

Journal 7.

Tell Jemmeh, Gaza, Palestine.  
(9 miles south of Gaza)

16 Jan 1927.

Private & confidential.

We are perched here at the foot of the great mound of Gerar, the city of Abimelech, and are steadily clearing out the rooms of the later levels, hoping to get through the fifty feet of successive buildings and reach the earliest city. At first we had but few men, beside the 7 Egyptians whom we brought as skilled excavators. After a month our gang of men, boys, & a few girls comes to about 120, and our current expenses to over £50 a week for labour. We shall need even more workers, if we are to clear the most important end of the city by May. Happily there is no Roman or late Greek layer, and we begin work in stuff of 500-600 BC, in the filling up of earlier buildings of probably 800 BC or before that. There has been great denudation of the mound; one edge  $\leq$  left, of great circular granaries 35 ft diameter on the top of a ridge; the rest of the circle would have been over ground now 30 feet deeper. Moreover these granaries must have been 50ft or more in height, but only three feet of one edge is left. This sweeping clearance has taken away the outer edges of the city, but we hope to get some early remains in the central parts.

The people are nearly all settled Bedawy, who have been here a few years, cultivating the ground, but mostly still living in the open-sided low tent of their ancestors. I am surprised to see how well they work, though not equal to Egyptians; also, how amenable they are, and ready to be friendly. Raids, which used to be common here,

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have died away owing to good police work; there have been few attempts on Beersheba in the year, but none reached out to this region. The posts of wireless at points in the wilderness, give notice of movements in time for the mounted police to save the position. Three times in the week two police come round here to see that all is quiet, either from Gaza or Beersheba. They also act as our postmen.

Our position is all the stronger, owing to the drought. The lateness & scantiness of the rains threaten to stop most of the cultivation, so that the people are largely dependant on our wages to keep them for the season. In other years the whole face of the rolling plain should be full green with barley & wheat. But only two inches of rain have come <sup>and that</sup> in the last few days, and all is bare brown for many miles, up to about a dozen miles to the north where rains have fallen. Until we got some rain the wind - often a gale - used to fill the air with fine dust, in which one could not see a hundred yards. We have a well two miles away, too brackish with magnesia to drink or wash satisfactorily. So we sent a camel 9 miles to Gaza for that water, but even that is enough to upset the insides of nearly all the party. So we had even to get bottled water for drinking, until the rain came & filled pools in the valley. When these are dry we shall be back on Gaza water. Thus in various ways we are rather near the limits of practicable work on a large scale. We have to bring the water 2 miles for all our workmen.

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
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 shown by the many enormous granaries, circular buildings  
 17 or 35 feet diameter, and probably 50 ft or more high in  
 proportion. Then in Roman times the land was crowded  
 with villages, proving close cultivation. In 1500 B.C. the  
 Egyptians reaped great crops out of Palestine. In 1300 B.C.  
 Isaac "sowed in that land and received in the same year one hundred fold".  
 The position seems to have been that Abimelech the Philistine  
 had pushed up the Gaza valley, as far as he was still  
 in sight of the sea, and got control of the corn production  
 probably for export to Crete. He relied on Syrian troops, as his  
 general was named "the Syrian", Phi-chol, Pa-khahu. The  
 Bedawy Isaac came settling in the region, and was moved  
 off because his ~~ate~~ herds ate up the grain supply, and did  
 not leave enough for export. The climate must have  
 been closely like the present, when flocks depend largely  
 on wells in the dry season, & wells were always squabbled  
 over.  
 So we can begin to realise how the history worked out. It might  
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 into the camp of Isaac close enough to observe actions. But we  
 now see that the entrances of the city were to the south, and  
 the great buildings <sup>were</sup> along a precipitous north face, below  
 which the Bedawy now camp, so that every movement in the  
 tents can be seen clearly from that position.  
 We have cleared down about 6 or 8 feet already, and every  
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
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every distinctive piece is kept & washed with chamber letter & level. There are very few scraps of Greek red-figure vases, (after 480 BC), but more of black figure, and the great loop handles of vases [  ] for carrying from a pole, are common, of about 600 BC. One scrap of vase - black figure - has Oedipus & the sphinx. There is also Cypriote pottery, of about 800 B.C., after a burning of the town. Gradually successive events of rebuilding and burning are being gathered, and placed in order.

All our party are working well together; Starkey mainly gauging men, Risdon & Harding watching different parts of the work, Mrs Risdon & Mr Starkey sorting & cleaning pottery, my wife keeping all the accounts of men & market, and my share is the surveying & photographing, with general planning out of the ways & means of work. Dr Parker looks after all the ailments of ourselves & the workmen, and is most active in going about.

As if the water was not salt enough already, the wife of the engine man took fright on seeing two policemen about, & shot off two sackfuls of concentrated salt down the well to prevent its being found, which would ~~not~~ have entailed a heavy fine. So for two days no one could drink any of the water, until it was all pumped out. Such is life on the border land.

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