

PALESTINE AS DESCRIBED IN THE JOURNALS OF
JEWISH TRAVELERS DURING THE CRUSADES

Thesis submitted for graduation

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Chapter One - The Travelers	1
Chapter Two - The Jews of Palestine	23
Chapter Three - The Coastal Plain	29
Chapter Four - Jerusalem: Within the Walls	35
Chapter Five - The Environs of Jerusalem	54
Critical Bibliography	67

CHAPTER ONE

T H E T R A V E L E R S

Thanks to the Crusades, the center of gravity of world history shifted to Palestine for two centuries. The cream of Europe's knighthood and the dregs of the world's scum hastened to the Holy Land in order to perform the "will of God"; which, when interpreted, meant to redeem the Holy Sepulchre and to pillage and massacre the Infidel. Down the valley of the Danube the hosts poured; across the Bosphorus they hastened; and then onward, succumbing perhaps to the Anatolian climate or Turkish strategy, they advanced towards Palestine. Other thousands sailed in Genoese and Venetian ships across the Mediterranean, equally anxious to attain their goal, equally certain of the outcome, - the raising of the Cross over the battlements of Jerusalem.

There was a long and bitter fight before the city fell in 1099. With a combination of religious frenzy and ruthless cruelty, the victors attended a solemn service of thanksgiving after they had massacred every last Jew

and Moslem in the city, killing them with the same fervor that accompanied their prayers.

But the story of the wretched Latin Kingdom or the triumphs of the chivalrous Saladin, hardly concern us here. We care less for the pilgrims and princes and plunderers on the Christian side, or for the vicissitudes of Islam's fortunes in Palestine, than for the experiences of those few Jews who ventured into Eretz Yisroel and left behind them accounts of what they saw in the land when it occupied the center of the world's stage.

These Jewish travelers came with strange, purblind eyes. They paid scant attention to the Palestine of their day which was covered by Christian shrines and governed by foreign lords. What they sought was the remains of the past, that past which was theirs alone, which nothing on earth could rob them of. And they found what they yearned for in the tombs of the Bible Patriarchs, in a bit of wall which remained from ancient Jerusalem, in the ruined synagogues of Galilee, where the makers of the Talmud had taught and preached. And just because they ignored what the Christian writers emphasized, because they looked at the Palestinian hills and valleys with the hungry eyes of exiles returning home, their descriptions are invaluable to us.

We may associate their sentiments and emotions with the poetry of that sweet singer, Jehuda Halevi, who sang and dreamt all his life long of the day when he would at last set eyes upon Zion. At last, he left his home in Spain, he braved a long sea voyage, and he gazed upon the city which had inspired his greatest efforts. Halevi could describe that yearning which burned inarticulately in the hearts of other Jews, and he wrote of it:

"O city of the world, with sacred
splendor blest,
My spirit yearns to thee from out the
far-off west;
Had I an eagle's wings, straight would
I fly to thee,
Moisten thy holy dust with wet cheeks
streaming free."

"In the East, in the East, is my heart,
and I dwell at the end of the West;
How shall I join in your feasting, how
shall I share in your jest,
How shall my offerings be paid, my vows
with performance be crowned,
While Zion pineth in Edom's bonds, and
I am pent in the Arab's bound!
All the beauties and treasures of Spain
are worthless as dust, in mine eyes;
But the dust of the Lord's ruined house,
as a treasure of beauty I prize."¹

The first of the Jewish travelers who entered

1. Emma Lazarus' translation. The original follows:

יפה נוף משוש תבל	קריה למגד רב
לך נכספה נפשי	מפאתי מערב
ומי יתנוני על	כנפי נשרים קד
אדום ברמעהי	עפרן ויהלערי

גבי במזרח ואנוכי בסוף מערב
אין אטענה את אשר אכל ואין יערב
איכל אשלם נדרי ואסרי בעור
ציון בחבל אדום ואני בכבל ערב
יכל בעיני עזב כל טוב ספרד וכו'
יחר בעיני ראות עפרות דביר נחרב

Palestine during the Crusades, and whose description has been preserved, was Rabbi Benjamin ben Jonah, who is called Benjamin of Tudela, because he came from Tudela in Navarre. He left that city, and began his travels by making his way into Provence. Then he journeyed through Italy and Greece to Constantinople, and after travelling in Asia Minor, he finally reached Palestine. His itinerary goes on to describe the countries farther to the east, - the Caliphate of Bagdad, Persia, India, China, etc. Next, it takes up Aden, Abyssinia, and Egypt and concludes with Sicily, France, Germany, Bohemia and Russia. It is hardly likely that Benjamin visited some of the more out of the way places, such as Arabia, Persia, India and China. As Zunz points out, the names of two hundred and forty-eight leaders are given as living in towns visited between Barcelona and Bagdad; but in the inaccessible districts of Asia and Africa, only four names can be found, a strong argument against actual visits and in favor of statements based on hearsay.¹

Benjamin's contribution to our knowledge of the Middle Ages can scarcely be underestimated. As writers of his time go, he shows rare understanding and accuracy. Not only that, but he includes much precious information

1. "Essay on the Geographical Literature of the Jews" in Asher's edition of Benjamin's Itinerary, Vol. II, p. 253.

which cannot be found elsewhere. To give but two examples of his transcendent importance, one need only point out that he was the first European author to mention China and that his account of David Alroy is the main source of our knowledge concerning that notorious charlatan.

We are, however, mainly interested in his treatment of Palestine. He entered the country at Acre, and after travelling along the coast to Caesarea, he visited the Samaritan Country. Next, he journeyed across the hills to Jerusalem and continued southward to Bethlehem and Hebron. He again turned northward, visiting various towns previously overlooked, and then turned to the southern portion of the Palestinian seacoast. Finally, he dashed across country to Galilee, and after concluding his tour of the land, he made his exit by way of Damascus. This itinerary zigzags considerably, but there is the possibility that Benjamin travelled by more direct routes, and this particular order was chosen in writing the account of the country.

In his travels, he made every effort to be specific. He expressed the distances between towns either in parasangs or in terms of the length of time necessary to complete the journey. Moreover, he attempted to estimate the number of Jews found in each community and he listed

the ones who were prominent. Those step-brothers of the Jews, the Samaritans, especially interested him, and he gave an exhaustive account of them and their customs. He paid little attention to the holy places of Galilee, but the other travelers have made up for this deficiency. Benjamin, in the case of other lands, was accustomed to devote some of his pages to a description of the non-Jewish population and their rulers, but for some strange reason, when it came to Palestine, he chose to ignore them completely.

Just when was the time of Benjamin's travels? The only definite date which we have, is found in the foreword to his Itinerary, where it is stated that he returned to Castile in 1173.¹ To this fact concerning the end of his journey, we add further information based on internal evidence, so that we may definitely establish that Benjamin began his travels in 1165 or 1166, more likely the latter date.

If we seek the exact time of his visit to Palestine, we find certain clues connected with the
a/ Allusions to Pope Alexander III, King Thoros of Armenia,

1. M.N.Adler - "The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela"
(Hebrew section), p.2.

and King Saif ed - Din of Damascus, very useful. Alexander III assumed office in 1159, but he was forced to fight an anti-pope so that he had to flee from Rome in 1162, and was unable to return until the end of 1165. In 1167, he was again compelled to leave the city.¹ When discussing Asia Minor, Benjamin has reason to refer to King Thoros², the Armenian ruler, who died at the beginning of 1168 or 1169.³ Therefore, he passed through that region before 1169. Finally, in regard to Mosul, he speaks of the king, Saif ed - Din, whom he calls the brother of Nur ed - Din, King of Damascus.⁴ Nur ed - Din did have a brother by that name but he died in 1149. At the same time, he had a nephew, Saif ed - Din II, who ascended the throne in the Fall of 1170.⁵ This was undoubtedly the man to whom Benjamin referred. Consequently, he must have visited Mosul at the end of 1170 or later, but it could not have been earlier. Going backwards and allowing for a reasonable time to elapse between his various

1. Encyclopaedia Britannica - "Alexander III (Pope)", Vol. I, p. 552.
2. Adler, p. 18.
3. W.B. Stevenson - "The Crusaders in the East", p. 201, n. 1.
4. Adler,
5. Stevenson, p. 199.

visits, we may assume that he passed through Cilicia in 1167 or 1168, and that he could not have visited Rome except in the interim between Pope Alexander's flights, that is between the end of 1165 and 1167. As for his sojourn in Palestine, that must have taken place between 1168 and 1170.

Benjamin of Tudela has proved to be a mysterious character about whom we know almost nothing. He set out on a long journey which carried him through many lands, and no doubt, he was obliged to endure many hardships, but yet, no one is able to explain what reasons prompted him to leave his home in Navarre and wander into regions which were not known to his fellow townsmen, even by name. Of course, writers have been busy constructing theories. They have pictured him filled with a passion to learn the welfare of his co-religionists in many lands, they have made him a travelling collector for Jewish schools, they have imagined him an itinerant merchant interested in the commerce of the world. All these hypotheses, however, are the merest poppycock. In all frankness, the only answer to the question, "why did Benjamin travel?" is "we do not know."

We are able to tell almost as little about the

As in the case of all the travellers with whom we deal, Benjamin's journal suffers severely from confusion due to scribal errors and omissions. The details with which he describes one town and the haste with which he passes over another ^{of} equal importance are strong proofs. Apparently, editors pruned wherever the subject matter did not interest them, in some cases leaving but a bare mention of a community. Even as early as 1429, Rabbi Isaac Israel of Pisa commented upon this fact.

"Apparently", he wrote, "this book of Rabbi Benjamin is incomplete, but I have not found any more of the manuscript." ¹

The next Jewish traveler who attracts our attention came to Palestine about fifteen years after Benjamin. His name was Rabbi Petachya of Regensburg, and as may be seen from the name of the town where he lived, he was, unlike Benjamin, an Ashkenasic Jew. He left Prague and travelled eastward through Kiev into Tartary. Then he crossed the mountains into the Tigris-

1. Eisenstein - "Ozar Massaoth" p.17, - "כפי הנראה זה ספר ר' בנימן אינו השלמות. אבל אני לא מאמין במנו יוחר בהעתיק".

Euphrates region, afterwards visiting Syria, Palestine and the Byzantine Empire before returning home.

The journal of Petachya's travels has been tragically mangled. This was to a large extent due to the fact that he entrusted the task of compiling it to others. The editor seems to have been Rabbi Judah the Pious, for he is mentioned as having refused to include certain facts concerning an astrologer of Nineveh lest he be suspected of believing in his claims.¹ Apparently, Petachya collected notes while on his journey. It is stated that he carried records of the burial places of certain Amoraim in Babylon with him, but he left them in Bohemia before his return to Regensburg.² There is good reason to believe that Rabbi Judah in the end entrusted the task to still a third man.

The utmost confusion shown in various parts of the account points to the carelessness or incompetence of those responsible. Petachya left his notes on various scrolls, it is believed, and when the time came to put them in order, the compiler failed to unite them properly, removing sentences from their contexts and placing them

1. L. Grunhut, "Rundreiser des R. Petachjah aus Regensburg" (Hebrew section), p.7.
2. Ibid, p. 19.

where they failed to make sense. The account of Jerusalem is thus divided, and extraneous material is introduced between the two parts.

Petachya's visit to Palestine occurred between 1174 and 1187. He mentioned that Damascus was under Egyptian rule¹, which places his arrival after the occupation of that city by Saladin in 1174.² Moreover, his description of Palestine brings out the fact that Jerusalem was under Christian rule, which means that he was there before it fell in 1187. Grünhut attempts to delimit the time still further, basing his findings upon a description of the manner in which the Babylonian Jews recited the Eighteen Benedictions, and he concluded that their procedure showed the influence of Moses Maimonides and hence, that Petachya could not have visited the Orient until 1177.³

It is impossible to determine the route which he followed in his journey through Palestine, as our text is so hopelessly confused. It is clear, however, that he entered the country by way of Damascus, and it seems

1. Grünhut, p.28.

2. Stevenson, p.206.

3. Grünhut, p.xi.

probable that he boarded a ship at Acre when he departed. He travelled through Galilee and visited Jerusalem, Hebron, the Salt Sea, and various towns near the seacoast.

Petachya is not so valuable to the student of the time as Benjamin, for he does not give as many important facts and details about the country. His account is characterized by fantastic legends which he seemed to gather wherever he went. In the foreword it is even stated that

"He wrote down all the rarities, miracles and wonders of the Holy One Blessed Be He which he saw and heard." 1

Of course, one may blame the shortcomings of Petachya on his compiler who admitted in certain instances, as we have seen, that he employed his editorial prerogative in leaving out details when he saw fit.

We know as little about Petachya's life as we have learned of the career of Benjamin. Regensburg was his home, he probably came of a good family. The introduction and conclusion of his itinerary declare that one brother was Rabbi Isaac Haleben who belonged to the Tossafists, and that the other brother was Rabbi Nachman of Regensburg.

1. Grunhut, p.1, - " וְכָל הַיְדוּשִׁים וְנִסִּים וּנְפִלְאוֹת שֶׁל הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרִכְיָה שְׁמֵהּ וְשִׁמְעֵהּ בְּרַחֲמֵי

No further crumb concerning the wanderer himself is vouchsafed by the editors. Therefore, we are again unable to find out the purpose of the man's travels. If it were not for the excellent reason that the editors may have discarded most material not pertaining to the wonders of God's handiwork, we might venture a guess that Petachya undertook his journeys in order to hear of the various examples of God's favor towards the House of Israel.

He has something to say about his own appearance, and states that inasmuch as he was well dressed, people imagined him to be rich.¹ He probably was.

The third man who comes within our range is Rabbi Jacob ben Nathaniel the Cohen. Unfortunately, his account is broken up into fragments which seem to have been shuffled and then published in the most senseless, incoherent fashion possible. There is not only no definite order, but many sentences have been transferred piecemeal to sections which have no relation to their contents. It is clear to any reader, moreover, that a great deal of material has been omitted, as great sections of the work consist of lists lacking in all details.

1. Grunhut, p.6.

We know absolutely nothing about the man or whence he came. Even a brief and blundering foreword to his work is lacking. Attempts, however, have been made to discover his country by an analysis of his Hebrew style, but this has not been successful. Grünhut asserts that the author was a German, using as an argument the careless Hebrew idiom found in the texts which he claims betrays Jacob's German environment.¹ On the other hand, Eisenstein has pointed out that his use of the word "Adonenu", reflects the Arabic influence which prevailed in the writing of Sephardic Jews. And so we are just where we began.

From the tone in which he concluded his records, one may judge that Jacob came to Palestine as a pilgrim. He expressed the hope at the end that in accordance with his merit in writing the work, he would deserve to return to the Land of Israel and die there.²

The date of his journey must be set before 1187, because we are told that the Christians occupied the land. There is no available proof, however, which will help us fix the date of his visit more closely.

It is also impossible to discover Jacob's route,

1. Sippur Massa'oth, p.2.

2. Ibid p. 14.

or even the places through which he passed in entering and leaving the country. His jumble of facts, however, includes practically every part of Palestine. In one section we have a table of distances between various places. His main interest in the country, constantly asserting itself, was in the tombs of famous men of the past. The "holy places" must have multiplied during the intervening years since the visits of Benjamin and Petachya, for we are regaled with many melancholy points of interest which the former travelers had overlooked. Included in the record, is a section devoted to a visit which he made to Egypt but it is only a fragment.

When we encounter our next traveler, Samuel ben Simson, political conditions in Palestine had been revolutionized through the victories of the irresistible Saladin. No longer was the Cross to be seen on the battlements of Jerusalem; it had been supplanted by the restored Crescent, and Christian Palestine was now only a slender strip along the seacoast. Samuel ben Simson made his visit at the beginning of the thirteenth century and according to his own testimony, he left Jerusalem in 1210.¹ He traveled

1. Heinrich Gross, "Etude sur Simson ben Abraham Sens," Revue des Etudes Juives, Vol.VI, p.177.

with a great scholar, Rabbi Jonathan ben David the Cohen of Lunel¹ in southern France, and it is therefore surmised that Samuel was likewise a Provençal.

Although we know little about our author's life, he himself made his record of travel a personal journal couched in the first person, and he supplied little details which the other chroniclers, in a more objective mood, disregarded. For instance, we learn of the travelers' rare good fortune in attaching themselves during their trip to the train of the Prince of the Captivity, who was greeted with a guard of honor wherever he went;² and consequently they must have shared some of the advantages which so high an officer enjoyed. The exilarch mentioned was probably David ben Hodaya of Mosul who took up the cudgels against the supporters of Maimonides in the controversy that raged throughout world Jewry.³ Samuel tells where each Sabbath was spent and mentions that the party celebrated Purim in Galilee, thus indicating that they made their travels during the winter season. We are even introduced to the emotions which the party experienced, and learn how they

1. Eisenstein, p.62.

2. Eisenstein, p.63.

3. Jewish Encyclopaedia "David ben Hodaya of Mosul", Vol. IV, p.463.

*I think
the expression
is
100%
correct*

tore their garments and wept copiously comme il faut when they drew near to Jerusalem.¹ Comparatively little is told of Jerusalem, but the author compensates for that in the full treatment which he accords Galilee.

The manuscript of these journeys is from the hand of some copyist who saw fit to omit those portions which referred to the party's earlier experiences en route. The scribe merely remarks that they entered Palestine from Egypt by way of the desert, and permits us to begin the story only when they reach Jerusalem. From Jerusalem the party made its way to Hebron, and then turned north again, visiting only a few places en route to Galilee. Samaria is quite overlooked and nothing at all is said about the Christian possessions along the seacoast. And yet, at the very end of the account, Samuel declares:

"I have a seal from the hand of the
King of Jerusalem certifying this
document." 2

In other words, he did visit the Christian lands, although he left no record of them.

The fifth and last traveler who has given us
information concerning the Holy Land was a certain Rabbi

1. Eisenstein, p. 63.

2. Eisenstein, p. 64: " ויש לי חותם מלך ירושלים ביד י לעד
"ה' תש"א

Jacob of Paris. From an extant letter we learn of the purpose of the journey and some scant facts about the man who made it. The mission which Jacob undertook was the collection of money from distant communities for the large academy attended by three hundred students over which Rabbi Yechiel presided in Paris.¹ Yechiel ben Joseph was the famous Rabbi who took part in the controversy with Nicholas Donin which preceded the destruction of the Talmud. As Yechiel became head of the Academy in 1224 and continued in that capacity until the unsafe conditions of life drove him to Palestine in 1244, we must place the journey of Jacob between those two dates.

In Palestine, Jacob was particularly interested in the graves that he saw there. The first words of an introduction attached to his journal declare:

"These are the journeys of Israelites who desired to go and prostrate themselves in prayer at the tombs of the saintly and holy ancestors in the Land of Israel." 2

The author makes good this claim by proceeding

1. Carmoly "Itinéraires de la Terre Sainte" p. 183.

2. Eisenstein, p.66: "אלה מסעי בני ישראל הנודים ללכת למקומות ולקחפול על קברי האבות הצדיקים והקדושים אשר בארץ ישראל."

to furnish us with facts concerning some eighty tombs in Palestine about which he discourses with more or less detail. To judge from Jacob's account, Palestine must have been one vast mausoleum. Not that he quite neglected other matters; but sepulchres were always of paramount importance to him.

Jacob made Acre, the capital of the remnant of the Christian Kingdom, his headquarters. At various times, he undertook journeys into the country from there. On one occasion, he would go to Jerusalem and Hebron, another time he would visit the sacred spots of Galilee, and a third time he would travel along the coast. He carefully noted distances covered during his wanderings. In his appetite for tombs he went far afield, and made journeys throughout the Orient, going even into Persia.

Jacob of Paris concludes our list of Jewish travelers. A number of others such as Nachmanides and Al Harizi furnish us with valuable material concerning the Palestine of the Crusading period, but they fall outside of our province, as they did not leave formal journals behind them. Nachmanides, for instance, furnished his information concerning Jerusalem in a letter he sent to his son, and in his commentary on the Bible. On the other hand, Al Harizi's

description of Palestine belongs to his "Tahkemoni", a sort of narrative poem with settings scattered over a large part of the world. Neither author belongs to a study of Palestine as revealed in travelers' journals.

These Jewish travelers whom we are to study covered only a brief period of the Crusades. The age itself stretched over two full centuries, running from 1099 to 1291. Only eighty-five years of this is described by our authors who, roughly speaking, came to Palestine between 1168 and 1243. What is more, their records compared with the descriptions of Arab and Christian writers, are all too brief. So many details found elsewhere are overlooked by the Jews who came to Palestine. And yet, thanks to their superior education, they came better equipped to appreciate the country than the Gentiles. And what is more, they covered much of a purely Jewish character in which the others naturally had no interest. Let me quote here the words of a Christian scholar, Colonel Claude Conder.

"Crusading typeography subsequent to 1100 A.D. is so hopelessly obscured by the ignorance of priests and pilgrims alike, and by the continual transference of sites from their true place known by the early Christians into new positions, quite irreconcilable with the requirements of the original narrative, that it must be considered entirely valueless in fixing the real sites.

The mediaeval Jewish pilgrims appear, as a rule, to have had a much more accurate knowledge, both of the country and of the Bible, their assertions are born out by existing remains and are in accordance with scriptural narrative, and the indications contained in their writings frequently appear to be of the greatest value."¹

Here, then, is the justification for the study of mediaeval Palestine through Jewish eyes.

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1. Claude Conder - "Christian and Jewish Traditions", Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement, 1877, p.36.

CHAPTER TWO

T H E J E W S O F P A L E S T I N E

Anyone who expects to obtain a picture of Jewish life in the journals of the Jewish travelers is sure to be disappointed. The fact is that very little is to be found, because there were almost no Jews in Palestine. We have only to recall the horrible massacres that marked the movement of the embattled fanatics through the Rhine Valley to appreciate what a holocaust overwhelmed Palestine Jewry, once the Crusaders swept through that country. When Jerusalem fell, all the Jews were herded into one synagogue by the Crusading knights, who set fire to the edifice, thus settling the Jewish problem for the time being. What we know definitely about Jerusalem must have been repeated throughout the country. Only later, were Jews able to steal in one by one from Europe and elsewhere.

But let us make the best of our meagre information by attempting to obtain the number of Jews scattered through Palestine. Our source is Benjamin

of Tudela, occasionally supplemented by Petachya of Regensburg. These two men are the only ones to give us any details about the Jews of the day and their mode of living. Incidentally, when they give statistics, they mean heads of families, and not the mass of individuals.

Jerusalem at that time had practically no Jews at all. Petachya found but one living there. When we turn to Benjamin, however, we see the statement,

"About two hundred Jews live in one corner of the city beneath the Tower of David." 1

Here we have a glaring contradiction, for such a discrepancy can hardly be looked at in any other light, when we consider how few were the years which intervened between the visits of the two travelers. Nevertheless, if one goes to the Roman manuscript of Benjamin's Itinerary, you will find the declaration made that there were four Jews in Jerusalem.² In this case the "four" was expressed by the letter δ , and it is very plausible to assume that some copyist read the δ as a ν , and interpreted the Jewish population as two hundred. I am in favor of discarding two hundred as the number and replacing it by four.

It should be noted that Benjamin said that the

1. Adler, p. 23: " וְהָיוּ בְּיִשְׁרָאֵל כְּאַרְבָּעִים יְהוּדִים דְּרִי'ם חֲמֵת מִגְדֹּל "

2. Ibid, p.23, n.26.

דִּין כְּפֶה הַמְדִּינָה.

Jews lived under the Tower of David. At the same time, there was a quarter in the northeastern part of the city which the Crusaders called the Juiverie. Without the slightest evidence that any Jews were living there during this period, certain Christian scholars have jumped to the conclusion that there were other Jews in the city whom Benjamin failed to mention.¹ The truth of the matter is that the quarter known as the Juiverie had been the ghetto before the Jewish population was annihilated. One can point to various cities in Europe where, when the last Jews were gone, their name still clung to the neighborhood in which they had dwelt. The Giudecca of Venice hundreds of years after the Jews withdrew beyond the Rialto bears their name today. Furthermore, when the Jews were readmitted to England by Cromwell, they found a street in London still known as Old Jewry which had been a center of Jewish life four hundred years before.

In the case of Jerusalem after the restoration of the Turkish rule, the Jews crowded near the Gate of Zion at the opposite end of the city.² And there they have lived

1. Claude Conder, "The City of Jerusalem", p.286.

2. Guy Le Strange, "Palestine under the Moslems", p. 215.

continuously to this day.

I have made a list of the leading Jewish communities in Palestine in the order of their numbers which is based upon Benjamin's statements. They are as follows: Ramleh - 300, Ascalon - 200 Rabbinites and 40 Karaites (the only time we ever find the Karaites of Palestine mentioned), Acre - 200, and Caesarea - 200. It will be noted, oddly enough, that every one of these towns was on or near the seacoast. There were two more communities in the country, both in Galilee. One was at Alma and the other at Tiberias, each of which had a Jewish population of fifty according to Benjamin. Petachya mentioned no Jewish community by name, except Tiberias, although he stated that in Palestine there were a number of them which ran anywhere from one hundred to three hundred families. 1

Benjamin gave the Jewish population of other places, even when they had only one or two Jewish families. At Beit Jibrin he found three. In the following towns, all the Jews were dyers: Beit Nuba - 2, Bethlehem -2,

1. Grünhut, p.29.

Jaffa - 1, St.George - 1, and Zerim -1. Besides these, we learn from Petachya of a family at Saffuriyah and another at the Terebinths of Mamre.

By adding up Benjamin's figures, one discovers the total estimated Jewish population of Palestine. The number is 1054 families, or about five hundred souls.

From the figures already given, one may note the important place which dyeing filled as a Jewish occupation. Benjamin tells us details about the Jewish dyers of Jerusalem. They had their own dye-house, and in order to make sure of their monopoly of the dyeing in the city, they paid a small rent to the king year by year. The one Jew whom Petachya found in Jerusalem when he came there was a certain Rabbi Abraham, a dyer, but Petachya says that he had to pay a heavy tax to the king for the right to follow his occupation.¹ Benjamin met him also, and called him "el Constantini", an allusion to the place of his origin. Benjamin also stated that he was a pious hermit, but said nothing about the fact that he was a dyer. Dyeing seems to have been the favorite Jewish occupation of the Middle Ages;

1. Grünhut, p.32.

a century before the Crusades, Mukaddasi, the Arab geographer had mentioned how Jews predominated in that calling.¹

As far as other callings are concerned, we know but little. Benjamin says that one of the leaders of the community in Tiberias was Rabbi Abraham, an astronomer.² On occasion, he mentioned other prominent Jews, but he failed to give any details concerning them.

We are indebted to Petachya, however, for a brief sketch of a picturesque figure, Rabbi Mehorai of Saffuriyah. His description follows:

"There is an outstanding man by the name of Rabbi Nehorai who is a descendant of Rabbi. He has a son named Rabbi Judah after Rabbi Judah the Nasi. The book of genealogy which he owns carries his line back to Rabbi. Rabbi Nehorai is a physician and a merchant of spices in the market. His sons are in the store with him, but they are covered up, so that they should not be seen anywhere. He himself is a scholar and a pious man.³

One cannot help wondering why these young men went about veiled. What could their reason have been?

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1. Le Strange, p. 215.
2. Adler, p. 29.
3. Grunhut, p. 29 - "

CHAPTER THREE

THE COASTAL PLAIN

Beginning with the River Nile in Egypt, there extends to the northward through Palestine, an unobstructed level plain with the Mediterranean on one side, and the mounting hills on the other. In ancient Philistia it is as much as twenty miles broad, but it narrows down and comes to an end where Mount Carmel almost rises out of the sea. The plain has been called the highroad between Africa and Asia, and this is true; it has proved an important route for merchants travelling in either direction with their precious wares. As for armies, from the days of Thebes down to Napoleon and Allenby in modern times, it has known the tread of warriors and heard the clash of steel.

Among our Jewish travelers, strangely enough, we find very little about this district. A number of the towns are mentioned, but for some unknown reason, the authors are hesitant about supplying even the meagrest details. The only ones treated with any degree of fullness are Ascalon, Jabneh, Ramleh, and Caesarea. In addition, Benjamin merely refers by name to Jaffa, Palmid (Ashdod), Kako and St. George,

while Jacob ben Nathaniel mentions Gaza.

Let us begin with Ascalon. Benjamin tells us it was, "large and handsome, and men repair there from everywhere with goods, because it is situated on the boundary of Egypt".¹ One cannot understand why he specifically states that Ascalon was the frontier city, inasmuch as Gaza was always considered as such; even in Benjamin's own day, William of Tyre, the great chronicler of the age, called Gaza, not Ascalon, the outermost city in the Kingdom of Jerusalem.² One cannot argue that Gaza's comparative insignificance commercially justified the description of Ascalon as the border city on the basis that it was the first important center one encountered after leaving Egypt; for, on the contrary, Moslem writers of the age, expatiate on the size and beauties of Gaza in much the same vein which they employ concerning Ascalon.³

Benjamin calls our attention to a well in the middle of the city which was dug by Abraham in Philistine days.⁴ It is interesting to compare the mention of the

1. Marcus Nathan Adler, "The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela" (Hebrew section) p.28. "גדולה ויפה ונאים מאד בסחורה"
גדול המקומות כי היא יושבת בקצה נגד מצרים."

2. Hermann Propst, - Die Geographischen Verhältnisse Syriens und Palästinas nach Wilhelm von Tyrus, Vol.I, p.70.

3. Guy LeStrange, "Palestine Under the Moslems" p.400-403,441-442.

4. Adler, p.28.

the same well by Ali of Herat who, writing in 1173 with cynical resignation, said:

"There is near here (Ascalon) the Well of Abraham, which they say he dug with his own hands; but of the truth of this Allah knows best."

From his skeptical remarks, we may turn to Jacob ben Nathaniel who describes the well's remarkable features and pins a miraculous tale on to it for good measure:

"In Ascalon, there is a well of Abraham, our father, that has four sides. The distance between the corners is two cubits. It contains four caves, one to each corner. The Waters of Siloah are opposite Mt. Zion in Jerusalem..... Once, when the priests were bathing there, a dish fell from the hands of a priest, and it was found in the well at Ascalon to which the waters had brought it from the Waters of Siloah through one of the caves of the well. The priests recognized it." 2

Benjamin calls the place New Ascalon and distinguishes it from the ancient city which, he says, stood four parasangs away. The former, he claims, was founded by Ezra, the prophet.⁵ We know, moreover, that in the Act of the Council of Constantinople, 536, a Bishop of Ascalon and a Bishop of the Port

1. LeStrange, p.402.

2. Grünhut-"Sigur Massaoth," p.5 אברהם אבינו
מבונה בין זויה לזויה ב'אבות ור' מקרות נכל זויה לזויה
קעה לערה וטי שמה בנדר הר איון כירושלים 'פעם
היו יוחאים המוסרים במי שילוח נפלה הקעה סילו של כומר אחר
ומצאו אותה באותה הנאר באשקלון שביאו אותה היום במי שילוח
מקורות שבבאר וסיליו אותה הנגלים."

3. Adler, p.28.

(Maiumas) of Ascalon are alike mentioned.¹ Many scholars feel that there is not sufficient evidence, however, to accept the existence of a maritime Ascalon distinct from the original city, as an established fact.²

Further to the north, we come to Jabneh, (then known as Ibelin) which is generally accepted as the scene of Yochanan ben Zachai's vineyard through which Judaism was preserved. Petachya found there a worthy rival of the famous river, Sanbation, a spring which gushed for six days and rested on the seventh.³ This paragon of piety is mentioned nowhere else, however.

Benjamin imagined that he could identify the actual site of the academy;⁴ William of Tyre could hardly have been closer to the truth in stating that the ruins he saw were traces of ancient Gath.⁵

Some ten parasangs to the northward, beyond Jaffa, was Ramleh, which Benjamin imagined dated from ancient Israelitish times, "for thus it was found written on the stones."⁶ Yakubi, a ninth century historian, flatly contradicts this, for he tells us that the city was founded by

1.E.B.Pusey, Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement for 1874, p.31.

2.G.A.Smith, "Historical Geography of the Holy Land," p.190,n.1.

3.L.Grunhut, editor, -"Die Rundreise des R.Petachyah aus Regensburg," Part 1, p.30.

4.Adler, p.28.

5.Propst, p.47.

6.Adler, p.28.

"פ'דקדק שם ארץ 1434 ע"ב"

the Caliph Sulaiman who reigned early in the eighth century.¹ Benjamin is right in saying that Ramleh was formerly a great city; before the Crusades it had been the capital of Palestine.²

Beyond Ramleh, on the coast was the flourishing Caesarea, which Benjamin called "a fine and handsome city."³ He explains that it was named in honor of Caesar but there is a disagreement in our texts as to whether he states correctly that it was built by Herod or gives Caesar the credit for the city's foundation. He likewise identifies it with the Philistine city of Gath,⁴ in contrast to the attempt of William of Tyre, who finds its site at Jabneh. In this case, contemporaries disagreed on the question of location, and yet both were wrong, for Gath was somewhere further south.

Rabbi Jacob ben Nathaniel limits his account of Caesarea to a description of the discovery of the sepulchre of ten (later called twelve) Jewish martyrs and the sub-

1. LeStrange, p.303.

2. Ibid, p.307.

3. Adler, p.21: *דפ"ל / ה' ע' י' ח'*

4. Adler, p.32.

sequent happenings. He says:

"The cave of the ten men that the (Roman) Government killed is at Caesarea. A very large stone is at the spot where they were killed. There is the grave of some Gentile in front of the cavern's entrance. The latter appeared to all the men of the city in a dream, and cried out to them, 'Take me away; because there is no remedy for me, as I am beaten with iron rods which have been heated by fire.' He told them that this was because there were twelve angels clad in tallithoth who did not resemble men, in this cave. He was a Gentile artist. The Gentiles paid no heed and all the artists died. They said that this great alabaster stone was the throne of the emperor, Caesar. Grass never grows at the place where the zaddikim were killed. In the middle of the old wall there is the grave of a zaddik, but no one knows who he was." 1

The men he refers to are the ten who were martyred by the Romans under Hadrian. According to the Midrash Asarah Haruge Malkut compiled during the Gaonic period, their executions took place the same day, although the Talmud and Midrash state that their deaths occurred at different times.² Included among the ten martyrs were Rabbi Akiba, Ishmael ben Elisha, and Hananiah ben Teradion.

1. Sipur Massa'oth, p. 10. ובהספרי סערה של עשרה חרונים מלכות. ובמקום שנהרגו יש אבן שיש גדולה הרבה ולפני פתח סערה של עשרה חרונים מלכות קבר נז' אחד בא להם בחלום לכל בני הסדרה הסדרה וזעק לפניהם הוציאו אותי לאינן לי תקוה כי מבין אותי בשבטין של ברזל רחוקין באש אמר להם כי באתם הסערה שנים אשר מלאכים בסליחות אינן דומין לבני אדם. והיה אותו נז' צייר לא הששו הנז'ים סתו כל הצוירים (הציירים). ואמר האבן הגדולה של שיש זה היה כסא מלכות של מלך סיסל. ולעולם לא יעלה שום עשב במקום שנהרגו החרונים. ובחור החלמה הישנה יש קבר אחת של צדיק ואין יודע מי הוא.

2. Jewish Encyclopedia, "Martyrs, The Ten", Vol. VIII, p. 355.

CHAPTER FOUR

JERUSALEM: WITHIN THE WALLS

Jerusalem under the rule of the Latin Kingdom was a city of strange contrasts. It belonged to the Orient, situated as it was in the Judean mountains with almost five centuries of Moslem rule behind it; and yet now that the Christians had returned, the Franks did everything in their power to make the city a replica of the feudal states in the west. The mosques were converted into churches; new buildings were erected in the Italian-Norman style; the old citizens having been massacred or expelled, their place was taken by a motley throng which included Jacobites, Syrians, Greeks, Georgians, Franks, and every other race in Christendom.¹

And yet all this was most distressing to the Jewish pilgrims who drew near. The ancient glory of Zion had departed; cruel and fanatical strangers held sway in the Holy City; the site of God's Temple itself was desecrated by a Christian shrine. Small wonder, indeed, that the Jewish

1. Adler, p. 21.

travelers approached the goal of their heart's desire with weeping and wailing. "The great cohen from Lunel and I came to Jerusalem from the west, and when we saw it, we tore our clothes as was proper for us; our emotions welled up within us, and we wept bitterly", said Rabbi Samuel ben Simson,¹ thus fulfilling the Talmud's command.²

Jacob of Paris made the ceremony accompanying the approach to Jerusalem somewhat more elaborate. He describes the arrival from the north as follows:

"When one reaches Scopus, he sees Jerusalem from there, and he makes a tear (in his clothes). And when he comes to Jerusalem he goes up to one of the ruins from which he sees the Mountain of the House, the wall of the Outer Court, the Court of Women, the Court of Israel, the site of the Altar and the sites of the Temple, the Sanctuary, and the Holy of Holies; then one makes a second tear for the sake of the Temple."³

These scenes of mourning for the Jerusalem that had been and for the Temple which was no more, indicate the complete dejection with which the Jewish pilgrims approached the city.

1. Eisenstein, p.63

2. Maod Katan, p.26.

3. Eisenstein, p.66

Prez's J'ene

קוראין קרעוה חלילי כ"ו

ה'תק"ל
ה'תק"כ
ה'תק"כא
ה'תק"כב
ה'תק"כג
ה'תק"כד
ה'תק"כה
ה'תק"כו
ה'תק"כז
ה'תק"כח
ה'תק"כט
ה'תק"ל

Benjamin called Jerusalem a small city with three walls by way of protection.¹ He said that the city had four gates, although Christian and Moslem sources speak of many more. And yet, this failure to mention the names of the other gates, was no oversight on his part. He spoke of the main entrances to the city, and did not consider the others worthy of discussion.² The gates he referred to were: the Gate of Abraham, more frequently known as the Damascus Gate, to the north; the Gate of David, now familiar to visitors of Jerusalem as the Jaffa Gate, on the west; the Gate of Jehoshaphat, St. Stephen's Gate today, on the east, near the Temple site; and the Gate of Zion on the south.³ Only the western gate goes back to Biblical times. Even at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, the Gate of Jehoshaphat and the Gate of Zion were not in existence, the latter not having been established for the obvious reason that the city and its walls extended farther south in the days of Herod than at

1. Adler, p.23.

2. "The City of Jerusalem" (Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society) p.4.

3. Adler, p.24.

the period of the Crusades. Later, Benjamin has reason to refer to a fifth gate of a different type, which I shall discuss in another connection.

The Gate of David is the only one going back to Biblical times, and in ancient days was known as the Valley Gate. The many pilgrims, such as Samuel ben Simson, who made their first entry into Jerusalem through its portals, were attracted by a large tower nearby, known as the Tower of David. This building which had an origin far later than the times of the poet king, is nevertheless, responsible for the alteration in the name of the gate by its side. While the tower does not go back to the Biblical period, its antiquity is well established by the Herodian style of its masonry, and by the fact that its dimensions are the same as those of the Tower of Phasaelus which Josephus describes in his "Wars".¹ This then was one of the defences of Jerusalem when Titus besieged the city. Benjamin does not attempt to give the date of the tower's erection, but contents himself by saying that it was built by "our fathers."² He makes it clear, however, that they

1. V, iv, 3; Charles Warren and Claude Conder, "The Survey of Western Palestine. Jerusalem." p.267.

2. Adler, p.23.

were responsible only for the lower part of the wall, and that the Moslems built the remainder. Jacob of Paris likewise fails to discuss the origin of the building. He merely remarks that the huge stones prove it to be an ancient structure.¹ In regard to its importance as a defense, Benjamin asserted that there was no stronger building in Jerusalem.² Colonel Conder, the authority on Palestinian archaeology, is of the opinion that the Crusaders, and not the Moslems, built the additional portion.³ The first place which every Christian pilgrim sought, was the spot which to him was sacred above all others, the reputed grave of Jesus in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Jewish visitors alluded to it, but with a brevity which betrayed their feelings concerning this great shrine of Christendom. Petachya mentions the location of "the Grave" as he called it.⁴ Benjamin said:

"The great church which is called the Sepulchre is there; that is where the man whom the erring ones visit, is buried."⁵

1. Eisenstein, p.67.

2. Adler, p.23.

3. "The City of Jerusalem" p. 134.

4. p.33; "

5. p.24; "

Jacob ben Nathan actually had the courage to visit the spot, for he speaks as follows:

"I stood at the grave of...(the man, which is) four cubits from the House of Stoning."¹

According to this, he found (at least to his own satisfaction) the location of the House of Stoning, something which modern scholars have failed to do.

Not far from the Holy Sepulchre was the huge establishment of the Knights of St. John or Knights Hospitalers, who very generously aided the poor and the sick. Benjamin gave the number of Knights as four hundred, and mentioned how they cared for the sick, both in life and in death.² Their ministrations to the poor are mentioned by Petachya also.³

There was one church in Jerusalem towards which all the Jewish pilgrims turned with mournful eyes, recalling with sorrow the time when God's House in all its glory had occupied that same spot. Titus destroyed the Sanctuary; Hadrian desecrated the Holy site with a Temple of Jupiter;

1. Sippur Massa'oth, p. 13; ...

2. p. 23.

3. p. 33.

at a later time, the Moslems, not without great reverence, erected their mosque; and now the Christians had transformed it into a church, the Templum Domini. This name was given in the artless belief that the building was none other than the ancient Temple of the Jews.¹

The Jewish pilgrims knew that the building dated back no further than the Arab occupation, but Benjamin made the same error which many later writers have fallen heir to, declaring that the builder of the mosque was the Caliph Omar,² when it really was 'Abd al Malik who ruled a half century later.³

Petachya tells a strange tale about the building of the mosque by a caliph who desired the Jews to have exclusive use of it. He reports as follows:

"Some leaders came and addressed the Arab ruler, 'There is an old man among us who knows where the Temple and the Outer Court stood.' The king forced the man to appear before him. He was fond of the Jews, and he said, 'I will build a Temple there, and no one shall worship there but the Jews.'" ⁴

1. John of Würzburg "Description of the Holy Land" (Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society) p.15.

2. p.24.

3. Conder, "The City of Jerusalem" p.239,240.

4. Grunhut, p.32-

It is very possible that neither Benjamin nor Petachya gained entrance to the church, but it is clear that Judah of Paris was inside for he has left us a detailed description of what the interior of the Dome of the Rock was like. His visit was made when the building had been restored by the Moslems to its original state, that of a mosque. He wrote:

"The Arab rulers erected a very imposing building about the Sh'thiyah Stone, and they made it a mosque. Above it they built an exceedingly beautiful dome. The edifice is built upon the site of the Holy of Holies and of the Temple. In front of the building beside the altar they set up columns supporting the dome which rises above them. It appears that this is the site of the middle altar which was in the Court of Israel." 1

The Sh'thiyah Stone, concerning which Judah of Paris spoke, is a large and irregular rock invested with many Talmudical legends. It was the spot upon which

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1. Eisenstein, p. 67 - "The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem"



Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac - it was the pillow that Jacob used when he dreamt of angels climbing heavenward (Westminster Abbey has a rival claimant for this honor); it was the stone upon which the Ark stood: it is in fact, the navel or center of the whole world.¹ Not content with all that the Talmud had to say about the rock, the Moslems invented new tales concerning it, some of which were connected with Mohammed himself.

Jacob of Paris went on to tell about the Mohammedan services which were held in the dome of the rock, but not without a sneer of superiority. He said:

"The Moslems gather there on their festivals in very great numbers, and surround the place in a sort of chorus, as Israel was wont to do on the seventh day of Succoth - to make an improper comparison." 2

In this manner did the Jews refer to the sacred ceremonies of the ancient Temple, now invested in their minds with so much of holiness and grandeur.

The Jews who came to Jerusalem when it was under

1. J. Horovitz "Geschichte des Sch'thijasteines", passim.
2. Eisenstein, p. 87 - "

SINCE THE TEMPLE WAS DESTROYED THE ROCK HAS BEEN USED BY THE MOSLEMS AS A PLACE OF WORSHIP AND AS A PLACE OF BURIAL FOR THEIR PROPHETS AND SAINTS.

Christian rule, must have been struck by the fact that this church was bare of all images in contrast to other Christian houses of worship. Both Benjamin and Petachya mention the fact, and the latter explains the phenomenon by repeating some traditions which must have developed by way of explanation for so strange an omission. He reports:

"The Gentiles came and set up crosses there, but they fell. Then they fastened the Cross to the joists of the wall; nevertheless, the House of the Holy of Holies would not permit it to stand." 1

Not far from the Templum Domini in the Haram area stood another building which, in Moslem days, had been known as the Akşa Mosque, but which was now a church known as the Temple of Solomon. The Knights Templars made it their headquarters, and incidentally, owed the name of their order to the building. Benjamin, who had not been deceived into believing that the ancient Temple was still standing, was credulous enough to imagine that the Templars actually made use of Solomon's palace.² Of the Knights Templars, themselves, Benjamin says,

1. Grünhut, p. 33 - "The Temple of Solomon was still standing, and the Knights Templars made use of it as their headquarters."

2. p. 23.

"Three hundred of them go out every day to the tournament. Besides these, there are the knights who have come from the land of France and other Christian countries who pledge themselves to serve a certain number of days or years until the fulfillment of their vows." 1

One is naturally curious to learn about the reliability of the traveler's statement that they numbered three hundred, but the Christian writers seemed less interested in furnishing statistics about the order than in giving us facts concerning the more sordid aspects of their activities, something which Benjamin ignores. John of Würzburg, who visited Jerusalem at this time, was outspoken enough to reproach them for treachery to the Christian arms. 2

Benjamin remarks:

"In Jerusalem connected with Solomon's palace are the Stables which he erected with great stones, thus making a very strong building. No edifice comparable to this may be seen in all the world." 3

1. p. 23, 4

2. "Description of the Holy Land", (P.P.T.S. n.21).

3. p. 24, 11

Theoderich writing at just the same time, also waxes enthusiastic on the subject:

"They have below them stables for horses built by King Solomon himself in the days of old, adjoining the palace, a wondrous and intricate building resting on piers and containing an endless complication of arches and vaults, which Stable, we declare, according to our reckoning, could take in ten thousand horses with grooms." 1

After such hyperbole, it is well to know the dimensions of the Stable. They are ninety-one yards long and sixty-six yards wide, and contain thirteen galleries.²

When Jacob of Paris came to Jerusalem after the return of the Moslems, he apparently failed to hear of the tradition of Solomon's Stables, but he seems to have referred to the substruction in rather vague terms. He wrote:

"There are caves opening into the wall of the Outer Court and extending under the Mountain of the House. Some say that they reach as far as the Sh'thiyah Stone." 3

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1. "Description of the Holy Places" (P.P.T.S.) p.31,
 2. Baedeker "Palestine and Syria" p.62.
 3. Eisenstein, p. 67 "The Holy Places of Jerusalem" p. 67

Nevertheless, they became known as stables because they were so used by the Crusaders, and even to this day, one may see the marks of the holes to which their horses were tethered. Herr Schick believed that the walls were built by Herod as foundations for a great hall,¹ but it appeared to Dr. Immanuel Benzinger that the substructions themselves were erected during the Arabic period.² Colonel Conder, on the other hand, was of the opinion, that the reconstructions go farther back, to Justinian.

Just without the north side of the Haram stands the remains of an ancient pool, known as the Birket Isra[^]l. Benjamin visited, and described it as the place where the priests washed before their sacrifices. He further pointed out that Jews who visited it wrote their names on the wall.⁴

An interesting feature of the Haram Area is a certain double gate on the eastern side which has been blocked up for centuries. This gate was sacred to each of the three sects -

1. "Reports from Jerusalem", Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement, 1891, p. 198.
2. Baedeker, p. 62.
3. "Survey of Western Palestine", p. 161.
4. Adler, p. 24.

Judaism, Islam and Christianity, and each one had a different reason, strangely enough, for regarding the place as holy.

Petachya called the gate The Gates of Mercy, using the plural because of its dual nature. He says:

"There is a gate in Jerusalem known as The Gates of Mercy, which is blocked with stone and plaster so that no Jew and likewise no Gentile, can pass through it..... The Jews have a tradition that the Shekinah went into exile through this gate, and that some day it will return through it." 1

The Moslems gave each side of the gate a different name. According to Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, a tenth century writer, one side was known as the Bâb at Taubah, the Gate of Repentance, "where Allah vouchsafed repentance to David". The second gate followed the Jewish usage, for it was called the Bâb at Rahmah, the Gate of Mercy. This was the gate "of which Allah has made mention in his book, saying 'A gate within which is mercy; while without the same is Torment'".² The place of torment mentioned

ה'ירושלים יש בער וקורין לו שער ירושלים
והם לא ידעו מה ענין השם הזה להם
ועל כן הם לא ידעו למה זה נקרא
ועל כן הם לא ידעו למה זה נקרא

1. Grünhut, pp. 34-35 - " - "

2. Le Strange, p. 163; Koran LVII, 13.

is the Valley of Jehoshaphat which I shall discuss when I take up the environs of Jerusalem.

The Jews might believe that the Shekinah had departed through the gate, they might live in hope that one day it would make its return by the same route; but the Christians felt that Christ himself had ridden through it on Palm Sunday when he came to Jerusalem to die for the salvation of mankind. They therefore called it the Golden Gate. During the age of the Crusades, it was blocked with stone and plaster which was only cleared away for the sacred procession held yearly on Palm Sunday.¹ (Theoderich says that it was also open on September 14th, the day of the exaltation of the Cross.)²

During exactly the same period in which John of Würzburg and Theoderich wrote, Petachya paid his visit, found the gate blocked, and not knowing that it was opened at regular intervals, solemnly proceeded to tell a legend about an attempt to open the gate which was frustrated by divine intervention. He writes:

1. John of Würzburg, p. 19.
2. Theoderich, p. 35.-

"One time the Gentiles desired to remove the obstruction and open the gate but the Land of Israel shook, and there was a convulsion in the city until they ceased." 1

This legend given by Petachya is repeated by other Jewish writers who came after him.²

Petachya noted the fact that the gate was opposite the Mount of Olives, and then made the statement that it was higher than the mountain itself. This is untrue, for the highest point on the Mount of Olives is 2680 feet above sea level,⁵ while the Haram Area attains an altitude of only 2440 feet. Suddenly, Petachya recalls some applicable Biblical verses, and he proceeds:

"From the Mount of Olives one may see it (The Gate of Mercy). 'And His feet shall stand on that day upon the mount of Olives (Zechariah XIV.3).' 'They shall see eye to eye the Lord returning to Zion (Isaiah LII.8).' His route will be through that gate. Men pray there." 4

1. Grunhut, p. 34 - "המורה נבוכים" (The Guide for the Perplexed) by Moses Maimonides, written around 1190.
2. "Sammelband", Mekize Nirdamin, 1886, pp. 27, 47.
3. Baedeker, p. 73.
4. Grunhut, p. 35 - "המורה נבוכים" (The Guide for the Perplexed) by Moses Maimonides, written around 1190.

And now we come to an inexcusable blunder which Benjamin makes in locating the Gate of Mercy. He does not place it at the east end of the Haram where it should be, but instead, he associates it with the Wailing Wall on the opposite side. He says:

"In front of this place (the Templum Domini) is the western wall, one of the walls which belonged to the Holy of Holies. It is called the Gate of Mercy, and thither all the Jews go to pray at the wall of the Outer Court." 1

To this day, notably late on Friday afternoon, the Wailing Wall is the gathering place of Jews who come to mourn the passing of the former glory of Zion. This happens to be an authentic site, probably the most ancient remain of the Sanctuary which we possess. 2

Jacob of Paris gave a description of the wall of the Outer Court which he stated surrounded it on four sides. He said that it was 360 cubits long. Actually, the Outer Court

1. Adler, p. 24 - "

2. "Survey of Western Palestine", p. 194.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ENVIRONS OF JERUSALEM

The Jewish pilgrims were interested in such points of interest outside of Mediaeval Jerusalem as the Mount of Olives, Mount Zion, The Valley of the Kidron and the Valley of Hinnom. These places were to the south and east of the city walls. Whatever lay north and west of Jerusalem possessed little interest at that time, and the travellers had nothing to say on the subject.

Jacob of Paris was specific in giving the location of the Valley of Jehoshaphat which lay close to Jerusalem.

"The Valley of Jehoshaphat", he said, "extends outside the entire southern and eastern sides of the city.... From there one goes down the road of the valley and passes between two mountains until he reaches the place which is called the Valley of Ben Hinnom." 1

1. Eisenstein, p. 67 - "The Valley of Jehoshaphat" extends outside the entire southern and eastern sides of the city.... From there one goes down the road of the valley and passes between two mountains until he reaches the place which is called the Valley of Ben Hinnom."

Benjamin called the Valley of Jehoshaphat the Wilderness of the Peoples.¹ The ancient name for the valley was the Valley of Kidron, and it was not known as the Valley of Jehoshaphat until the time that the earliest of Christian pilgrims, the unknown traveler from Bordeaux, paid his visit to Jerusalem 333 C.E. From then on, the tradition grew until it was accepted by Jews, Christians and Mohammedans alike. Joel spoke of the Valley of Jehoshaphat as the spot where God would gather the nations to try them for the wrongs they had committed against Israel; but it is doubtful if the prophet had a definite valley in mind when he spoke.² Then Benjamin calls this valley the Wilderness of the Peoples he is falling back on a passage in Ezekiel which does not so much as mention the Valley of Jehoshaphat. It follows:

"And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will I plead with you face to face." 4

Near the Gate of Jehoshaphat Benjamin noted the Pillar of Absalom which he called Absalom's Hand, a term based upon a

1. Adler, p.24.

2. IV, 2, 12.

3. Julius Beyer - "Joel" (International Critical Commentary), p.128.

4. XX, 35 - "And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will I plead with you face to face."

Although the Christians destroyed these cavern tombs for the sake of the stone, as Benjamin says, they nevertheless, left many of them quite intact. They may be seen to this day throughout the Valley of the Kidron and the Valley of the Hinnom. The inscriptions have been destroyed, however. During the Middle Ages hermits used many of these caves as dwellings, while other sepulchres were made the resting places for Christian dead without any consideration for their former tenants. At a later date, the poor made of them living quarters for themselves and shelters for their cattle.¹

As Jacob of Paris pointed out, the slopes of the Mount of Olives were favorite places for the burial of the Jewish dead.² Jacob ben Nathaniel gave a dramatic but dubious account of the funerals which proceeded there daily. He himself saw the mourners pass through the Valley of Jehoshaphat only to encounter a shower of stones which were hurled at them. He rather recklessly estimated that at least a hundred deaths were caused each day through these attacks. Inasmuch as he failed to say whether the victims were Jews or Christians, we must conclude

1. "Survey of Western Palestine", pp. 416 - 420; Baedeker, pp. 84-85.

2. Eisenstein, p. 67.

that they were the latter, especially since the Jewish population in Jerusalem was so insignificant.

At any rate, he went on to say that the funeral parties left the city by the Gate of Benjamin and went down a steep descent, passing between Mount Zion and the Waters of Siloah.¹ There was no gate of that name, however. The gate he probably meant was the Gate of Zion, for one leaving Jerusalem through it would pass between the Mount of Zion and the waters of Siloah in order to reach the Mount of Olives. Incidentally, part of the way would be down hill (the junction of the Valley of Jehoshaphat and the Valley of Hinnom is 350 feet below the Haram).²

One is all the more inclined to doubt the foregoing upon reading what Jacob ben Nathaniel offers next, an account of hot springs on the Mount of Olives. He saw three great holes on the mountain, and upon inquiry, discovered that because the water inside boiled, the holes never became completely filled. And then, puffing with pride, he boasted:

1. Sippur, p.13.

2. Baedeker, p.64.

It is strange that no one else reports this prophecy.

Both Jacob ben Nathaniel and Jacob of Paris pointed out that the priests used to burn the red heifer ^{there} in ancient times. Jacob ben Nathaniel visited the mountain with a group numbering twenty who prayed there. Concerning it, he went on to say:

1. Sippar, p. 13 -
2. Eisenstein, p. 68 -

Concerning the number of those who went up to pray, we are unable to determine whether all twenty were pilgrims, or if a part of the group was made up of residents from Jerusalem. It is small wonder that the writer was struck by the number of ruined churches on the Mount of Olives. Theodosius, a bishop of Alexandria, in 530 had counted twenty-six churches; but not one of them was now left.

Jacob of Paris stood beside some columns, and looked back at the Mountain of the House with all its buildings. Then he prayed.¹ Benjamin was most impressed by the panorama which spread out before him to the eastward. He could make out the Dead Sea which he called the Sea of Sodom, the Land of the Plain, the Valley of Shittim, and off in distant Moab, Mount Nebo.²

Benjamin spins a tale about the adventure of some laborers who discovered the sepulchres of David and his house on Mount Zion. This account, because of its length and wealth of detail, makes a striking bit of writing. It follows:

1. Eisenstein, p. 67.

2. Adler, p. 24-25.

"On Mount Zion are the tombs of the House of David and of the kings who arose after them. The spot itself is not known, but fifteen years ago, a wall of the church on Mount Zion fell, and the patriarch said to his superintendent, 'Take the stones from the walls of the tombs and build the church with them.' He did so, hiring laborers at definite wages, and twenty men removed the stones from the foundation of the wall of Zion. Among them were two who were sworn comrades.

"On a certain day, one prepared the meal for his fellow, and after they had eaten, they went to work. The superintendent said to them, 'Why were you late in coming today?' They answered, 'What is it to you? While our companions go to eat, we shall do our work.' When mealtime came, their fellow workmen went to eat, and they removed the stones.

"In lifting up a stone, they found the mouth of a cave. One said to his fellow, 'Let us enter and see if there is any money.' They went through the entrance of the cave, and proceeding until they approached a great palace built with pillars of marble that were covered with silver and gold. In front of them was a golden table with a sceptre and a crown. It was the tomb of King David. On its left was the tomb of King Solomon, and further on were the tombs of all the kings of Judah. There were closed chests, with what contents no one knows.

"The two men rushed to enter the palace, but a tempest came from the mouth of the cave and struck them so that they fell to the ground as if they were dead; and they lay there until evening. Then another wind came with a sound like the voice of a man, saying, 'Arise! leave this cave!' They hastily withdrew in confusion, and went to the Patriarch to whom they told

these things.

"He summoned Rabbi Abraham el Constantini, the pious hermit, who was one of the mourners of Jerusalem, before him, and he told Rabbi Abraham all the things that he had heard from the lips of the two men who had come. Rabbi Abraham replied to him, 'These are the tombs of the House of David who belonged to the kings of Judah. You and I shall enter tomorrow with these men, and we shall see what there is.'

"The next day, they sent for the two men and found each of them lying in bed. They were afraid, and declared, 'We will not enter the place, because God does not desire to show it to man.' Then the patriarch ordered the place closed so that it has been hidden from man down to this day. This Rabbi Abraham told me these things." 1

ובחר ציון (קברי בית דוד וקברי) המלכים אשר קמו
אחריו. ואין המקום ידוע כי מהיום ש'ו (נה נפל סן) הכמה אשר בחר ציון
ואם הפטריארכא למנוחה שלו קח את (האבות מחסות הקדש) ובה מסנו
הכמה והוא עמם כן וצבר פועלים וצבר ידוע וכן היו עמלים חובלים) והיו
מוציאין את האבות מיטת חומת ציון ובין האבות האם היו שני אבות
האבות בעלי כרית ויום אחד קמה האמת מיתה לחבי (רו ואחר) אשר לתם באו אל
המלאכה ואם" להם המנוחה עליהם מיום ההוא היום לבא (נו ואחר) מה יש
לך בעתה שילכו חבירנו למעוד נוחנו וקמה מלכתנו הגיע זמן הספוד והלכו
חביריהם למעוד ואם היו מוציאין את האבות והאבות בן וצאנו אם פי סערה
אמר אחד לחבירו נכנס ונראה אם יש עם מסון והלכו במבוא המער" קד הגיעו
אל ארמון אחד גדול בנוי על קמודי שם מצופה כסא וכוהב" ולפניו שלחן
זהב וסרביט ולפניה וזהו קבר דוד המלך ולמאלו קבר שלמה המלך כמו כן כן
קברי כל המלכים הקבורים עם המלכי יהודה. ועם ארבעות סגורות שאין אדם
ידוע מה שבהם. ורצו אל שני האנשים ליכנס בארמון והנה רוח סערה יוצא
מפי המערה והכה אותם ונפלו לתוך כמיתים ונכדו עד הערב. והנה רוח חזק (ו)
ובא צועק בקול אדם קומו צאו סן המקום הזה ויצאו משם מבוהלים ודחופים
והלכו אל הפטריארכא והגידו לו הדברים האלה. ושלא הפטריארכא להביא לפניו
ר' אברהם החסיד הפרוט אל קוסטנטינוי שהיה מאבלי ירושלם וספר לו אלה
הדברים כולם על פי שני האנשים. באו משם. וענה לו ר' אברהם ואם" לו זה
קברי בית דוד למלכי יהודה הם ולמחרת נכנס שני ואתה ואילו האנשים ונראה
מה יש שם. ולמחר עלהו בעביל שני האנשים וצאנו אותם כל אחד ואחד מוטב
על מטהו ומתו ואמרו לא נכנס אהנו שם כי אין חפץ האל להראות אותו לאדם.
וצוה הפטריארכא לשחוט אותו מקום ולהעלימו מבני אדם עד היום הזה. ור'
אברהם זה ספר לי הדברים האלה."

This is no wild yarn conjured up by a feverish imagination to satisfy the superstitious and credulous Benjamin gives as his authority, Rabbi Abraham el Constantini, who himself figured in the sequel to the finding of the cave. What must have ~~happend~~ is this: These laborers did find the opening to the cavern; they did essay to enter; and they were either thrown back by a strong wind or were affected by the escaping gases which had been formed during the centuries the cave had been sealed. The supernatural voice and the splendors which they glimpsed may be properly discounted, and ~~laped~~ to their hysteria and to the spirit of the age.

Jacob of Paris had reason to refer to the sepulchre of the kings years later, when the Moslems were again masters of Jerusalem.

"On the Mountain," he wrote, "is the Citadel of Zion where the tombs of the kings are. An ancient building called the Temple of David is there. It faces the Sanctuary, and tapers are kindled there because of the sanctity of the spot. Men say that it was a building of David, and that it was the place where he put the Ark of the Lord until the House might be built." 1

1. Eisenstein, p. 67.
הנה היא מצודה ציון ובה קברי המלכים
ועם בני יסן קורין אותו בית המלכים והמליקים
בו נרמס המלכות והמלך המלכים שמו בני דוד וזה המקום
שבו עם המלכים שבוהו דוד עד שובנו הבית.

Benjamin saw the church on Mount Zion, and accepted it as such, whereas Jacob of Paris was led, not many years later, to believe that the building dated back to King David. Thus rapidly did legends develop in that fertile age. This church was made the scene of numerous events recorded in the New Testament. It is interesting to note, that Saewulf, sixty years before Benjamin's visit, asserted that Peter hid in a cave connected with the church after he had denied his master, and hence, the building was called Gallicantus (Cock-Crowing).¹ But not a word did Saewulf say about a tomb of David. As Benjamin shows in his anecdote, that story had not yet developed. John of Würzburg, although writing in the time of Benjamin, also makes no comment on the royal sepulchres, but he adds the fact that the church marks the spot where the risen Christ was seen by the men of Galilee.²

The building which our travelers described is no longer standing. It fell into ruin and was replaced by a new structure which the Franciscans erected during the fourteenth century. The

1. "The Pilgrimage of Saewulf to Jerusalem and the Holy Land", p.21.
2. John of Würzburg, p.8.

Moslems considered this site too sacred to remain in Christian hands, however, and so they seized the church. The building is known as En-Nebi-Dāūd,¹ and the cave where David was buried (the tradition still persists) is underneath.¹ The place pointed out as the royal tomb is quite in accord, moreover, with the location given by Nehemiah.²

Jacob of ~~Paris~~ reported a legend that had become linked with one of the caves close to Jerusalem. It is a fantastic tale about a lion who devoured some martyrs that had already been condemned to death by Antiochus Epiphanes. The King, it seems, had sentenced the men to be buried on the morrow, but during the night a lion came and dragged them off one by one to his den below the cave where they were confined. The next day the King and his retinue discovered the lion at the entrance to its cave with its victims stretched out beside it. Then all knew that they had condemned martyrs, and they therefore permitted the bones of the dead to lie in the cave. Because of this incident, the place was called the Lion's Cave and as proof

1. "Survey of Western Palestine", pp.409-410.
2. III, 16.

of the historicity of the tale, were not the bones of the victims
still to be seen? ¹

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1. Eisenstein, p.67.

A CRITICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

One may find the Hebrew text of each of the travelers I have discussed, in J.D. Eisenstein's "Ozar Masseoth". He supplies rather good introductions to the itineraries. Unfortunately, however, the value of the book is lessened by the fact that the editor on occasion shifts the order of narration and alters words, in every case an improvement, but affording no inkling of the fact that he is tampering with the original text.

The first English translation of the Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela appeared in Purchas's "Pilgrimes", 1625. Two more recent translations in general use are those by A. Asher and Marcus N. Adler. The former is a poor piece of work with many notes of varying value. It has also an article on the geographical literature of the Jews by Dr. Zunz. Mr. Adler's translation is good, as are his notes, but there are not enough of them. His Hebrew text is critical and excellent.

The English translation of Petachya of Regensburg by A. Benisch is beneath contempt. There is one in German, however, by Dr. L. Grünhut with a good Hebrew text.

Eliacin Carmoly was responsible for a French translation of Samuel ben Simson with some good notes in his "Itinéraires de la Terre Sainte". The only Hebrew text I could find was that in Eisenstein.

Jacob ben Nathaniel has never been translated into English. The best Hebrew text was edited by Dr. Grünhut under the name of "Sippur Massaoth".

I could find no other version of Jacob of Paris than that contained in Eisenstein. Carmoly quotes merely his list of tombs in his "Itinéraires de la Terre Sainte" but gives some additional information in the introduction.

Articles on Benjamin of Tudela and Petachya of Regensburg may be found in the Jewish Encyclopaedia.

Among contemporaneous works, the publication of the Palestine Pilgrim's Texts Society are of the greatest value. This is particularly true of the accounts by Jacob of Würzburg and Theoderich. Guy Le Strange's "Palestine under the Moslems" is also invaluable, and Hermann Probst's "Verhältnisse Syriens und Palästinas nach Wilhelm von Tyrus" is useful.

In continuing this bibliography, if I sought a complete list of books on the subject, I should have to catalogue all the works on the history, geography and archaeology of Palestine, but I shall confine myself to a few outstanding books in each field.

First of all, the Jewish Encyclopaedia and the Encyclopaedia of the Bible have worth while articles on various towns. George Adam Smith's "Historical Geography of the Holy Land" and Baedeker's "Palestine and Syria" are very good, but the former does not include Jerusalem. Claude Conder's "City of Jerusalem" is a work of a general nature that is valuable. Neubauer's "Geographie du Talmud" may also be mentioned.

Among histories, those that were of the greatest use to me were Besant's and Palmer's "Jerusalem, the City of Herod and Saladin", and W. B. Stevenson's "Crusaders in the East".

Probably most valuable of all are the Quarterly Statements of the Palestine Exploration Fund. Equally noteworthy is "The Survey of Western Palestine, Jerusalem"

by Charles Warran and Claude Conder, published under
the auspices of the same organization.

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