

THE ITINERARY OF BENJAMIN OF TUDELA

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The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela throws a flashlight upon one of the most interesting stages in the development of nations.

The history of the civilized world from the downfall of the Roman Empire to the present day may be summarized as the struggle between Cross and Crescent. This struggle is characterized by a persistent ebb and flow. Mohammed in 622 A. D. transformed, as if by magic, a cluster of Bedouin tribes into a warlike people. An Arabian Empire was formed, which reached from the Ebro to the Indus. Its further advance was stemmed in the year 732, just a hundred years after Mohammed's death, by Charles Martel, in the seven days' battle of Tours.

The progress of the culture of the Arabs was as rapid as had been that of their arms. Great cities such as Cairo and Bagdad were built. Commerce and manufactures flourished. The Jews, who enjoyed protection under the benign rule of the Caliphs, transmitted to the Arabs the learning and science of the Greeks. Schools and universities arose in all parts of the Empire. The dark age of Christendom proved to be the golden age of literature for Jew and Arab.

By the eleventh century, however, the Arabs had lost much of their martial spirit. Islam might have lost its ascendancy in the East had not the warlike Seljuk Turks, coming from the highlands of Central Asia, possessed themselves of the countries which, in days of old, constituted the Persian Empire under Darius. The Seljuks became ready converts to Islam, and upheld the failing strength of the Arabs.

It was the ill-treatment by the Seljuks of the Christian pilgrims to Palestine which aroused Christian Europe and led to the First Crusade. The feudal system adopted by the Seljuks caused endless dissension among their petty sovereigns, called "Atabegs", all of whom were nominally vassals of the Caliph at Bagdad. Thus it came about that Islamism, divided against itself, offered but a poor resistance to the advance of the Christians. The Crusaders had little difficulty in making their way to Palestine. They captured Jerusalem, and established the Latin kingdom there.

By the middle of the twelfth century Mohammedan power had shrunk to smaller dimensions. Not only did the Franks hold Palestine and all the important posts on the Syrian coast, but, by the capture of Lesser Armenia, Antioch, and Edessa, they had driven a wedge into Syria, and extended their conquests even beyond the Euphrates.

At length there came a pause in the decline of Islam. Zengi, a powerful Seljuk Atabeg, in 1144 captured Edemas, the outpost of Christendom, and the Second Crusade, led by the Emperor Conrad of Germany and by King Louis VII of France, failed to effect the recapture of the fortress. Nureddin, the far-sighted son and successor of Zengi, and later on Saladin, a Kurd, trained at his court, discovered how to restore the fallen might of Islam and expel the Franks from Asia. A necessary preliminary step was to put an end to the dissensions of the Atabeg rulers. Nureddin did this effectually by himself annexing their dominions. His next step was to gain possession of Egypt, and thereby isolate the Latin Kingdom. Genoa, Pisa, and Venice, the three Italian republics who between them had command of the sea, were too selfish and too intent upon their commercial interests to interfere with the designs of the Saracens. The Latin king Amalric had for some years sought to gain a foothold in Egypt. In November, 1168, he led the Christian army as far as the Nile, and was about to seize Fostat, the old unfortified Arab metropolis of Egypt. The inhabitants, however, preferred to set fire to the city rather than that it should fall into the hands of the Christians. To this very day many traces may be seen in the neighbourhood of Cairo of this conflagration. Nureddin's army, in which Saladin held a subordinate command, by a timely arrival on the scene forced the Franks to retreat, and the Saracens were acclaimed as deliverers.

The nominal ruler of Egypt at that time was El-Adid, the Fatimite Caliph, and he made Saladin his Vizier, little thinking that that modest officer would soon supplant him. So efficiently did Saladin administer the country that in a few months it had regained its prosperity, despite the five years' devastating war which had preceded.

At this juncture the traveller Rabbi Benjamin came to Egypt. Some three years earlier he had left his native place--Tudela, on the Ebro in the north of Spain. After passing through the prosperous towns which lie on the Gulf of Lyons, he visited Rome and South Italy. From Otranto he crossed over to Corfu, traversed Greece, and then came to Constantinople, of which he gives an interesting account. Very telling, for example, are the words: "They hire from amongst all nations warriors called Barbarians to fight with the Sultan of the Seljuks; for the natives are not warlike, but are as women who have no strength to fight "After visiting the Islands of the Aegean, as well as Rhodes and Cyprus, he passed on to Antioch, and followed the well-known southern route skirting the Mediterranean, visiting the important cities along the coast, all of which were then in the hands of the Franks.

Having regard to the strained relations between the Christians and Saracens, and to the fights and forays of the Latin knights, we can understand that Benjamin had to follow a very circuitous way to enable him to visit all the places of note in Palestine. From Damascus, which was then the capital of Nureddin's empire, he travelled along with safety until he reached Bagdad, the city of the Caliph, of whom he has much to tell.

It is unlikely that he went far into Persia, which at that time was in a chaotic state, and where the Jews were much oppressed. From Basra, at the mouth of the Tigris, he probably visited the island of Kish in the Persian Gulf, which in the Middle Ages was a great emporium of commerce, and thence proceeded to Egypt by way of Aden and Assuan. Benjamin gives us a vivid sketch of the Egypt of his day. Peace and plenty seemed to prevail in the country. This happy state of things was entirely due to the wise measures taken by Saladin, who, however, kept

himself so studiously in the background, that not even his name is mentioned in the Itinerary. The deposition of the Fatimite Caliph on Friday, September 10, 1171, and his subsequent death, caused little stir. Saladin continued to govern Egypt as Nureddin's lieutenant. In due course he made himself master of Barca and Tripoli; then he conquered Arabia Felix and the Soudan, and after Nureddin's death he had no difficulty in annexing his old master's dominions. The Christian nations viewed his rapidly growing power with natural alarm.

About that time news had reached Europe that a powerful Christian king named Prester John, who reigned over a people coming from Central Asia, had invaded Western Asia and inflicted a crushing defeat upon a Moslem army. Pope Alexander III conceived the hope that a useful ally could be found in this priest-king, who would support and uphold the Christian dominion in Asia. He accordingly dispatched his physician Philip on a mission to this mysterious potentate to secure his help against the Mohammedans. The envoy never returned.

Benjamin is one of the very few writers of the Middle Ages who gives us an account of these subjects of Prester John. They were no other than the infidels, the sons of Ghuz, or Kofar-al-Turak, the wild flat-nosed Mongol hordes from the Tartary Steppes, who, in Benjamin's quaint language, "worship the wind and live in the wilderness, who eat no bread and drink no wine, but feed on uncooked meat. They have no noses--in lieu thereof they have two small holes through which they breathe."

These were not men likely to help the Christians. On the contrary, as is so fully described in Benjamin's Itinerary, they broke the power of Sultan Sinjar, the mighty Shah of Persia, who, had he been spared by the men of Ghuz, would have proved a serious menace to Saladin.

It took Saladin some years to consolidate his empire. In 1187 he felt himself in a position to engage the Franks in a decisive conflict. At the battle of Tiberias, Guy, the Latin king, was defeated and taken prisoner. The Knights-Templars and Hospitalers, of whose doings at Jerusalem Benjamin gives us particulars, either shared the fate of the king or were slain in action. Jerusalem fell soon afterwards. Pope Alexander III roused the conscience of Europe, and induced the pick of chivalry to embark upon the Third Crusade in 1189. But the prowess of the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa, the gallantry of Richard I of England, the astuteness of Philip Augustus of France, were of no avail. The Fourth and Fifth Crusades were equally unsuccessful, and the tide of Islam's success rose high.

After Saladin's death his empire gradually crumbled to pieces, and under Ghenghis Khan an invasion took place of hordes of Mongols and Tartars, of whom the Ghuz had been merely the precursors. They overran China and Russia, Persia, and parts of Western Asia. The effete Caliphate at Bagdad was overthrown, but to Islam itself fresh life was imparted. The rapid decline of the Mongol power at the end of the thirteenth century gave free scope to the rise of the Ottoman Turks, who had been driven from their haunts east of the Caspian Sea. Like their kinsmen the Seljuks they settled in Asia Minor, and embraced the Mohammedan faith, an example which many Mongols followed. The converts proved trusty warriors to fight the cause of Islam, which gradually attained the zenith of success. On May 29, 1453, Constantinople was captured by the Turks, and an end was made of the Byzantine Empire. Eastern Europe was

subsequently overrun by them, and it was not until John Sobieski defeated the Turks under the walls of Vienna in 1683 that their victorious career was checked.

Then at last the tide of Islam turned, and its fortunes have been ebbing ever since. At the present day little territory remains to them in Europe. India and Egypt are now subject to England; Russia has annexed Central Asia; France rules Algiers and Tunis. One wonders whether there will be a pause in this steady decline of Islam, and whether the prophetic words of Scripture will continue to hold good : "He will be a wild man, his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him, and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren."

This brief consideration of the struggle between Cross and Crescent may serve to indicate the importance of the revival of Islam, which took place between the Second and Third Crusades, at the time when Benjamin wrote his Itinerary.

Begin passage [pg. 19]

A three days' voyage brings one to Abydos, which is upon an arm of the sea which flows between the mountains, and after a five days' journey the great town of Constantinople is reached. It is the capital of the whole land of Javan, which is called Greece. Here is the residence of the King Emanuel the Emperor. Twelve ministers are under him, each of whom has a palace in Constantinople and possesses castles and cities; they rule all the land. At their head is the King Hipparchus, the second in command is the Megas [p. 20] Domesticus, the third Dominus, and the fourth is Megas Ducas, and the fifth is Oeconomus Megalus; the others bear names like these⁽⁴¹⁾. The circumference of the city of Constantinople is eighteen miles; half of it is surrounded by the sea, and half by land, and it is situated upon two arms of the sea, one coming from the sea of Russia, and one from the sea of Sepharad.

All sorts of merchants come here from the land of Babylon, from the land of Shinar, from Persia, Media, and all the sovereignty of the land of Egypt, from the land of Canaan, and the empire of Russia⁽⁴²⁾, from Hungaria, Patzinakia⁽⁴³⁾, Khazaria⁽⁴⁴⁾, and the land of Lombardy and Sepharad. It is a busy city, and merchants come to it from every country by sea or land, and there is none like it in the world except Bagdad, the great city of Islam. In Constantinople is the church of Santa Sophia, and the seat of the Pope of the Greeks, since the Greeks do not obey the Pope of Rome. There are also churches according to the number of the days of the year. A quantity of wealth beyond telling is brought hither year by year as tribute from the two islands and the castles and villages which are there. [p. 21] And the like of this wealth is not to be found in any other church in the world. And in this church there are pillars of gold and silver, and lamps of silver and gold more than a man can count. Close to the walls of the palace is also a place of amusement belonging to the king, which is called the Hippodrome, and every year on the anniversary of the birth of Jesus the king gives a great entertainment there. And in that place men from all the races of the world come before the king and queen with jugglery and without jugglery, and they introduce lions, leopards, bears, and wild asses, and they engage them in combat with one another; and the same thing is done with birds. No entertainment like this is to be found in any other land.

This King Emanuel built a great palace for the seat of his government upon the sea-coast, in addition to the palaces which his fathers built, and he called its name Blachernae⁽⁴⁵⁾. He overlaid its columns and walls with gold and silver, and engraved thereon representations of the battles before his day and of his own combats. He also set up a throne of gold and of precious stones, [p. 22] and a golden crown was suspended by a gold chain over the throne, so arranged that he might sit there under⁽⁴⁶⁾. It was inlaid with jewels of priceless value, and at night time no lights were required, for every one could see by the light which the stones gave forth. Countless other buildings are to be met with in the city. From every part of the empire of Greece tribute is brought here every year, and they fill strongholds with garments of silk, purple, and gold. Like unto these storehouses and this wealth, there is nothing in the whole world to be found. It is said that the tribute of the city amounts every year to 20,000 gold pieces, derived both from the rents of shops and markets, and from the tribute of merchants who enter by sea or land.

The Greek inhabitants are very rich in gold and precious stones, and they go clothed in garments of silk with gold embroidery, and they ride horses, and look like princes. Indeed, the land is very rich [p. 23] in all cloth stuffs, and in bread, meat, and wine. |

Wealth like that of Constantinople is not to be found in the whole world. Here also are men learned in all the books of the Greeks, and they eat and drink every man under his vine and his fig-tree.

They hire from amongst all nations warriors called Loazim (Barbarians) to fight with the Sultan Masud⁽⁴⁷⁾, King of the Togarmim (Seljuks), who are called Turks; for the natives are not warlike, but are as women who have no strength to fight. No Jews live in the city, for they have been placed behind an inlet of the sea. An arm of the sea of Marmora shuts them in on the one side, and they are unable to go out except by way of the sea, when they want to do business with the inhabitants⁽⁴⁸⁾. In the Jewish quarter are about 2,000 Rabbanite Jews and about 500 Karaites, and a fence divides them. Amongst the scholars are several wise men, at their head being the chief rabbi R. Abtalion, R. Obadiah, R. Aaron Bechor Shoro, R. Joseph Shir-Guru, and R. Eliakim, the warden. And amongst them there are artificers in silk and many rich merchants. No Jew [p. 24] there is allowed to ride on horseback. The one exception is R. Solomon Hamitari, who is the king's physician, and through whom the Jews enjoy considerable alleviation of their oppression. For their condition is very low, and there is much hatred against them, which is fostered by the tanners, who throw out their dirty water in the streets before the doors of the Jewish houses and defile the Jews' quarter (the Ghetto). So the Greeks hate the Jews, good and bad alike, and subject them to great oppression, and beat them in the streets, and in every way treat them with rigour. Yet the Jews are rich and good, kindly and charitable, and bear their lot with cheerfulness. The district inhabited by the Jews is called Pera.

From Constantinople it is two days' voyage to Rhaedestus⁽⁴⁹⁾, with a community of Israelites of about 400, at their head being R. Moses, R. Abijah, and R. Jacob. From there it is two days to Callipolis (Gallipoli), where there are about 200 Jews, at their head being R. Elijah Kapur, R. Shabbattai Zutro, and R. Isaac Megas, which [p. 25] means "great" in Greek. And from here it is two days to Kales. Here there are about fifty Jews, at their head being R. Jacob and R. Judah. From here it is two days' journey to the island of Mytilene, and there are Jewish congregations in ten localities on the island. Thence it is three days' voyage to the island of Chios, where there are

about 400 Jews, including R. Elijah Heman and R. Shabtha. Here grow the trees from which mastic is obtained. Two days' voyage takes one to the island of Samos, where there are 300 Jews, at their head being R. Shemaria, R. Obadiah, and R. Joel. The islands have many congregations of Jews. From Samos it is three days to Rhodes, where there are about 400 Jews, at their head being R. Abba, R. Hannanel, and R. Elijah. It is four days' voyage from here to Cyprus, where there are Rabbanite Jews and Karaites; there are also some heretical Jews called Epikursin, whom the Israelites have excommunicated in all places. They profane the eve of the sabbath, and observe the first night of the week, which is the termination of the sabbath⁽⁵⁰⁾. From Cyprus it is four days' journey to Curicus (Kurch), [p. 26] which is the beginning of the land called Armenia, and this is the frontier of the empire of Thoros⁽⁵¹⁾, ruler of the mountains, and king of Armenia, whose dominions extend to the province of Trunia⁽⁵²⁾, and to the country of the Togarmim or Turks. From there it is two days' journey to Malmistras, which is Tarshish, situated by the sea; and thus far extends the kingdom of the Javanim or Greeks⁽⁵³⁾.

Thence it is two days' journey to Antioch the Great, situated on the river Fur (Orontes), which is the river Jabbok, that flows from Mount Lebanon and from the land of Hamath⁽⁵⁴⁾. This is the great city which Antiochus the king built. The city lies by a lofty mountain, which is surrounded by the city-wall. At the top of the mountain is a well, from which a man appointed for that purpose directs the water by means of twenty subterranean passages to the houses of the great men of the city. The other part of the city is surrounded by the river. It is a strongly fortified city, and is under the sway of Prince Boemond Poitevin⁽⁵⁵⁾, surnamed le Baube. Ten Jews⁽⁵⁶⁾ dwell here, engaged in glass-making, and at their head are R. Mordecai, R. Chayim, and R. Samuel. From here it is two days' [p. 27], journey to Lega, or Ladikiya, where there are about 100 Jews, at their head being R. Chayim and R. Joseph.

Thence it is two days' journey to Gebal (Gebela), which is Baal-Gad, at the foot of Lebanon⁽⁵⁷⁾. In the neighbourhood dwells a people called Al-Haahishim⁽⁵⁸⁾. They do not believe in the religion of Islam, but follow one of their own folk, whom they regard as their prophet, and all that he tells them to do they carry out, whether for death or life. They call him the Sheik Al Hashishim, and he is known as their Elder. At his word these mountaineers go out and come in. Their principal seat is Kadmus, which is Kedemoth in the land of Sihon. They are faithful to each other, but a source of terror to their neighbours, killing even kings at the cost of their own lives. The extent of their land is eight days' journey. And they are at war with the sons of Edom who are called the Franks, and with the ruler of Tripolis, which is Tarabulus el Sham⁽⁵⁹⁾. At Tripolis in years gone by there was an earthquake, when many Gentiles and Jews perished, for houses and walls fell upon them. There was great destruction at that time throughout the Land of Israel, and more than 20,000 souls p. 28 perished⁽⁶⁰⁾. Thence it is a day's journey to the other Gebal (Gubail), which borders on the land of the children of Ammon, and here there are about 150 Jews. The place is under the rule of the Genoese, the name of the governor being Guillelmus Embriacus⁽⁶¹⁾. Here was found a temple belonging to the children of Ammon in olden times, and an idol of theirs seated upon a throne or chair, and made of stone overlaid with gold. Two women are represented sitting . one on the right and one on the left of it, and there is an altar in front before which the Ammonites used to sacrifice and burn incense⁽⁶²⁾. There are about 200 Jews there, at their head being R. Meir, R. Jacob, and R. Simchah. The place is situated on the sea-border of the land of Israel. From there it is two days' journey to Beirut, or Beeroth, where there are about fifty Jews, at their head being R. Solomon, R. Obadiah, and R. Joseph. Thence it

is one [p. 29] day's journey to Saida, which is Sidon, a large city, with about twenty Jews. Ten miles therefrom a people dwell who are at war with the men of Sidon; they are called Druses, and are pagans of a lawless character. They inhabit the mountains and the clefts of the rocks; they have no king or ruler, but dwell independent in these high places, and their border extends to Mount Hermon, which is a three days' journey. They are steeped in vice, brothers marrying their sisters, and fathers their daughters. They have one feast-day in the year, when they all collect, both men and women, to eat and drink together, and they then interchange their wives⁽⁶³⁾. They say that at the time when the soul leaves the body it passes in the case of a good man into the body of a newborn child, and in the case of a bad man into the body of a dog or an ass. Such are their foolish beliefs. There are no resident Jews among them, but a certain number of Jewish handicraftsmen and dyers come among them for the sake of trade, and then return, the people being favourable to the [p. 30] Jews. They roam over the mountains and hills, and no man can do battle with them.

From Sidon it is half a day's journey to Sarepta (Sarfend), which belongs to Sidon. Thence it is a half-day to New Tyre (Sur), which is a very fine city, with a harbour in its midst. At night-time those that levy dues throw iron chains from tower to tower, so that no man can go forth by boat or in any other way to rob the ships by night. There is no harbour like this in the whole world. Tyre is a beautiful city. It contains about 500 Jews, some of them scholars of the Talmud, at their head being R. Ephraim of Tyre, the Dayan, R. Meir from Carcassonne, and R. Abraham, head of the congregation. The Jews own sea-going vessels, and there are glass-makers amongst them who make that fine Tyrian glass-ware which is prized in all countries.

In the vicinity is found sugar of a high class, for men plant it here, and people come from all lands to buy it⁽⁶⁴⁾. A man can ascend the walls of New Tyre and see ancient Tyre, which the sea has now covered, lying at a stone's throw from the new city. [p. 31] And should one care to go forth by boat, one can see the castles, market-places, streets, and palaces in the bed of the sea. New Tyre is a busy place of commerce, to which merchants flock from all quarters.

One day's journey brings one to Acre, the Acco of old, which is on the borders of Asher; it is the commencement of the land of Israel. Situated by the Great Sea, it possesses a large harbour for all the pilgrims who come to Jerusalem by ship. A stream runs in front of it, called the brook of Kedumim⁽⁶⁵⁾. About 200 Jews live there, at their head being R. Zadok, R. Japheth, and R. Jonah. From there it is three parasangs to Haifa, which is Hahepher⁽⁶⁶⁾ on the seaboard, and on the other side is Mount Carmel⁽⁶⁷⁾, at the foot of which there are many Jewish graves. On the mountain is the cave of Elijah, where the Christians have erected a structure called St. Elias. On the top of the mountain can be recognized the overthrown altar which Elijah repaired. in the days of Ahab. The site of the altar is circular, about four cubits remain thereof, and at the foot of the mountain the brook Kishon flows. From here it is [p. 32] four parasangs to Capernaum, which is the village of Nahum, identical with Maon, the home of Nabal the Carmelite. Six parasangs from here is Caesarea, the Gath⁽⁶⁸⁾ of the Philistines, and here there are about 200 Jews and 200 Cuthim. These are the Jews of Shomron, who are called Samaritans. The city is fair and beautiful, and lies by the sea. It was built by Caesar, and called after him Caesarea. Thence it is half a day's journey to Kako⁽⁶⁹⁾, the Keilah of Scripture. There are no Jews here. Thence it is half a day's journey to St. George, which is Ludd⁽⁷⁰⁾, where there lives one Jew, who is a dyer. Thence it is a day's journey to Sebastiya, which is the city of Shomron (Samaria), and here the ruins of the palace of

Ahab the son of Omri may be seen. It was formerly a well-fortified city by the mountain-side, with streams of water. It is still a land of brooks of water, gardens, orchards, vineyards, and olive groves, but no Jews dwell here. Thence it is two parasangs to Nablous, which is Shechem on Mount Ephraim, where there are no Jews; the place is situated in the valley between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, and contains about 1,000 Cuthim, who observe the written law of Moses alone, and are called Samaritans. They have [p. 33] priests of the seed (of Aaron), and they call them Aaronim, who do not intermarry with Cuthim, but wed only amongst themselves⁽⁷¹⁾. These priests offer sacrifices, and bring burnt-offerings in their place of assembly on Mount Gerizim, as it is written in their law--"And thou shalt set the blessing on Mount Gerizim." They say that this is the proper site of the Temple. On Passover and the other festivals they offer up burnt-offerings on the altar which they have built on Mount Gerizim, as it is written in their law--"Ye shall set up the stones upon Mount Gerizim, of the stones which Joshua and the children of Israel set up at the Jordan." They say that they are descended from the tribe of Ephraim. And in the midst of them is the grave of Joseph, the son of Jacob our father, as it is written "and the bones of Joseph buried they in Shechem⁽⁷²⁾." Their alphabet lacks three letters, namely He, Heth, and Ain⁽⁷³⁾. The letter He is taken from Abraham our father, because they have no dignity, the letter Heth from Isaac, because they have no kindness, and the letter Ain from Jacob, because they have no humility. In place of these letters they make use of the Aleph, by which we can tell that they are not of the seed of Israel, although they know the p. 34 law of Moses with the exception of these three letters. They guard themselves from the defilement of the dead, of the bones of the slain, and of graves; and they remove the garments which they have worn before they go to the place of worship, and they bathe and put on fresh clothes. This is their constant practice. On Mount Gerizim are fountains and gardens and plantations, but Mount Ebal is rocky and barren; and between them in the valley lies the city of Shechem.

From the latter place it is a distance of four parasangs to Mount Gilboa, which the Christians call Mont Gilboa; it lies in a very parched district. And from there it is five⁽⁷⁴⁾ . . . , a village where there are no Jews. Thence it is two parasangs to the valley of Ajalon⁽⁷⁵⁾, which the Christians call Val-de-Luna. At a distance of one parasang is Mahomerie-le-Grand, which is Gibeon the Great; it contains no Jews.

From there it is three parasangs to Jerusalem, which is a small city, fortified by three walls. It is full of people whom the Mohammedans call Jacobites, Syrians, Greeks, Georgians and Franks, and of [p. 35] people of all tongues: It contains a dyeing-house, for which the Jews pay a small rent annually to the king⁽⁷⁶⁾, on condition that besides the Jews no other dyers be allowed in Jerusalem. There are about 200 Jews who dwell under the Tower of David in one corner of the city⁽⁷⁷⁾. The lower portion of the wall of the Tower of David, to the extent of about ten cubits, is part of the ancient foundation set up by our ancestors, the remaining portion having been built by the Mohammedans. There is no structure in the whole city stronger than the Tower of David. The city also contains two buildings, from one of which--the hospital--there issue forth four hundred knights; and therein all the sick who come thither are lodged and cared for in life and in death⁽⁷⁸⁾. The other building is called the Temple of Solomon; it is the palace built by Solomon the king of Israel. Three hundred knights are quartered there, and issue therefrom every day for military exercise, besides those who come from the land of the Franks and the other parts of Christendom, having taken upon themselves to serve there a year or two until their vow is fulfilled. In Jerusalem is the great church called the Sepulchre, and here is the [p. 36] burial-

place of Jesus, unto which the Christians make pilgrimages. Jerusalem⁽⁷⁹⁾ has four gates-the gate of Abraham, the gate of David, the gate of Zion, and the gate of Gushpat, which is the gate of Jehoshaphat, facing our ancient Temple, now called

Templum Domini. Upon the site of the sanctuary Omar ben al Khataab erected an edifice with a very large and magnificent cupola, into which the Gentiles do not bring any image or effigy, but they merely come there to pray. In front of this place is the western wall, which is one of the walls of the Holy of Holies. This is called the Gate of Mercy, and thither come all the Jews to pray before the wall of the court of the Temple. In Jerusalem, attached to the palace which belonged to Solomon, are the stables built by him, forming a very substantial structure, composed of large stones, and the like of it is not to be seen anywhere in the world. There is also visible up to this day the pool used by the priests before offering their sacrifices, and the Jews coming thither write their names upon the wall. The gate of Jehoshaphat leads to the valley of Jehoshaphat, which is the gathering-place of nations⁽⁸⁰⁾. [p. 37 [Here is the pillar called Absalom's Hand, and the sepulchre of King Uzziah⁽⁸¹⁾.

In the neighbourhood is also a great spring, called the Waters of Siloam, connected with the brook of Kidron. Over the spring is a large structure dating from the time of our ancestors, but little water is found, and the people of Jerusalem for the most part drink the rain-water, which they collect in cisterns in their houses. From the valley of Jehoshaphat one ascends the Mount of Olives; it is the valley only which separates Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. From the Mount of Olives one sees the Sea of Sodom, and at a distance of two parasangs from the Sea of Sodom is the Pillar of Salt into which Lot's wife was turned; the sheep lick it continually, but afterwards it regains its original shape⁽⁸²⁾. The whole land of the plain and the valley of Shittim as far as Mount Nebo are visible from here.

NOTES

⁴¹ See Gibbon, chap. liii. He often quotes Benjamin.

⁴² The Grand Duchy of Kieff was called Russia. See page 81.

⁴³ The Petchinegs, as well as the Khazars, Bulgarians, Hungarians, and Turks, are called by Josippon, 1, chap. i, descendants of Togarma. Patzinakia was the country from the Danube to the Dnieper, and corresponds with Dacia of classical times.

⁴⁴ The readings of E and A are corrupt. R has . . . , and BM. has The southern provinces of Russia were spoken of as the land of the Khazars, especially by Jewish writers, long after the Russian conquest about the year 1000, and the Crimea was known to European travellers as Gazaria. It took Rabbi Pethachia eight days to pass through the land of the Khazars. See Dr. A. Benisch, *Translation of Petachia's Travels*. In note 3, p. 70, he gives a short sketch of their history. The ruling dynasty and moat of the inhabitants embraced the Jewish religion.

⁴⁵ *Procopius*, vol. I (Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society), gives a full description of Constantinople.

⁴⁶ The commentator, wrongly supposed to be Rashi, gives an interesting note upon the passage in i Chron. xx.2 where it is mentioned that David took the crown of the king of the children of Ammon, and found it to weigh a talent of gold, and it was set upon David's head. Rashi states that the meaning of the passage must be that this crown was hung above David's throne, and adds that he heard in Narbonne that this practice was still kept up by the kings in the East.

⁴⁷ See for a full account of these powerful Seljuk Sultans F. Lebrecht's Essay on the Caliphate of Bagdad during the latter half of the twelfth century. Vol. II of A. Asher's *Itinerary of Rabbi Bmjamin*.

⁴⁸ Ibn Verga, *Shevet Jehuda*, XXV, states that a predecessor of the Emperor Manuel Comnenus issued an edict prohibiting the Jews from residing elsewhere than in Pera, and restricting their occupation to tanning and shipbuilding.

⁴⁹ This place is mentioned by *Procopius*, p. 119, as having been fortified by Justinian. It is now known as Rodosto.

⁵⁰ Ibn Ezra visited Cyprus before his arrival in London in 1158, when he wrote the *Sabbath Epistle*. It is not unlikely that the heterodox practices of the sect of whom Benjamin here speaks had been put forward in certain books to which Ibn Ezra alludes, and induced him to compose the pamphlet in defence of the traditional mode of observance of the Sabbath day. This supposition is not inconsistent with Graetz's theory, vol. VI, p. 447. See also Dr. Friedlander, *Ibn Ezra in England*, *J. Q. R.*, VIII, p. 140, and Joseph Jacobs, *The Jews of Angerin England*, p. 35.

⁵¹ See Gibbon, chaps. lviii and lix; Charles Mills, *History of the Crusades*, I, p. 159; C. R. Conder, *Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, p. 39.

⁵² The several MSS. give different readings. The kingdom reached to the Taurus mountains and the Sultanate of Rum or Iconium.

⁵³ Beazley remarks that Benjamin must have passed along this coast before 1167, when Thoros died at peace and on terms of vassalage to the Emperor Manuel Comnenus. Malmistras is forty-five miles from Tarsus. Both had been recaptured by Manuel in 1155. *Josippon*, I, chap.i, identifies Tarshish with Tarsus.

⁵⁴ No doubt the river Fer, otherwise Orontes, is here referred to. Ancient Antioch lies on the slope of Mount Silpius, and the city-wall erected by Justinian extended from the river up to the hill-plateau. Abulfeda says: "The river of Hamah is also called Al Urunt or the Nahr al Maklub (the Overturned) on account of its course from south to north; or, again, it is called Al' Isi (the Rebel), for the reason that though most rivers water the lands on their borders without the aid of water-wheels, the river of Hamah will not irrigate the lands except by the aid of machines for raising its waters." (Guy le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems*, p. 59.) It is strange that R. Benjamin should call the Orontes the river Jabbok, but he always takes care to add that it rises in the Lebanon, to avoid any misconception that the Jabbok which falls into the Jordan is meant.

⁵⁵ Boemond III, surnamed le Baube (the Stammerer), succeeded his mother in 1163. We owe the doubtless correct rendering of this passage to the ingenuity of the late Joseph Zedner. Benjamin visited Antioch before 1170, when a fearful earthquake destroyed a great part of the city.

⁵⁶ It must be inferred from the context here, as well as from other passages, that when Benjamin mentions the number of Jews residing at a particular place he refers to the heads of families.

⁵⁷ Gebal is the Gabala of ancient geographers. See Schechter, *Saadyana*, p. 25. Many travellers, among them Robinson, identify Baal-Gad with Baniyas, others suppose it to be Hasbeya.

58. ⁵⁸ Hashishim--hemp-smokers--hence is derived the word "assassin." See Socin, *Palestine and Syria*, pp. 68 and 99. Ibn Batuta and other Arabic writers have much to say about the Assassins or Mulahids, as they call them. They are again referred to by Benjamin on p. 54, where he states that in Persia they haunted the mountainous district of Mulahid, under the sway of the Old Man of the Mountain. The manner in which the Sheik acquired influence over his followers is amusingly described by Marco Polo (*The Book of Ser Marco Polo: translated and edited by Colonel Sir Henry Yule; third edition, London, John Murray, 1903*): "In a fertile and sequestered valley he placed every conceivable thing pleasant to man--luxurious palaces, delightful gardens, fair damsels skilled in music, dancing, and song, in short, a veritable paradise! When desirous of sending any of his band on some hazardous enterprise the Old Man would drug them and place them while unconscious in this glorious valley. But it was not for many days that they were allowed to revel in the joys of paradise. Another potion was given to them, and when the young men awoke they found themselves in the presence of the Old Man of the Mountain. In the hope of again possessing the joys of paradise they were ready to embark upon any desperate errand commanded by the Old Man. "Marco Polo mentions that the Old Man found crafty deputies, who with their followers settled in parts of Syria and Kurdistan. He adds that, in the year 1252, Alau, lord of the Tartars of the Levant, made war against the Old Man, and slaughtered him with many of his followers. Yule gives a long list of murders or attempts at murder ascribed to the Assassins. Saladin's life was attempted in 1174-6. Prince Edward of England was slain at Acre in 1172. The sect is not quite extinct. They have spread to Bombay and Zanzibar, and number in Western India over 50,000. The mention of the Old Man of the Mountain will recall to the reader the story of Sinbad the Sailor in *The Arabian Nights*.

⁵⁹ See Parchi, *Caphtor wa-pherach*, an exhaustive work on Palestine written 1322, especially chap. xi. The author spent over seven years in exploring the country.

⁶⁰ Socin, the author of Baedeker's *Handbook to Palestine and Syria*, p. 557, gives the year of the earthquake 1157. It is referred to again p. 31. There was a very severe earthquake in this district also in 1170, and the fact that Benjamin does not refer to it furnishes us with another *terminus ad quem*.

⁶¹ See the narrative of William of Tyre.

⁶² Gubail, the ancient Gebal, was noted for its artificers and stonecutters. Cf. I Kings v. 32; Ezek. xxvii.9. The Greeks named the place Byblos, the birthplace of Philo. The coins of Byblos have a representation of the Temple of Astarte. All along the coast we find remains of the worship of

Baal Kronos and Baaltis, of Osiris and Isis, and it is probable that the worship of Adonis and Jupiter-Ammon led Benjamin to associate therewith the Ammonites. The reference to the children of Ammon is based on a misunderstanding, arising perhaps out of Ps. lxxxiii. 8.

⁶³ *The Quarterly Statements of the Palestine Exploration Fund* for 1886 and 1889 give a good deal of information concerning the religion of the Druses. Their morality is there described as having been much maligned.

⁶⁴ Tyre was noted for its glass-ware and sugar factories up to 1291, when it was abandoned by the Crusaders, and destroyed by the Moslems.

⁶⁵ This name is applied to the Kishon, mentioned further on, celebrated in Deborah's song (Judg. v. 21), but it is about five miles south of Acre, the river nearest to the town being the Belus, noted for its fine sand suitable for glass-making. It is not unlikely that R. Benjamin alludes to the celebrated ox-spring of which Arab writers have much to say. Mukkadasi writes in 985: "Outside the eastern city gate is a spring. This they call Ain al Bakar, relating how it was Adam--peace be upon him!--who discovered this spring, and gave his oxen water therefrom, whence its name."

⁶⁶ Gath-Hepher, the birthplace of Jonah, near Kefr Kenna, in the territory of Zebulon (Joshua xix.13, is not here referred to, but the land of Hepher, I Kings iv.10 is probably meant.

⁶⁷ In Benjamin's time hermits, who eventually founded the Carmelite order of monks, occupied grottoes on Mount Carmel.

⁶⁸ In the time of the Crusaders Gath was supposed to be near Jamnia, but nothing definite is known as to its site. (Baedeker, *Handbook to Palestine and Syria* , 1876, p. 317.)

⁶⁹ It lies between Caesarea and Lydda. See Conder's *Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*. Munk's *Palestine* might also be consulted with advantage.

⁷⁰ The tomb of St. George is still shown in the Greek church at Lydda.

⁷¹ Mr. A. Cowley in an article on the Samaritan Liturgy in *J. Q. R.* , VII, 125, states that the "House of Aaron" died out in 1624. The office then went to another branch, the priest being called . . . , the Levite Cohen. Cf. Adler and Seligsohn's *Une nouvelle chronique Samaritaine*. (Paris: Durlacher, 1903.)

⁷² The small square building known as Joseph's tomb lies a short distance north of Jacob's well, at the eastern entrance to the vale of Nablous.

⁷³ Cf. Guy Le Strange, *Palestine*, 381, and Rapoport's Note 166, Asher's *Benjamin* , vol. II, p. 87.

⁷⁴ The MSS, are defective here; starting from Shechem, Mount Gilboa, which to this day presents a bare appearance, is in a different direction to Ajalon. It is doubtful whether Benjamin personally visited all the places mentioned in his *Itinerary*. His visit took place not long after the second great Crusade, when Palestine under the kings of Jerusalem was disturbed by internal

dissensions and the onslaughts of the Saracens under Nur-ed-din of Damascus and his generals. Benjamin could at best visit the places of note only when the opportunity offered.

⁷⁵ This and most of the other places mentioned by Benjamin are more or less identified in the very important work published by the Palestine Exploration Fund, *The Survey of Western Palestine*. Our author's statements are carefully examined, and Colonel Conder, after expatiating upon the extraordinary mistakes made by writers in the time of the Crusaders, some of whom actually confounded the sea of Galilee with the Mediterranean, says: "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 borne out by existing remains, and are of the greatest value."

⁷⁶ King Baldwin III died in 1162, and was succeeded by his brother Almaric

⁷⁷ The reading of the Roman MS. that there were but four Jewish inhabitants at Jerusalem is in conformity with R. Pethachia, who passed through Palestine some ten or twenty years after R. Benjamin, and found but one Jew there. The meaning four would easily be misread for meaning 200.

⁷⁸ The Knights of the Hospital of St. John and the Templars are here referred to. See Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* ; Charles Mills, *History of the Crusades*, 4th edition, vol. I, p. 342, and Besant and Palmer's *Jerusalem*, chap. ix.

⁷⁹ Cf. the writings of Mukaddasi the Hierosolomite, one of the publications of the Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society. See also Edrisi's and Ali of Herat's works. Chap. iii of Guy Le Strange's *Palestine* gives full extracts of Edrisi's account written in 1154 and Ali's in 1173. See also five plans of Jerusalem designed between 1160 and 1180, vol. XV, *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palestina-Vereins*.

⁸⁰ Ezek. xx. 35. The idea that the Gorge of Jehoshaphat will be the scene of the last judgment is based upon Joel iv.2. Cf. M. N. Adler, *Temple at Jerusalem* and Sir Charles Warren's Comments.

⁸¹ In memory of Absalom's disobedience to his father, it is customary with the Jews to pelt this monument with stones to the present day. The adjoining tomb is traditionally known as that of Zechariah, 2 Chron. xxiv. 20. King Uzziah, otherwise Azariah, was buried on Mount Zion, close to the other kings of Judah, 2 Kings xv. 7. Cf. P. E. F., *Jerusalem* , as to identification of sites. Sir Charles Wilson, *Picturesque Palestine* , gives excellent illustrations of the holy places, and his work might be consulted with advantage.

⁸² Pillars of salt are to be met with elsewhere, for instance at Hammam Meskutim in Algeria. They are caused by spouts of water, in which so great a quantity of salt is contained as at times to stop up the aperture of the spring. The latter, however, is again unsealed through cattle licking off the salt near the aperture, and the same process of filling up and unstopping goes on continually. Cf. Talmud Berachot, 54 a.