



Notes on the Position of Taricheæ

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Thus the *topographical key* is useful in rightly applying misapplied prophecy.

B. Rabbah, as Polybius relates, was taken (B.C. 218) through its Tzinnor being revealed to the enemy.

In 2 Sam. xii. 26-28, "Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city. And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, I have fought against Rabbah, and *have taken the city of waters*. Now therefore gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city and take it."

Some think the words in italics should be translated, "*I have intercepted or cut off the waters of the city.*" Houbigant gives, it "*et aquas ab urbe jam derivavi.*" This agrees with Josephus, who says, τῶν τε ὑδάτων ἀπορεύμενος, and adds that the Ammonites besieged in the citadel "depended only on one small well of water, and this they durst not drink of too freely, lest the fountain should entirely fail them."

Joab might have been poetical, but it was more fit in a military despatch to say, "*I have cut off the waters which supplied the town*" (Junius) than to describe the "royal city" as "the city of waters."

Joab could never forget the Tzinnor of Jebus. It is not likely, then, that *he* would be over-hasty to say he had cut off the waters from the city, merely because he had possession of the stream or pool in the valley, but if there was a *Tzinnor* or *gutter* at Rabbah, and if with or without the help of some unpatriotic Ammonite (? Shobi, the son of Nahash) Joab found it and stopped it, he might safely speak of an impending surrender in his pressing message to David.

The words of Josephus are just the account we should expect from a person knowing but a part of the true case.

Here is a nice bit of excavation for our American cousins. "Biblical discovery in Philadelphia" would do for a sensational heading. With a Tzinnor found at Zion, another cropping up at Rabbah, I would ask, "What next?" Was not there a Tzinnor at Samaria, to enable it to endure a three years' siege?

W. F. BIRCH.

NOTES ON THE POSITION OF TARICHEÆ.

THE following notes on the position of Taricheæ may prove of value to those interested in the topography of the Sea of Galilee. The city, though not noticed in the Bible, appears to have been only second in importance to Tiberias, and was regularly besieged by the Romans. Taricheæ is apparently not noticed in the Talmud, and thus it is from Pliny and from Josephus only that we obtain any indications of its position.

Like Tiberias, Taricheæ was situate on the shore, with cliffs rising above it. It was washed on some sides by the sea, and strongly fortified on the land side. Before the city there was a plain. (B. J. iii. 10: 1).

One further important indication we obtain from the Life of Josephus, in which he says that Taricheæ was thirty furlongs from Tiberias (Vita, 32).

The town was walled, and contained a hippodrome. Its position was one of special strength, because surrounded partly by the sea, so that during the sieges the place could never be completely invested, and provisions and reinforcements could be—and were—brought into it by sea.

Taricheæ was apparently, as will be seen, in sight of a certain place called Sinnabris. This is another most important indication. The western shore of the Sea of Galilee is bowed outwards, and presents a steep wall of precipice above a narrow shore line. Tiberias lies in a recess, and cannot be seen from the south end of the lake west of Jordan; while the line recedes yet further in the neighbourhood of Mejdel.

Sinnabris is also mentioned as being thirty stadia from Tiberias (B. J. iii. 9, 7), and an important statement is made by Josephus that the Roman camp there constructed could "be easily seen by the innovators."

The name Sinnabris occurs in the Talmud, under the form Sineberii, as that of a place in Galilee, but without any notice of its position. The name was heard first by Rabbi Schwartz as still existing near the Sea of Galilee. In 1872 I received from the Rev. Mr. Zeller, of Nazareth, a list of villages and ruins in Galilee, and to my delight found the name *Sin-en-Nâbreh* put down by the native scribe as that of a place near Tiberias. I pointed this out to Lieut. Kitchener, and he was fortunately able to ascertain the exact position of the place and to verify the existence of the name among the peasantry.

Sinnabris has thus been fixed at a ruin on the road leading from Tiberias to Beisân. It is close to the ruined site of Kerak, and west of the road, being situate on a spur of the cliff, while a wall runs from it to the sea (see P. E. F., *Quarterly Statement*, July, 1877, p. 120).

The ruin of Kerak appears (as seen from the hills in 1874, and as described by Lieut. Kitchener) to have been that of a considerable town. It consists of a large plateau, partly artificial and projecting into the lake. Only a narrow entrance is left on the west by which the plateau could be reached; the lake and the Jordan surround it on the other sides, and a broad waterditch forms a further protection to the site.

These two sites, Sinnabris and Kerak, which are thus close together, are just about thirty stadia from the ruins of ancient Tiberias, which we learn from the Talmud did not exactly occupy the same position as modern Tiberias. (Tal. Jer. Megilla, i. 1.)

With regard to the identification of Sinnabris we can have no doubt. The name exists, the distance agrees, the direction is that in which the thirty stadia should be measured—namely, on the way from Beisân to Tiberias, for Vespasian, when camping at Sinnabris, was advancing from Scythopolis or Beisân to Tiberias.

The site cannot, however, be said to be "easily seen" from Tiberias,

as a wall of rocky cliff projects between the two. Thus we are led to suppose that it was the "innovators" of Taricheæ—the other revolted town which Vespasian was advancing to attack—who were overawed by the camp at Sinnabris.

The site of Kerak in every way agrees with the description of Taricheæ by Josephus. It is a large site, and was evidently once a place of importance. It lies beneath the cliffs, and is washed by the lake. It has on the south a plain—the broad, flat Jordan valley, and it is thirty stadia from Tiberias.

It has, however lately been proposed to look for Taricheæ north of Tiberias. Major Wilson places it at Mejdal, which is rather more than three miles (or not more than twenty-eight stadia) from Tiberias. Lieut. Kitchener proposes the ruin of Kuneitriyeh ("the little arch"), which stands on a hill-top, with a steep slope descending into the lake, and which is only two miles, or sixteen stadia, from Tiberias.

Neither of these sites seem to me admissible, for the following reasons, which I submit to the consideration of the readers of the *Quarterly Statement*:—

1st. The situation does not agree in either case with the description of a site washed by the lake on several sides and situate at the bottom of a mountain.

2nd. In the case of Kuneitriyeh the distance does not agree with that noticed by Josephus.

3rd. We have a definite statement of Pliny's that Taricheæ was at the south end of the lake, or just where the site of Kerak is now found. (See *Quarterly Statement*, October, 1877, p. 181.) Pliny is an authority who cannot be lightly set aside without some very strong counter evidence.

4th. It seems further clear from the narrative of Josephus that Vespasian in his attack on the revolted cities Tiberias and Taricheæ established two camps, one against the one, the other against the other. Sinnabris was his first camp, and his second was at the hot baths south of Tiberias (B. J. iv. 1, 3). Both of these sites are well known, and both are south of Tiberias. There is in the narrative of Josephus no account, so far as I have been able to find, of any third camp north of Tiberias. The second camp—that at the hot baths—is described as being between Taricheæ and Tiberias (B. J. iii. x. 1), and thus the words of Josephus fully agree with the statement made by Pliny that Taricheæ was south of Tiberias. The distance and the character of the site, with the proximity of Sinnabris in full view, all seem to point definitely to the important site of Kerak as being the ancient Taricheæ. I am not aware that I have omitted anything which could lead to a contrary conclusion, for Vespasian was evidently well able to leave Taricheæ in his rear in advancing on Tiberias after he had established a strong post in the commanding situation occupied by Sinnabris as now identified.

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