

Professor Palmer gives us ("Desert of the Exodus," vol. I, chap. xiv) the conclusions arrived at by the members of the "Sinai Expedition," 1868-9. I do not know whether he modified his views as to the starting-point of the Israelites; I lay stress only on his itinerary for them from Ayún Músa.

They are moving from the Red Sea: Ayún Músa, with its ancient traditions, is a halting-place (on a straight line it would be about sixty-five miles from El Kantâra). What does one see as one looks northward, with one's back to the blue water of the Gulf of Suez, towards the desert and the desolate lines of Jebels er Râhah and Et Tih? The "wall-like escarpments" are the *salient features* of the landscape, and we need not wonder at the name "Shur" (in Hebrew signifying "a wall") being given to this track of the desert.

For three days from the "Wells of Moses," the ordinary traveller with baggage has to traverse a waterless region, till he comes to a small clump of dwarf palms, looking in the distance merely like a single bush, which overshadows Ain Hawwârah, a small pool with no water fit to drink. At a distance of two or three hours in a southerly direction you come, however, to the green tamarisks and grand old palm-trees of Wâdy Gharandel, and its perennial stream! Here or hereabouts Elim may be placed, and the present fertility of the spot, in the midst of a district which neglect and the destruction of vegetation tends to render dry and barren, is almost a guarantee for the antiquity of this fertility. The Israelites removed from "Elim" and encamped by the "Red Sea." It is exactly what one does now-a-days! If one chooses the Wâdy Feirân route to Sinai, one crosses from Wâdy Gharandel into the beautiful Wâdy Taiyebah, and, without over fatigue, on the same day one gets to the sea-shore a little north of Râs Abu Zenímeh, having turned the black headland of Jebel Hammân Far'ûn ("Pharaoh's hot bath"). This strip of desert, fringing the coast south of Wâdy Taiyebah, may reasonably be taken for the "wilderness of Sin."

Making these remarks I don't lose out of sight that the whole narrative would be simpler if from Etham we could bring the Israelites by Lakes Balâh and Timsâh to the Bitter Lakes, and place the passage of the sea somewhere in the neighbourhood of Suez. Only as yet I do not think that we have got satisfactory sites for "Pihahiroth" and "Baal-Zephon," even if there would be no great risk in imagining a "Migdol" in these parts. The starting-points of the Exodus I think we have found, and I think that Professor Palmer has given us firmness of footing for the "wilderness of Sin." Little by little we may come to learn more of the Exodus, giving due weight to every reasonable theory which may be put forth, and not trying to make what *we* think should have been harmonise with what really was.

C. PICKERING CLARKE.

III.

THE following letter was written and published in the year 1869, on the author's return from a journey to Sinai:—

“I thought that all well-informed persons, who had turned their attention to the subject, were convinced by this time that Cairo had nothing to do with the passage of the Israelites. Avaris was the Zoan of the Pharaohs, and the capital, at least during harvest, of the provinces of Lower Egypt. But every traveller does not go into Lower Egypt, and but few examine the frontier of Goshen, which Robinson long ago identified with the modern province of Shurkeeyeh. Consequently, we still have ‘travellers’ who try hard to believe that the great event took place at that part of the Red Sea which they saw with their own eyes at Suez. This easy theory is supported by swallowing Mohammedan traditions and names, which are just as worthless in Sinai as data for Scriptural topography, as Popish traditions and names are in Palestine. The ‘Valley of the Wandering,’ south of Cairo, and the mountain of Attaka, had no more to do with the passage of Israel than Marylebone Lane and Primrose Hill; and if people would but stick to their Bibles instead of servilely following Josephus and the Mohammedans, we should never have heard a word about the Israelites being impeded; ‘entangled,’ ‘shut in,’ or turned, by a mountain at all. Even if Holy Scripture had said they were entangled by a mountain, it could not possibly have been Attaka: for they could not have reached it in time, and if they had, it could never have ‘entangled’ anybody. Your correspondent says he examined it, but the value of his examination is not great, if he did not discover that the mountain does *not* run down sheer into the sea, as it appears to do from Ayn Moosa, but leaves, between its foot and the sea, a level much-used road, a quarter of a mile broad at its narrowest part, and which consequently could not ‘entangle’ or even hinder any number of fugitives from whichever side they approached it. The idea that they came from Cairo is to be similarly accounted for. ‘Travellers’ come from Cairo, and *therefore* (for there is no other reason whatever) the Israelites came from Cairo. Zoan, now called San, lies far out of the route, or rut, of such travellers, and *therefore*, in dragoman’s logic, could have had nothing to do with it.

“But granting that Zoan was Avaris, and that Abou Kesheyd in the Tumeylatt, was, as Lepsius has shown, the approximate site of Raamses, we have the true starting-point, and the whole narrative, examined on the spot, becomes easily intelligible. Leaving that rendezvous for the Highlands of the Patriarchs, the Israelites struck east by north, or east-north-east by the ordinary way from Egypt to Palestine. On reaching the edge of the desert, near the Serapeion on the Watershed, south of Timsah, they were ‘turned’ by command, and consequently got on the western shore of that arm of the Red Sea which then ran up near to that point. There they were surrounded by the salt lakes, mirages, marshes, and moving sands, which still ‘entangle’ any man who wanders in that region. They spread themselves along the shore, weary, disorganised, and confused. There they were overtaken by the angry king. No doubt he had attempted to intercept their north-eastward march by running his chariots into the desert by the Kantâra route, and finding the people had turned southward, he exclaimed that they were entangled by the quicksands,

and following joyfully he came up with them late that evening on the shore.

“At or about fifteen miles north of Suez there runs out towards the desert the only bluff on that whole frontier, Gebel Geneffa, on which the Migdol, or watchtower, would naturally stand to guard the country; near it, the Bible tells us, was Baal-Zephon, and exactly indicated by these marks near the station of Chalouf en Terraba, as I have no doubt, the great deliverance took place. Not, indeed, as depicted in our nurseries, in a long narrow passage across a sea eight miles wide, as at Ayun Moosa, which would have occupied a week at least, but, as afterwards at Jordan, by the drying up of so many miles of the narrow arm of the sea as would permit the vast and disorderly host to rush across, ‘broadside on,’ in the short time they had to do it in, ‘before the morning.’ The other stations now all fall into their proper places. Exactly ‘three days’ journey’ brings them to the only *healed* water, or sweet wells, on this coast of the peninsula, not the bitter puddle of Ain Howâra, which is the ‘Marah’ of travellers, but the rich fresh-water stores of Abou Soueyra. One whole day’s journey more, and Gurundel and Oosait are reached. Almost all along these to represent Elim. The ‘encampment by the sea,’ at Abou Zuleema, has never afforded room for controversy. From thence, another difficult and therefore short day’s march, round the tide-washed bluff, and they enter the pasturages of ‘Sin.’ Dophka then followed, *i.e.*, the plain, in the lower part of the Wâdy Feiran, near the sea, where, then as now, ‘there was no water.’ Alush, also waterless, would be that great plain at the entrance to the granite district of Horeb, where the Amalekite defile begins, with its easily identified hill (not mountain), standing athwart the valley, from which Moses, Aaron, and Hur watched the fight; and at the end of the defile, the oasis of Rephidim, or Feiran proper, watered by the streams which drain Alayatt and the northern slopes of Serbal. From thence it is just one day’s journey from one gate to the other, along the Wâdy el Sheykh; and after passing the Ootaieyeh gate, they were *in* the Midbar, or ‘pasturage’ of Sinai, under which, in the plain of Er Raha, they assembled ‘on the third day.’ It is of no use referring to maps, for not one of them is worth a rush.¹

“F. GELL.”

IV.

I HAVE read Canon Scarth’s article in the *Quarterly Statement* with much interest, and all the more from having recently made the march from Ismailya to Cairo. I have worked out the subject, and find that the march could have been accomplished without difficulty in the way suggested; of course I do not absolutely accept the theory, as one would not like to do that without a careful examination of the argument on both sides.

¹ P. S.—March 25th, 1883. This could not be said now; but it was true fourteen years ago, when this letter was written, that not one map of Sinai existed worth anything. Subsequent investigations have confirmed the view of the route of Israel here indicated.—F. G.