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978-1-108-05202-3 - Unexplored Syria: Visits to the Libanus, the Tulúl el Safá, the Anti-Libanus, the Northern Libanus, and the 'Aláh: Volume 1

Richard Francis Burton and Charles Frederick Tyrwhitt Drake

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Unexplored Syria

After his diplomatic sojourn in Syria as consul in Damascus, Richard Francis Burton (1821–90) published, in 1872, this two-volume account of nineteenth-century Syria. It is the result of collaboration with several partners with specific expertise, primarily Charles Frederick Tyrwhitt Drake (1846–74) but also Burton's wife. Throughout his life Burton immersed himself in as many different cultures as possible. His natural aptitude for languages and disguise allowed him to frequently pass himself off as a native. The two years he was consul were eventful, including local uprisings, an assassination attempt and religious strife. This work reveals the unknown and extraordinary side of Syria. In Volume 1, Burton and Drake use their experiences of living and travelling in the country, and those of friends and colleagues, to explore the geography, natural history, politics and culture of remote provinces.

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Unexplored Syria

*Visits to the Libanus,
the Tulúl el Safá, the Anti-Libanus,
the northern Libanus, and the 'Aláh*

VOLUME 1

RICHARD FRANCIS BURTON
CHARLES FREDERICK TYRWHITT DRAKE



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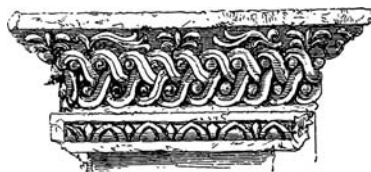
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KANAWÁT ALTAR.



THE ASTARTE SIDE.



THE BAAL SIDE.

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VISITS TO

THE LIBANUS, THE TULUL EL SAFA,
THE ANTI-LIBANUS, THE NORTHERN LIBANUS,
AND THE 'ALÁH.

BY

RICHARD F. BURTON

AND

CHARLES F. TYRWHITT DRAKE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 18 CATHERINE ST. STRAND.

1872.

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TO

MY FATHER,

HENRY RAYMOND ARUNDELL,

THESE PAGES

ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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المَلِكُ بِبِقِي بِالْكَفِّ وَلَا بِبِقِي بِالظَّمِّ

Kingdom endureth without the True Faith (*i.e.* El Islam); but it endureth not with tyranny. (*Hadis, or Saying of the Prophet.*)

We live in an age of free-thinking and plain-speaking, 'rarâ temporum felicitate, ubi sentire quæ velis, et quæ sentias docere licet.' (*Christian Theology and Modern Scepticism*, by the Duke of Somerset, K.G.: London, 1872.)

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PREFACE.



I HASTEN to own, before reviewers tell me so, that this production is what my great namesake, Robert Burton of melancholy and merry, of facete and juvenile memory, honestly termed a 'Cento:' it is a *pot-pourri*, a gathering of somewhat heterogeneous materials—all, however, bearing more or less upon the subject of Unexplored Syria.

For instance, with reference to the contents of Volume I., the general remarks are mine. The first chapter is by Mrs. Burton, with my annotations. Chapter ii. is, again, my property. Appendix No. 1 contains observations for altitude, taken by Mr. C. F. Tyrwhitt Drake and myself, and computed by Captain George, R.N. Appendix No. 2 offers a short specimen of neo-Syrian Proverbs: it forms part of a much larger collection, which I have not had time to prepare for the press; and it may curiously be compared with the ancient proverbial philosophy of the Holy Land. In Appendix No. 3 my friend and fellow-traveller contributes an essay upon 'Writing a Roll of the Law, according to the rules laid down by Maimonides and other Hebrew authorities.' Appendix No. 4 contains a paper by myself upon the 'Hamah

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Stones,' followed by the interesting remarks of Mr. Hyde Clarke, and accompanied by transcripts reduced to quarter-size. I need hardly draw attention to these 'Memorials,' which, first cursorily mentioned by Burckhardt in A.D. 1810, now appear in lithograph for the first time.

As to Volume II.: in chapter i. I tell the tale of travel; whilst chapters ii. and iii. are the handiwork of Mr. Tyrwhitt Drake. The *catalogue raisonné* of my collections in Syria and Palestine is by myself, with the able assistance of Dr. C. Carter Blake, Professor Busk, Messrs. A. W. Franks and John Evans, and Dr. Barnard Davis. In Appendix No. 2 my old and valued friend, W. S. W. Vaux, has taken the trouble to decipher, as far as was feasible, the eighty-one original Greek inscriptions collected in the Haurán Mountain (Jebel Durúz Haurán) and in the 'Aláh by Mr. Tyrwhitt Drake. Messrs. William Carruthers and James Britten have been good enough to catalogue for Appendix No. 3 the small collection of Alpine plants which we brought from the apex of the Libanus. Mr. Gwyn Jeffreys kindly catalogued the shells brought home by me; and Dr. Percy and Mr. Reeks named the geological specimens.

The original plans and sketches are all the work of my *compagnon de voyage*. The map, which alters the aspect of Northern Syria, has been drawn by Mr. Keith Johnston from the materials thus supplied to him, and supplemented by the sketches of Count Léon de Perthuis and M. F. Bambino, Vice-consul for France at Hums and Hamah. To these I also have added a few observations.¹ The frontispiece of the first volume is the artistic production of Mr. Richard Knight;

¹ Some of the bearings, especially those from Jebel Sannín, proved, when protracted, so erroneous, that future travellers are advised to ascertain if there are any peculiar elements of disturbance upon this wind-lashed crest.

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whilst that of the second is a photograph put on stone by those able lithographers Messrs. Kell Brothers for the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. The second volume concludes with an Index; and I here take the earliest opportunity of apologising to the public for the absence of so necessary an adjunct from my last two volumes, *Zanzibar,—City, Island, and Coast* (Tinsleys, 1872). Finally, my thanks are due to Messrs. Robson and Sons, my printers, for the prodigious trouble caused to them by the state of a manuscript written on board ship, and subjected to various corrections.

It need hardly be remarked, that while we (the writers) all hold ourselves responsible to readers for our own sentiments, opinions, and statements, we disclaim being called to account for those of one another. This principle of limited liability we would extend, like those who give evidence before 'Select Parliamentary Committees,' even to such small matters as Arabic orthography.

The discoveries contained in these volumes originated from the Palestine Exploration Fund. The distinguished Committee of that Society declined, somewhat imprudently, I thought, to secure the services of Mr. Tyrwhitt Drake, who understood that he had returned to Syria as its representative. Thereupon I proposed to him that we should proceed, when leisure offered, to the field of action, and leave nothing save details for the Exploration Fund to explore. We succeeded, despite many risks and chances. We carried off the cream of discovery; but during the process, and in the moment of victory, we discovered how much more than we expected still remains to be discovered.

Unfortunately the *Œil-de-bœuf* still reigns to a considerable degree over the learned societies of the day, from those 'Fifty Immortals,' the French Academy, downwards. A spirit of

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clique too often succeeds in ignoring the real explorer, the true inventor, the most learned writer, and the best artist; in fact, the *fauteuil* is denied to the right man; the pin-cushion stuck full of pins is still the fittest legacy. Party is not rarely successful against Principle. The Pharisee—with his aggressive and vigorous but narrow-minded nature; with his hard thin character, all angles and stings; with his starch and inflexible opinions upon religion and politics, science, literature, and art; and with his broad assurance that his ways are the only right ways—forms not unfrequently a minority that rules with a rod of iron the herd headed by Messrs. Feeble-mind and Ready-to-halt. And this we find notably the case in the present phase of our national life, when the Battle of the Creeds, or rather of 'Non-Credo' *versus* 'Credo,' has been offered and accepted; when every railway-station is hung with texts and strewed with tracts for the benefit of that working-class which now monopolises public interest; when the South Kensington Museum offers professional instruction in science and art for women—that is to say, for the girl before she becomes a mother—suggesting that creation by law may be as reasonable as creation by miracle; when Secularism draws the sword against Denominationalism; and, briefly, when those who 'believe' and those who do not can hardly, as the saying is, 'keep hands off one another' in a *mêlée* which suggests a foretaste of the mystical Armageddon.

The following note, an *abrégé* of a paper addressed by me to the leading journals in the capital, may here be reprinted as a proof that I wish the Palestine Exploration Fund all success, despite these remarks, by which the Society, it is hoped, will not feel aggrieved. The Fund has undertaken the goodly labour of subjecting the Holy Land to an Ordnance Survey, and we all look forward to its result. But the present staff will take, at the present rate, treble the time

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proposed for finishing the work; the three years will grow to nine before they can show final results. At least three hill-sketchers and four assistant-surveyors and astronomical observers are peremptorily required, but this pauper country cannot afford the miserable pittance of 1500*l.* per annum. To my mind there are few things less intelligible than the scanty interest which the Jewish as well as the Christian world takes in the Holy Land. I am especially astonished that the various Protestant communities should feel so coldly about a work which a French writer has declared, somewhat *à la française*, to have the force of a fifth Gospel, because it completes and harmonises—I may add, that it makes intelligible—the other four.

‘The return of Mr. C. F. Tyrwhitt Drake to Damascus on November 5, after his dangerous *reconnaissance* of the 'Aláh or uplands lying between El Hamah (the Hamath of the Old Testament?) and Aleppo, enables me to say a word for the cause lately advocated by the “Hon. Sec. Palestine Exploration Fund.” My friend and fellow-traveller, during a journey of thirty-five days, averaging seven hours of riding per diem, sketched and fixed the positions of some fifty ruins, which, in presence of the Circassian immigration, now a *fait accompli*, are fated soon to disappear from the face of earth; he is also sending home twenty to twenty-five Greek inscriptions, of which six or seven have dates; and before joining Captain Stewart, R.E., he will explore the Harrah or ‘Hot Country,’ a pure white blank in the best maps, which, however, have not yet had the opportunity of being good. All except the hydrographic charts have been hurriedly executed; the bearings are mostly in confusion, and the proper names of places are hideously distorted. Let me offer, as a proof, the positions for Palmyra supplied to me by Mr. Stanford, of Charing-cross, who assures me that the position of the old Phœnician city is not given in Ritter’s *Erdkunde*:

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	Lat.	Deg.	Min.	Sec.	Long.	Deg.	Min.	Sec.
1. Duc de Luynes's map ; Lt. Vignes' position	N.	34	32	30	E.	38	14	39
2. Lt.-col. Chesney's map, published by Walker	N.	34	15	00	E.	38	35	00
3. Carl Ritter's map . .	N.	34	17	30	E.	38	32	30
4. Major Rennell's map .	N.	34	24	00	E.	38	20	00
5. Murray's Handbook for Syria has adopted from Rennell and Vignes'	N.	34	35	00	E.	38	14	39

‘Here, then, the extremes of difference in latitude amount to seventeen miles, and in longitude to twenty miles, or a total of thirty-seven miles, in fact nearly thirty-eight; and it must be remembered that Palmyra lies within an easy four days’ ride of Damascus.

‘Newly transferred to Syria and Palestine, I imagined—and many would do the same—my occupation as an explorer clean gone. The first few months, however, proved to me that although certain lines of transit have been well trodden, yet few travellers and tourists have ever ridden ten miles away from the high-roads. No one, for instance, would suspect that so many patches of unvisited, and possibly at the time unvisit-able, country lie within a day or two’s ride of great cities and towns, such as Aleppo and Damascus, Hums and Hamah. When the maps show a virgin-white patch in the heart of Jaydur, the classical Ituræa, students naturally conclude that the land has been examined and has been found to contain nothing of interest—the reverse being absolutely the case. Finally, as will presently appear, there are valid reasons why these places have escaped European inspection; the traveller at once knows that an unexplored spot means one either too difficult or too dangerous for the multitude to undertake.

‘A correspondent has effectively pointed out the nature of the work required by the Bible lands proper, “from Dan to Beersheba,” where there is nothing barren of interest. It is to be hoped, however, that the funds will soon permit an

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archæologist to follow the surveyor. Although the East moves slowly, still she moves; but her present movement is all towards the change of ancient and Oriental to modern and European art, and in many places to the destruction of the most valuable remains of antiquity. The ruins of the 'Aláh are being pulled to pieces in order to build houses for Hamah. The classical buildings of Saccæa are torn down and set up into rude hovels for the mountaineers who have fled from the Anti-Libanus and the Hermon. Patterns which possibly antedate the Pyramids are making way for cheap English calico prints. The porcelain sent from China is sold or stowed away, and the table is decked with tawdry bits of French stuff, all white and gold, and worth, perhaps, a franc apiece.

‘Allow me to conclude with again attempting to impress upon subscribers to the Palestine Exploration Fund that Syria, north of Palestine proper, is an old country, in more than one aspect—geographical and technological, for instance—virtually new. A Land of the Past, it has a Future as promising as that of Mexico or of the Argentine Republic. The first railway that spans it will restore to rich and vigorous life the poor old lethargic region: *Lazare, veni foras!*—it will raise this Lazarus of eastern provinces, this Niobe of the nations, from a neglected grave. There is literally no limit that can be laid down to the mother-wit, to the ambition, and to the intellectual capabilities of its sons; they are the most gifted race that I have, as yet, ever seen. And when the Curse shall have left the country—not the ban of superstition, but the bane and plague-spot of bad rule—it will again rise to a position not unworthy of the days when it gave to the world a poetry and a system of religion still unforgotten by our highest civilisation.

‘Your obedient servant,

‘RICHARD F BURTON.

‘Garswood, Dec. 31, 1871.’

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My twenty-three months at Damascus (October 2d, 1869, to August 18th, 1871) were, I may here remark, rendered bitter by contact with a tyranny and an oppression which even that land of doleful antecedents cannot remember. The head and front of offence was one Mohammed Ráshid—not to be pronounced or confounded with Rashíd the ‘upright,’ the ‘treader in the right path’—who held the responsible office of Wali or Governor-general. The politics of this unworthy man were alternately French and Russian, whilst, like the Oriental educated in Europe, he hated all Europeans. Similarly, a certain Tahir Pasha, who took such strong part in the massacres of 1860, had studied six years at the Woolwich Artillery College. Brought into collision with him by his utterly ignoring the just claims and even the rights of British subjects and protégés—a proceeding in which he was supported by those whose duty was to do otherwise—I had to battle with hands bound. But at last the truth prevailed. Not even the attention of an acknowledgment was paid to the telegrams and the solicitations of certain Consuls-general resident at Bayrut; their protégé, the infamous Wali, was recalled in disgrace and degradation, whilst the Mushir, or commander-in-chief, was ordered by telegraph to send him, in case of resistance, ironed and fettered to Constantinople. My *Personal Adventures in Syria and Palestine* will, I hope, place the whole subject in the clearest light, and Messrs. Tinsley have kindly undertaken to father the work.

Sweeping changes throughout the province followed the removal of Mohammed Ráshid in September 1871; and every measure which, since October 1869, I had ventured to recommend in the interest of our Ottoman allies was at once carried out. The reform was so thorough and so complete, that presently her Majesty’s ambassador at Constantinople was directed officially to compliment the Porte upon its newly-initiated line of progress.

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Wonderful is the irony of events. Meanwhile (August 18th) I had left Damascus under a recall. Being the civil, military, and ecclesiastical capital of the country, the headquarters of the Government and the High Courts of Appeal, and the residence of the chief dignitaries, it was reduced to a Vice-consulate. We now rank there, greatly to the detriment of British interests, and to the injury of English residents, and missionaries, and school-teachers, with, but after, Spain, Portugal, and Greece, because the representatives of those powers, often Rayyáhs or subjects of the Porte, are senior to the British Vice-consul. Persia, with her usual diplomatic sagacity, has long ago directed a Consul-general to reside at Damascus. Russia and Prussia, France and Italy, have not yet been driven by economy, and the hard necessity of saving 300*l.* per annum, to speak through Vice-consuls.

Yet the English public is surprised to hear from the British Vice-consul in Damascus that certain English travellers have been made prisoners at Kerak.

To conclude: Critics and reviewers, who honoured with their notices my last volumes upon Zanzibar, appear in some cases to have acted upon the now recognised principle, 'Abuse the plaintiff's attorney.' Instead of reviewing the books, they have here and there reviewed the author. However amusing may be such a process to the writer, and exciting to the reader, I would protest against it in my own interest. Few lessons indeed, morally as well as in a literary sense, are more useful and beneficial than an able and temperate review. Let me name the *Observer* of February 4th, 1872. One of its remarks particularly attracted my attention: 'Many considerations, we are told, argue this (Wanyika) race to be a degeneracy from civilised man, rather than a people advancing towards civilisation. It is to be wished that Captain Burton

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had told us what some of the considerations are.' The fact is, that I had left the words as they were written in 1857, when I believed in the old Arab and Persian civilisation of the Coast, and in the great 'Monomoesi Empire' (Unyam wezi) of now obsolete geographers. I had neglected to append a note showing that my opinions about the settled abodes of the maritime classes had been greatly modified. On the other hand, nothing can be less profitable to an author or reader than a long tirade of personal comment and of unanswerable sneer, peevish and petulant withal, like that of the once-respected *Examiner* (February 3d, 1872). What could the most docile of men make of a literary verdict like this? 'We are afraid that these two rambling, egotistical, and excessively bulky volumes will prove tiresome reading even to the most arduous student of African travel.' The worst and the most irritating part of such *critiques manqués* is that, to quote what was said by a reviewer of a very different stamp, 'they declared their misjudgments with that air of supercilious authoritativeness, which, whilst it sometimes disfigures the style of an able critic, is always observable in the utterances of a pretender in critical art.'

RICHARD F. BURTON.

Athenæum Club, May 15, 1872.

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Richard Francis Burton and Charles Frederick Tyrwhitt Drake

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[More information](#)*Additional Note to p. 110.*

The three steps referred to in page 110, beginning from the seaboard, may thus be supplemented :

1. Sáhil; Shore (קמץ);
2. Wusút; Hill (שפלה)—Volney (i. 190) mentions only Nos. 1 and 3, ignoring the Wusút; and
3. Jurd; Mountain (רר).

The Sáhil, shore or coast,¹ opposed to Aram, the upland plateau which may be said to form Syria and Palestine, is a strip of ground, here flat, there broken, at this part barely exceeding two miles in breadth, and extending from the lower slopes of the Libanus to the sea.

¹ It is the ancient Kana'an (Canaan, the lowland), and the Palesheth (Philistia), the Greek Paralia (*παράλια*), and especially the Macras and the Macra-pedium of Strabo, opposed to Shéphelah (שפלה, Josh. xi. 16) of the Hebrews, whence the Arabic Sofalah. 'Aram,' in its widest sense, includes all the uplands lying between the Mediterranean and the middle course of the Euphrates, from Phœnicia and Palestine to Mesopotamia, Chaldæa, and even Assyria. Upon the disputed point of 'Shephelah,' the following note by Mr. C. F. Tyrwhitt Drake (Report of Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement, April 1872) will be found valuable :

"Shephelah" has been wrongly rendered "plain" and "valley" in the A.V. (e.g. Zech. vii. 7 and Josh. xv. 33). Eusebius says that the country about Eleutheropolis was still called Shephelah in his time. It is in fact the district of rolling hills situated as above mentioned, and forms a most marked feature in the physical geography of the country. It is not, however, so far as I am aware, shown on any map otherwise than as a series of spurs or shoulders running down from the main range, which in reality it is not.

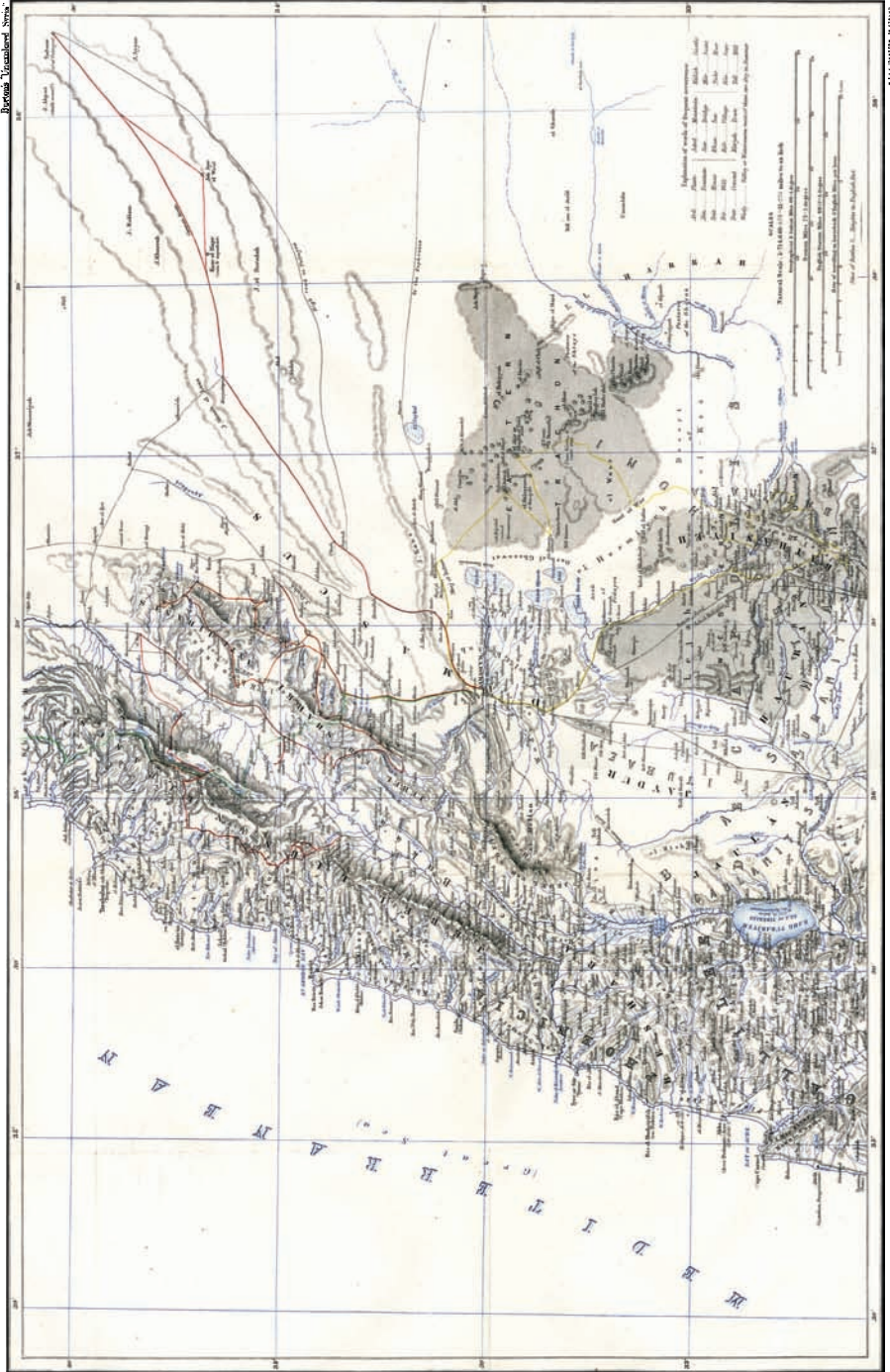
'It is very important that these natural features should be well understood and carefully borne in mind, as most important in helping to clear up the obscurity in which the geography of the Old Testament is now enveloped. These distinctions of mountain, hill, and plain are more than once mentioned in the Talmud (cf. tract Shevith, &c.). Rabbi Jochanan says that from Bethoron to Emmaus is mountain (רר); from Emmaus to Lydda, hill (שפלה), and from Lydda to the sea, plain (קמץ); which is perfectly correct, as Amwas is situated at the base of a spur from the mountains, and the hills extend to within a very short distance of Lidd, beyond which is the plain.'

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