

JUDÆA CAPTA

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Judæa Capta by Charlotte Elizabeth

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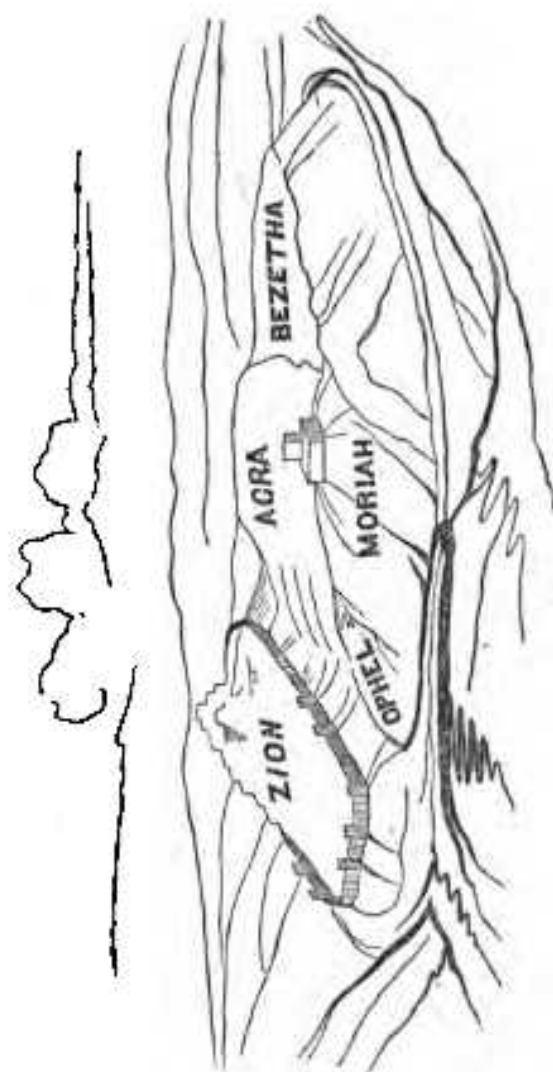
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CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH

JUDÆA CAPTA



JERUSALEM.

JUDÆA CAPTA.

BY

CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH. *ps. for*

[Mrs. C. E. Donna]

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JUDÆA CAPTA.

CHAPTER I.

“AGAIN will I build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel!” saith the Lord. Evermore bearing in mind this promise, regarding it as a beacon of hope, yea, of positive certainty, brightening the dark path that we are about to traverse, we may the better bear to fix a steadfast gaze on the desolations of many generations,—to recall, in what has been, the painful prelude to what now is; and to relate how, with the stroke of a cruel one the holy city was smitten, her spiritual privileges extinguished, and her temporal glories buried in the dust.

“Beautiful for situation,” that which constituted its principal beauty was also its main strength. Judæa is peculiarly a “hill country;” and in the neighbourhood of the holy city these mountainous elevations are rendered conducive to its defence as to have furnished King David with an illustration of the divine guardianship: “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people.” What the size and aspect of the city may have been in the days of its highest splendour,

when Solomon swayed the sceptre of Israel, not then disunited from Judah, or even what it may have been when Zerubbabel had reared the second temple, and Nehemiah rebuilt the walls, it is not our present intention to inquire. We come before the city of the great king in darker days, intent on describing it as seen by the beleaguering hosts of Rome, advancing to fix the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, in the holy place.

At this time, the position of Jerusalem, as regards its natural strength and compact beauty, was, and yet was not, what travellers now behold it. The everlasting hills do indeed maintain their ancient places, but the deep ravines, naturally almost impassable by a hostile force, are now choked up by the accumulated ruin and neglect of many centuries, divesting the site of its otherwise isolated appearance, particularly since Zion has been ploughed like a field; and the city of David presents, on its magnificent external acclivity, little else than a waste of desolate ground. Our ideas concerning the place are in general extremely confused and erroneous: many will speak and write of Zion and Moriah, the city of David and the Temple, as though they had formed an undistinguished mass, and were convertible terms. So far is this from being correct, in reference to the Jerusalem of the Bible, that we require to obtain a clear, and in many instances a wholly novel, view of its geographical position, before we can comprehend even the proceedings of the Roman invader.

We will first speak of its boundaries, as they existed eighteen hundred years ago. Northward of the city

rose an undulating ground, termed *Scopus*, which stretched away also to the westward, rendering the approach in that direction comparatively easy; it was, indeed, the only accessible point, and all the enemies who have attacked Jerusalem made it their highway. Towards the south-west the ground began to deepen into a valley, whence rose in lofty grandeur the noble hill of Zion. This was called the valley of Gihon, and soon spread into another valley, that of Hinnom, running due west and east, between the southern foot of Zion and an elevation termed the hill of Evil-counsel, from a tradition that there had Solomon been misled by his idolatrous wives into the sin that polluted the latter part of his reign. The valley of Hinnom was met, at the south-eastern extremity of the city, by another and a far more striking pass, the valley of the Kidron, or Jehosaphat; this running along the whole eastern course of the city, yielded a bed to the brook Kidron, and separated Mount Moriah from the Mount of Olives. The side of the former was exceedingly steep, precipitous, and altogether an unapproachable defence. No adequate conception can be formed, from its present appearance, of what it was before the fall of those immense ruins that have converted its decent into a slope, and raised its original level; but it is plain that its whole aspect has been so changed. The Mount of Olives, however, remains unaltered, a sublime and enduring relic, of interest so thrilling that its very name awakens emotions not less deep in the bosom of the Gentile Christian than in that of the Jew. This beautiful mountain rises like a broad shield over against where the Temple of the Lord once stood; and the traveller

who takes up his post on its swelling side beholds the holy city spread out, in all its length and breadth, at his feet.

Of that city itself we have now to speak, and of its remarkable divisions. Supposing ourselves placed on the Mount of Olives at the period referred to, its aspect would have been that of three very distinct hills, separated one from the other by narrow but deep ravines; while, towards the north, that is, to the right of the spectator, in front, extended a fourth division, reaching far over the comparatively level country in that direction. First of the holy hills, right opposite the Mount of Olives, and rising so as to terminate in a broad, square platform, was Moriah, on whose summit stood the magnificent Temple, within its threefold courts. To the south, the hill descended till it reached the spot where the vallies of Hinnom and of the Kidron meet, the eastern side of this hill, which here was called Ophel, running along the whole ridge of the latter, the western terminating in a deep, abrupt declivity, called the valley of the Tyropean. The sides of Moriah, precipitous on the east, were also steep on the west and on the south; and at the angle of these two points a lofty bridge was requisite to span the Tyropean, and so to form a communication between the Temple and the upper city on Mount Zion.

This hill, rising from the valley of Hinnom on the south, and bounded on the east and north by the Tyropean, (which thus wound its way through the heart of Jerusalem,) was at once the highest, the strongest, and the most important of the inhabited places round Moriah; its outlines were so perfectly

defined, that it might well be called a city in itself, apart from and independent of all the rest. The third hill, Acra, was the site of the ancient Salem, which David took from the Jebusites, lying due west of the Temple, and north of Zion; its irregular sides sloping towards the Tyropean, and ascending the Mount Moriah, while its northern and western boundaries were formed by Bezetha, the most recent addition to the metropolis.

Zion is frequently used to designate the whole city, as being the principal, the most conspicuous part. While the site of the Temple was but a threshing-floor, Zion was covered with magnificent buildings, and at all subsequent periods it was the residence of the princes and chief men. Here David fixed his kingly seat, and here, during his reign, and for some years after Solomon's accession, the Ark of the Lord remained within a tabernacle which David had prepared for it. That Zion, where corn now waves, and a few flocks find pasturage among its beautiful but desolate slopes, presented to the eye one vast pile of architectural grandeur and military strength. At the time whereof we write, such was its character, while that of Acra, venerable as it was, and famous as having been the seat of Melchizedek's kingdom, had become principally mercantile; its numerous intricate and narrow streets being densely inhabited by tradesmen, artisans, and all those who ministered to the luxurious dwellers in the palaces of Zion. Bezetha, as it has been observed, was a modern addition to the city, having been walled in by Agrippa, but by no means in so perfect a manner as he had planned to do it. Here the population was less crowded, and