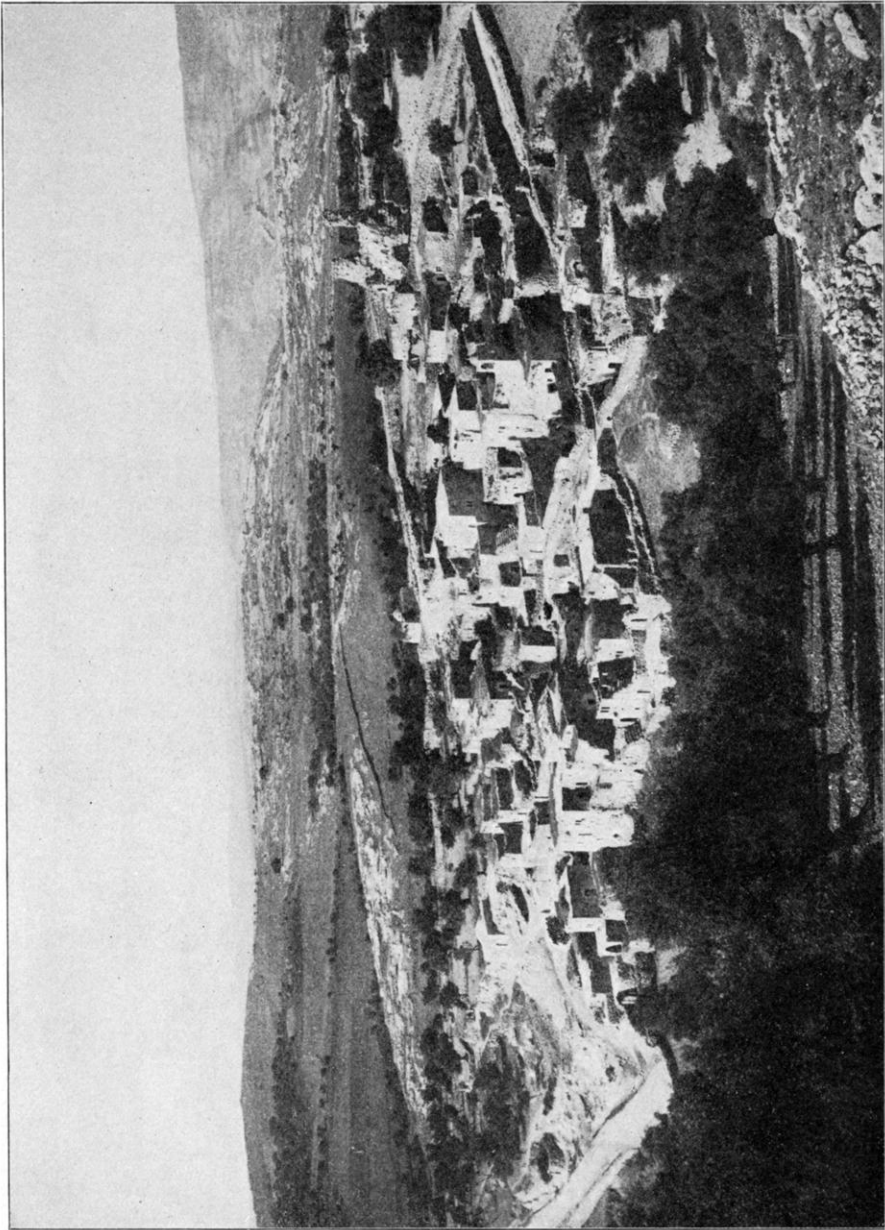


FROM HAIFA TO NAZARETH.

By EDGAR J. GOODSPEED,
The University of Chicago.

THE oriental traveler whose objective point is the Sea of Galilee leaves the Mediterranean steamer at Haifa, eighty miles south of Beirût, and thence proceeds, sometimes, and most expeditiously, by carriage, but ordinarily on horseback, eastward through Galilee to Tiberias. March is the favorite month for such an expedition, but it was on a January morning that we saw our small luggage deposited in the mukâri's saddle-bags, mounted our horses, and, with the dragoman leading the way, set out for Nazareth, the half-way point of the journey.

Our little cavalcade moved through the crooked streets of Haifa, already busy with the morning's traffic, and out upon the Tiberias carriage-road. We proceeded southeast along the base of Carmel, the Jebel Mâr Eliâs—Mt. St. Elijah—of the Arabs. The bright blue waters of the Bay of Acre, and beyond them Acre itself, the scene of the successive triumphs of Baldwin, Saladin, and Richard Lionheart, soon passed from view at our left, and were succeeded by the broad, fertile plain of the Nahr-el-Mukatta, "that ancient river, the river Kishon." A flock of long-fleeced sheep hastened by us to their morning's pasturage. A string of camels from the Hauran moved past toward Haifa, which divides with Damascus the trade of that fertile trans-Jordanic region. Now and again we encountered mounted Bedouin, with their fine swarthy faces and long-barreled guns. A cluster of picturesque and blackened tents was pointed out to us as the abode of workmen on the new railroad which is reaching out toward Damascus with such speed as Turkish officialdom will permit. The northern face of Carmel, long so plain, was at length broken abruptly by a transverse ravine, its rugged sides weathered a rich brown. The plain was dotted with plowmen,



GENERAL VIEW OF BETHANY

their little plows drawn by cattle appropriately small. They were preparing the ground for the wheat, which is sown here in January.

Eight miles from Haifa we stopped to water our horses in the Kishon, whose slender stream is here spanned by two sub-



SHEEP ON THE SIDE OF CARMEL

stantial stone bridges of recent construction, one for the carriage-road and the other for the Damascus railway. Just beyond, our dragoman pointed out el-Harathiyeh, on its little hill, as the ancient seat of Sisera, and we rode by it into the noble oak openings of Harathiyeh, the biblical Harosheth ("grove") of the Gentiles. Though the trees were almost leafless, the grove was beautiful, spreading over the rolling hills and traversed by the winding road. The oak leaf here is almost like the holly leaf, but larger, and quite glossy.

We came out from among the scattered oaks to a fine fore-taste of the far views of plain and mountain that are the glory

of Palestine. At our right we saw the clustering houses of Bethlehem of Zebulun; at our left, the head of Carmel, the site of Elijah's sacrifice conspicuous both by natural elevation and by the Latin chapel that crowns it, 480 feet above the sea. Before us spread the broad, rich plain of Esdraelon, great strips of

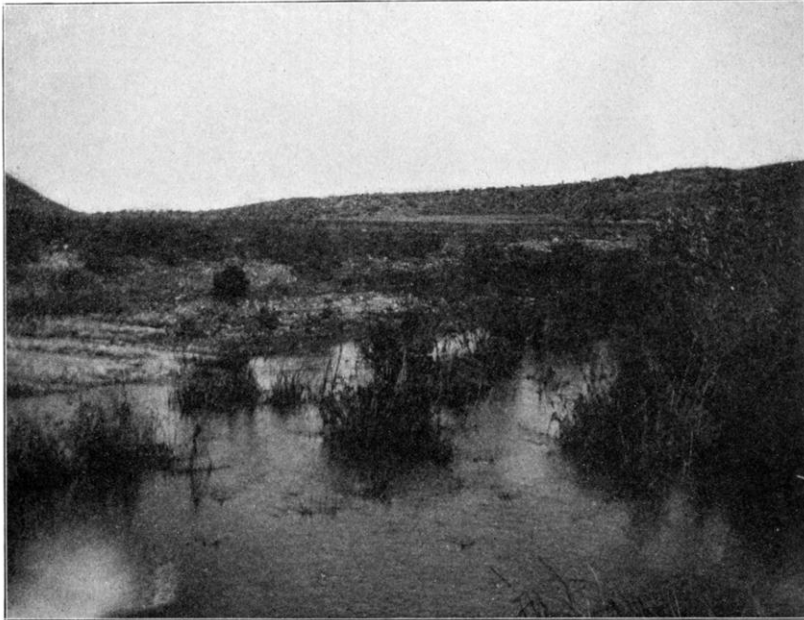


CAMELS FROM THE HAURAN

springing barley showing green amid the freshly plowed land. Beyond rose Little Hermon, seen against the blue background of far-off Gilead.

Some four miles beyond the bridges we passed Jêda, a little Moslem village of one street. Behind the houses stood a picturesque collection of native ovens, wigwam-shaped constructions of mud or clay, in which is baked the wheat bread of the land. The making of this really excellent bread is one of the native woman's proudest accomplishments, great dexterity being required to form, on no bread-board but the outstretched arms, a wafer of dough eighteen inches or more in diameter, without

letting the thin film tear of its own weight. The open-air ovens are heated by fires of brush and grass; they are then cleared of ashes and embers, and the wafers of dough are put into them for two or three minutes, when they are ready for consumption. These great wafers are most convenient, as one can carry a

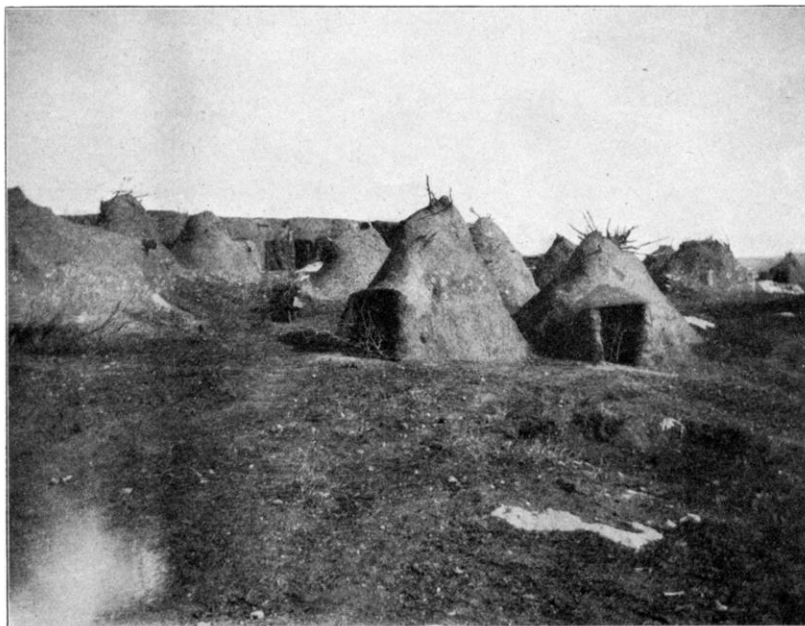


THE KISHON NEAR THE SCENE OF SISERA'S DEFEAT

lunch wrapped up in such a loaf and finish by eating the wrapper. On first seeing these strange cakes, folded, on the dinner table at Baalbek, the late Charles Dudley Warner mistook them for brown napkins, but found them tolerably palatable, "if one could get rid of the notion that he was eating a limp rag."

Much more attractive than Jêda was el-Mujêdil, with its schools and churches, lying high among its hedges of prickly pear. Then Yâfa, the near neighbor of Nazareth, began to show itself on its little hilltop. Mediæval tradition has it that this place, the ancient Japhia of the book of Joshua, and a border-town of Zebulun, was the residence of Zebedee and his sons

James and John. The stretch of road between Mujêdil and Yâfa leads along the edge of the hill. To the south and east, and three hundred feet below, lies the broad plain, spread out like a map, and bordered on every side by hills and mountains. Again the Gilead country bounds the view eastward, and the

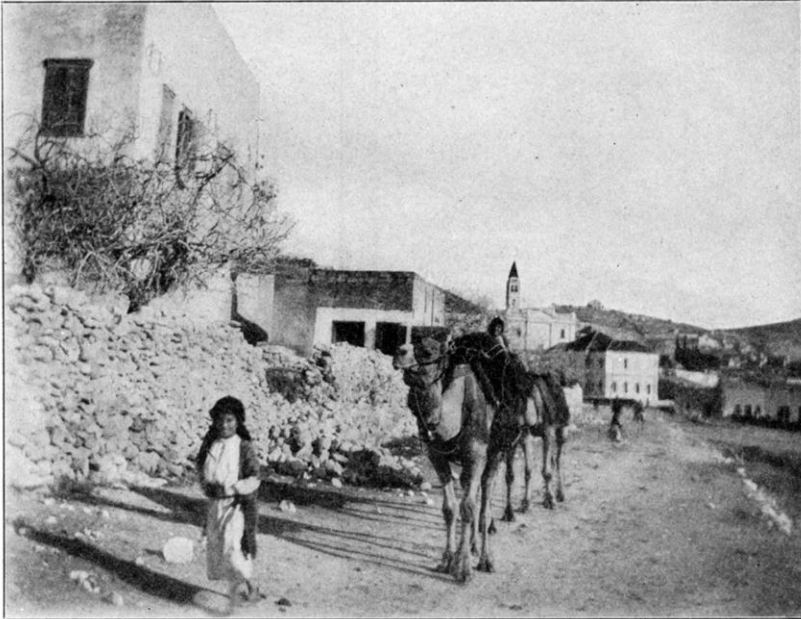


OVENS AT JËDA

hill country of Ephraim toward the south. And now the rounded top of Tabor comes in sight, and at the left of it the so-called Mount of Precipitation.

We had not been six hours in the saddle when our first view of Nazareth — en-Nâsira the natives call it — opened suddenly before us. The city, which now numbers 10,000 inhabitants, lies within a sort of amphitheater of hills looking southward — a very pleasant situation. The town is unfortified, the rim of hills being perhaps deemed a sufficient wall, if indeed the ancient town occupied this very site; on some accounts a situation somewhat higher on the hill has been thought probable.

As for the modern town, the large buildings of churches, convents, and schools, and numerous newly erected private structures with walls of stone and roofs of red tile, combine to give it a prosperous and attractive appearance. In the newer quarters, too, the streets are broad and fine, and altogether unoriental.



A STREET IN NAZARETH

Sunset found us climbing the *Jebel-es-Sikh*, the great hill on whose southern side Nazareth is built. The hilltop is crowned by a *weli*, or tomb of a holy man, and upon the dome of this dilapidated building we clambered in the gathering twilight. Many travelers have described the view this point affords, but every fresh-comer must be amazed and delighted by the panorama. From the Mediterranean to Gilead, and from Hermon to Mt. Ephraim, the length and breadth of the land is spread before the eye. To the west appears the ridge of Carmel, its headland jutting boldly into the sea, with Haifa in its shadow and the Bay of Acre at the right. To the northeast rises

Hermon, lying like a white cloud upon the dark horizon of hills. More to the east one has glimpses of the mountains of the Jôlan, beyond the upper Jordan, while to the southeast appears the bold rounded summit of Tabor, with the far blue line of Gilead behind. Southward and close at hand lies Little Hermon—Nebi Daḥî—and between it and Carmel the great plain of Esdraelon reaching away to Mt. Ephraim, the brown of the fresh plowing for the wheat alternating with the tender green of the springing barley.

We looked and looked again, until the deep hollows—our *weli* lies 1,600 feet above the sea—filled with purple shadows, and the after-lights of sunset failed. The new moon, a slender silver crescent, was hanging in the clear sky when we descended from the dome; and, after a hasty glance at its dark recesses, spread with the votive handkerchiefs of pious Moslems, found our way down the stone-walled lanes, between their hedges of prickly pear, into the steep and narrow streets of old Nazareth.