

Quarterly, but a comparison of the above list with the map will serve to show that they all belong to one district—the rolling chalk downs of the Negeb north of Beersheba.

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TOPOGRAPHY OF THE EXODUS.

THE valuable and interesting paper contributed to the last number of the *Quarterly Statement* has, we may perhaps feel justified in saying, entirely destroyed the basis on which Brugsch's theory of the topography of the Exodus is founded. The following notes may, it is hoped, prove of use in connection with this important question.

I.

An important element in the consideration of the subject to which Mr. Greville Chester does not seem to allude, is the rapid formation of land, and advance of the shore line, due to the annual deposit of the Nile mud on the Mediterranean coast. The shore in the Pelusiatic Bay has been proved by actual observation to be advancing seawards at the rate of 52 yards per annum, and according to the observations of Mr. Fowler, C.E., the Nile deposits no less than three millions of cubic yards of mud annually, or an area of 4 square miles added to the Delta of the river, and to the Levantine shore line. A strong current sets from the Nile mouths eastwards, and as the prevailing winds are from the north, a series of bars are formed, behind which the mud gradually consolidates into an alluvial tract, and this especially in the Pelusiatic Bay, and in the vicinity of Port S'aid, where the shoaling is a constant source of danger and expense.

Herodotus tells us that in his opinion (II, 5), all Egypt except the Theban Nome was at the time of the founding of Memphis (or some 30 centuries before the Exodus), a marshy tract, and that none of those districts which afterwards existed south of Lake Moeris (which was near Memphis) were then above water. He considers that the Nile Delta was originally a bay of the Mediterranean (II, 11), and he remarks that if the Nile had flowed into the Red Sea nothing could have prevented its being entirely filled up by the mud brought down by the river. Herodotus was apparently unaware that the Pelusiatic branch of the Nile, which in his time was silted up, had in all probability actually done what he suggests, and had formed an isthmus of marshy ground with lakes dividing the Red Sea from the Mediterranean.

In the Geography of Ptolemy (about 147 A.D.), degrees of latitude are marked, and no part of the Delta is shown as being north of 31° N. Lat. whereas the land now extends 40 minutes further north. The central part of the Delta is that which appears to have formed latest, and thus while the sites of Zoan and Bubastis are found on the east, no ancient cities (so far as the map informs us) existed in the lower part of the Delta between the branches of the river.

From these considerations it becomes apparent that, in addition to the very cogent objections which Mr. Greville Chester has stated to the identification of the Yâm Suph with the great lagoon near el Gelseh, and the narrow bar which contains it with the path of the Israelites, there is this further objection--that in all probability neither the bar nor the lagoon existed at all at the early historic period of the Exodus. The old Serbonian bog has no doubt long since become dry, as the present lagoon appears also likely in time to become, and the fact pointed out by Mr. Greville Chester that the Gelseh is merely a great sand-dune is of considerable importance in confirmation of this view.

It would seem probable for the same reason that the marshes at the head of the Red Sea, now represented by the Bitter Lakes and Birket Balah, and Birket Timsah, were more extensive formerly than after the silting up of the Pelusiatic branch of the Nile. It would seem strange if no account of the crossing of these marshes were traceable in the Biblical account of the Exodus.

II.

Dr. Brugsch has made out a strong case for the identification of the Land of Goshen with the Arabian Nome of Lower Egypt, south of the great city of Zoan or Tanis. But whether the Rameses of the Book of Exodus were in reality the same city as Zoan appears to be open to question. It has indeed been proposed to bring down the date of the Exodus to the time of Rameses II (Miamun), for the very reason that the city Rameses is mentioned in the Book of Exodus, and that Zoan was only known as the City of Rameses from the time of Rameses II, but this theory fails altogether to account for the fact that the "Land of Rameses" is noticed in the Bible as early as the time of Joseph (Genesis xlvii, 11), for no chronologist has endeavoured as yet to prove that the date of Jacob's descent into Egypt can have been as late as the time of Rameses II. The LXX translators, and Josephus believed the starting-point of the Exodus to have been much further south-west, and nearer to Memphis than to Zoan, and an element of uncertainty is thus introduced into the strongest part of Dr. Brugsch's theory.

Admitting however, that the identification of Zoan with the city Rameses is probable, several grave practical difficulties still remain. Dr. Brugsch has assumed that the Israelites' journey thence to Etham occupied a single day, whereas we may gather from the Bible that it took two days to reach the latter place (Exodus xii, 37, and xiii, 20), which cannot be considered absolutely identified with the site of Tell Dufneh. The third day's march (or the second according to Brugsch, who makes the first day's journey extend over 20 miles), was, he supposes, from Etham to the hill of el Gelseh, a total distance of 40 miles.

It is impossible to suppose that even when hastening from their enemies, the Israelites, with women, children, flocks and herds can have gone more than about 10 miles in a day's march, and Mr. Greville Chester, while considering the supposed Etham to have been within two days' easy

journey of Sâh (or Zoan) appears to have occupied three days in travelling over the route which Brugsch supposes the Israelites to have passed over in one.

III.

If then the distances implied by Brugsch, are impossible, and if the supposed route along the sandspit was not only an unnecessary détour, but was also impossible, because no such spit then existed, it remains to inquire where did the passage of the Red Sea really occur.

The name Yam Suph, or "sea of rushes" is applied in several passages of the Bible to the Red Sea, including both the Gulf of Suez, and that of Akabah (Numbers xxxiii, 10; 1 Kings ix, 26), but the meaning of the word Suph (used elsewhere to signify the rushes of which Moses' ark was made, Exodus ii, 3), suggests that the name originally applied to a lacustrine region, or freshwater marsh, and was gradually extended to include the whole Sea.

A difficulty has arisen in explaining by natural causes the driving back of the waters of the Gulf of Suez, through the agency of an east wind, and this has furnished Dr. Brugsch with an argument in favour of his supposed identification of the "Sea of Rushes" with a lagoon where no rushes it now appears), can ever have grown. It is not, however, clear that the word used in the Hebrew (*Kadim*) is correctly rendered. It may mean simply "contrary" without reference to direction. The LXX translate it "south," and Jerome gives *urens*, or "burning," as his interpretation. An east wind would, however, affect the marshes north of the Gulf of Suez equally with the lagoon indicated by Dr. Brugsch.

If we accept the identification of Etham with Tell Dufneh as probable, the site of Migdol should be sought within 10 miles of that place, and the natural reading of the scriptural narrative (Exodus xiv, 2) would place Pi-ha-hiroth not far off, and Baalzephon within view. The words of the Biblical passage seem according to our version, and also according to the LXX rendering, to imply a change of direction or a return march, which is not easily explained, but I would venture to suggest that the word used (ישבר) might perhaps be better rendered *abide*, (from the root ישב), and in this case the topography becomes at once very easily explicable.

Pi-ha-hiroth is rendered "Entrance to the Gulfs" by Brugsch, but Gesenius derives the name from a Coptic word signifying "pastures," and this agrees well with the translation given by the LXX, *επαυλεως*, "farms" or "pastures."

Thus modified, the command to the Israelites would stand as follows:—

"Speak to the children of Israel that they abide and encamp before the pastures between Migdol (the watch-tower), and the sea over against Baalzephon ("the northern ridge").

The site of Migdol is as yet not well fixed. Mr. Greville Chester considers that the remains at Tell es Samût ("hillock of acacias") are too insignificant to allow of Brugsch's doubtful identification, and the site of Tell

el Hîr seems too near to Pelusium to satisfy the requirements of the Antonine Itinerary. The Baalzephon of Brugsch has also been proved an impossible identification, and no certain recovery of the name has been suggested, although the title occurs as distinguishing the god Amon in the Egyptian inscriptions. Nevertheless, there appears to be many circumstances which favour the site proposed below for the crossing of the so-called Red Sea, near the present ruin of el Kantarah.

1st. The lakes and marshes must here have presented a formidable obstacle before the silting up of the Pelusiatic branch of the Nile, and must have been crossed by the Israelites, of which crossing we have no account, unless it be the passage of the Yam Suph, or Sea of Rushes, rendered Red Sea in the English Version.

2nd. The scene of the supposed crossing is within a few miles of the last station of the Israelites at Etham, agreeing with the view that the site of Pi-ha-hiroth was to be sought in this vicinity. While the fresh water of the Nile was carried down towards this district it may probably have presented good pasture land, and the rushes which grew in the Nile and formed the ark of Moses (Suph) would also no doubt be found in the swampy marshes near the Pelusiatic Mouth.

3rd. The driving back of the waters of the Mediterranean near the mouth of the river would have probably formed a shallow bar at its mouth, and rendered possible the crossing of the swamps or lakes, which on this theory are supposed to have then occupied the part of the isthmus between the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Suez; and when we reflect on the account which Herodotus gives of Necho's Canal, in W. Tameilat, we are led to conclude that even in his time (11 centuries after the Exodus), the head of the Gulf of Suez was further north than it now is.

I would suggest then for the consideration of students, that the passage of the Red Sea may be supposed to have been that of the lakes near the Mediterranean, and the mouth of the Pelusiatic branch of the Nile somewhere between Birket Balah and Lake Menzaleh, near the ruin of el Kantarah ("the arch").

A reference to the map published with Mr. Greville Chester's paper will show that this passage is within a day's march (10 or 12 miles) of the probable site of Etham (Tell Defneh), where presumably the Pelusiatic branch formerly discharged into the Mediterranean before forming the marshy ground which now surrounds Lake Menzaleh (see *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*, July, 1880, p. 145.) On this map also, the spits and bars which now form the shore line of the Pelusiatic Bay are clearly shown, while a comparison of various recent surveys would convince the inquirer that these shoals are ever steadily moving northwards as the Nile annually brings down the African soil to form a semi-consolidated delta, of which in the time of Moses, not a trace was as yet visible.