

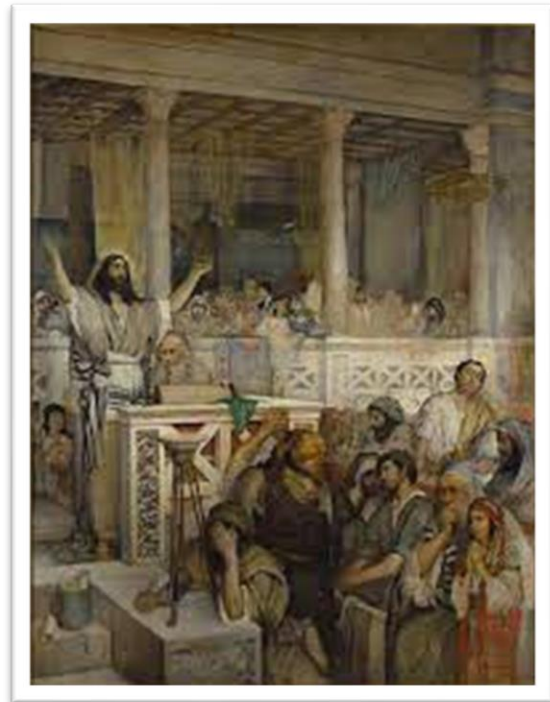
Jesus in Sunem, Ulama, and Capharnaum

In the evening Jesus went through Jezrael and about three hours further to Sunem, an open place on a hill. Some of the disciples had gone on before, in order to make arrangements with the landlord of the inn at the entrance of the city. The fertile valley through which Jesus had just passed lay to the south of Jezrael. He went through a part of Jezrael without attracting notice, and then turned northward toward Sunem. Near this city, that is at a distance of one to two hours, are two others, one of which Jesus had passed on His way from Kisloth-Thabor to Jezrael.

The inhabitants of Sunem depended upon weaving for their livelihood. They wove narrow edging of twisted silk, plain or interspersed with flowers. Sunem did not lie in the vale of Esdrelon, but rather where the mountains took their rise.

The multitude that here pressed around Jesus was simply astonishing, and it was ever on the increase. The people surrounded Him everywhere, cast themselves down before Him, crying and shouting that a new Prophet had arisen, One sent by God! Many were sincere in their acclamations, but others followed through curiosity and shouted merely to swell the noise. The crowd was so dense that it was almost like an insurrection, and because here in Galilee the excitement was daily increasing, Jesus resolved soon to leave it. Sunem was the native city of the beautiful Abisag who had served David in his old age. Eliseus also had had an inn here at which he frequently stopped and in which he had recalled the dead son of his hostess to life. A vision of the same was vouchsafed me, that I might know the place. This city possessed also a free inn for certain travelers. It had been founded as a memorial of Eliseus. I know not, however, whether it was the house that the Prophet once occupied, or whether it was another built upon the same site. Jesus taught on this day in the synagogue and visited many of the houses to console and cure the sick. Sunem was built rather irregularly around a hill whose summit overlooked the city. A road led up the hill. The houses upon it decreased in size with the ascent, the highest being mere huts. The top of the hill was crowned by an open space upon which stood a teacher's seat. It was surrounded by palings over which an awning could be stretched for protection from the sun.

When Jesus, on the morning of the following day, started with His disciples



for the teacher's chair, the whole place was alive with excitement. They had brought numbers of sick in litters, and had placed them all along the road leading up the hill. Jesus ascended through the clamoring multitude, healing as He went. The people had mounted to the roofs, the better to see and hear all that He would do and say. From the teacher's chair on the top of the hill the view was magnificent, stretching off toward Thabor. Jesus inveighed against the pride and presumption of the Sunemites who, instead of being converted, doing penance, and keeping the Commandments of God, broke forth into vain shouts over the Prophet that had come among them, the Sent from God, for they attributed His coming as an honor due their own merit, whereas He had come in order to convince them of their sins.

About three in the afternoon Jesus left Sunem. Taking a northerly direction, He reached, in about three hours, a large and closely built city with a less ancient appearance than Sunem. It was enclosed by walls so broad that trees flourished upon them. This city was called Ulama and was about five hours southeast of Thabor. Arbela was about two hours to the north. The rough roads of the surrounding mountains were covered with sharp, white pebbles, on which account there were made in Ulama numbers of soles to bind as a protection under the feet. The city was built on a mountain, surrounded by other mountains, and in an altogether impassable region. Vines covered those mountains from base to summit. I have seen upon them plants as high as a tree, their tangled branches as thick as one's arm. They produce large, pyriform fruits like gourds, and from them flasks are made.¹ Ulama did not appear so old as other cities; indeed, there was something about it that even made it look unfinished. The inhabitants did not bear the stamp of old Jewish simplicity, they appeared to be aiming at greater culture and refinement. It was as if the Romans or some other nation had formerly sojourned among them. Here as elsewhere, the concourse of people was very great, for they knew that Jesus was about to celebrate the Sabbath in Ulama. Several of the disciples had rejoined Jesus, among them Peter's half-brother Jonathan and the sons of the widows. They numbered, in all, twenty. Peter, Andrew, John, James the Less, Nathanael Chased, and Nathanael the bridegroom had also come. Jesus had directed them to do so that they might hear His instructions and assist Him in His ministrations to the sick, rendered difficult by the turbulence of the multitude. The people had found out the way by which Jesus was to come, and they went forth to welcome Him, carrying green branches and strewing leaves. They had stretched across the road long strips of stuff which they lowered for Him to step over, while shouts of joy proclaimed the advent of the Prophet. The chief officers of the place maintained order and formally saluted Jesus in the name of the city.

There were in Ulama many possessed, who clamored violently after Jesus and shouted His name. But He commanded them to be silent. Even at the inn they allowed Him no rest. They ran about raging and screaming, until He again ordered them to be silent and had them removed.

Ulama had three schools: one of jurisprudence; another for youths; and the third, the synagogue. Jesus entered different houses, to cure and to console. Then He taught in the school, speaking especially upon simplicity and of the respect due to parents; for in both of these particulars the people of this place were wanting. He rebuked them severely also for their pride. Vain at the thought of a Prophet's coming among them, they were by their presumption depriving themselves of the benefits attached to these days of penance and instruction.

The Sabbath over, the distinguished men of the place gave Jesus an entertainment in the grand public hall. The Apostles and disciples that had gone home limited themselves to a mere visit to their relatives. They had then called upon Mary, with whom the holy women were becoming more and more intimate.

The Baptist was still in the same place, his followers constantly diminishing. Herod had several times been to see him and had frequently sent his officers for the same purpose.

At nine o'clock on the morning after the Sabbath, Jesus went with His disciples to a mountain along which was a pleasure garden or bathing place, about a quarter of an hour from the city. The garden was almost as large as the cemetery of Dulmen.² It had pavilions and little summer houses, a beautiful fountain, and a place for instruction. Jesus had directed the sick, of whom there were numbers, to be transported thither from the city, for He could not, on account of the crowd, cure in the latter place. The disciples busied themselves in the maintenance of order, and the sick on their litters were placed around under tents and in the pavilions. The crowds that followed from the city were so great that many could not even reach the garden. The magistrates and priests also kept order. Jesus passed from litter to litter curing many. When I say, I generally mean about thirty. When I say or , I mean about ten. Jesus taught and alluded to the death of Moses, whose anniversary would soon be celebrated by a fast day, when their food already cooked would be placed under the ashes, and when they would eat, as was usual on such days, a particular kind of bread. He also referred to the Promised Land and its fertility, which was to be understood not only of the material sustenance of the body, but also of the spiritual nourishment of the soul; for it was also fruitful in Prophets and oracles from God, the fruit of which would be penance and the salvation promised to all that would

embrace it.

This instruction ended, I saw Jesus going into a building nearby wherein the possessed had been assembled. He entered to find them raging and shouting. They were for the most part young people, some of them only children. Jesus caused them to be placed in a row, commanded silence, and with one word freed them from the evil spirit. Some of them fell fainting. Their parents and friends were present, and to all Jesus addressed some words of exhortation and instruction.

After Jesus had taught in the synagogue, He left the city unnoticed, the disciples having gone before Him. He knew how to manage that. Without entering any of the cities on the way, they proceeded toward Capharnaum. Jesus was about to leave Galilee on account of the great excitement there prevailing. He travelled with the disciples the livelong night, and arrived at His Mother's in the morning. Peter's wife and sister were there, also the bride of Cana and other women. The house that Mary occupied here was for the most part like its neighbors and very roomy. She was never alone. The widows lived nearby and the women from Bethsaida and Capharnaum, between which these houses were, gathered around her as also one or other of the disciples. I saw them keeping the fast with signs of mourning, the women being veiled. Jesus taught in the synagogue of Capharnaum, the disciples and holy women being present.

Capharnaum was situated, measuring in a straight line over the mountain, about one hour from the Sea of Galilee, but two hours if one went through the valley and through Bethsaida on the south. About a good half-hour on the road from Capharnaum to Bethsaida were the houses, in one of which Mary dwelt. A beautiful stream flows from Capharnaum to the lake. Near Bethsaida it branched off into several arms, rendering the land very fruitful. Mary conducted no household, she owned neither cattle nor fields. She lived as a widow upon the gifts of her friends, engaged in spinning, sewing, knitting with little wooden needles, praying, consoling, and instructing the other women.

Jesus, on the day of His arrival, had a private interview with His Mother. She wept over the great danger threatening Him on account of the excitement everywhere produced by His teachings and miracles, for she had been informed of all the murmurs and calumnies uttered against Him by those that would not presume to say them to His face. But Jesus told her that His time was come, that He would soon leave those parts and go down to Judea where, after the Pasch, still greater vexation would arise on His account. That evening there began in Capharnaum a feast of thanksgiving for rain. The synagogue and other public buildings were gaily ornamented with young

green trees and pyramids of foliage, while from the galleries on the roof of the synagogue and other large edifices, a wonderful, many-toned instrument was sounded. The servants of the synagogue, people like our sextons, played on it. It looked like a bag about four feet in length in which were several pipes and trumpet mouthpieces. When the bag was not distended with wind, these pipes and tubes lay together, one upon another. But when it was inflated by the breath of a man blowing into one of the mouthpieces, two other men raised it up and (either by blowing the breath, or by means of a bellows) introduced air into it. Then by opening and closing the different valves of the pipes, which arose in several directions, a shrill-sounding, many-voiced tone was produced. Those standing at the side of the instrument blew into it at certain intervals.

Jesus delivered in the synagogue an extremely touching discourse upon rain and drought. In it He told of Elias, who prayed on Mt. Carmel for rain and six times questioned his servant as to what he saw. The seventh time, the servant replied that he saw a little cloud rising out of the sea. It became larger and larger until at last it bore rain to the whole country. Then Elias journeyed through the whole land. Jesus applied those seven questionings of Elias to the space of time before the fulfillment of the Promise. The cloud He explained as a symbol of the present and the rain as an image of the coming of the Messiah, whose teaching should spread everywhere and bear new life to all. Whoever thirsted should now drink, and whoever had prepared his field should now receive rain. This was said so touchingly, so impressively that all His hearers, as well as Mary and the other holy women, wept. The people of Capharnaum were at that time very well disposed. There were three priests attached to the synagogue and near it was the house in which they dwelt. Jesus and His intimate disciples often took their meals with them, for a certain degree of hospitality was always extended to the teacher who had taught in the synagogue.

That evening and early the next morning, I heard them playing again on that wonderful instrument. The feast was celebrated all the next day, but only by the children and young people, who enjoyed themselves heartily. The evening of the feast, Jesus took leave of the disciples related to Him, as also those from Bethsaida, because early the next day He was to depart from Capharnaum and go down into Judea. He took with Him only about twelve, those from Nazareth, those from Jerusalem, and those that had come from John.