



Notes and Queries

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NOTES AND QUERIES.

The Hebrew Name of the Tyropœon Valley.—It must appear strange that the Hebrew name for the Tyropœon (or cheesemakers') Valley has not been recovered yet, whilst the smaller valleys of Hinnom and Kedron are frequently cited. We read in 2 Sam. xii, 31, that David made the Ammonites pass through the "brick-kiln." But this interpretation of the Hebrew מַלְבֵּן is open to great objection, as it is not intelligible why the captives, after having been subjected to three of the worst kinds of torture, should have been taken to a brick-kiln, a kind of torture that needs explanation. Besides, there have never been brick-kilns in Judea, the country being rocky, and all the buildings having been, as they are at the present day, of calcareous stone. The Aramaic Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel reads וַגֵּר יִתְהוֹן בְּשׁוּקֵי, "And he dragged them along the market" (*lit.* "streets").

Now "laban" in Arabic means milk, sour milk, and especially a sort of fresh cheese, a particular native preparation. I should suggest, therefore, that מַלְבֵּן in this passage is the name of the cheese market, where "laban (cheese)" was made, and that it is identical with the Greek name Tyropœon—*i.e.*, cheesemakers' valley—in Josephus. As the Tyropœon was the principal market in Jerusalem, the tortured captives were taken through this *Šûl* in triumph. It is worth adding that the form *malbēn*, in the suggested meaning of a place where cheese was made, is similar to *maktēsh* (Zeph. i, 11), the name of another place in Jerusalem.

In Jeremiah xliii, 9, and in Nahum iii, 14, מַלְבֵּן signifies mortar, but not brick-kiln, which would yield no proper sense, especially in the first-mentioned passage. The Aramaic Targum in both places translates "buildings," referring no doubt to brick buildings. May not the meaning of *lēbēnah*, originally "mortar" and then "brick," have arisen from its resemblance in colour and softness to fresh cheese?

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