The Bridge and Cave of Benât Y'akûb

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planted, many are often turned up. His father had told him that he had tried hard to get documentary proof that the traditional massacre of Christians by Abu-Dahab really did take place, and at Tell er Roos, but had only found a short notice of the event having occurred on a small hill near Jaffa. This notice was in an Armenian book in the Armenian Convent.¹ Herr Georg Murad was pleased when I placed in his hands the first volume of "Volney's Travels" (London, 1787), giving (ch. viii, p. 115 ; ch. ix, pp. 145-150) a full account of the Mameluke siege of Jaffa during six weeks, ending in an indiscriminate slaughter of men, women, and children, to the number of above 1,200, and also of the erection by Abu-Dahab of a pyramid formed of the heads of his victims. This catastrophe took place, according to Volney, on May 19th, 1766. Herr Georg Murad tells me that in memory of this terrible event, and in order to mark the spot, he thinks of placing a monument on Tell er Roos. This structure will have placed upon it, besides the broken cannon, bombs, and cannon balls, an appropriate inscription giving an account of the disaster, of which—an allusion in Murray's excepted—the ordinary guide-books make no mention.

THE BRIDGE AND CAVE OF BENÂT Y'AKÛB.

By the Rev. B. Z. FRIEDMANN.

THE Rev. B. Z. Friedmann writes from Safed :—

I am very sorry to have delayed so long in sending you the information you wished respecting the Jisr and Mûghâret Benât Y'akûb.

Some years ago I made the acquaintance of a Maronite priest, Hourî Jacob, a very well-informed man, and it was from him I heard the origin of the name which I repeated to Dr. Chaplin during his visit last year. I did not like to trust entirely to my memory, and found great difficulty in obtaining Hourî Jacob's address.

Fortunately, however, I met him accidentally in Haifa last week, and am very glad to forward you the information I received from him. It may require confirmation, but seems a much more reasonable explanation than the Mohammedan tradition.

¹ Since writing this, I have found a literal translation of this notice into German in the Zeitschrift of the German "Palästina Verein," Bd. III, Heft 1, p. 49. Rendered into English it reads as follows :—"In the year 1775, Mehemed Abu Dahab came out of Egypt to Jaffa and pitched his camp upon a hill in the neighbourhood of the town of Jaffa. From this place he besieged the city. On May 27th (June 8th, new style), on a Sunday, he stormed, took, and plundered the city, and led all the male Christians he found to his camp. There he had them beheaded, and caused a hill to be erected of their heads. The reporter has seen this hill with his own eyes."

The Mohammedan tradition is that when Jacob returned from Mesopotamia to Palestine with his sons and daughters (the Moham medans follow the Talmudical tradition that Jacob had many daughters) he crossed the Jordan by this bridge and proceeded to Safed. While his sons were tending their flocks by Jub Yusef he settled with his daughters in a cave situated at the foot of the Castle Hill, a little to the north of the present Seraiah, and overlooking the road to Damascus. The news of Joseph's death was brought to him there by his sons, and he and his daughters wept so much that the holes in the rock made by their tears are shown at this present day. This cave, like the bridge, bears the name of Mûghâret Benât Y'akûb—Cave of the Daughters of Jacob. On this cave a mosque has been erected, and the spot is held so sacred that only Mohammedans are allowed to enter unless by special favour.

The following is the explanation given by Houri Jacob :—

At the southern end of Safed, not far from the Seraiah, there is a mosque called Jami'a el Ahmar, or the "Red," which in Crusading times was a church dedicated to St. James. Close by was a nunnery called by the same name. One of the French kings repaired the Jisr Benât Y'akûb, and the tolls paid by travellers crossing it went for the maintenance of the Nunnery of St. James. Salim Khalit Ashraf (?), King of Egypt and Damascus, besieged Safed and burned the church, the white stones of which turned red by the fire. The Crusaders' army took possession of the castle at Safed, and the nuns left the Nunnery in order to seek safety there, but finding the enemy had surrounded it, they took refuge in the above-mentioned cave. They were, however, discovered by their terrible foes, who after barbarous ill-treatment massacred them. This has given rise to the Mohammedan fable of Mûghâret Benât Y'akûb as well as that of the Jisr Benât Y'akûb. In both cases the nuns of St. James the Apostle have been confounded with the daughters of Jacob the Patriarch.

From the same source I heard that west of Safed, on the Jermuk Mountain, are ruins called Gabtu, about half an hour distant from the village of Semû'aieh, which was the dwelling-place of Tobiah (Apocrypha).

Near Sasa, another village on Mount Jermuk, is Katmûn, the birth-place of Anna the prophetess (Luke ii, 36). In the time of the Crusaders there was a church there dedicated to her.