

in the Syrian version I find this translated as in the Old Testament "Jam Suph." Some will perhaps say this is a mere tradition, but anyhow we have Scripture traditions stating that it was the Jam Suph. The Jam Suph is first mentioned in Exodus x, 19, in connection with the plague of locusts. An east wind brought the locusts, a west wind took them away and carried them into the Jam Suph. Surely the description here given seems well to answer to the position of the sea east of Egypt called the Red Sea.

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HIDING PLACES IN CANAAN.

III. SAMSON AND THE ROCK ETAM.

DISTANCE was nothing to the roaming lion of Dan. Eager to prey on the Philistines, he went down to Ashkelon, though both Ekron and Ashdod were nearer to Timnath; at another time he carried away the gates of Gaza to within sight of Hebron. When therefore he wanted to be quiet, Samson might easily have sauntered quite as far from home in going down to the top (lit. fissure) of the rock Etam.

In seeking then for this hiding place of the famous Danite, we must not groundlessly assume that it was in the vicinity of his native Zorah, but be guided solely by the following conditions required in the Bible:—

A. The *rock Etam* is in Hebrew called a *sela*; therefore it was a *precipitous* rock or *crag*.

B. It was in the tribe of Judah, as also was Lehi.

C. It was probably near to Lehi, where the Philistines having gone *up* spread themselves, and also to an eminence called Ramath-Lehi, close to which was a spring called En-hakkore.

D. Its position was such, that it is said (1) that Samson went *down* (from Timnath or Zorah?) and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam, and (2) that the men of Judah went *down* to the same place and brought him *up* from the rock to Lehi.

In "Tent Work," the rock Etam is placed at Beit 'Atâb, and the identification is there thought satisfactory. It must however be rejected, as it fails to satisfy A; for though it may be said to be pre-eminently a *rock*—a knoll of hard limestone, without a handful of arable soil, standing above deep ravines, still it has no claim whatever to be considered a *sela* or *crag*, if we compare it with known instances, viz., Petra and the precipices of the passage of Michmash. Further, it is not clear how the springs to the north-west of Zorah could represent En-hakkore in Lehi, for they are situated far *below* Beit 'Atâb, in Dan, while Lehi was in *Judah*, and the men of Judah brought Samson *up* and *not down* from the rock to Lehi.

Any candidate for the honour of being the *rock Etam*, must pass the preliminary examination required by *sela*.

Accordingly it is unnecessary to sift the suggestions that Samson's retreat was in one of the caves near Deir Dubban or Beit Jibrin, until a genuine *sela* reveals itself in that neighbourhood.

No position for the rock Etam seems to me more likely or suitable than one in Wâdy Urtas. This valley becomes a romantic gorge as we descend eastwards to the great cave of Khureitûn. Here, if not nearer to Solomon's pools, are found magnificent *crags*, fully deserving the title of *sela*. As this part is in the desert of *Judah*, conditions A and B are already satisfied.

The Ramah of Samuel was certainly (as it seems to me) just to the west of Solomon's pools. We have then a *Ramah* (with a spring adjacent) not far distant from a *sela* in Wâdy Urtas to answer to the Ramah in Lehi. This latter name appears to me to have been that of the valley extending north-east towards Rachel's sepulchre.

With Lehi in this position, the Philistines would naturally be said to go *up* to it in search of Samson, probably intending also, at the expense of Judah, to recoup themselves for their burnt corn with the rich harvest in Lehi or (else) in the valley of Rephaim. With the same precision of language, the men of Judah would be said to go *down* towards Khureitûn, and to bring Samson *up* to Lehi.

This position for the rock Etam is not really at variance with the statement that Samson went *down* (from Timnath ?) to the top of the rock, though the long *ascent* preceding the *descent* is not alluded to. David (1 Chron. xiii, 6) went *up* to Kirjath-jearim (from Jerusalem) to bring *up* thence the Ark of God (to Jerusalem). Why may not an *ascent* be passed over in silence in Samson's case, just as well as a *descent* in David's? Thus a *sela* in Wâdy Urtas further satisfies C and D.

The name Etam still survives in 'Ain 'Atan, near Solomon's pools, and a city Etam at one time apparently existed in this district (2 Chron. xi, 6); though "the rock Etam" does not seem to me *necessarily* to mean that the rock was near a city of this name.

An Etam also occurs in 1 Chron. iv, 2, immediately after the mention of Zorathites, while the Zareathites (*i.e.*, the people of Zorah) and Eshtaulites seem in II, 50-54 to be connected with Bethlehem. This contact of the tribe of Judah with Dan at Zorah may have influenced Samson (even if he were not by descent connected with the immigrants from Bethlehem) to take refuge in their country when it was expedient for him to leave his own.

Not improbably then, through information given by Judah, the secret fissure in the *crag* Etam became the celebrated hermitage of the great Nazarite. But whether this could possibly be identical with the still more famous cave of Adullam of after time, must depend upon the precise kind of *hole* or *fissure* really described by the Hebrew word rendered "top" in the A. V.

W. F. B.