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JOURNAL OF  
THE TRANSACTIONS  
OF  
The Victoria Institute,  
OR,  
Philosophical Society of Great Britain.

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EDITED BY THE HONORARY SECRETARY,  
CAPTAIN F. W. H. PETRIE, F.G.S., &c.

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1899.

# MOUNT SINAI

REDUCED FROM THE ORDNANCE SURVEY

Scale One Inch to 1 Eng. Stat. Mile

FURLONGS 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 MILE



From Dr. Wm. Smith's Ancient Atlas.

with Mr. John Murray's permission

TO ILLUSTRATE A PAPER BY PROFESSOR HULL, LL.D. F.R.S.

## ORDINARY MEETING.\*

The following paper was read by the Author :—

### *WHERE IS MOUNT SINAI?*

By Professor EDWARD HULL, LL.D., F.R.S., F.G.S.

[WITH A MAP AND SKETCHES.]

1. *Introduction.*—Professor Sayce has put the above question before the public in a recent pamphlet, and after a very learned philological discussion leaves the reader very much in the condition in which he finds him. He merely suggests that some day or other the Mount may be discovered amongst the sterile and sunbeaten heights of Edom. Not having had the advantage, enjoyed by myself in 1883, of personally visiting Arabia Petraea, Professor Sayce naturally hesitates to identify any of the supposed sites with Mount Sinai. Serbâl, Jebel Musâ, and Mount Hor have all been recognized by writers as “Horeb, The Mount of God,” besides two or three others scattered over the region of Arabia Petraea which are altogether too problematical for further reference. Having, as I feel convinced, personally ascended this ever memorable mountain in the year 1883, and satisfied myself that the traditional Sinai, known as Jebel Musâ in the centre of the Sinaitic Peninsula, in every way meets the requirements of the narrative of the Exodus, I venture to reply to the question put by my

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\* This paper could not be fully discussed when it was first brought forward. The discussion has now been completed and corrected to date, 1899. Any election of members, etc., when it was first brought forward are noted at p. 94, vol. xxix.

learned friend; and to state, not for the first time, the grounds of my belief. I must first premise, however, that I accept the account of the Israelitish Exodus as given in the Books of Exodus and Deuteronomy as a narrative of facts—due allowance being of course made for minor errors of transcription. Nor am I in the least concerned regarding the authorship—whether it was written entirely by Moses, or is a compilation from documents handed down from the time of Moses and arranged historically at a somewhat later period. I regard the events recorded, the words spoken, and the miraculous interposition of Jehovah, as having been faithfully handed down to us. And as we know from recent discoveries amongst the most ancient records, whether engraved in brick or stone, that the art of writing was understood and practised in Egypt at the period of the Exodus, and recollecting how transcendently important to the future of the Israelitish nation were the events of the Exodus, I cannot doubt but that the utmost care was exercised by the scribe, or scribes, of that nation to transmit to future generations a true and faithful record of the wonderful events which were interwoven with that great crisis in their history. This probability is in itself so strong as almost to amount to a demonstration. Guided, therefore, by these postulates, and I know of no others upon which we can proceed,\* I will endeavour to answer the question of Professor Sayce, and I shall claim to have done so if I succeed in showing that there is in Arabia Petraea a mountain which answers in situation and conditions the requirements of the narrative. If this can be reasonably demonstrated it will react on the narrative itself in favour of the view of its truth; otherwise we should have to suppose that the inventor had personally visited and examined the localities in order to make his narrative fit in with the topographical details as they existed some 3,000 years ago.† I do not profess to offer anything perfectly new. I am glad to know that the results of personal examination are in accordance with the views of other

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\* Unless we suppose with some German critics, such as Winckler, that the whole account of the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt is a pure invention—a view more incredible than the narrative itself.

† The story of the siege of Troy as given in the *Iliad* was formerly considered as a poetic fiction of Homer—but the investigations of Schliemann have proved that the siege of Troy is based on fact, and is in the main topographically correct.

observers even better qualified than myself to maintain the correctness of the traditional site, amongst whom I may mention the late Professor Palmer, who on several occasions visited Arabia Petræa and has recorded his views in his well known work, *The Desert of the Exodus*; Captain (now Major-General Sir Charles) Wilson, R.E., who with several assistants carried out the Ordnance Survey of Sinai in 1868, and had opportunities not surpassed, if reached, by any other Englishman of studying the topographical details\*; and Dean Stanley, who took infinite pains to satisfy himself that Jebel Musâ, with its great plain of Er-Râhah lying at its base, agreed with the account of the "Giving of the Law," and departed without a doubt resting on his mind.† Nor may we omit to mention the name of Dr. Robinson, to whose mind the personal observation of Jebel Musâ and its surroundings carried the conviction that it was indeed the Mount of God; the scene of the awful events accompanying the giving of the Law, which he has expressed in the following words:—"We gave ourselves up to the impressions of the awful scene, and read with a feeling of awe that will never be forgotten, the sublime account of the transaction, and the Commandments there promulgated, in the original words as recorded by the great Hebrew legislator."‡

Having thus shown that "the traditional Sinai" (or Jebel Musâ) is recognised by several weighty authorities writing from personal examination of the locality (and others might be cited) as really the Mount of the Law described in Exodus, I now pass on to give my own views on the same subject, also drawn from personal examination. And first it must be ascertained if Jebel Musâ occupies a geographical position consistent with the narrative of the Israelitish journeys after their departure from Egypt and previous to their arrival at Kadesh Barnea. This part of my subject I can only refer to very briefly.

2. *Journey from Moses Wells (Ayun Musâ) to Sinai.*—Assuming, what is scarcely doubtful, that after the passage of the Red Sea (the Gulf of Suez, which I have elsewhere shown, probably extended up the Isthmus into the Great

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\* The results were published in five folio volumes by authority of H.M. Treasury (1872).

† *Sinai and Palestine*, 5th Edit., p. 75. Dean Stanley was no easily convinced enthusiast, as any one may satisfy himself who reads his book.

‡ *Biblical Researches*, I, p. 129, 130 and 158.

Bitter Lake at this period\*), the Israelites appear to have turned southwards along the plain which borders the eastern shore of the Gulf in order to avoid the wild and forbidding line of escarpment of the Wilderness of Shur (or Etham) now called Jebel et-Tih; and they went three days' journey and pitched in Marah. It is reasonable to suppose that this name is retained in the present "Wadi-el-Amâra"—which is 35 miles from 'Ain Musâ—giving about 11 miles for each day's journey.† From Marah they removed to Elim, one day's journey of 12 miles if we adopt the view that Elim is the present Wadi Gharandel, where water (by digging) and vegetation are abundant, though the "twelve wells and three-score and ten palm trees" have disappeared. From Elim continuing their course for a further distance of about 25 miles, they came to their camping ground by the shore of the Red Sea, where they appear to have rested for nearly a month and a half (Ex. xvi, 1). This camping ground has been identified with every probability by Sir C. W. Wilson as the plain of Murkhâh opposite the entrance to Wadi Taiyibeh‡ by which they commenced their journey towards Mount Sinai. Leaving their camp after a seasonable rest, they proceeded in the second important stage of their journey by the Wadies Shellâl, Mokattam and Feirân to Rephidim. The Feirân is the best watered valley in the whole peninsula, and as Wilson has shown is naturally the great highway from the shores of the Red Sea towards Jehel Musâ, and was therefore the most convenient line of march for the Israelitish host. At Rephidim, which is identified by Palmer and Stanley§ as some point near the junction of the W. esh Sheikh with W. Feirân, they were attacked by the Amalekites, who from their camps towards the north had probably watched with jealous eyes the progress of the host. From thence they proceeded by the former valley onwards towards the Holy Mount, and passing through the Grand Gorge of El Watyieh between lofty walls of red porphyry, they finally pitched their tents on the wide plain now called Wadi er-Râha which stretches up to the base of Jebel Musâ (Pl. II, Fig. 2).

\* *Mount Seir, Sinai and Western Palestine* (1884).

† The account of the stages given in Exodus agrees with that expressly stated to have been recorded by Moses in Numbers xxxiii, except that in this latter we have mentioned (v. 10) the encampment by the Red Sea and two others, Dophkah and Alush, which are omitted in Exodus.

‡ *Ordnance Survey of Sinai*, p. 151.

§ As Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, 5th Edit., p. 41.

It has been doubted whether there is sufficiently extensive camping ground at the base of Jebel Musâ to admit of the long residence of a host such as that of the Israelites, with their flocks and herds.\* But I think that anyone who has surveyed this fine valley, nearly a mile in breadth and two miles in length, will admit that the difficulty vanishes, and will be inclined to agree with Dean Stanley when he says, "Considering the almost total absence of such conjunctions of plain and mountain in this region, it is really important evidence of the truth of the narrative, that one such conjunction can be found, and that within the neighbourhood of the traditional Sinai."† For myself I never had a doubt, after traversing this great amphitheatre leading up to the very base of the stupendous granite cliff of Râs Sufsâfeh, that here indeed was the camp, and there the mount from whence Jehovah gave forth His laws amidst the thunders and earthquakes which caused the mountain to rock from its foundations. Thus we see that as far as the journey from Egypt to Jebel Musâ, here considered to be "Mount Sinai," is concerned, the narrative is fairly consistent with the physical features and conditions of the route now sketched out.‡

3. *Journey from Sinai to Kadesh Barnea.*—Before entering upon an account of Mount Sinai (or J. Musâ) itself, in order to show how it corresponds in its physical features with the Bible narrative, I propose to consider the third stage of the journey to Kadesh in order to see whether it also fits in with the narrative.

On leaving Mount Sinai two roads were possible in order to reach Kadesh; one (advocated by Holland) by the Wadies Zelagah and El'Ain and the desert of Et Tih; the other by W. Sa'at and El Huderah§ down to the shore of the Gulf of Akabah, and thence northwards by the Arabah Valley. This latter appears the more probable route, as Ezion Geber (now

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\* Prof. Palmer has estimated that Wadi er Râha has an area of two million of square yards. The flocks and herds would find pasturage in the neighbouring valleys of Sebayeh, Esh-Sheilch and its branches.

† Stanley, *loc. cit.* p. 77.

‡ Ex. xix, 18. There was a second route, that by the Haj Road from Suez to Akabah across the waterless plateau of the Badiet-et-Tih. This route has been advocated by Mr. J. Baker Greene in his work *The Hebrew Migration from Egypt*. But any one who knows this region is aware that it is perfectly impracticable for a multitude of men, women and children travelling on foot and accompanied by flocks and herds.

§ Identified by Palmer with Hazeroth, Num. xi, 35.



Akabah at the head of the Ælanitic Gulf) is distinctly mentioned in the narrative of Moses bearing on this part of the wanderings between Sinai and Kadesh\* ; by this route also there would be better pasturage for the flocks and herds, along the Wadi-el-Arabah itself. The fact that it was after the Israelites had left Mount Sinai that they passed by Ezion Geber on their way to Kadesh is sufficient to prove that Sinai could not have been in the land of Edom, as this mountainous country lies to the east and north of the route towards Kadesh, and Ezion Geber was on its margin. To suppose Mount Sinai was somewhere amongst the Edomite Mountains or (Mount Seir) would be to reverse the order of localities as narrated in Numbers xxxiii. Doubtless it is now impossible to identify more than one or two of the localities referred to as camping ground in the march from Sinai to Ezion Geber, but there is no reason to doubt they are stated in the correct order of succession.† Nevertheless it will be observed that the narrative of events both before and after the visit to Mount Sinai is consistent in showing that Sinai lay in a position intermediate between the shore of the Gulf of Suez, and that of the Gulf of Akabah, both being branches of the Red Sea.

*Mount Serbâl.*—The only other mountain in this region which can possibly lay a claim to the title of Mount Sinai is Jebel Serbâl, a magnificent serrated ridge which rises to a height of 6,712 feet above the sea, and along the northern base of which winds the Wadi Feirân (Fig 2). Notwithstanding the fact that Serbâl was identified with Sinai by Eusebius, Jerome and other writers down to the time of Justinian,‡ and that (alike with J. Musâ) it is regarded as a sacred place by the Bedouins, it does not appear to answer the requirements of the narrative to the extent of its rival Jebel Musâ. If Rephidim be properly placed in the W. Feirân, as I believe, and if after the events which took place there the Israelites broke up their camp, and as stated “departed from Rephidim and came to the wilderness of Sinai,”§ then clearly Sinai was not Mount Serbâl: for every step they took towards the former left the latter farther behind. In

\* Num. xxxiii, 15-35.

† For the origin of some of the names, which have generally only a local meaning derived from plants, rocks, &c., see *The Speaker's Commentary*.

‡ This statement is questioned by Wilson. (*See discussion.*)

§ Ex. xix. 1, 2.

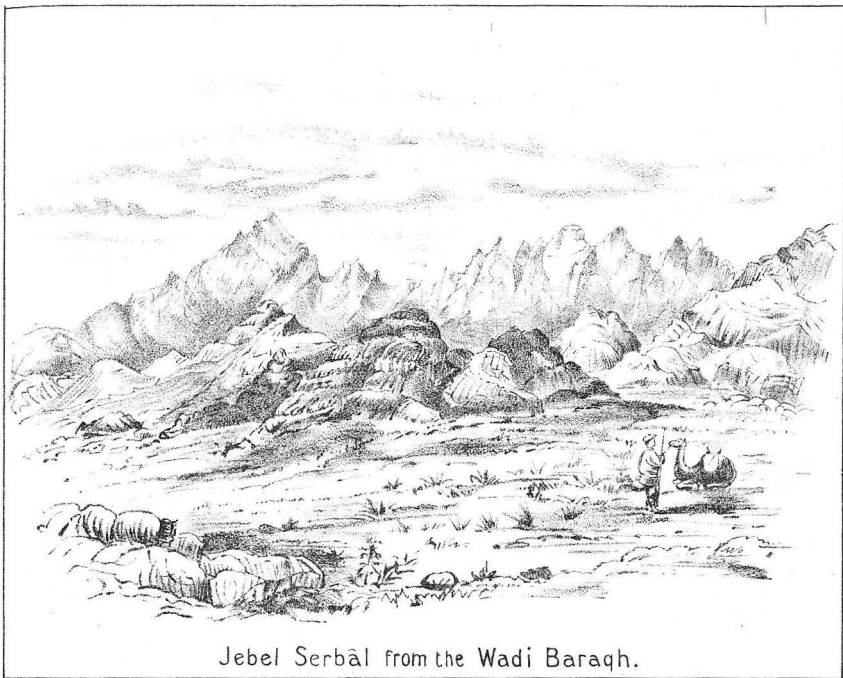
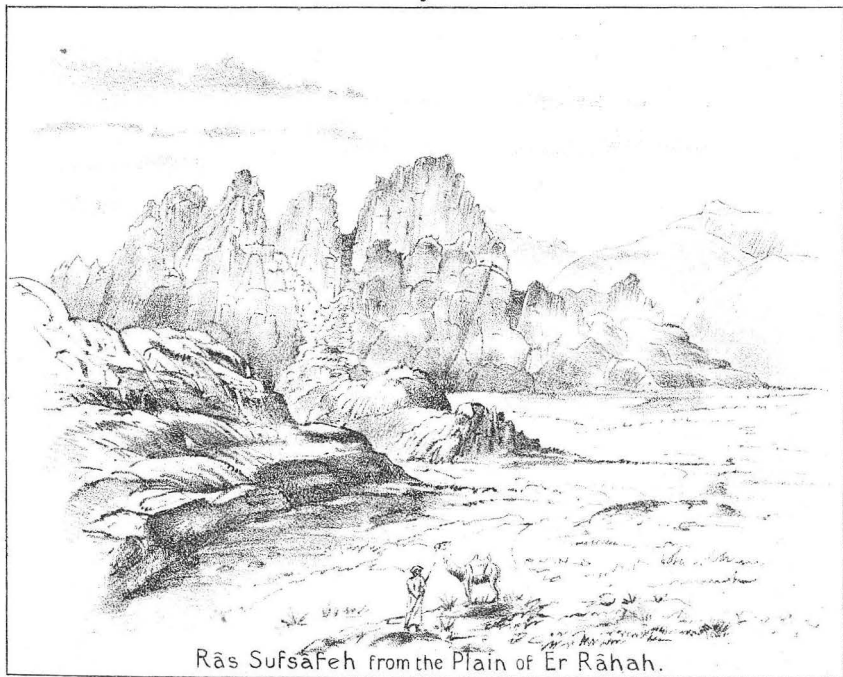


Fig. 2.



the next place there is no camping ground of sufficient extent reaching to the base of Serbâl which can compare with that of the Wadi er Rahâh both for convenience and fitness with the requirements of the narrative. I have not myself traversed the Wadi Feirân, and have only seen the rugged outline of Serbâl at some distance to the west of our route in 1883; but Stanley had visited this mountain as well as J. Musâ, and deliberately rejects the claims of Serbâl, on the ground of topographical unfitness.\*

4. *Jebel Musâ*.—We are now in a position to consider the physical characteristics of Jebel Musâ, and to determine whether or not this mountain fulfils the requirements of the narrative of the giving of the Law.

Though Jebel Musâ is a mountain amongst mountains, it stands out clearly individualized by reason of the broad valley of Er Râhah at its confluence with that of Esh Sheikh on the north; that of Wadi ed Dêir by which it is bounded along the east; and the W. Seil Leja which follows its western flank and separates it from Jebel-el-Hôm. In the Wadi ed Dêir is situated the Monastery of St. Catharine.

The summit of J. Musâ reaches an elevation of 7,363 feet, and is formed of fine grey gneiss with slight traces of foliation; and it is crowned by a little mosque, and the ruins of an ancient Greek Church built of marble. A few hundred feet below the summit is a remarkable basin of clear cold water; and in the cliff surrounding it is a cave known as that of Elijah.† The basin gives origin to a small stream and cascade which descends to the base of the mount opposite the monastery, and is a never-failing source of supply. This spring, and three or four others which descend from J. Musâ and J. Katharina, are, according to Wilson, fed by the snows of winter which at these high altitudes rest on the mountain tops, and when melting percolate into the joints and crevices of the rocks. This abundance of water is an important point of evidence of the identification of the

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\* *Loc. cit.* p. 40; 44, 76. In this I myself concur for reasons to be stated; but probably Serbâl, which is the grandest mountain in the Sinaitic peninsula, partly owing to its isolation, and partly to its extreme ruggedness, will always have supporters to its claim to be the Mount of the Law.

† I have personally little doubt that it is really the cave to which the prophet Elijah fled from the face of Ahab; and also that it was the retreat of St. Paul after his conversion, when he "went into Arabia." Gal. i, 17.

mountain with Sinai, as we read of the brook into which Moses strewed the dust of the golden calf.\*

But the summit of Mount Sinai is not visible from the valley of Er Râhah. Although only about a mile distant, the view of the summit is completely cut off by the huge wall of red granite known as Ras Sufsâfeh which springs from the head of the valley with astonishing boldness to a height of about 2,000 feet, Pl. II, Fig. 2. This remarkable feature is in entire accordance with the account in the Bible. Once Moses and Joshua had disappeared in their ascent of the mount behind this rock they were lost to view; and it is not surprising that the people should have exclaimed, "as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him."† Again, on viewing this mural cliff forming the base of the mountain at this spot, we cannot but feel, as it seems to me, that we are in face of the "mount which might be touched," and which was to be warded off by setting bounds to it.‡ It would be impossible to apply such language to the border of a mountain of irregular form and sloping outline.§ This great cliff, between which and the main mass of J. Musâ, there is a depression along which a traveller may descend from the summit, also throws light on the tenour of the remarkable conversation between Moses and Joshua. It is clear from this conversation that the proceedings going forward in the camp were completely hidden from them when on the summit, and it was only when they were descending that even the voices of the singing multitude came to their ears. But on turning by the corner of the cliff (probably by the Wadi el Leja), the terrible scene of idolatrous riot broke upon their view for the first time, and "Moses cast the tables of the Law out of his hands and brake them beneath the mount."||

*Vegetation and Water.*—The only other point, as it seems to me, requiring notice to confirm the identification is the question whether at the base of Jebel Musâ there was sufficient

\* *The Brook that descended out of the Mount*, Deut. ix, 21.

† Ex. xxxii, 1.

‡ Ch. xix, 12, 13.

§ I cannot concur in the view of Dr. Robinson that one of the necessities of the account requires that the summit of the mountain must have commanded a view of the camp, and the converse. The whole narrative appears to infer the very opposite of this.

|| Ex. xxxii, 15-18.

vegetation for the food of the flocks and herds accompanying the host. At the present day the valleys in this district are very far from being deserts. When seen from the summit of the mountain, even at the end of the summer or autumn, their surfaces show a green tinge contrasting with the colours of the naked rocks forming the flanks of the mountains themselves; and, as a matter of fact, there is generally a covering of vegetation over their surfaces, consisting of small plants and herbs upon which the camels mainly depend for their food when traversing the mountain passes. The *Zygophyllum* is generally abundant even in dry localities; and, where there are springs, willows, broom with white blossoms, tamarisks and palm trees flourish; but there is some reason for believing that, 3,000 years ago, the vegetation was more abundant than at the present day.\* As regards water, there is no mountain in the whole peninsula better supplied than Jebel Musâ. I have already referred to the fine spring which descends from the pool immediately under the summit of the mountain, but there are several others, especially that which gives origin to the brook of the W. el Leja on the flanks of J. Katharina; without doubt there was no want of water for the necessities of the host of Israel during their encampment.

5. *Conclusion.*—I have thus endeavoured to show that, both as regards geographical position and the physical details to be gathered from a careful survey of Jebel Musâ and its surroundings, this mountain sustains its claim to be regarded as the Mount Sinai of the Bible, from the summit of which Jehovah gave the Law to the Children of Israel. The fact that there is a mountain which in the minuter details of the narrative can be found to meet these requirements, is a strong corroboration of the truth and reality of the events recorded; but only those who have visited personally this wonderful region can realize to their full extent the harmony between the narrative and the physical conditions presented to his view.†

\* Mem. *Physical Geology of Arabia Petraea, &c.*, chap. 2, part v (1886).

† I believe Prof. Sayce attaches some importance to the passages in Deut. xxxiii, 2, and Judges v, 4, in which there is an *appearance* of identifying Seir or Edom with Sinai. This appearance of identification seems to me very questionable; but in any case the language of Hebrew poetry can scarcely be admitted as of greater force than a narrative of events.

The CHAIRMAN (T. CHAPLIN, Esq., M.D.)—I am sure that our thanks are due to Professor Hull for the interesting paper he has just read (hear).

Sir C. W. WILSON, R.E., K.C.M.G., K.C.B.—I do not think I can add very much to what Professor Hull has said in his paper, but I would remind you that the question of Mount Sinai being in Edom is not a recent one.

The same question was raised a great many years ago by the late Dr. Beke, who was a very determined man and very certain of his opinions, and before he left England he decided where Mount Sinai was. He went out and made a very short journey across the desert and found Mount Sinai in the mountains in Edom, and came back again fully satisfied that he had found the true mount. He did not go up the mount or examine its environs. He merely encamped about the mountain and looked up at it and was certain that all was right.

There are two points that I should like to mention in connection with the paper, and one is that I think Professor Hull has hardly, or not at all, introduced what I think is a very strong argument in favour of the present Mount Sinai.

There is no doubt that the Jews, during the period of the Kings, knew perfectly well where the real Mount Sinai was, and from the time of the Kings,—if you consider the intimate connection there was between Palestine and Egypt during the latter part of the monarchy—I cannot think that the identification of Mount Sinai could be so completely lost. It is rather the fashion to doubt tradition such as that of Mount Sinai, but I think we may be pretty certain that the tradition has been true, and that in Jebel Musâ, or rather the mountain group of that name, we have the true Mount Sinai of the Israelites. I do not quite know where Professor Hull got his authority for saying that in the time of Eusebius and Jerome, Serbâl was considered the true Mount Sinai: that is not in accordance with my reading of the old authorities, and I do not think it is quite in accordance with the existing remains that are found in the peninsula. When the upper Monasteries were destroyed by the Arabs, a great many hermits were driven out and there was a concentration of hermits round Mount Serbâl, where there is one of the most interesting types of rock steps ever seen laid down from the monasteries to the waters. One of the oldest accounts that has come down to us clearly refers, I think, to Jebel Musâ and not Mount Serbâl.

I am sorry that I did not know that the illustrations of the

lecture were so small, or I would have sent some models of Mount Serbâl and others for the inspection of the meeting. I think anyone looking at the models will come to the conclusion that Jebel Serbâl is in impossible competition with Jebel Musâ. There is the encamping ground on which the Israelites could encamp, but three or four miles off there is the roughest mountain country that anyone could wish to travel over. The actual peak of Jebel Musâ is, in all particulars, in agreement with the Bible narrative. Wadi er-Rabah is, in one sense, the head of the valley; its peculiarity is that it slopes down in the form of the seats in a theatre towards the base of this gigantic wall so that the Israelites standing on that would be arranged in tiers, so to speak, and in absolute view of what was going on on the mount.

The features of Jebel Musâ are entirely in accordance with the Bible narrative. I think that Moses did not come down by Wadi el Leja, as Professor Hull suggests, but there is another valley in which a small stream rises, and it is separated from Wadi el Leja by a spur. The name of that valley is Wadi Feirân, and a stream, in which I believe fragments of the golden calf were thrown, rises in that valley. There is a very easy ascent to the mountain, and consequently an easy descent by which Moses and Aaron may have come down.

The question of the route by which the Israelites left Mount Sinai is rather a difficult one. My own view is that the Israelites went down by the Wadies Zelagah and Elain, and did not turn down to the gulf of Akabah. I think if they had turned down and camped by the water, we should have had a mention of it. I believe they went to Kadesh, invaded it, and being repulsed they went to Ezion Geber after.

Rev. Canon R. B. GIRDLESTONE, M.A.—May I mention that Major H. Spencer Palmer, in his *Sinai*, deals with some objections raised by doubters of the traditional view.\* One point has not been touched on to-day; Professor Sayce says that in the time of the Exodus the country that has been described was entirely under Egyptian rule; being held for the sake of the turquoise and the copper mines, by garrisons in places on the western coast of the Red Sea. But what could a handful of troops do against 600,000 fighting men marching out of Egypt?

Professor HULL.—I feel it is a great satisfaction to me, as I am

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\* See also Professor Palmer's *Desert of the Exodus*. 2 vols.—ED.

sure it is to everyone here, to have had the presence of my distinguished friend Sir Chas. Wilson, who is able to speak from a personal knowledge of this region.

With regard to the reference to Eusebius and Jerome I must say he has driven a wedge into my argument there, for I must confess that he is a more reliable authority as regards those two venerable authors.

Sir Chas. Wilson does not think that Ezion Geber was the Israelites' halting place on the way to Kadesh ; but he will find it so stated by Moses in Numbers (ch. xxxiii, v. 35), and therefore I must assume that to be correct.

The Meeting was then adjourned.

#### PROFESSOR A. H. SAYCE, D.D., IN REPLY.

*Luxor, Egypt.*

I have been reading Professor Hull's paper with very great interest, but it does not touch the point I have raised. He shows that if we accept the traditional view of the position of Mount Sinai, Jebel Musâ and the route leading to it will fulfil all the conditions required by the narrative of the Pentateuch. But my point is that this traditional view is not older than the age of the Christian hermits of the so-called Sinaitic Peninsula, and that it is inconsistent with (1) the Biblical geography and (2) Egyptian history.

(1) The *Yâm Sûf* of the Old Testament, mistranslated "the Red Sea," was the Gulf of 'Akabah, according to 1 Kings ix, 26, Deut. i, 1, Numb. xxxiii, 8-10, not the Gulf of Suez, the Hebrew name of which was "the Egyptian Sea" (Is. xi, 15).

Jethro visited Moses at Sinai, which seems to imply proximity to Midian.

At Rephidim the Amalekites were overthrown. The district they inhabited was not in the "Sinaitic Peninsula," but in Edom, and the desert south of Judah which stretched from Havilah to Shur (Gen. xxxvi, 12, 1 Sam. xv, 7, Gen. xiv, 7, etc.) From Exod. xvii, 16, we may gather that the Amalekites defeated by Moses were identical with those whom Saul was ordered to destroy.



The wilderness of Sinai adjoined that of Paran (Numb. x, 12), and Paran lay on the southern border of Canaan, the sanctuary of Kadeshbarnea being in it (Numb. xiii, 3, 17, 22, 26).

In Judg. v, 4, 5, Seir and Sinai are identified, as they are also in Deut. xxxiii, 2. The passages are poetry, it is true, but poetical geography is not necessarily false geography. If Sinai had been miles away in the Egyptian province of Mafket, some indication of the fact must have been given.

(2) From the time of the 3rd dynasty to the age of the Ptolemies, the Sinaitic Peninsula was an Egyptian province, and the copper and malachite mines on the western side of it were strongly garrisoned. To have marched into it, therefore, would have been like going out of the frying pan into the fire, and the Israelitish fugitives, who were ordered to avoid "the way of the Philistines" lest they should "see war," would have shared the fate of Professor Palmer and his companions.

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### COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED.

*Cannes, France.*

The Rev. W. ARTHUR writes:—

With Professor Hull I am entirely agreed in the belief that the true Mount of the Covenant is neither Serbâl nor some unknown peak in the heights of Edom, but is that mountain which I call Sinai and which Professor Hull calls Jebel-Musâ. I always found the Arabs to confine the name Jebel-Musâ to the great summit on the south-eastern side of that mass which altogether has been from time immemorial called Sinai, on the north-western front of which on a level many hundreds of feet lower lie the three minor peaks, of which one is known as Ras-Sufsâfeh. Professor Hull seems to place these at a distance of a mile from each other; my recollections would make it more than two miles, but that is a point to be decided by the Ordnance Survey, of which I have not here any copy. But at all events the distinction between Jebel-Musâ and Ras-Sufsâfeh with its two kindred peaks is as clear and as necessary as that between the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral and the cupolas on the west side overlooking Ludgate Hill; but to make the comparison a good one

the dome ought to stand quite at the end of the structure farthest from the cupolas.

In 1857, when about to start from Cairo for Arabia Petræa, the late Rev. G. S. Drew asked me to take him into my party, which I consented to do on two conditions—first, that he should not object to my taking as much time as I pleased at Mount Sinai and at the supposed passages of the Red Sea, and secondly, that I should take time for a careful ascent of Mount Serbâl.

Mr. Drew, who was subsequently Hulsean Lecturer and author of *Studies in Bible Lands* and other careful and scholarly books on Eastern travel, proved to be a very valuable and soundly critical companion. Arrived at the foot of Serbâl, we spent a Friday in the ascent and examination of that mountain. Personal acquaintance with Lepsius, the German traveller and Egyptologist, and with Dr. Stewart the Scotch traveller, author of *The Tent and the Khan*, had given me somewhat of a bent in favour of Serbâl as being the Mount of the Covenant. But having carefully drawn out from the Bible narrative the conditions required by it in the mountain, I came back to my tent after twelve hours' absence satisfied that in Serbâl those conditions did not by any means meet. The next day, Saturday, we reached Mount Sinai, and did not leave it till the afternoon of the following Thursday. Mr. Drew was at first somewhat impatient at my taking so much time, but I had come determined to pace every yard not only of the mountain but of the Wadi Sebayah, where tradition placed the children of Israel during the giving of the law, and of the Wady Er-Rahah, to which valley Dr. Robinson, the careful and meritorious American traveller, removed the people on the ground that there was not room for them in the Wadi Sebayah, in which removal he had been followed by Stanley and other English travellers. I knew that Robinson's position as to the lesser extent of Sebayah was denied by Mr. Strauss of Berlin, the Court Preacher, and by Mr. Kellogg, an American artist. Moreover, these two gentlemen had been in and examined the Wadi Sebayah, whereas Robinson did not profess to have been in it, and Stanley's own map showed that what he called an hour's walk from the convent, and which he thought to have taken him into the Wadi Sebayah, had only taken him into one of its side openings, from which another quarter of an hour's walk would greatly have astonished him.

One difference between Er-Rahah and Sebayah is this: Er-Rahah runs end on to Mount Sinai at one end, Sebayah runs across it at the other end. From the small peaks of Sufsâfeh the spectator

much nearer the ground than on Jebel-Masâ, looks along the whole length of Er-Rahah and sees every inch of it; while from Jebel-Musâ at an immensely greater height, the spectator looks not along but only across Sebayeh, of which the greater part is hidden by the swellings of the mountain he is upon, so that he sees only its further fringe. It was from this height and under this disadvantage that Robinson and Stanley took their observations, on the strength of which observations the one removed the site and the other followed him. A man on the roof of St. Paul's looking from the western cupolas would know all about Ludgate Hill which he looks along. What would a man on the top of the dome know about the passage at the east end of the Cathedral which he would only look across? Having first traced the valleys to the north and west and south, and also ascended Jebel-Katerina, we ascended Jebel-Masâ; from there saw the eastern fringe of Wadi Sebayeh, and saw even upon that portion of it Bedouin camps and flocks which I am sure no one ever saw in Er-Rahah. This point of contrast between the two was at the moment to me very puzzling. Leaving Jebel-Musâ we descended, traversed the whole length of the mountain until we reached the base of Sufsâfeh, where we had the whole of Er-Rahah spread under our eyes, and so completely were we under the impressions of the Robinson school that there we solemnly read the Decalogue, seeking to realize the scene as written by Moses; but I could not help observing "the people may have assembled in Er-Rahah, but encamp there they never would; it is utterly without anything for the flocks and the herds." It was not till after all our other pacing had been carefully done that on the Wednesday we turned towards Sebayeh, taking note of Stanley's hour's walk from the Convent. For some time after we had passed that point, there seemed to us no room for the people, but everyone who knows either mountain valleys or mountain rivers is aware that, if you follow them up at times, when they seem to promise nothing they may suddenly startle you with their openings; and I shall never forget when I turned back after Sebayeh had so opened up and shown itself to be much larger than Er-Rahah and meeting Mr. Drew, who was following after me, said, "Don't you feel as if you had been imposed upon?" and he said, "Yes, and it is a shame for men like Robinson and Stanley to profess to inform the public about valleys which they have never traversed, but have judged of them from the tops of the mountains." We carefully paced Sebayeh as we had previously done Er-Rahah, and found it by

much the larger of the two. The result of which is this, that whereas certain critics have doubted whether at Mount Sinai any place could have been found for the people, that mountain has two valleys either of which would contain them, but only one of which, as I contend, fulfils the conditions of the narrative, all of which are easily satisfied in Wady Sebayeh. These conditions I stated in an article on Sinai in Fairbairn's *Bible Dictionary*, but as to the comparative size of the two valleys, if Sir Charles Wilson's Ordnance Survey were complete and included Sebayeh, it would settle the question.\* To that authority I have not access here, and in Professor Hull's paper, Sebayeh is not mentioned.

The Rev. R. COLLINS, M.A., writes:—

I have read Professor Hull's paper with much interest. No one, who has not actually visited the sites mentioned, can speak with any amount of authority. One difficulty with regard to the route laid out by Professor Hull, Dean Stanley, Mr. Clarke, and others, appears to me to be, that Rephidim, where it is so emphatically said "there was no water," is placed in or near the Wadi Feiran, which is described by Mr. Clarke as the best watered part of the whole peninsula. Mr. Clarke pictures the Amalekites protecting their watered valley against the Israelites; and it is quite *possible* the miracle may have been needed on that account; but the text of the Bible hardly suggests this. The Amalekites seem rather to have attacked the Israelites on the rear (Deut. xxv, 8).

Another point perhaps requires some little explanation. Most of these travellers, I observe, start their own journeys and computations of time and distance from 'Ayûn Mûsa, opposite to Suez, but the crossing of the waters was almost certainly many miles north of this, and even perhaps north of the crossing place of the "Pilgrims' road" from Cairo to Ezion Geber. Did the Israelites at once turn south by the sea? There seems a little difficulty here: "Moses brought Israel *from* the Red Sea, and they went *out* into the wilderness of Shur, etc." (Ex. xv, 22); this suggests, though it does not state, that the beginning of the journey was eastward. I have not noticed any other special difficulties, as to this particular track.

On the other hand, one thing seems certain, that Sinai was in

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\* For want of funds this survey is still incomplete.—ED.

or near the portion of Arabia inhabited by the Midianites ; there (in Midian ?) was Horeb, the "Mount of God" (Ex. iii, 1); there Aaron met Moses (Ex. vi, 27); and thither would the Israelites first direct their steps under the guidance of Moses, since God had given a special token to him—"When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain" (Ex. iii, 12). Is it possible that that "Mount of God" could have been in Edom? If so, then Midian must have extended much further north than we may have been led to suppose.

The encamping of the Israelites so soon again by the "sea" (Deut. xxx, 10) is a strong point for the route indicated by Professor Hull, and is specially remarked upon by Dean Stanley. The encampment at Ezion Geber, after Sinai, is also, as Professor Hull says, another, perhaps, strong point.

The nature of the Râs Sufsâfeh, of the adjacent Wadi er Râhal, and of the whole of the Jebel Musâ, seems to wonderfully coincide with all the demands of the Bible story, though I am not sure that that ought to be considered alone enough to close controversy.

#### FURTHER REPLY BY THE AUTHOR.

*May, 1899.*

I agree with Mr. Collins that no one who has not personally visited the Sinaitic region ought to be considered as speaking with authority regarding the identification of the site of Horeb or Mount Sinai. On this ground the attempted identification of Professor Sayce must be received with great suspicion. Nor do I admit that the passages he cites from Judges and Deuteronomy—both admittedly poetic—necessarily imply identification of Seir and Sinai; on the contrary, in Deut. xxxiii, 2, the two mounts are specifically distinct. Again, is it likely that after the destruction of the Egyptian host, a fact which would immediately become known to the Egyptian garrison in the Peninsula, this garrison would have been formidable to the Israelites, as Canon Girdlestone has well pointed out? It will be satisfactory to those who hold the traditional site of Mount Sinai to be correct, that this view is supported by Sir C. W. Wilson, the Rev. W. Arthur and his companion Mr. Drew, all of whom, as well as the Author, have personally visited the region in question.

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## INTERMEDIATE MEETING.\*

COMMANDER HEATH, R.N., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the last Meeting were read and confirmed, and the following election was announced:—

A. E. Molony, Esq., Indian Civil Service, India.

A lecture was then delivered upon—

### DESIGN AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE FORMATION OF THE HUMAN FOOT. By Gerard Smith, Esq., M.R.C.S.

The author stated that he had selected the human foot as a "concrete example" in proof of a greater "abstract principle," this principle being that the animal body exhibits proof of purpose and design in structure, and of being formed *for* its work, as opposed to the contention that the body is an imperfect result of the actions of environment, and formed *by* its work, not merely modified thereby.

The human foot offered a valuable example in support of this principle, because its mechanical arrangement was so unique, being *human* essentially, and ministering to the unique human physical advantage, that of the perfect erect posture.

He said that the arguments advanced to support the denial of design, or the assertion that design, if present, is a bad one, involved the further assertions that the deformities of the human body—those of the feet specially, when they are of that class due to failure in duly discharging the functions of the feet (not in reference to deformities caused by disease, as paralysis, etc.)—are invited and precipitated by the inherent defects of the structure; defects which, if the foot is designed, have been introduced of set purpose, to inflict suffering, etc.

In justification of these imputations the lecturer brought forward demonstrations that the foundations of such arguments are fallacious, and are entirely misconceptions of the meaning of the structure of the foot.

That, though there exist possibilities of failure, since these are necessary parts of the design, with every one of such possibilities there is an efficient provision against deformity, the disregard of which (or denial of their presence, which must be held to be consistent in holding the major premise of materialism) is the real cause of deformities of this type, and also robs cripples of the provided means for their relief, whilst the methods of physical education of children, based upon theories of the kind, are rendered faulty.

A brief discussion ensued.

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\* April 13, 1898.