

tem of irrigation employed when the ruined cities were in their prime. Elsewhere the water which appears formerly to have supported oases is now saline. The ruins date from near the beginning of the Christian era. Not far removed from the Syrian ruins, Palestine is a well-known example of a land, once highly prosperous, which now suffers from aridity. Josephus, A. D. 75, describes Judea and Samaria as "moist enough for agriculture, and very fruitful. They have abundance of trees, and are full of autumn fruits, both wild and cultivated. They are not naturally watered by many rivers, but derive their chief moisture from rain, of which they have no want. By reason of their excellent grass, their cattle yield more milk than do those in other places; and as the greatest sign of excellence and abundance they are very full of people." A single description of this kind cannot be accepted as conclusive, but it is worth quoting because of its agreement with a large number of other data in regard to Palestine. One would hardly speak of Judea and Samaria to-day as countries which "have no want" of rain.

Farther to the south, the wandering of the tribes of Israel in large bands through the desert peninsula of Sinai, where small caravans now find but a scanty supply of water, presents the same sort of inconclusive, but not therefore insignificant, evidence of desiccation. As to Egypt, which shares the climatic conditions of Sinai, it has been concluded by Sayce, Unger, and others that the great diminution in the area of cultivation during the past three thousand years, the disappearance of certain plants like the nelumbo, — a kind of lotus, once a principal article of diet among the Egyptians, — and the presence of magnificent ruins in the now