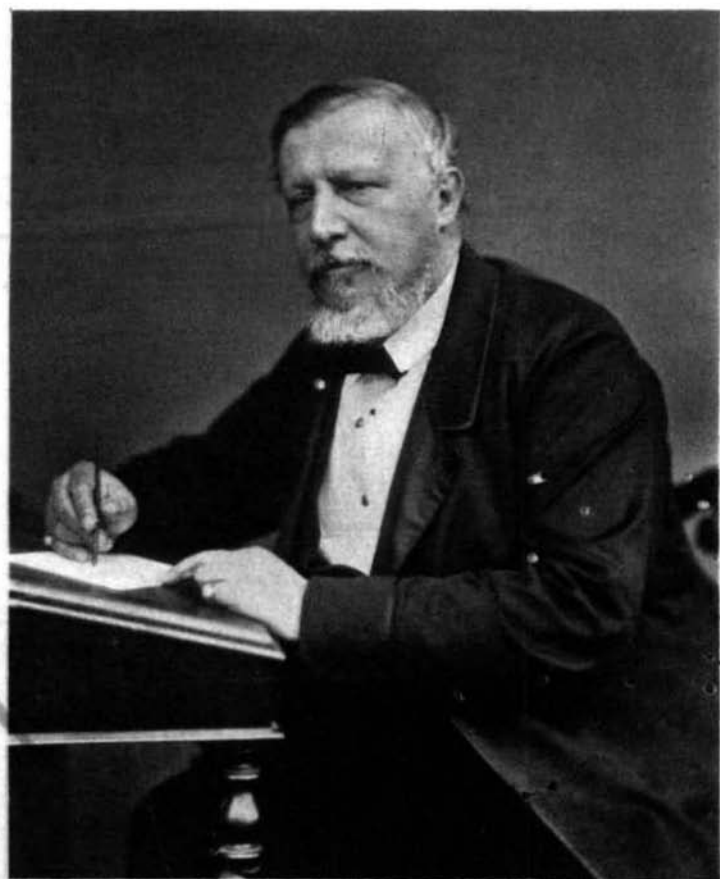


# SINAI IN ARABIA

*"For this Agar, is Mount Sinai in Arabia*

GAL. IV 25



*Charles Deke*

THE LATE  
DR. CHARLES BEKE'S  
DISCOVERIES OF  
SINAI IN ARABIA  
AND OF  
MIDIAN

WITH PORTRAIT  
*GEOLOGICAL, BOTANICAL, AND CONCHOLOGICAL REPORTS, PLANS, MAP,  
AND THIRTEEN WOOD ENGRAVINGS*

EDITED BY HIS WIDOW  
AUTHOR OF "JACOB'S FLIGHT," ETC

LONDON  
TRÜBNER & CO., LUDGATE HILL  
1878

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"I will go in the strength of the Lord God : I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth : and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not ; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come."

Ps. lxxi. 16-18.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord ; trust also in him ; and he shall bring it to pass."

Ps. xxxvii. 5

"And let us not be weary in well-doing : for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

GAL. vi. 9.

"Lord, not my will but thine be done !"



## INTRODUCTION.

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‘Malheureux celui qui est en avant de son siècle.’

---

“Oft as ye sink . Rise ”

---

“The world may say I’ve fail’d . I have *not* fail’d  
If I set truth ’fore men they will not see ;  
Tis they who fail, not I . My faith holds firm,  
And time will prove me right ”

---

“Che sara sara.”

THE present work contains the narrative of an expedition to North-Western Arabia, undertaken at the commencement of 1874, by my lamented husband, Dr. Charles Beke, Ph.D., F.S.A., F.R.G.S. (at the advanced age of seventy-three, and on recovering from a serious illness), in order to establish, by personal observation, the correctness of the views expressed by him in his *Origines Biblicæ* forty-four years ago, respecting the true position and physical character of the Mount of God on which the Law was delivered to Moses, the inspired leader of the Israelites.

The first three chapters, which were written by Dr. Beke, show the results of this expedition, and may claim to be considered the outcome of the efforts of the greater part of a lifetime to elucidate and substantiate the truth of the Bible History from the Holy Scriptures themselves.

By disputing only the "*traditional* explanations of the *Geography* of the Scriptures"—the errors of which have unhappily caused the authority of the Scriptures themselves to be called in question—and by endeavouring to discover the correct position of the Mount of God in Horeb, where was delivered that Divine Law which to this day forms the basis of the legislation of all civilised nations and the rule of their religious and social conduct, and upon the settlement of which question depends the right understanding of the whole history of the Exodus, Dr. Beke has, I venture to think my readers will admit, incontrovertibly cleared away many of the difficulties and doubts which have hitherto disturbed earnest and anxious minds.

He has done a good work in having thus paved the way for others to arrive at a final settlement of the whole of the important questions connected with the Exodus of the Israelites, whereby many wan-

derers may (with God's help) be brought back to the fold.

My husband left England on his memorable journey in search of the true Mount Sinai on December 8, 1873; and, after an absence of three months and eleven days, he returned home on March 19, 1874, having in the intervening period accomplished his task, and discovered "Mount Sinai in Arabia" (Jebel-e'-Nūr, the Mountain of Light), precisely in the position where he contended it should be looked for. He was also so fortunate as to discover Moses' "Place of Prayer" at Madiān, the capital of Midian, where Captain Burton<sup>1</sup> has now gone to make further explorations, and to develop the gold mines of this ancient Land of Midian.

But although Dr. Beke found his Mount Sinai, it turned out not to be a "volcano," as he had previously contended that it might be; or at least, Dr. Beke says, "it cannot be proved to have been one, but at the same time cannot be proved *not* to have been one. If this is really the true Mount Sinai, it is as little a 'volcano' as the traditional one is,

<sup>1</sup> Just after I had sent these pages to press, I saw the gratifying announcement in the "Times" of Captain Burton's safe return, bringing with him twenty-five tons of ore.

or else geology is all at fault. The same arguments that Sir George Airy uses to prove that the traditional mountain was volcanic, will, however, apply to this mountain also, for the geological formation of both seems the same."

The truthful, manly, and straightforward way in which, it will be remembered, Dr. Beke's recantation was at once announced, the public will hardly have failed to appreciate. The courage which such an act required could but have sprung from the highest and most unselfish motives,<sup>1</sup> and must have proved to demonstration that the first and sole object of Dr. Beke's expedition was simply the elucidation of the truth. Such an admission of the fact of his not finding his Mount Sinai to be a volcano, as he had expected, can surely not be deemed to invalidate, but, on the contrary, to enhance, the value of Dr. Beke's discovery. Of the action of one who will admit with frank and ready courtesy that he has been mistaken, it may be said that it "blesseth him that gives and him that takes"—it covers his own retreat with gracefulness, and gives his adversaries a pleasant memory of an encounter with a generous foe.

The controversy which ensued in the columns of

<sup>1</sup> See p. 436.

the "Times" and other journals<sup>1</sup> upon the question, is doubtless fresh in the minds of those who are interested in this important subject, as also the sad fact that my lamented husband's sudden death unhappily cut all further controversy and his labours short. His pen dropped from his hand ere he could complete the *résumé*, upon which he was engaged, of the facts collected on his journey and from his long and deep researches. The loss is irremediable, and for me too recent and painful to dwell on here.

Thus, the trying responsibility unfortunately devolved upon me of editing this work. The first three chapters, although to a certain extent completed, required some revision, and the many references to the authorities from whom Dr. Beke drew his information, and to which he alludes with brevity—although not too concise for his own well-stored mind—left his editor many difficulties to overcome.

In this emergency, the Rev. Albert Löwy, the learned editor of the works published by the Society of Hebrew Literature, kindly came to my aid, and not only volunteered me the benefit of his able revision of most of the Hebrew texts which

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B.

occur; but through his friendly instrumentality I am also indebted to Mr. Richard Garnett, of the British Museum, for much valuable assistance; and to both these gentlemen I have the greatest pleasure in here recording my sincere thanks. To Mr. W. W. Waddington, whose services in verifying references I have availed myself of, my thanks are also due.

I fear that the publication of this book has been looked for long ere this, but continued ill-health and lack of means rendered the execution of this labour of love utterly impossible on my part. My health, however, by God's blessing, becoming somewhat re-established last summer, I felt it to be one of my first duties to endeavour to publish this work, and that I owed it no less in justice to my husband's memory than to the subscribers to his expedition.

My best and most earnest thanks must, therefore, here be tendered to the liberal-minded noblemen and friends who so kindly assisted me privately in my efforts to publish this book. Also to my adopted daughter, Mrs. J. Laurence-Levi, without whose self-sacrifice, indefatigable solicitude, and invaluable co-operation I could not have accomplished my task.

I could have wished that the editing of so important a work had fallen to some far more competent person, and one better able than I am to render justice to my husband's labours, and to the subject generally. I would venture, however, to ask my readers, before perusing the following pages, to be so good as to bear in mind that I do not lay claim to any literary merit in the production of this work; but simply to have given to the public a truthful and unvarnished statement of what my lamented husband did and saw on his expedition in search of the true Mount Sinai.

I have felt that I could not do this better, or more satisfactorily to others, than by letting Dr. Beke's very characteristic letters to me (as the late Mr. William Longman suggested), on this, his last journey, tell their own tale—as I believe they, and his "Notes on Egypt," will be found most interesting, especially at the present time.

If in giving them, as I have done, almost *verbatim*, I should have given my readers cause to complain of a certain amount of repetition, I must remind them that they were written more as a journal of daily events than as ordinary letters; and that from the sad fact of this journey having



been Dr. Beke's *last*, I have not liked to omit more than was absolutely necessary.

Though Dr. Beke hardly expected 'latterly to have been permitted to accomplish it himself, this journey was one of his most cherished wishes, and was one of the last tasks he had set himself to perform in early life, it being one of those "dreams" so feelingly referred to in his Preface to his "British Captives in Abyssinia."

It may well be conceived, therefore, that his gratitude to those few scientific and other friends who generously supported his expedition was commensurate with the importance of the subject he had so much at heart.<sup>1</sup>

I am glad to avail myself of this opportunity of respectfully expressing my deep *reconnaissance* to the enlightened and generous patron of scientific exploration, His Highness the Khédive of Egypt, who, by having kindly granted Dr. Beke the use of a steamer, so materially conduced to alleviate the fatigues of my husband's journey, and to its successful accomplishment.

<sup>1</sup> With profound regret I see in the "Times" of the 4th May the announcement of the sad and fatal termination of the accident to Sir Francis H. Goldsmid, Bart., M.P., one of the most generous and kind-hearted patrons of my late husband. The loss of so good and noble a man will be universally felt.

Further, I beg to tender my thanks to his Excellency Nubar Pasha, and to Messrs. Oppenheim & Co: (especially Mr. Henry Oppenheim), through whose courtesy and aid Dr. Beke's "wish" was brought to the knowledge of the Khédive. The ready help afforded Dr. Beke by the several naval officials, and our many other good friends in Egypt, was fully appreciated.

I must also state how great a relief it was to Dr. Beke to have been accompanied by so able a geologist<sup>1</sup> and assistant generally as Mr. John Milne, as my husband frequently testifies. The illustrations are nearly all from sketches by Mr. Milne, whose valuable services as artist, geologist, botanist, and conchologist to the expedition, I have much pleasure in recording, though I regret that, owing to his absence in Japan, these reports have not had the benefit of his revision; but Messrs. William Carruthers, F.R.S., and Edgar Smith, of the British Museum, have done me the favour to revise the botanical and conchological lists.

The observations made by Dr. Beke on the journey<sup>2</sup> were computed by Mr. R. Strachan, at

<sup>1</sup> The geological specimens, &c., collected at Midian and Akaba were, by Dr. Beke's desire, presented to the British Museum.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix C.

the instance and expense of the Royal Geographical Society, and have kindly been revised for press by Captain George, R.N. The map has been drawn by Mr. E. Weller, F.R.G.S., from Dr. Beke's materials, he having unfortunately only left his *route* prepared for his map; but this also has had the important benefit of Captain George's revision,—and for this friendly aid I am most deeply indebted to him, having met with considerable and unexpected difficulties in the matter of its preparation for publication.

In apologising for my inefficiency and many shortcomings in the production of this volume, I would venture to crave the indulgence of my "critical" readers. The delay and the faults are greater than possibly might otherwise have been, owing to the difficulties under which I have laboured, of additional suffering caused by a railway accident last year, and especially to the fact that this is the first time of my appearing in a literary capacity, so to say, single-handed—the master-hand that supported and directed me in my former publication ("Jacob's Flight") being, alas! no longer here to guide me.

I feel the more diffidence, as the task (although

a labour of love) I have imposed on myself, is that of giving to the world the last fruits of my husband's labours—which he himself was not permitted to see ripen, but which, had he been spared to bring to maturity, would have afforded a much richer store—and because I could not hope to do justice to his thoughts and intentions. But in spite of this and of the numerous drawbacks I have had to contend against, I have nevertheless been unwilling to withhold altogether from the public the information my dear husband has left.

I am indebted to Messrs. Trübner & Co., my publishers, for considerable assistance and kindness; and also to my printers, Messrs. Ballantyne, Hanson & Co.; for the trouble they have taken with the manuscript of an invalid.

In conclusion, I have only to mention that I have recently heard that Mr. Holland has again started for Mount Sinai. It is, therefore, earnestly to be hoped, that he will not fail to give to Dr. Beke's 'Mount Sinai' that attention and *impartial* consideration and further investigation which it so richly deserves, and which all who desire to arrive at the *truth* must wish to see bestowed upon it. Should Mr. Holland do this, it cannot be doubted

that he will bring back information of the highest value, for which he will merit the grateful thanks of myself and all believers in the truth of the Bible narrative. May God speed him !

EMILY BEKE,

*née* ALSTON.

FERNDALE VIEW, TUNBRIDGE-WELLS,

*25th April 1878,*

*The Anniversary of my Wedding-Day.*

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*The Woodcuts are by Mr. W. J. Welch.*



# DISCOVERY OF MOUNT SINAI IN ARABIA.

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## CHAPTER I.\*

THE TRADITIONAL MOUNT SINAI, AND ITS RIVALS WITHIN THE  
PENINSULA OF PHARAN.

WHEN we take into consideration the momentous character of the subject, it would seem natural to conclude that the position of the Holy Mountain on which the Law was revealed to the inspired leader of the Israelites, would not, and indeed could not, be a matter of question. We might reasonably conjecture that the Mount of God would be to them too sacred a spot ever to have been lost sight of; that the knowledge of its locality could not have failed to be retained by the whole people from generation to generation, and handed down by them to their descendants the Jews; that from these, in due course of time, it would have been transmitted to the Christians, and religiously preserved by the latter down to the present day. But it is not so.

\* Written by the late Dr. Beke, 28th May 1874. A

As far as the written records of the Israelites are concerned, the mention of Sinai, or Horeb,<sup>1</sup> as it is otherwise called, is confined to the history of Moses and of the Exodus narrated in the Pentateuch, with the single exception of the incident in the life of the prophet Elijah, who is recorded<sup>2</sup> to have gone from Beersheba unto "Horeb the Mount of God," and to have there lodged in a cave, which is conjectured, not unreasonably perhaps, though without a tittle of evidence in support of the conjecture, to have been the identical "cleft of the rock" wherein Moses had been hidden<sup>3</sup> when the glory of the Lord passed by him.

If, therefore, any tradition on the subject existed among the Jews, it must have been simply oral, liable to be forgotten in the lapse of ages, and especially during the time of national peril. Their descendants at the present day avow that they have no traditional knowledge on the subject. Nevertheless it is a remarkable fact that the Jewish historian Josephus gives a description of Mount Sinai, from which it would almost appear that some traditional knowledge on the subject

<sup>1</sup> Exod. iii. 1; Deut. i. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings xix. 8, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. xxxiii. 22.

had been handed down to his time. When relating how Moses fled from Pharaoh, king of Egypt, he says that "he came to the city Midian, which lay upon the Red Sea, and was so denominated from one of Abraham's sons by Keturah."<sup>1</sup> Now we are told in Scripture, that those descendants of the Patriarch were sent into the "east country,"<sup>2</sup> that is to say, into the regions lying to the east of the valley of the Jordan and its continuance southward to the Gulf of Akaba, and not anywhere within the peninsula west of that gulf, where Moses's place of refuge has been so erroneously imagined to have been situated.

The Jewish historian then goes on to describe the Mountain of God in these specific terms:—"Now this is the highest of all the mountains thereabout, and the best for pasturage, the herbage being there good; and it had not been before fed upon, because of the opinion men had that God dwelt there, the shepherds not daring to ascend up to it."<sup>3</sup>

And in a subsequent passage, when describing how Moses ascended Mount Sinai, he says, this mountain was "the highest of all the mountains

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, lib. ii. cap. xi. sect. 1, Whiston's trans.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xxv. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., lib. ii. cap. xii. sect. 1.

that are in that country, and is not only very difficult to be ascended by men, on account of its vast altitude, but because of the sharpness of its precipices also; nay, indeed, it cannot be looked at without pain of the eyes; and besides this, it was terrible and inaccessible, on account of the rumour that passed about, that God dwelt there.”<sup>1</sup>

In the Christian Scriptures the only mention made of the Mountain of the Law is by the Apostle Paul, who, in his Epistle to the Galatians,<sup>2</sup> speaks of “Mount Sinai in Arabia;” which expression, however, is too indefinite to allow any conclusion to be drawn from it, except perhaps that, as in the Apostle’s time, the name of Arabia was limited to the country east of the Jordan, Mount Sinai itself must likewise have been deemed to have been situated there. And as Aretas, king of Arabia, that is to say, Arabia Petraea, of which Petra was the capital,<sup>3</sup> was at the same time king of Damascus;<sup>4</sup> and as in the same Epistle the Apostle expressly relates, how, after his conversion, “immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood,” but “went into

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., lib. iii. cap. v. sect. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. iv. 25.

<sup>3</sup> See Josephus, Antiq. xiv. 1, 4; Wars of the Jews, i. 6, 2.

<sup>4</sup> See 2 Cor. x. 32; Origines Biblicæ, p. 254 (note); Gal. i. 16, 17.

*Arabia*," whence he "returned again to Damascus;" it may even be conjectured that the Apostle had "Mount Sinai in Arabia" in his mind, in consequence of his personal acquaintance with the locality.

Still this would be ascribing to the Apostle more accurate geographical knowledge than probably we have a right to attribute to him. It is nevertheless possible that this statement of St. Paul, like that of his contemporary and co-religionist Josephus, may have been derived from the last lingering spark of Jewish oral tradition, which did not become quite extinguished till after the cessation of the national existence of the people.

It may not be without bearing on this subject to add, that Justin Martyr, who flourished about the middle of the second century, when speaking of the Magi, or wise men, who, in the first Gospel,<sup>1</sup> are said to come "from the east," always describes them as "Magi from Arabia" (*μάγοι ἀπὸ Ἀραβίας*).<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, however, the school of Alexandria had come into existence, to which so many learned Jews belonged, and which exercised so vast an influence upon early Christianity. Naturalised in

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Dial. Tryph., lxxviii. cvi.

Egypt, the Jews were proud to trace a connection which, in reality, had never existed between the history of their adopted country and that of their Hebrew ancestors, and hence they came to remodel the geography of the Pentateuch from an Egyptian point of view.

On this important subject I have already stated my opinion in my first work, "*Origines Biblicæ*,"<sup>1</sup> published in the year 1834, and in many subsequent publications, and I shall also have occasion to discuss it in a subsequent portion of the present work; I therefore need not dwell on it now.<sup>2</sup> All that I have occasion to say here is, that the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, being assumed to have taken place somewhere at the head of the Gulf of Suez, it necessarily follows that the scene of their wanderings must have been shifted into the regions lying immediately to the east of the gulf; hence Mount Sinai would naturally have come to be placed somewhere within the mountainous country between that gulf and the Gulf of Akaba.

It is, however, a most significant fact, that not a single place recorded in the Old Testament in

<sup>1</sup> See *Orig. Bibl.*, pp. 8, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Unhappily Dr. Beke's lamented death happened before he could complete his task.—ED.

connection with the Exodus of the Israelites can conclusively, or even satisfactorily, be pointed out as represented at the present day by a similar name within that peninsula, or as having been known to the Greeks or Romans under its ancient Biblical designation.

The Pharan of Ptolemy<sup>1</sup> and of the early Christian writers,<sup>2</sup> the country of the Lapis Pharanites of Pliny,<sup>3</sup> which is identified with the modern Feiran, in the vicinity of the copper and turquoise mines, is indeed deemed by Professor Lepsius,<sup>4</sup> and also by Professor Palmer,<sup>5</sup> to be an evident reminiscence of the ancient Biblical name Paran. Yet the latter traveller does not attempt actually to identify Feiran with the Paran of the Bible,<sup>6</sup> which he places in a totally different position; for he says, "I concur with Wilton (the Negeb, p. 124) in believing that the Wilderness of Paran comprised the whole Desert of Et Tih, and that Mount Paran was the southernmost portion of the mountain plateau in the north-east, at present inhabited by the 'Azázimeh Arabs, and known as Jebel Magráh."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Geogr., lib. v. cap. 17, sect. 3.

<sup>2</sup> St. Jérôme, Comment. in Abucuc, lib. ii. c. 3, v. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Plin. Hist. Nat., lib. xxxvii. 40.

<sup>4</sup> Lepsius's Letters, xxiii. n.

<sup>5</sup> Desert of the Exodus, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> See Ebers's *Durch Gosen zum Sinai*, pp. 189-208.

<sup>7</sup> Palmer's *Desert of the Exodus*, p. 509.

What "reminiscence," then, Pharan or Feiran, near Mount Serbál, can possibly give of Mount Magráh, some hundred miles distant from it, must surely be "evident" to the mind of Professor Palmer alone. As for the German Professor, though he asserts that "the name of Firān, formerly Pharan, is indeed evidently the same as Peiran," he makes the strange avowal that<sup>1</sup> "it is equally certain that this name has altered its meaning with reference to the locality;" which assertion, as far as I can understand it, seems to signify that the classical and modern name does not correspond to the Biblical, which is a virtual denial of their identity,<sup>2</sup> represented by the two names.

And Josephus,<sup>3</sup> as quoted by Lepsius, when speaking of Simon of Gerasa, says that he 'overran the Accrabatene toparchy, and the places that reached as far as the Great Idumæa; for he built a wall at a certain village called Nain, and made use of that as a fortress for his own party's security; and at the valley called Paran he enlarged many of the caves, and many others he found ready for his purpose;' and Robinson, speaking of the Paran of Ptolemy, and that of Eusebius and Jerome,

<sup>1</sup> Lepsius's Letters, xxxiii. note.

<sup>2</sup> See Elms's *Durch Gosen zum Sinai*, *ut sup.*

<sup>3</sup> Wars of the Jews, iv. 9, 4.



remarks, "The valley of Pharan mentioned by Josephus is obviously a different place, somewhere in the vicinity of the Dead Sea; perhaps connected with the mountain and Desert of Paran so often spoken of in the Old Testament, adjacent to Kadish."<sup>1</sup>

As regards the most important spot in the history of the Exodus, Mount Sinai itself, it has to be remarked, that when the Jews, and after them, the Christians of Egypt, began to consider and to investigate the topography of the regions which they connected with that great national event, namely, those contiguous to Egypt, they probably, in the first instance, indiscriminately applied the designation of Sinai or Horeb to the whole of the lofty range of the Black Mountains (*Μέλανα Ὀρη*) of the Greco-Pelusian geographer, Claudius Ptolemy;<sup>2</sup> which range might reasonably be regarded from a distance as a single mountain-mass, culminating in the peak of the Um Shaumer, with an elevation of 8449 feet above the sea.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Numb. xiii. 26. Biblical Researches, i. 593.

<sup>2</sup> Geogr., lib. v. cap. 17, sect. 3.

<sup>3</sup> According to the Ordnance Survey of the peninsula, Jebel Katarina has an elevation of 8536 feet, or 87 feet more than Um Shaumer; but as it stands somewhat farther towards the east, and thus out of the direct line of the chain, it loses in appearance some of its height. But both are surpassed by Jebel Zebir, which is the highest peak in the peninsula, reaching a height of 8551 feet. See Account of the Survey, Pt. I., App. 11, Tables I., II.

But it would not have been long, especially after the persecution of the professors of the new faith had caused them to flee for safety into the desert, before some one of the mountain-peaks would have been singled out as being specifically that on which the Law was delivered to Moses in the sight of the children of Israel. "And be ready against the third day; for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly" (Exod. xix. 11, 17, 18). It is, therefore, quite natural that Jebel Serbal should have been originally identified by the Coptic, or Egyptian Christians, with the Mountain of the Law: for it is the first lofty mountain, being 6734 feet high, that the fugitives would fall in with on their way out of Egypt: it is an isolated peak, and in a superficial manner it readily answers to the general requirements of the Scripture narrative. It even appears to have been a "high

place" of the native Arab tribes, who made pilgrimages to it, and offered sacrifices on it, before the Christian hermits applied it to their own religious uses, and built upon it what must be regarded as the oldest convent within the peninsula.

It was the traveller Burckhardt who first suggested the priority of Jebel Serbal, and his reasoning on the subject is most cogent, if not absolutely conclusive. His words are:<sup>1</sup> "It will be recollected that no inscriptions are found either on the Mountain of Moses [he refers to *Jebel Musa*, the present traditional Mount Sinai] or on Mount St. Catherine; and that those which are found in the Ledja Valley at the foot of Djebel Katerin, are not to be traced above the rock, from which the water is said to have issued, and appear only to be the work of pilgrims, who visited that rock. From these circumstances, I am persuaded that Mount Serbal was at one period the chief place of pilgrimage in the peninsula: and that it was then considered the mountain where Moses received the tables of the law; though I am equally convinced, from a perusal of the Scriptures, that the

<sup>1</sup> Burckhardt's *Travels in Syria, &c.*, p. 609, 4to edit., 1822. See also Lepsius's *Letters*, p. 533, Horner's trans., 1853.

Israelites encamped in the Upper Sinai, and that either Djebel Mousa or Mount St. Catherine is the real Horeb. It is not at all impossible that the proximity of Serbal to Egypt may at one period have caused that mountain to be the Horeb of the pilgrims, and that the establishment of the convent in its present situation, which was probably chosen from motives of security, may have led to the transferring of that honour to Djebel Mousa. At present, neither the monks of Mount Sinai nor those of Cairo consider Mount Serbal as the scene of any of the events of sacred history: nor have the Bedouins any tradition among them respecting it; but it is possible that if the Byzantine writers were thoroughly examined, some mention might be found of this mountain, which I believe was never before visited by any European traveller."

Subsequent investigations have established the sagacity and general correctness of the German traveller's remarks. The fact that the so-called Sinaitic Inscriptions are plentiful on and about Jebel Serbal, whilst none, or scarcely any, are found on Jebel Musa or Jebel Katharina, demonstrates that the first-named mountain was the original object of religious pilgrimages; and the fact that these inscriptions were principally, if not entirely,

the work of native heathen pilgrims, who came there to offer sacrifices and thank-offerings,<sup>1</sup> just as the Mohammedan Beduins do on the self-same mountain at the present day, and as they do on Jebel Bághir, or Jebel e' Nùr (Mountain of Light), which I have lately discovered, and which I regard as the true Mount Sinai, must undoubtedly be understood to indicate that Serbal was at an early period the centre of an ancient Pagan worship; though there is nothing in the character of any of those inscriptions, as now deciphered, to connect them in any way with the age of the Exodus, or any period at all approaching it. On the contrary, the general opinion now is that not any of the inscriptions are older than the first centuries of the Christian era, and that they bear no reference to any earlier historical period.

The actual claim of Jebel Serbal to be the true Mount Sinai was first advanced by Professor Lepsius in the year 1845, and advocated with much learning in his "Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai," published in Germany in 1852, and in an English translation in 1853. It has since been ably maintained by several travellers and scholars, both in England

<sup>1</sup> See *Reise in Abyssinien*, von Ed. Rüppell, vol. i. p. 127.

and on the Continent, the latest of them being Dr. Ebers, in his work, "*Durch Gosen zum Sinai*," published at Leipzig in 1872.

It is scarcely necessary to explain that the arguments of Lepsius and his followers in proof of the superior claim of Jebel Serbal over Jebel Musa are based on the gratuitous assumption that one of the two must necessarily be the true Mount Sinai. As, however, I think I shall be able to show the claim of the one mountain has no better foundation than that of the other, it would be altogether beside my purpose to discuss their respective merits. All that concerns me is the fact, which those scholars have sufficiently established, that Jebel Serbal was deemed to be Mount Sinai before that honour was acquired by Jebel Musa.

The ancient convent in Wady Sigillfyeh, now in ruins, which was seen by Burckhardt, and has recently been visited by Professor Palmer and my friend Major Wilson, points to a time when that on Jebel Musa had not come into existence : and there is every reason for concurring in the suggestion of the German traveller, that the proximity of Serbal to Egypt, which in the first instance caused that mountain to be regarded as

the Sinai of the pilgrims, and led to the building of the convent, became at a later period a cause of insecurity and peril to the monks who inhabited it; and in consequence to have led to the founding of the convent which was erected on the more secluded Jebel Musa, as a place of greater security :—in like manner as the scene of St. Paul's conversion, which was on the highroad from Jerusalem to Damascus, and therefore necessarily on the south-west of the latter city, has,—for the convenience of pilgrims,—been shifted to the neighbourhood of the Latin Convent, on the *east* side of Damascus;<sup>1</sup> or as in the more glaring case of the scene of the Annunciation, the Holy House having been bodily transported from Nazareth first into Dalmatia, and thence again to Loreto.

It may even be, that the transfer of Sinai, or Horeb, from Jebel Serbal to Jebel Musa was not made directly, but through the intervention of Jebel *Katarina*, which mountain, as is shown by the "Sinaitic" inscriptions found by Burckhardt in the Ledja valley at its foot, was at some time or other<sup>2</sup> certainly regarded as the true Mountain

<sup>1</sup> See Mrs. Reke's work, "Jacob's Flight," p. 88, London, Longmans & Co., 1865.

of the Law, as it is still deemed to be by the traveller Rüppell.<sup>1</sup> Indeed its superior elevation over all the other mountain peaks (except that of Jebel Zebir) within the peninsula, namely, 8536 feet (Burckhardt seems to favour Jebel Katarina), against Jebel Serbal, 6734 feet, and Jebel Musa, 7363 feet; even the giant Um Shamer, 8449 feet, might be regarded as favouring its claim to be Josephus's "highest mountain within the region wherein it is situate," did but other circumstances combine to countenance such a claim.

In the consideration of this shifting from time to time of the name Sinai or Horeb from one mountain peak to another within the peninsula, the especial point to be borne in mind is the order of succession, and this clearly appears to be—first, Serbal; secondly, Jebel Katarina; thirdly, Jebel Musa; and now, of late years, Ras Sufsâfeh. Such being the case, it is manifest that everything like an appeal to *tradition* must be cast to the winds, except perhaps in the case of Jebel Serbal alone, which mountain has at all events the special and exclusive merit of having been deemed to be the Mountain of God before the upstart Jebel Musa was even thought of as such.

<sup>1</sup> Rüppell's Reise in Abyssinien, vol. i. p. 120.



Of the fact that, in the first ages of the Christian era, Jebel Serbal, and not Jebel Musa, was considered to be Mount Sinai, the particulars extracted from the works of early Greek ecclesiastical writers now about to be related will leave no room for question.

It must be premised that Ptolemy, when describing the peninsula between the Heroöpolitan and Elanitic gulfs (the gulfs of Suez and Akaba, in which the city of Pharan was situate), mentions among the tribes dwelling to the westward of the Black Mountains (the Sinaitic range) towards Egypt, the Saracens (*Σαρακηνοί*), the Pharanites<sup>1</sup> (*Φαρανῖται*), and the Raithenoi (*Ραιθηνοί*), the last named being toward§ the mountains of Arabia Felix.

There is great difficulty in reconciling the details of Ptolemy's topography of this region with our present precise knowledge of it, but sufficient is known to enable us to identify the city of Pharan with the modern Feiran, near Jebel Serbal, where the ruins of the ancient city still exist—a view of them being given by Laborde in his work, "*Voyage de l'Arabie Pétrée*,"<sup>2</sup>—these ruins being in the neighbourhood of the ancient copper mines, whence the

<sup>1</sup> Geogr., vi. 7, 21, v. 17, 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Voyage de l'Arabie Pétrée*, p. 69, Paris, 1830.

Egyptians obtained the *Lapis Pharanites* or turquoise; whilst Ptolemy's Raithenoi must be the inhabitants of the district containing the modern town of Tor, called '*Παρθὸν*' by the Greek Christians, both in ancient and modern times. The name of Saracens, though now the appellation of the Arabian invaders of the Western world generally (as will next be shown), was limited in the early ages to the tribes dwelling at, or in the vicinity of Pharan.

As early as A.D. 250, Dionysius of Alexandria speaks of the monasteries of *Sinai* as being the refuge of Egyptian Christians in times of persecution, where they were often attacked and made slaves by the Saracens or Arabs.<sup>1</sup>

The first hermit of whom we have any specific knowledge is Sylvanus, who lived about A.D. 365, and is called by Tillemont, Abbot of Mount Sinai.

But the great agent in Christianising the coun-

<sup>1</sup> See Gallandii Bibliotheca Vet. Patrum, vol. iii. p. 516.

Dionysius's text makes no definite mention of monasteries—he seems to intimate that many Christians perished in the mountain wilds, while others were carried off by Arabs and put to ransom.

Galland's note on *ἐν τῷ Ἀραβικῷ ὄρει*:—"Mons est ita dictus, cujus meminit Herodotus, quem Ptolemæus et alii Troicum vocant. Male ergo Christophorsonus montem Arabiæ vertit. Paullo post Arabicus dicitur (τὸ Ἀραβικὸν ὄρος), ob vicinitatem Arabum ita nominatus."

The passage occurs in a letter to Fabius, Bishop of Antioch, apud Euseb. Hist. Eccl., lib. vi. cap. 41, 42, and 44.—ED.

tries south of Palestine, and in introducing the monastic life into these regions, was Hilarion,<sup>1</sup> a disciple of St. Anthony, who was born A.D. 291, at Thabatha, near Gaza, and died A.D. 371, two years before the slaughter of Raitha, hereafter to be related.

In the time of the Emperor Julian (360-3) the deserts of Sinai were beginning to teem with ascetics, whom the example of Hilarion had attracted to the monastic life. Among these ascetics was Nicon, who is supposed to be the same as is honoured by the Greeks on the 26th November, and of whom the following story is told by Nilus, who, like Nicon, is a saint of the Greek calendar:—Nicon was dwelling on Mount Sinai, when the seducer of the daughter of an inhabitant of Pharan persuaded her to accuse that venerable man of the crime. On this the father of the girl went after Nicon to kill him; but on his raising his sword in the act of striking him, his hand became withered. Not deterred by this miracle, the father accused the saint before the priests of Pharan, who caused him to be beaten, and would have banished him from the country, but that he

<sup>1</sup> See his life written by Jerome, *Vita S. Hilarionis*, *Hieronymi Opera*, tom. ii. p. 30, *Patrolog. Cursus*, Migne, Paris, 1849.

asked permission to remain in order to do penance. For three years he remained excommunicated, no one being allowed to speak to him; and during that period he came every Sunday to the church with the other penitents to beseech the faithful to pray for him. At length it pleased God to make known Nikon's innocence; the true seducer of the girl, possessed by the devil, openly confessed before the whole congregation his crime and his calumny. On this all the inhabitants of the place went to demand pardon of the saint, who readily granted it, but refused to remain longer among them, inasmuch as not a single one of them had shown any charity or compassion for him.

Ammonius relates the following anecdote:<sup>1</sup>--  
"A vessel from Aila was stranded on the shores of the Avalitic gulf (the modern Gulf of Zeila). The people of this district (whom the historian designates by the convenient but much-abused term Blemmyes) seized on the vessel, and (being accustomed to navigation), resolved to use it in a piratical excursion against the wealthy city of Clysma. They sailed up the Arabian Gulf (or Red Sea), and on entering into the Heroöpolitan Gulf, were driven on the eastern shore, instead

<sup>1</sup> See Ammonius, Tillemont, vii. 576, 577.

of the Egyptian, to which their voyage tended. They landed at *Ratha* (the modern Tor), and after the massacre of part of the inhabitants, carried away the rest as captives. Being driven a second time on the coast of *Ratha*, they murdered their remaining captives, but were fortunately overtaken by *Obedian* before they could resume their voyage. The king having heard of their former landing [had] hastened to *Ratha* at the head of a small and select body of troops, and falling upon the African savages, slaughtered them to a man." The date of this occurrence is stated to be the year 373 of the Christian era.

In the curious work entitled, "Narrative of the Monastic Monk Nilus," touching the massacre of the monks on Mount Sinai,<sup>1</sup> an account is given of an occurrence similar to that recorded by Ammonius. The writer describes how he and his son Theodulus were living as anchorites with others on Mount Sinai. The position of their residence was on the mountain itself, and lower down dwelt other hermits at the spot called "the Bush;" it being supposed to be that at which Moses was first addressed by the Almighty.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Narrative of the Monastic Monk Nilus, Paris, 1639, Narratio. iv.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. iii. 4.

Nilus and his son were in the habit of visiting these other hermits, and one day when they were supping with them, the priest of the place, named likewise Theodulus, speaking with more than his usual kindness, said, "How do we know whether we shall ever sup together again before we die?" The result showed the pertinency of what he thus said; for early on the morrow, when hardly the morning hymns had been sung, they found themselves attacked by a band of Saracens, who killed the priest Theodulus, and his companion Paul, an old man, with a boy named John who waited on them, and then allowed all the other men to escape, but retained the boys. Those who were liberated hastened to gain the 'summit' of the mountain, which the Saracens did not dare to approach, under the persuasion that the Majesty of God resided there, it being there that He appeared to the Israelites. Nilus was at first unwilling to accept his liberty whilst his son was kept a prisoner, but at the solicitation of the latter, he also escaped to the top of the mountain, whence he had the grief of seeing his son carried away by his captors, who went on pillaging other places and killing a great number of other persons. Nilus and the others who had fled to the top of

the mountain came down from it in the evening to bury the bodies of their slaughtered brethren. Life had not quite left the priest Theodulus, who, before breathing his last, had strength to exhort them to worship God without fear, and to give them the kiss of peace. After having buried them, they reached the city of Pharan before the morrow.<sup>1</sup>

In page 87 of the original work, Nilus speaks of the Senate of that city, which was also in his time the seat of a bishop. [But how can this be if Moses was the first bishop?] Nilus has usually been supposed to have lived some time during the fifth century, and the slaughter of the monks on Mount Sinai related by Nilus has consequently been supposed to be a repetition of the event related by Ammonius. But there is no good reason for imagining it to be a different occurrence.

In A.D. 372 or 373 the prince was Obedian, who died soon after, and was succeeded by his wife, Mavia or Moawiyah, who, ten years after Julian had carried the Roman arms triumphantly beyond the frontier to the capital of Persia,—where, however, he was slain in the moment of victory,—defeated the Roman forces in Phœnicia. *Socrates* relates that no sooner had the Emperor (Valens)

<sup>1</sup> Tillemont, xiv. 200-203.\*

departed from Antioch, than the Saracens, who had before been in alliance with the Romans, revolted from him, being led by Mavia, their Queen, whose husband (Obedian?) was then dead. All the regions of the East, therefore, were at that time ravaged by the Saracens; but their fury was repressed by the interference of Divine Providence, in the manner I am about to relate. A person named Moses, a Saracen by birth, who led a monastic life in the desert, became exceedingly eminent for his piety, faith, and miracles. Mavia, the Queen of the Saracens, was therefore desirous that this person should be consecrated bishop over her nation, and promised on this condition to terminate the war. The Roman generals considering that a peace founded on such terms would be extremely advantageous, gave immediate directions for its ratification. *Moses was accordingly seized*, and brought from the desert to Aléxandria, in order to his being initiated into the sacerdotal functions; but, on his presentation for that purpose to Lucius, who at that time presided over the churches in that city, he refused to be ordained by him, protesting against it in these words:—"I account myself indeed unworthy of the sacred office; but if the exigences of the state require my



bearing it, it shall not be by Lucius laying his hand upon me, for it has been filled with blood." Moses having expressed himself in this manner, was taken by his friends to the mountains, that he might receive ordination from the bishops who lived in exile there. His consecration terminated the Saracenic war; and so scrupulously did Mavia observe the peace thus entered into with the Romans, that she gave her daughter in marriage to Victor, the commander in chief of the Roman army.<sup>1</sup>

The same story is related by Theodoret substantially in slightly different terms. His words are:—"At this period the tribe of Ishmaelites ravaged the provinces situated on the frontier of the empire. They were led by Mavia, who, notwithstanding her sex, possessed masculine intrepidity. After several engagements she made peace with the Romans, and having received the light of the knowledge of God, she stipulated that a certain man, named Moses, who dwelt on the borders of Egypt and Palestine, might be ordained bishop of her nation. Valens acceded to her request, and desired that the holy man should be conveyed to Alexandria, and that he should there

<sup>1</sup> Socrates, *Eccl. Hist.*, book iv. chap. 36.

receive the holy rite of ordination, for this city was nearer her place of residence than any other. After his arrival at Alexandria, when he found Lucius desired to lay hands upon him for the purpose of ordination, he said, 'I account myself indeed unworthy of the sacred office; but if the exigences of the state require my bearing it, it shall not be by Lucius laying his hand upon me, for it has been filled with blood.' Lucius was deeply incensed, and wished to put him to death; but not daring to renew a war which had been terminated, he ordered him to be conveyed to the other bishops, by whom he desired to be ordained. After having received, in addition to his fervent faith, the archiepiscopal dignity, he, by his apostolic doctrines, and by the working of miracles, led many to the knowledge of the truth."<sup>1</sup>

It could not, however, have been till some considerable time after the death of this saintly bishop Moses that he became confounded (whether intentionally or through ignorance is not at all material), with the great Lawgiver of the Israelites, so as to allow the mountain called after the former to become "traditionally" associated with the latter. But when once the ball was set rolling,

<sup>1</sup> Théod., Eccl. Hist., book iv. chap. 23.

the Greek ecclesiastics were at no loss in finding materials to increase its bulk, till at length almost the whole Christian world has been brought to look on Jebel Musa—the Mountain of (Bishop) Moses—as the veritable Mount Sinai.

From the foregoing anecdotes, the general truth of which cannot reasonably be questioned, it is manifest that, in the time of Nikon, Nilus, and Ammonius, Mount Sinai was considered to be in the immediate vicinity of Pharan. Therefore it could have been no other than Jebel Serbal, which is distant only about five miles from Wady Feiran. To suppose the incidents related could have referred to Jebel Musa, which lies more than twenty miles in a direct line from that spot, would render the whole story inconsistent, and consequently impossible. That Jebel Serbal continued to be regarded as the true Mount Sinai till the beginning of the sixth century is proved by the statement of the Coptic monk Cosmas Indicopleustes, who then visited the Holy Mountain. The testimony of this traveller is too precise and explicit to be open to any question. He relates that, landing at Raithu (*Ῥαῖθου*), (the town of Ptolemy's *Ῥαῖθηνοί*, and the modern Tor), which was two days' journey from Sinai, he went along the Wady Hebron to Rephidim,

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which is now called Pharan, where he was at the termination of his Sinaitic journey. From this spot, he says, Moses went with the elders "unto Horeb, which is in the Sinaic (Mountain), the same being about six thousand paces (six miles) from Paran."<sup>1</sup> And in a subsequent passage he distinctly affirms that he journeyed on foot to all these places (*ὡς αὐτὸς ἐγὼ πεζεύσας τοὺς τόπους μαρτυρῶ*, "as I myself, having visited these places on foot, bear witness").<sup>2</sup> And it was, as he journeyed on foot, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, that he saw the inscriptions which he supposed to have been written by the children of Israel, and which, in consequence of this supposition, are known as the Sinaitic Inscriptions. Now, although the distance of two days' journey from Tor corresponds equally well both to Jebel Musa and to Jebel Serbal, the distance to Pharan of six thousand paces, and the presence of the Sinaitic inscriptions, can apply to the latter mountain alone. So far, all is clearly in favour of Jebel Serbal.

But on the other hand, it appears not less clear from the Greek writer Procopius, who was the

<sup>1</sup> Topograph. Christ., lib. v. sect. 196, apud Migne, Patrolog. Cursus, vol. lxxxviii., Series Græca.

<sup>2</sup> Ut supra, lib. v. Sect. 205.

contemporary of the last-named writer, Cosmas, that Jebel Musa had at that time begun to be regarded as the true Mount Sinai. He, Procopius, says that in the third Palestine, which was formerly called Arabia, is a barren mountain named Sinai, which is as if it were suspended over the Red Sea. This mountain was inhabited by monks, who, living in pious solitude and in the meditation of death, and having no wants in this world, required nothing more; so that all the Emperor Justinian could do for them was to build them a church, which he dedicated to the Mother of God. This church, says Procopius,<sup>1</sup> was not erected on the summit of the mountain, where Moses received the Law, but far below; because, no one could pass the night on the summit on account of the noises heard there, which caused them to fear and tremble: in this agreeing with the reports of Ammonius and Nilus, which themselves are in accordance with the tradition recorded by the Jewish historian Josephus. Procopius adds, that Justinian also caused a very strong castle to be built at the foot of the mountain, in which he placed a sufficient garrison, in order to prevent

<sup>1</sup> Procop. de *Ædificiis*, v. 8, ap. *Corpus Script. Hist. Byzant*, ed. Dindorf.

the inroads into Palestine of the barbarian Saracens who inhabited these desert regions.

The erection of this castle by Justinian had evidently some connection with the treaty which that Emperor made with the prince of the Saracens, called by Procopius,<sup>1</sup> Abocharagos, who, submitting himself to the Emperor, surrendered his country to him, and was in return appointed by him Governor (Phylarch) of the Saracens of Palestine; an arrangement which, in the estimation of the historian, gave the Emperor nothing but a nominal sovereignty. If this Saracen prince, Abocharabos, was a successor of Obedian and Mavia, whose seat of government was at Pharan, it might almost be conjectured that the Mount Sinai overhanging the Red Sea, on which the Emperor built the church dedicated to the Mother of God, and at the foot of which he erected a fortress, might still have been Jebel Serbal, and not Jebel Musa. But without insisting on this, it will be sufficient to say that the Church of the Virgin Mother of God, described by Procopius as being some way down the mountain's side, cannot have stood on the site of the present Convent of the Transfiguration on Jebel Musa, but must rather be represented by the existing

<sup>1</sup> Procop. de Bello Persico, i. 19, sect. 3.



Chapel of the Virgin,<sup>1</sup> on Jebel Serbal, which stands at some distance above the convent, whilst the convent itself represents Justinian's castle at the foot of the mountain. The "tradition" of the monks of the convent, that the Chapel of the Virgin is of later date, is manifestly only a part of the general system of fraud and imposture in which the whole history of the convent is involved.

After the lapse of so many ages, it may be difficult, if not impossible, to determine the actual circumstances under which Jebel Musa came to supersede Jebel Serbal as Mount Sinai. But the change may well have been caused, as Ritter suggests, by party views and jealousy between the monks of Constantinople and Alexandria. It is certainly remarkable that the rival claims of the two mountains should have been in existence at the same moment; those of Jebel Serbal being evidenced by the Coptic monk, Cosmas Indicopleustes, and those of Jebel Musa by the Greek historian, Procopius, both writing at the beginning of the sixth century. But the fact that the monks of the convent on the former mountain were Egyptians, or Copts, and that those on Jebel Musa were orthodox Greeks, would sufficiently explain

<sup>1</sup> See Robinson's *Biblical Researches*, vol. i. pp. 97, 102, 104.

not only the rivalry between the two, but the eventual victory of the latter. It is quite certain that the Greek monks would not have been at all scrupulous as to the means they employed to gain the victory over their heterodox rivals. The deliberate fraud and falsehood of the Greek clergy, from the earliest ages of Christianity, are matters of history. In my work, "Jesus the Messiah,"<sup>1</sup> I have adduced some striking examples of this, to which I will refer my readers.

There can be no question as to the fact that Pharan, near Mount Serbal, was the first Christian centre of the Peninsula, and that the church founded by the Emperor Justinian,<sup>2</sup> on Jebel Musa, was dependent on the Bishop of Pharan, and so continued during several centuries, which would hardly have been the case had Jebel Musa, and not Jebel Serbal, been from the commencement deemed to be Mount Sinai.

The two inscriptions on the wall of the convent on Jebel Musa afford another instance of Greek fraud and imposture. These inscriptions, which are in Greek and Arabic, assert that this convent was built by the Emperor Justinian in the 527th year of the Christian era. But, according to my

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus the Messiah*, chaps. iii., iv., London, Trübner & Co., 1872.

<sup>2</sup> *Procopius's Life of Justinian*, cap. ii. sect. 1.

erudite friend, Dr. Wetzstein, formerly Prussian Consul at Damascus, the written characters of the Arabic inscription indicate that it could not have existed before the year 550 of the Hegira (A.D. 1172), and no earlier date can be attributed to the corresponding Greek inscription; so that the authority of these fabricated records is worthless. There seems to be a *third* inscription of older date, which Lepsius could not copy (Lepsius's Letters, p. 553).

Considering the views I entertain respecting the real position of the Mountain of the Law, it may perhaps be deemed to have been a work of supererogation on my part to go into these particulars concerning Jebel Musa, the traditional Mount Sinai, and the convent thereon; but I do so in order to demonstrate to the general reader the worthlessness of the monkish traditions connected with the same.

The intrinsic claims of Jebel Musa to be the Mountain of the Law are as worthless as its traditional ones. So far from being the highest mountain, as Josephus styles it, Jebel Musa is invisible from every quarter;<sup>1</sup> it is almost concealed and buried; it is neither distinguished by height,

<sup>1</sup> Robinson, vol. i. pp. 103-106. Bartlett, Forty Days in the Desert, p. 57. Desert of the Exodus, p. 112.

form, position, or any other peculiarity. Professor Palmer admits, that "the view from the summit [of Jebel Musa] does not embrace so comprehensive a prospect of the Peninsula as that from the more commanding peaks of Katarina or Serbal;"<sup>1</sup> and it is absolutely destitute of verdure, cultivation, running streams, and even of abundant springs, and with no resources whatsoever. In fact, it is physically impossible for the children of Israel to have remained long encamped there.

So poor indeed are the pretensions of the monkish Jebel Musa to be Mount Sinai, that no scientific and intelligent traveller who has visited the spot, and who is not enslaved by the local "traditions," but dares to think for himself, can avoid seeking for some other mountain-peak in preference to what he feels to be an impostor; Lepsius choosing Jebel Serbal; Ruppell, Jebel Katarine; and more recently, Dr. Edward Robinson<sup>2</sup> taking on himself to substitute for it the neighbouring more northerly peak of Ras Sufsâfeh.

Even the members of the recent Ordnance Survey of the Peninsula, who went out to perform the task they have so ably accomplished with the pre-

<sup>1</sup> *Desert of the Exodus*, p. 108, and *Exod.* xix. 16-18.

<sup>2</sup> *Robinson's Biblical Researches*, vol. i. pp. 106, 107.

conceived idea that Jebel Musa must be the true Sinai, have found themselves constrained to abandon it in favour of Ras Sufsâfeh.

Conscious, however, of the danger of relinquishing the "traditional" identification of Jebel Musa with the Sinai of Scripture, they have found it necessary to give to the former name an extension which in nowise belongs to it, which never existed before their time, and cannot honestly be maintained. Professor Palmer, in his work "The Desert of the Exodus," p. 111, thus states the case in what I cannot but regard as a most disingenuous manner. "Before entering upon the question of the exact scene of the delivery of the Law" (says he), "it will be necessary for me to explain what is meant by the summit of Sinai. *Jebel Musa is not a single peak*, but a huge mountain block, about two miles in length, and one mile in breadth, with a narrow vallëy on either side, a somewhat larger one at the south-eastern extremity, and a spacious plain at the north-eastern end. A well-watered basin or plateau occupies the centre, and this is surrounded by numerous peaks, of which two only, those at the extremities, are prominent in height or position." And the writer of a letter in the "Times" of April the 3d, 1874, under the signature

of "One who has been there"<sup>1</sup> (seemingly one of the surveying party), asserts in like manner, that Ras Sufsâfeh is "simply one of the buttresses of the great mountain known as a whole as *Jebel Musa*;" and he goes on to say, that "any one who has stood on that wondrous cliff, as I have, and looked down on the great plain of Er Râhah, stretched out at his feet, and rising gradually, as it recedes from the base, like the pit of a theatre, cannot fail, with the Bible narrative in his hands, to recognise it as the undoubted spot where the Israelitish encampment stood."

To this, however, it has to be categorically replied, that every one who has been on the spot or at all studied the subject knows perfectly well that it is not the fact that "*Jebel Musa* is not a single peak, but a large mountain block," &c.; or that Ras Sufsâfeh is "simply one of the buttresses of the great mountain known, as a whole, as *Jebel Musa*;" for that there does not exist, and never did exist, any great "mountain block" bearing the name of *Jebel Musa*, which name belongs to the separate peak at the southern end of the mountain block known as the monkish Sinai, and to *that peak alone*, on and about which the whole of the tra-

<sup>1</sup> The Times, 3d April 1874.

ditional identifications of the delivery of the Law are congregated ;<sup>1</sup> and the Ordnance Survey Map shows marked the two separate and distinct peaks of Jebel Musa with an elevation of 7363 feet, and Ras Sufsâfeh with an elevation of 6541 feet ;<sup>2</sup> the former of those peaks being considered to be Mount Silai, and the latter Mount Horeb ; and, further, in the map and sections in Professor Palmer's work, just referred to,<sup>3</sup> the distinction between the two peaks is plainly shown, though it is ingeniously contrived to make the general designation of Mount Sinai comprehend the two, and even to represent the name "Jebel Musa" as applicable to both.

Seeing then the utter uncertainty of the whole question of the position of Mount Sinai, which has, if possible, been increased rather than lessened by the labours of the Ordnance Surveyors, however valuable the results of those labours must be in other respects, it appears to me, as I have already declared in the "Times" of March 30, 1874, that "the only issue out of the many difficulties which have perplexed earnest but anxious minds," and the only sure way to "solve questions that have

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xix., xx

<sup>2</sup> See Dr. Beke's letter in the Times of April 9, 1874.

<sup>3</sup> Desert of the Exodus.

thrown discredit on the truth of a portion of the Bible history," the confirmation of which was in fact the main object of the Ordnance Survey,<sup>1</sup> is to reopen the whole question, and to consider impartially and reasonably the probable position of the Mountain of the Law upon the basis of my theory that the *Mitzraim* of the Bible is *not* the "Egypt" of Profane History; and that the Yam Suf or Red Sea, through which the Israelites passed in their Exodus, is the same "Red Sea in the Land of Edom"<sup>2</sup> that was navigated by the Israelitish and Tyrean fleets five centuries later—namely, the Gulf of Akaba, whence I have just returned,—the Gulf of Suez having been as little known to Moses as it was to Solomon and Hiram.

Before entering upon the discussion of my theory, or upon the narrative of the journey which I have undertaken for the purpose of establishing its correctness; it is expedient that I should state, as a most important preliminary, what I conceive to be a paramount and fatal objection to the identification either wholly or in part of the Peninsula of Pharan, between the gulfs of Suez and Akaba, with the wilderness of the Exodus.

<sup>1</sup> See *Athenæum*, Sept. 26, 1868.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings ix. 26.



According to the vulgar interpretation of the Scripture history, we are called on to believe that Moses, when he fled from the face of Pharaoh, took refuge within a district in which there was a colony of Egyptians, with copper mines, which, as the hieroglyphics then show, were worked by them, not merely before, but actually at the time of the Exodus; and further, that the Israelites, who were constantly in a state of insubordination, and even rebellion, and anxiously longing to return into Mitzraim ("Egypt"), were, with a view to their liberation from the house of bondage, deliberately led by their inspired legislator into the *cul-de-sac* between the two gulfs, where they were almost within sight of Egypt, where they must have come in contact with the Egyptian colonists and miners, and whence they would at any time have had not the slightest difficulty in returning to that country.

Professor Palmer, whilst forced to admit that "it is most improbable that Moses, well versed as he was in all the 'learning of the Egyptians,' and acquainted with all the details of their political system, would have led the hosts of Israel into direct contact with those enemies from whom they

were fleeing,"<sup>1</sup> seeks to get over the difficulty by representing it as merely a question of whether or not the Israelites were conducted by their inspired leader directly past the very spots at Sarábit el Khádim, at Wady Maghálah, and Wady Nash, where the copper and turquoise mines were being worked; and he argues, that "as we read in the sacred narrative of no collision with their late taskmasters after the overthrow of Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea, we may fairly conclude that they did not pass by any of those roads, which must inevitably have brought them into the very midst of a large Egyptian military settlement."<sup>2</sup> And having thus slurred over this difficulty, he complacently remarks, "This, therefore, considerably narrows the question by disposing of at least two of the principal routes by which the Israelites could have approached Mount Sinai."<sup>3</sup>

But let the line of march of the Israelites be assumed to be such as not to lead to any actual "collision with their late taskmasters," it could not avoid being within fearful proximity to some of the Egyptian settlements, and even a *détour* of several miles would not have allowed them to

<sup>1</sup> Desert of the Exodus, p. 232.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

pass unobserved the outposts, except on Professor Palmer's monstrous supposition that all the Israelitish host fell in with was some "little knot of worshippers who mayhap were bowing down to Apis while the great pilgrim Father passed."<sup>1</sup> How long these worshippers had to continue bowed down whilst the host of the Israelites passed by them, is left to the imagination of the reader, who is further called on to believe that their inspired leader thereby fancied himself and the people hidden from the view of the Egyptian soldiery; even as the ostrich is said to fancy it conceals itself from the view of the hunter by hiding its head in the bushes and leaving its whole body exposed. In the consideration of this, to me insurmountable difficulty, it must always be borne in mind that the children of Israel remained some time encamped at Elim,<sup>2</sup> wherever it may please the traditionists to fix that place; and that they did not reach the wilderness of Sin, between Elim and Sinai, till the fifteenth day of the second month,<sup>3</sup> that is, one month after the Exodus; that it was yet a fortnight more ere they encamped before the Mount;<sup>4</sup> that they remained stationary

<sup>1</sup> The Desert of the Exodus, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. xvi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xv. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Exod. xix. 1, 2.

there till the twentieth day of the second month of the second year,<sup>1</sup> or close on a whole twelve-month; and during the whole of this period, even Jebel Musa itself, the extremest point of the imagined sojourn of the Israelites within the Peninsula, is less than forty miles from the Egyptian mining settlements! Is this within the range of the wildest imagination?

Such ideas as these are so utterly preposterous, that it would be inconceivable how they could be entertained for a single instant, were it not for the daily instances we unhappily meet with of the blindness with which the "authority" of puerile tradition is deferred to, even by persons of great learning, and otherwise of the most enlarged minds.

It is true that the objection here raised is, in its direct application, far more cogent in the case of Jebel Serbal than of Jebel Katarina, or Jebel Musa, inasmuch as the former is in the immediate vicinity of the copper mines, and also of "another spot in the Peninsula," which we are told was a position of great importance long before the time of Moses, and even in his days, but has lost it since that time, namely, the harbour of Abu Zelimeh, in the Gulf of Suez, within forty miles

<sup>1</sup> Numb. x. 11.

of the summit of Jebel Serbal, by which spot, according to the Ordnance Survey party, the Israelites passed, inasmuch as they "were unanimously of opinion that the Israelites must have taken the lower route by the sea-shore,"<sup>1</sup> and than which spot, in the estimation of Professor Lepsius, "there was no more convenient landing-place to connect Egypt with those colonies"<sup>2</sup> of *miners*. Lepsius complacently records how the sandy plain on the western side of the mountain "disclosed to him across the sea a glorious prospect of the opposite coast, and the Egyptian chain of mountains bounding it,"<sup>3</sup>—a most marvellous locality indeed for Sinai, at the foot of which the Israelites had to remain so long encamped!

But notwithstanding the force of the direct application of the objection here raised, it is even more fatal to the pretensions of both Jebel Katarina and Jebel Musa; because such pretensions are subordinate to those of Jebel Serbal, and cannot have arisen until after the traditional repute of the latter, if not entirely extinct, was already on the wane, and therefore could the more easily be superseded by its younger, more pretentious, and

<sup>1</sup> Palmer's *Desert of the Exodus*, p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> Lepsius's *Letters*, p. 305.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 296.

(as the mendacious inscriptions on the convent wall and Eutychius's false statement testify) more unscrupulous rival.

Having said this much, I feel myself dispensed from taking any further notice of all and singular the rival mountain summits within the region between the Gulf of Suez and Akaba, which has hitherto erroneously borne the name of the Peninsula of Mount Sinai, but which I propose to call henceforth the Peninsula of Pharan—the country of the *Lapis Pharanites* (turquoise) of Pliny—and I give it the name it bore in the earliest ages of Christianity, as a standing protest and memorial against the identifications of any place within that Peninsula with the Paran of Scripture.

## CHAPTER II.\*

THE NON-IDENTITY OF THE MITZRAIM OF SCRIPTURE WITH THE EGYPT  
OF PROFANE HISTORY—ITS POSITION, AND THAT OF THE LAND  
OF MIDIAN.

HAVING proceeded to the consideration of the position of Mount Sinai, as a preliminary to the narrative of my journey for its discovery, it is requisite that I should say a few words on the subject of the situation of the Mitzraim of the Hebrew Scriptures, the land of bondage of the children of Israel, which, by the common assent of ages, is generally believed to be the Egypt of profane history, but which I have, during upwards of forty years, maintained to be a distinct and separate kingdom lying to the east of the Isthmus of Suez, and thence extending to the land of the Philistines: a kingdom which, in the course of time, lost its independent existence, and was merged in its more powerful and more fortunate western neighbour, Egypt, whilst it became itself "utterly waste and desolate," in accordance with

\* Written by the late Dr. Beke, June 4, 1874.

the prophecies that had foretold its destruction. And in immediate relation to and connection with this translocation of the Land of Bondage, I have in like manner maintained that the *Yam Suf*, or Red Sea, through which the Israelites passed on their Exodus from Mitzraim, was the Sea of Edom, or Gulf of Akaba, and not the Gulf of Suez, as is generally supposed.

Paradoxical as these opinions appeared when they were first enunciated in "*Origines Biblicæ*," and as they are still considered to be by the majority of scholars, there are, nevertheless, not a few persons whose judgment is not to be despised—and I am happy to say their number is daily increasing—who are convinced of the general correctness of such opinions; and I have further the satisfaction of knowing that not only my own researches, but likewise numerous facts bearing on the subject which have come to light since the publication of that work in 1834, have served to convince me that the opinions therein expressed are substantially true.

It would be quite out of place here to enter upon any lengthened discussion of my theory of the non-identity of the Mitzraim of the Pentateuch with the Egypt of profane history. Still, it is essential that



I should offer a few general remarks on the subject, in order to render intelligible to the general reader the views which I entertain respecting the position of Mount Sinai, and the history of the Exodus.

For this purpose, discarding all traditions whatsoever, we have to take the *simple statements of Holy Scripture as our sole, absolute, and exclusive guide*. And in the first place, we find it recorded in that inestimable canon of ethnology and geography handed down to us in the tenth chapter of Genesis, under the head of the children of Ham, that "Mitzraim begat Ludim . . . and Pathrusim and Casluhim (out of whom came Philistim);"<sup>1</sup> from which we learn that the Philistines were a race of cognate origin with the Mitzrites, or, in fact, a branch of the great family of mankind classed under the latter generic name. Hence it may also be inferred in a general way that these kindred people were also neighbours.<sup>2</sup> The contiguity may be more clearly shown when the migrations of the Patriarch Abraham and his immediate descendants are taken into consideration. The early migrations of the Patriarch himself have formed the subject of special study on my part, resulting in a journey into Syria, undertaken by my wife and myself in

<sup>1</sup> Gen. x. 13, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xiii. 17.

the year 1861-62; and in her work, "Jacob's Flight; or, a Pilgrimage to Harran, and thence in the Patriarch's Footsteps into the Promised Land,"<sup>1</sup> it is conclusively demonstrated that when Terah and his family "went forth from Ur-Casdim (Ur of the Chaldees) to go into the land of Canaan, and they came unto Haran and dwelt there,"<sup>2</sup> the place they thus removed to was not the celebrated town of Harran in Mesopotamia, according to tradition, but a recently discovered village near Damascus bearing the same name, the error respecting its position having been caused by the erroneous identification of "Aram Naharaim," or Aram of the Two Rivers, that is to say, "Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus;" with Mesopotamia, the country between the two rivers Euphrates and Tigris; the expression "Aram Naharaim" in Genesis xxiv. 10 being literally translated "Mesopotamia."

From Harran, in Aram of the Two Rivers, near Damascus, Terah's son, Abraham, was called to go into the land of Canaan, whither he was accompanied by his nephew Lot.<sup>3</sup> Their first station was Shechem,<sup>4</sup> whence they removed to near Bethel,

<sup>1</sup> Published by Longmans & Co., London, 1865.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xi. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xii. 1-4.

Gen. xii. 6.

where Abram "built an altar to the Eternal,"<sup>1</sup> and seems to have made a lengthened stay, both before and after his journey into the South Country (Negeb), and Mitzraim, to which I have now to direct particular attention.

We first read that from Bethel the Patriarch "journeyed, going on still towards the south." (The Hebrew says, "in going and journeying," which does not affect the sense.) "And there was a famine in the land; and Abram went down into Mitzraim to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land."<sup>2</sup> Without dwelling on what occurred in that country, we may go on to the following chapter, wherein it is stated, that "Abram went • up out of Mitzraim<sup>3</sup>. . . into the south;" that is to say, into the "Negeb," or south country, through which he had previously passed on his way to Mitzraim; and that he there "went on his journeys, from the south (Negeb) even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning."<sup>4</sup> Now, it is deserving of special consideration that the very word "Mitzraim," which, in the Septuagint Greek version, and all other • versions that follow it, is retained as in

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xiii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xii. 9, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. xiii. 3.

the original Hebrew in the tenth chapter of the Book of Genesis, is here, in the twelfth chapter of the same Book, translated "Egypt," gratuitously, and most wrongly, as I contend; for in the first mention of the name it would have been impossible to say, and "Egypt begat Ludim, and Pathrusim, and Casluhim (out of whom came Philistim);" and if so, on what pretence is the Hebrew word "Mitzraim" in the very next page of the Bible to be translated "Egypt," and thus made to apply to the country known by that name in Profane History?

In my opinion, this arbitrary and wholly unwarrantable assumption of the identity of the two countries, and the consequent erroneous translation of the Hebrew expression *Mitzraim*, has been more fraught with mischief, leading to the misunderstanding of the Scripture history, than any of the numerous errors which have unhappily to be laid at the door of the Septuagint Greek translators.

Independently of this, I would ask whether it is reasonable to imagine, or is it at all likely, that the Patriarch, in his journeys between Bethel and the distant western country "Egypt," would have proceeded through the "Negeb" or South

Country? A glance at the map will show that this must be answered in the negative.

If, however, we consider the land of Mitzraim, into which Abram went down from the "South" Country, to be in close proximity to that country and to the land of the Philistines, we may without difficulty understand not merely this portion of the Scripture history, but likewise those subsequent portions in which "Mitzraim" is wrongly translated "Egypt." For example, we read that Sarah's handmaid, Hagar the "Mitzrite," when ill-treated by her mistress, fled into the wilderness, to the well called "Beer-lahai-roi, between Kadesh and Bered;"<sup>1</sup> and that Abraham afterwards "journeyed from thence (Hebron) towards the south country (Negeb); and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar;"<sup>2</sup> that Hagar's son Ishmael, when driven with her from his father's house, "dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Mitzraim;"<sup>3</sup> and that he and his descendants "dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Mitzraim, as thou goest toward Assyria:"<sup>4</sup>—from all which texts, and from many others that might be cited,

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xvi. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xx. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xxi. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. xxv. 18.

it certainly does appear that the country of Mitzraim therein named,—let its precise position and its boundaries be what they may,—can only have been in the immediate neighbourhood of the land of the Philistines and the South Country.

But many years ago the objection was raised by the late Dean Milman, when reviewing my work "*Origines Biblicæ*," and it has since been repeated by many others, that the Mitzraim of Scripture<sup>1</sup> was celebrated for its fertile corn-fields, which supplied not merely the native Mitzrites, but also their famished neighbours with food, and that this could only be Egypt watered by the river Nile; and under this view the seven years' famine in Mitzraim which Joseph prognosticated, and sagaciously provided against, is ascribed to the failure or insufficiency of the periodical inundations of that river. But this argument may be conclusively met by that which I adduced in answer to the criticism of Dr. Paulus of Jena,<sup>2</sup> who, next to Dean Milman, was my great opponent on this subject; namely, that natural causes operating during seven consecutive years at the sources of the Nile in

<sup>1</sup> See *Quarterly Review* for November 1834, vol. lii. pp. 510, 511.

<sup>2</sup> See *Heidelberger Jahrbücher*, January 1835. See also Beke's "*Vertheidigung gegen Herrn Dr. Paulus*," Leipzig, 1835.

Abyssinia, or elsewhere in the interior of Africa, could not be connected with the natural causes which produced a famine in the Land of Canaan, and in the "South Country" (Negeb) precisely during the same period. This objection was, however, attempted to be met by Dean Milman's suggestion in his "*History of the Jews*,"<sup>1</sup> that "a long and general drought, which would burn up the herbage of all the pastoral districts of Asia, might likewise diminish that accumulation of waters which, at its regular period, pours down the channel of the Nile. The waters are collected in the greatest part from the drainage of all the high levels in that region of Central Africa where the tropical rains, about the summer solstice, fall with incessant violence." But this suggestion is invalidated by the fact stated in my recently published pamphlet, "*Mount Sinai a Volcano*," p. 19,<sup>2</sup> that the tropical winds on which the rains in Central Africa are dependent do not extend to the pastoral districts of Asia; so that, even on the unphilosophical assumption of the absolute suspension of those winds throughout the tropics during seven consecutive years, acting not merely upon the Nile, but upon every other river

<sup>1</sup> Milman's *History of the Jews*, vol. i. 4th edit., 1866, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Published by Tinsley Brothers, 1873.

throughout the world having its sources within the tropics, a second natural cause, independent of such tropical winds, would still be requisite to produce the simultaneous drought within the *extra-tropical* regions of Asia to which Canaan and the Negeb belong.

Hence I suggested to my German reviewer, and I do so now to all who entertain the same opinion, that as he and they would doubtless be incredulous as to the miraculous coincidence of two such distinct natural causes, they might, on reflection, be inclined to admit that Mitzraim, like Canaan and the other districts where the famine raged during one and the same period, could not have been situate within the valley of the Nile; and that, consequently, *one single natural cause*, namely, an extraordinary continual drought in all those countries at the same time, with which the inundation of the Nile had nothing whatever to do, would suffice to bring about the result recorded in the Scripture history, the famine caused by that extensive drought having been specially and exclusively provided against in Mitzraim by the miraculous foresight and administrative talent of Joseph.

That the Land of the Philistines was a rich and fertile country, possessing vines and olives, and



producing corn, is shown by the story of Samson,<sup>1</sup> and the fact of its having furnished the Israelites with a resource in case of famine is established not only by what is narrated of the Shunammite widow, who having been forewarned by Elisha of the approaching seven years' famine in the land of Israel, "went with her household, and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years,"<sup>2</sup> precisely as, eight centuries previously, her ancestor, the Patriarch Jacob, and his household, had, under similar circumstances, migrated into the conterminous corn-growing country of Mitzraim; but yet more by the apposite case of the Patriarch Isaac, of whom we read, that after his father's death, and whilst he "dwelt by the well Lahai-roi,"<sup>3</sup> "there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech, king of the Philistines, unto Gerar. And the Eternal appeared unto him, and said, *Go not down into Mitzraim*; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of. Sojourn in this land. . . . And Isaac dwelt in Gerar."<sup>4</sup> From which text it is manifest that even in the time of that patriarch the corn-growing country Philistia was a resource against famine, as it was in the time of the Prophet

<sup>1</sup> Judges xv. 5.<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings viii. 1, 2.<sup>3</sup> Gen. xxv. 11.<sup>4</sup> Gen. xxvi. 1-6.

Elisha; and therefore the argument that Egypt, watered by the Nile, must of necessity have been the only country that escaped the famine in the next generation after Isaac, falls to the ground.

The further objection, that the country which I assert to be Mitzraim is at the present day a dreary waste, incapable of supplying its own wants, not to speak of those of the adjoining countries, is surely not valid. How many are the once rich, fertile, and populous regions in various parts of the earth, of which the condition has deteriorated quite as much as that of the Mitzraim of Scripture!

The Negeb, or "South Country," in particular, has, by the recent explorations of Professor Palmer and (the late) Mr. Tyrwhitt Drake, been found to be covered with ruins of buildings and other signs of former prosperity and fertility,<sup>1</sup> which entirely belie the notions hitherto entertained of its utter inability to have ever maintained a large settled population, or, in fact, any inhabitants whatever beyond the scanty tribes that now wander over its barren surface. The following extracts from the "Desert of the Exodus" of the former of these two travellers shall be cited in proof of this assertion. On the road from Kalaáb en

<sup>1</sup> See Wilton's "Negeb," p. 61, London, 1863.

Nakhal to Hebron, in about  $30^{\circ} 20'$  N. lat., Professor Palmer says:—"Descending into Wády Lussán itself, we found considerable signs of former cultivation; admirably constructed dams stretched across the valley, and on the higher slope were long low walls of very careful construction, consisting of two rows of stones beautifully arranged in a straight line, with smaller pebbles between. One of these was 180 yards long, then came a gap, and another wall of 240 yards, at the end of which it turned round in a sharp angle. The next was even larger, and here the object of the walls was at once apparent, as the enclosure was divided into large steps or terraces, to regulate the irrigation and distribute the water, the edge of each step being carefully built up with stones. They formed *Mezárí*, or cultivated patches of ground; and from the art displayed in their arrangement, belonged, evidently, to a *later* and more civilised people than those who now inhabit the country."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Palmer identifies this spot Lussan with the ancient Roman station Lysa, which is mentioned in the *Peutinger* Tables as situated forty-eight Roman miles from *Eboda* or Abdeh.

He goes on to say that the principal reason for

<sup>1</sup> Palmer's *Desert of the Exodus*, 1871, p. 347.

assuming Hebron, or more properly Wády el Khalíl, not to be the Eshkol of Numbers xiii. 23, "appears to be the circumstance that Hebron is the most southern point of Palestine where grapes are found, and that the district is still renowned for them. But (says he) it is a noteworthy fact that among the most striking characteristics of the Negeb are miles of hill-sides and valleys covered with the small stone-heaps formed by sweeping together in regular swathes the flints which strew the ground; along these grapes were trained, and they still retain the name of Teleilát el 'Anab, or 'grape mounds.' Towers similar to those which adorn the vineyards of Palestine are also of frequent occurrence throughout the country."<sup>1</sup> And at page 356 Mr. Palmer says, "The hill-sides are traversed in every direction by well-constructed paths, and traces are also visible in the valley of dams and other devices for irrigation, all of which bespeak a former state of fertility and industry." A few miles farther north the travellers came to the confluence of Wády el 'Ain, Wády Gaseimeh, and Wády es Serám; and the Professor adds (pp. 357, 358), "At the mouth of Wády el 'Ain the hill-sides are covered with paths and walls, and the bed of the

<sup>1</sup> *Mitzraim*, Palmer's *Desert of the Exodus*, 1871, p. 352.

wády has strongly-built dams extending across it, and is filled with mezári or sowing-fields, and the surrounding hills are covered with innumerable stone remains. . . . As we proceed northward from this point, the marks of former cultivation become more and more apparent at every step. The wády-beds are embanked and laid out in fields, and dams are thrown across to break the force of, and utilise the water. The hill-sides are covered with paths and terraces, and everywhere there is some trace of ingenious industry." And next day he describes Wády Berein as "a broad valley, taking its rise in Jebel Magráh, and filled with vegetation; grass, asphodel, and 'oshej grew in great profusion. Flowers sprang beneath our feet, immense herds of cattle were going to and fro between us to the wells, and large flocks of well-fed sheep and goats were pasturing upon the neighbouring hills. Numbers of donkeys, and some horses, the first we had seen in the country, were also feeding there. . . . The valley has been enclosed for purposes of cultivation, and banked-up terraces (called by the Arabs 'ugúm), to stop the force of the seils and spread the waters over the cultivated ground, extend along the whole length of the wády-bed."¹

¹ Palmer's Desert of the Exodus, 1871, p. 361.

The following interesting description is also given by Professor Palmer of the mode in which water is obtained from wells sunk in the chalk country of Berein. He says:—"Opposite the *dowár* [or stone circle serving as enclosure for cattle] are two deep wells, built with very solid masonry, and surrounded with troughs for watering the flocks and herds; one of them is dry, the other still yields good water, and is about twenty-five feet deep. Besides the troughs, there are circular trenches, fenced round with stones, for the cattle to drink from. A man in the airy costume of our first parents *was always to be seen drawing water* for the camels, hundreds of which were crowding around to drink. When the camels had finished, the flocks came up; it was a curious sight to see the sheep and goats taking their turns, a few goats going up and making way for a few sheep, and so on until the whole flock had finished. A little farther on, is the *fiskíyeh*, a large reservoir, with an aqueduct leading down to it from the wells. The aqueduct is on the north-east side of the valley; it is well constructed and firmly cemented; the channel for the water is about eighteen inches wide and sixteen deep, and built on huge blocks of stone, which support it from below and give

the proper level ; above it is a row of huge boulders, arranged so as to protect it from the falling *débris* and torrents. The *fiskiye*, or reservoir, is built of rather roughly dressed but squared stones, the courses of masonry, which are eight in number, running with great regularity vertically as well as horizontally. It has been originally plastered on the inside with hard cement, some of which still remains on the walls. Around the top of the walls is a path some eighteen inches wide, and above this are two more courses of masonry. The earth outside the tank has been piled up to within three feet of the top, and the remains of buttresses are still to be seen around it.”<sup>1</sup> Writing of the people of Hanein (p. 365), he adds: “There exists an old tradition among them that, ‘should a *seil* [flood or torrent] once come down Wády Hanein, there would be an end to all prosperity in the land.’ . . . The tradition evidently dates from ancient times, and alludes to the admirable art with which the valley is dammed up, or rather laid out in terraces with strong embankments ; these would make it simply impossible for any flood to rush through the valley, and would distribute the waters of a torrent equally over the sur-

<sup>1</sup> Palmer's *Desert of the Exodus*, p. 362.

faces of the cultivated terraces, instead of allowing them to rush unimpeded down to the sea, as they would do in other valleys unprotected by such art."

All the valleys here mentioned are tributaries of the great *Nakhal Mitzráim* (or *Nahal*), the *Wády el Kebir* ("Quadalquiver"), or great stream of *Mitzraim*, now known as the *Wády el 'Arish*.

Professor Palmer goes on to say, that in two hours and ten minutes from Berein they reached El 'Aujeh, where they encamped, a little above *Wády Hanein*, in about 30° 50' north latitude, and being still about forty geographical miles south of Hebron, and twenty-five miles north of Beersheba. "Now all is desert, though the immense numbers of walls and terraces show how extensively cultivated the valley must once have been. Arab tradition, which calls *Wády Hanein* a 'valley of gardens,' is undoubtedly true for many of those large, flat, strongly-embanked terraces must have been once planted with fruit-trees, and others have been laid out in kitchen-gardens: this would still leave many miles for the cultivation of grain."<sup>1</sup>

My own experience too, in my passage across the desert, between the heads of the Gulfs of Akaba and Suez, has convinced me that the destruction of

<sup>1</sup> Palmer's *Desert of the Exodus*, p. 366.



the trees which once were planted there, and the consequent aridity of the country has reduced it to the miserable condition in which it now is.

The time was when the Nakhal Mitzraim, the Brook of Mitzraim,<sup>1</sup>—not the “River of Egypt,” as it is so erroneously translated, and now known as the Wády el 'Arīsh,—was, as were once the Paglione of Nice, the Po, the Arno, the Tiber, the Sebeto, and most of the Italian rivers, a full perennial stream, instead of being, as it now is, a dry river-bed, except at the momentary period when it is an impetuous torrent carrying away every atom of good productive soil, and overwhelming and destroying everything it meets with in its headlong course.

In thus speaking of the Wády el 'Arīsh, or Nakhal Mitzraim, I wish it to be understood that this *wády*, or one of its branches, and not the Nile of Egypt, is the *Yeór* of the Biblical Mitzraim, on the brink of which the infant Moses was exposed,<sup>2</sup> and the water of which was turned into blood<sup>3</sup> by the deliverer of the Israelites.

That the Hebrew expression “*Yeór*” cannot mean the Nile may be proved by twofold arguments. In the first place, it is the Euphrates that is styled

<sup>1</sup> In “*Origines Biblicæ*,” p. 286, I conjectured this to have been the Wády Ghazza, the much smaller wády near Gaza.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. ii. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. vii. 19.