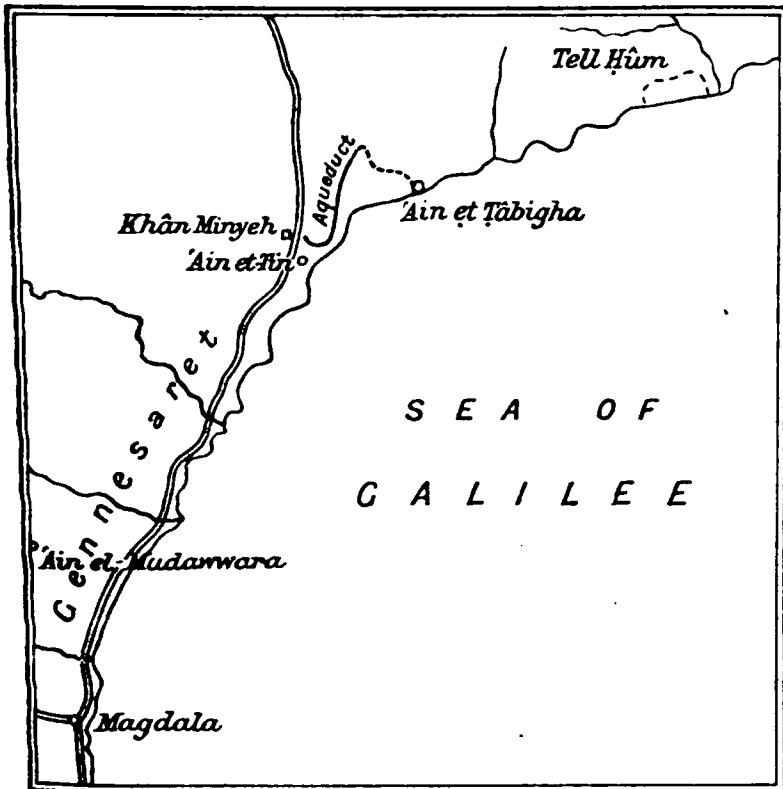
I had from the first attached the greatest weight to the evidence of Josephus. It was contemporary, and it related to a district that Josephus himself knew and had fought over. I read the evidence of Josephus in the light of the topographical features in such a way as to make it point with some clearness towards *Khân Minyeh*.

I shall explain myself best by inserting a rough sketch of the locality.

Josephus<sup>1</sup> says expressly that there was a fountain at Capernaum which watered the plain of Gennesaret; and it is agreed on almost all hands that this fountain is to be identified with the copious springs of *'Ain et-Ṭābigha*. Now these springs are a full mile and a half from *Tell Hâm* and without any apparent con-

<sup>1</sup> *B. J.* iii. 10. 8.

nexion with it, whereas they are barely three-quarters of a mile from *Khân Minyeh*, with what appears to be an aqueduct carrying the water to the back of *Khân Minyeh* in a position from which it could be easily distributed over the plain.



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It seemed to me that this argument was primary, and other arguments secondary; though I came to think more and more that the balance of those other arguments was rather the other way.

Now the point that I had overlooked was that these cities or large villages round the Sea of Galilee were not bounded by a ring fence, but had each its territory, extending for some miles round the place itself. There are data enough to generalize in this sense. For instance, Josephus has *ἑπταήρη* for the district of

Hippus (*B. J.* iii 3. 1); and there is the familiar case of the Gerasene (or Gadarene) demoniac in the Gospels. In the face of this I saw at once that there need not be the slightest scruple in making the territory [of Capernaum] include '*Ain et-Ṭābigħa* (in ancient times *Heptapegon*); and not only so, but the fountain would naturally be described as the 'fountain of Capernaum.'

If I had needed confirmation on this head I had it abundantly a few weeks later in a letter from my friend Prof. W. M. Ramsay, on my sending him a copy of my book. This letter is so exactly pertinent and contains such an excellent lesson in scientific topography that I have asked and obtained permission to print it. Dr. Ramsay writes as follows:—

'From the words in your preface about Capernaum I am wondering whether you are going through the same process as I did: viz. a first impression in favour of *Khân Minyeh* gradually giving way to the arguments for *Tell Hâm*. One argument seems to me at present, with available knowledge, supremely strong. Theodosius came to *Heptapegon* and, moving on to the north, reached Capernaum<sup>1</sup>. That class of argument is in my experience the most unshakable and safe to rest on. The arguments for *Khân Minyeh* are all of the class that assume a different aspect with a slight change in the point of view or an increase of knowledge. I have known some startling examples of such change in the aspect of those general vague arguments.

'The argument from Josephus seems to me in favour of *Tell Hâm*. You say "at *Tell Hâm* there is no fount of any sort." But surely *Heptapegon* is in the land of *Tell Hâm*; and there are numberless examples of the use of the town name for the entire territory subject to it. I have frequently pointed out in my *Historical Geography of Asia Minor* examples of error caused by our assuming that a name means the actual town, when the ancient writer means the whole territory of the town. As to the connexion of *Heptapegon* with Gennesaret, you point out that its water was carried by an aqueduct to *Khân Minyeh*—and so, as Josephus says, the Capernaum fountain fertilized the plain of Gennesaret.'

That, I may say, seems to me quite decisive; and as I had

<sup>1</sup> [Theodosius, *De situ Terrae Sanctae*, 2 (CSEL. vol. xxxix, p. 138: or *Palestine Pilgrim Texts*, vol. ii, p. 8).—EDD.]

hitherto rested my support of the *Khân Minyeh* site mainly upon this argument which I now see to be fallacious, I definitely transfer my vote to the other side, which has throughout claimed such high authorities as Sir Charles Wilson and Professors Socin, Schürer, Buhl, and Guthe.

As I am upon the subject of *Khân Minyeh* and its surroundings, I may take the opportunity to touch upon another point that has had some further light thrown upon it.

I had the good fortune to meet in the early summer the Rev. John Kelman, who like myself has recently written about Palestine. I communicated to him my change of opinion in regard to Capernaum, and we compared notes upon that and other matters connected with it—among them the curious rock-cutting represented in Pl. xxxiv of my book.

Some days after our meeting Mr. Kelman wrote to me from Edinburgh: 'Dr. Torrance of Tiberias was with me the other day, and I spoke to him about the rock-cuttings at the Sea of Galilee. He is not an expert in these matters, and I am in no sense qualified for giving an opinion, but two facts he mentioned appeared to me to be likely to interest you.

(1) He says there is an aqueduct which is certainly of the Roman-Greek period cut through the rock at *Abilene* in Hauran.

(2) That a Roman road runs through *Wady Fejjas* to Tiberias, and that whenever rock comes in the way, it is cut through. This cutting is now definable only on one side of the road.'

A little later Mr. Kelman wrote again:—

'I lunched on Tuesday with Colonel Conder of Palestine Exploration fame, and propounded to him the question of the aqueduct. He at once replied that there was a Roman rock-cut aqueduct at *Abila* (the one I mentioned to you), and that it bore the inscription of Julius Verus. He further stated that the supposed Roman aqueduct at *Minyeh* is in his opinion certainly Roman, but not an aqueduct. There is no trace of cement in it, and it is larger than any demand there could ever have been for water. He believes it to have been a road, and he favours the *Minyeh* site of Capernaum. On the other hand he declares the present *Wasserthurm* [i.e. the masses of masonry visible in my Pl. xxxiii] there a quite modern structure.'

This opinion had been already expressed by Colonel Con in *Text Work in Palestine* (London, 1855), p. 294:—

‘Revisiting the spot in 1882, it seemed to me that the view as to an aqueduct from <sup>1</sup> *et-Tābigha* to *Misryeh* is improbable and that the rock-cutting in the *Misryeh* cliff represents an ancient road. It would have been easier, ‘had it been necessary,’ to irrigate the plain of Gennesaret from the springs in it, than to have brought water from *et-Tābigha*.’

My own first impulse, when we struck into the rock-cutting, was to regard it as a road; but I quickly gave up this idea for that of an aqueduct. I can only speak from memory, helped by the photograph, but I should say that the cutting was not wide enough for wheeled traffic, and it does not appear what other purpose it could have served; a pathway could have been easily made without cutting so deep. If there was to be any considerable irrigation I should not have thought the scale excessive. The current number (July, 1903) of the *Quarterly Statement* opportunely describes and illustrates an analogous case in the *Wady Kusurka*, near the northern end of the Dead Sea. The aqueduct there is about half a mile long, and is on a smaller scale; there is a tunnel in it three feet high and two feet wide, but it seems to have been only used to fill a cistern, or cisterns, with the winter rains. It should however be said that there is an express mention of ‘plaster’ in connexion with it.

No doubt it would be well to have the point as to the Capernaum aqueduct once more verified carefully on the spot; but in the meantime I should be much inclined to accept the precise and detailed statement of Sir Charles Wilson, which for the benefit of the reader I will venture to transcribe.

‘Westward along the shore of the lake, a mile and a half from *Tell Hām*, is the charming little bay of *et-Tābigha*, and the great spring which is without a doubt the fountain of Capernaum, mentioned by Josephus as watering the plain of Gennesaret. The bay is about half a mile across, and on its western side is shut in by the cliff of *Khan Misryeh*, the only place at which the shore of the lake cannot be followed. There is a small tract of fertile land, but we could find no ruins except those connected

<sup>1</sup> I have ventured to assimilate the spelling of place-names in quotations to that adopted in my book, which is based on Baedeker.

with the mills or waterworks. There are five fountains, all more or less brackish, and varying in temperature from  $73\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  to  $86\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ ; four are small, but the one mentioned above is by far the largest spring in Galilee, and was estimated to be more than half the size of the celebrated source of the Jordan at *Bāniyds*. It rises to the surface with great force, at a temperature of  $86\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ , which can hardly be considered warm in such a climate as that of the lake district. Most of the water now runs to waste, producing a quantity of rank luxuriant vegetation; but some of it is collected in a small reservoir, and is thence carried off by an aqueduct to a mill owned by a man of *Şafed*, the only one in working order of five that were built by the great chieftain *Dhahr el-'Amr* [early in the last century]. . . . Connected with this fountain are the remains of some remarkable works which at one time raised its waters to a higher level, and conveyed them bodily into the plain of Gennesaret for the purposes of irrigation. The source is inclosed in an octagonal reservoir of great strength, by means of which the water was raised about twenty feet to the level of an aqueduct that ran along the side of the hill. Strong as the reservoir was, the water has at last broken through it, and there is now little more than two feet left at the bottom, in which a number of small fish may be seen playing about. After leaving the reservoir the aqueduct can be traced at intervals following the contour of the ground to the point where it crossed the beds of two water-courses on arches, of which the piers may still be seen; it then turns down towards the lake, and runs along the hillside on the top of a massive retaining wall, of which fifty or sixty yards remain, and lastly passes round the *Khān Minyeh* cliff by a remarkable excavation in the solid rock, which has been noticed by all travellers. The elevation of the aqueduct at this point is sufficient to have enabled the water brought by it to irrigate the whole plain of Gennesaret; and though we could only trace it for a few hundred yards inland, it was not improbably carried right round the head of the plain: the same causes which have almost obliterated it in the small plain of *et-Tābigha* would fully account for its disappearance in Gennesaret' (*Recovery of Jerusalem*, 1871, pp. 348-350).

Among the many excellent descriptions of the Sea of Galilee,

I turn with especial pleasure to Sir Charles Wilson's in this volume. It is written with the experience of a trained observer, is trustworthy in its statements, and although sympathetic for that which gives to the region its peculiar interest, is free from exaggeration.

There is just one other detail on which a word may be said.

Josephus notes expressly that the fountain of Capernaum contained the Coracin fish which is also found in the Nile. This led Dr. Tristram to identify the fountain with '*Ain el-Mudawwara*, another copious fountain about two and a half miles south of *Khân Minyeh*, which irrigates the lower portion of the plain of Gennesaret. The fish is actually found in this fountain, but not in '*Ain et-Ṭābigħa*, the waters of which are said not to be suited for it. I do not think that this discrepancy is sufficient to shake our belief in the identity of '*Ain et-Ṭābigħa* with *Heptapegon*, which is now generally accepted. I should prefer to suppose that Josephus, who had more to do with Tiberias and Taricheae than with the north of the lake and probably spoke from hearsay, had made a slight mistake.

W. SANDAY.