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## 797TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,  
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON MONDAY, MARCH 2ND, 1936,  
AT 4.30 P.M.

BRIG.-GENERAL F. D. FROST, C.B.E., D.S.O., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the Meeting of February 17th were read, confirmed, and signed, and the HON. SECRETARY announced the following Elections:—

As Associates: The Lady Sydenham of Combe and J. P. Lane, Esq., and the Administrator, Maison de la Chimie, Paris, as Library Associate.

The CHAIRMAN then called on Lieut.-Colonel C. C. Robertson, D.S.O., to read his paper "On The Track of the Exodus."

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### ON THE TRACK OF THE EXODUS.

By LIEUT.-COL. C. C. ROBERTSON, D.S.O.

#### THE NARRATIVE OF THE EXODUS.

*Exod. ii, 15.*—"Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian."

*Exod. iii, 1.*—"Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb" (or Sinai).

#### *Migration Ordered from Egypt to Midian.*

*Exod. iii, 10.*—"I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."

*Exod. iii, 12.*—"When thou has brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain."

#### *Preliminary Movement Eastward to Etham.*

*Exod. xii, 37.*—"And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children."

*Exod. xvi, 38.*—"And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle."

*Exod. xviii, 20.*—"And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness."

*At Etham—Advance Eastward Prohibited.*

*Exod. xviii, 17.*—"God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt."

*Exod. xviii, 18.*—"But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea; and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt."

*At Etham—Order to Turn.*

*Exod. xiv, 2.*—"Speak unto the children of Israel, that they  
TURN

*(Order to Encamp by the Sea.)*

and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea."

*The Purpose of the Order.*

*Exod. xiv, 3.*—"For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in."

*The Effect Intended.*

*Exod. xiv, 4.*—"And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host;

*(The Motive.)*

that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord."

*Completion of the Order.*

"And they (the Israelites) did so" (verse 2).

*The Effect.*

*Exod. xiv, 8.*—"And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel . . .

*Exod. xiv, 9.*— . . . and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon.”

#### *The Crossing of the Sea.*

*Exod. xiv, 21.*—“ The Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.”

*Exod. xiv, 22.*—“ And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground : and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.”

#### *Destruction of the Egyptian Army.*

*Exod. xiv, 23.*—“ And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.”

*Exod. xiv, 28.*—“ And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them.”

#### *Movement to Elim.*

*Exod. xv, 22.*—“ So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea.”

*Exod. xv, 27.*—“ And they came to Elim.”

#### *From Elim to Sin.*

*Exod. xvi, 1.*—“ And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai.”

#### *From Sin to Rephidim.*

*Exod. xvii, 1.*—“ And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim.”

#### *From Rephidim to Sinai.*

*Exod. xix, 1.*—“ In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day they came into the wilderness of Sinai.”

*Exod. xix, 2.*—"For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount." (Horeb, or Sinai, *Exod. iii, 1.*)

From the narrative certain deductions may be made.

- (1) When Moses was ordered to go to Egypt he was at Horeb (or Sinai) in Midian.
- (2) He was told to bring the Israelites out of Egypt to Horeb (or Sinai) in Midian.

The terminus of the Exodus was in Midian. Midian comprised the whole of the El Hesma country, east and north of the gulf of Akaba. Midian territory north of Akaba was bounded on the north by the as-Sera range of Mount Seir (Edom), and on the west by the Araba rift depression, extending from Akaba to the Dead Sea.

The southern portion of the Araba was the wilderness of Sin, or Zin. This lay between Elim on the west and Sinai on the east. Sinai therefore was located in the northern territory of Midian, eastwards of the Araba, and south of Edom.

There is no indication in the narrative that the Israelites as a nation ever penetrated the Sinai peninsula.

Mount Sinai was not a great mountain but a low hill, probably a spur of the as-Sera range of Mount Seir.

The idea of the Israelites being "in flight from Egypt" is contrary to the narrative.

#### THE NILE INFLUENCE.

The rise to power of the foremost kingdoms in early history, those of Egypt and Babylon, resulted from their similar control of a great river highway with its outlet to the sea.

Commerce was then, as now, the main factor in national prosperity; and where trade was water-borne commerce flourished exceedingly. But the great river highways served more especially the purposes of national defence. By their means only could large forces be moved with rapidity over the whole extent of the kingdom, to meet attack at any threatened point.

The rise to power of Egypt may be attributed to these two great sources of national prosperity, commerce and security, afforded by the Nile. But to further safeguard the kingdom,

and to obtain access to the southern seas also for their commerce, a ship canal was constructed joining the Nile with the head of the gulf of Suez.

In Breasted's *Records of Ancient Egypt*, vol. ii, p. 102, he deals with the voyage of Queen Hatshepsut from Thebes to Punt (c. 1494 B.C.), wherein the same ships which sailed from Thebes down the Nile appear also on the voyage down the Red Sea. Breasted infers the existence at this early period of the ship canal joining the Nile with the gulf of Suez.

In *Egypt and Syria*, by Sir J. W. Dawson, a clear appreciation may be gained of the value of Goshen to the Israelites. "The land of Goshen where Jacob and his sons settled extends eastwards from the Nile to the Red Sea. One of the numerous branches into which the Nile divides in the Delta ran eastward along the Wady Tumilat.

"In this district the Israelites had not only a rich agricultural country but open pastures on either side, and were in a position to control much of the trade and intercourse of Egypt with the East, and to act as carriers between the former and Palestine and Arabia."

"The recent surveys of the British Military Engineers also render it certain that this valley once carried a branch of the Nile, which discharged its waters into the Red Sea. This branch, or a canal representing it, must have existed at the time of Moses."

By their settlement in Goshen the Israelites had access to the Mediterranean Sea by the Pelusiac branch of the Nile, now non-existent.

According to Prince Omar Toussoun, who has made a study of the ancient branches of the Nile, the Pelusiac branch crossed the line of the Suez Canal about 12 miles north of Kantara.

Through communication was thus possible between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, by means of the Wady Tumilat Canal linking the Pelusiac Nile with the Gulf of Suez.

The Israelites had every opportunity to develop a fishing fleet both in the Mediterranean and in the Gulf of Suez, of which the upper waters came within their territory. They were in a position to carry on overseas trade, north and south, to the full extent of what maritime enterprise they possessed.

Life on the Nile Delta meant for them a complete change from that of a nomadic people concerned mainly with flocks and herds. If the Israelites failed to become a great nation under

such favourable conditions for expansion, the cause could not lie in any territorial disadvantage.

### MAIN TRADE ROUTES.

There were two main trade routes from Egypt to the East.

The northern trade route followed generally the direction of the northern coast of the Sinai peninsula, crossed the frontier near El Arish, and led northwards through Canaan to Damascus, or alternatively south of Edom into Babylonia.

The southern trade route led by caravan to the Egyptian ports on the western shores of the Gulf of Suez and the Red Sea; thence by sea to Tor, Akaba, Modiana, the Arabian coast ports, and to India and the far East.

These two trade routes exist to the present day, substituting road and rail for caravan and eliminating the vanished ports of ancient days.

Tor was formerly a port of great importance to the Red Sea trade bearing commerce from China, India and Arabia. Tor only declined in importance following the discovery of the Cape Route by the Portuguese. In the British Museum the Map Room has a chart of the sixteenth century, "done by order of the Kings of Portugal," showing Tor with a breakwater covering the whole harbour and a fort for its defence.

The Tor crossing was strategically of great value to Egypt, enabling her to maintain and reinforce the garrison at Serabit el Khadem from Thebes. There must have been a harbour, and a fortress for security of the trade route, on the western shore opposite Tor.

We are not familiar with the idea of great shipping activity in the Gulf of Suez at the period of the Exodus, but we should be.

In *A History of Sinai* Miss Lina Eckenstein, quoting Raymond Weill, says with reference to the tablets found at Serabit el Khadem: "These tablets mention some of the dignitaries which took part in the expedition. That of Dadkara named the ship captain Nenekht-Khentikhat; that of Pepy I the ship captain Ibdō; a further one of Pepy II, the ship captain Benkeneph. This shows the Egyptians approached the mainland by water." So we have ships in the Gulf of Suez a thousand years before the Israelites.

The subject of trade routes is dealt with in the official guide to Egyptian Collections in the British Museum. From p. 19 we gather that the Red Sea trade with Puenet or Punt was carried on from the earliest time. Punt is identified with the Somaliland region, and was visited by Egyptian ships centuries before the time of Hatshepsut, whose expedition, 1494 B.C., is the best known. P. 150: "The craft of the boat builder was very important in a country where a river was the main highway. Flat-bottomed boats and punts for the canals; boats for carrying merchandise on the river; and great Nile boats for official, religious or war purposes. Fleets are mentioned in the war against the Hyksos. The Egyptians had the equivalents of the modern broad ferry boat, barge, lighter, etc., worked with oars or 'sweeps' and sails. We have representations at Thebes of the great ships which conveyed Hatshepsut's expedition down the Red Sea. Foreign merchantmen entered the Nile and came up as far as Thebes. Sixty ships were constructed in a year by King Snegeru (3000 B.C.) to fetch wood from Syria." P. 339: "King Thothmes III, 1501-1447 B.C., was the first to utilise sea power intelligently. He undertook fifteen campaigns in Western Asia, basing himself on the coast and his ships in Phœnicia."

It is evident that the Egyptians had developed into a maritime nation long before the Exodus of the Israelites. The effect on the Israelites of close association with the mariners of Egypt for two centuries must have been to develop in them the habits and instincts of seamen, and to render them familiar with the two main trade routes from Egypt by land and by sea.

At this early period the Mediterranean trade routes were undeveloped and, to Egypt, of minor interest. The Minoan empire of Crete held the sea power. For Egypt the Red Sea was of supreme importance. Her overseas commerce depended on the southern trade route.

#### LIFE OF THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT.

*Gen. xlvii, 6.*—The repeated references in Exodus to the Israelites dwelling in houses, not in tents, shows the transition from their nomadic life in Canaan. They were given "the best of the land," which must have meant for them the choicest agricultural and pasture country.



Thenceforth they dwelt in towns and villages in the cultivated region with wide pasture lands (Wilderness) extending eastwards over what is now desert. Here doubtless they maintained their tents, where thousands of them could encamp in charge of their flocks and herds.

The Egyptians had no use for that country, shepherds being to them "an abomination." Pharaoh placed his own cattle in charge of the Israelites.

*Gen. xlvii, 27.*—"And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly."

The land of Goshen lay on the eastern side of the Delta, either traversed by the Pelusiatic branch of the Nile or with this great water highway for its western border. The Wadi Tumilat canal joined the Nile with the Gulf of Suez.

Eastwards there was practically no limit for expansion as the rapid increase in population required.

Thus for two centuries before the Exodus the Israelites had been in the Egyptian Delta, living the life of the Delta, entirely different from the nomadic life of Canaan; and continually founding new colonies to relieve congestion from within the bounds of their original settlement.

The climate and the physical geography of any and every country determine the life, activities and customs of its inhabitants.

The Israelites had no choice but to follow this law of racial development, as did their Hyksos predecessors. They led the life of the Delta, very similar to that of Holland. In Goshen they were no longer concerned solely with flocks and herds. They developed into a water-side, agricultural and pastoral folk, engaged in shipping, commerce and industry, with easy access to the sea. The fishing and agricultural industries are indicated in *Num. xi, 5*.

In the course of two centuries of Delta conditions, they had time to acquire the habits and instincts of sea-faring people. Their display of maritime activity following immediately on their conquest of Palestine must have had its source in Egypt. This familiarity in Palestine with everything concerned in shipping and seamanship was no sudden acquisition. It could only have accrued from generations of sea-faring experience, habits and customs.

In addition to their fishing, agricultural and pastoral pursuits, it is evident that the Israelites of Goshen were expert carpenters, metal workers, weavers, tanners, tent makers, silversmiths, artisans of all arts and crafts. These trades are all indicated in the construction of the tabernacle, certain craftsmen being named as excelling in design and workmanship.

The conclusion drawn is that the conscription of labour during the period of bondage in Egypt, however severe, did not involve the whole manhood of the people.

#### THE ROUTE OF THE EXODUS.

The Exodus, like any racial migration, had to follow some well-defined route.

The preliminary concentration was on the border between Goshen and Etham, which lay to the east of the line of the Suez Canal.

The Israelites were prohibited from advancing direct across the Sinai peninsula by "the way of the Land of the Philistines," or the northern trade route.

In other words, they were forbidden to cross the line of the Suez Canal; at Etham they were ordered to TURN and to encamp by the sea. They could turn in two directions only—northwards or southwards. It follows that they adopted the southern trade route for the migration from Goshen to Midian. This involved a sea-crossing, and a fleet of ships and barges was an essential factor. The Exodus appears as a combined land and sea migration.

At the beginning of the twelfth century B.C. a similar land and sea migration was accomplished by the Philistine confederacy from Crete, along the coast of Asia Minor, down through Syria and Palestine to Lake Serbonis; where they were defeated in a great land and sea battle by Rameses III about 1192 B.C.

From *The Philistines, their History and Organisation*, by R. A. S. Macalister: "The inscription regarding the war of 1192 B.C. is engraved on the second pylon of the temple of Medenit Habu, near Thebes. The inscription records how the Northerners were disturbed and proceeded to move eastward and southward, swamping the land of the Hittites, Carchemish, Arvad, Cyprus and other places in the same region.

"We are thus to picture a great southward march through Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine. Or, rather, we are to imagine a

double advance, by land and sea; the landward march which included two-wheeled ox carts for the women and children; and a sea expedition, in which no doubt the spare stores would be carried more easily than on the rough Syrian roads. Clearly they were tribes accustomed to sea-faring who thus ventured on the stormy Mediterranean; clearly too, it was no mere military expedition but a migration of wanderers accompanied by their wives and families and seeking a new home."

What was accomplished in the migration of the Philistine confederacy could have been effected in the migration of the Israelites from Goshen to Akaba, by the southern trade route.

The procedure would have involved:—

- (a) A combined land march and sea voyage from Suez to Arsinoe near the mouth of the gulf.
- (b) The sea-crossing from Arsinoe to Tor.
- (c) A combined land march and sea voyage from Tor to Akaba.
- (d) A land march from Akaba to Horeb, or Sinai, in Midian.

The Tor crossing was interrupted by the sudden attack of the Egyptian army of chariots and horsemen. The sea was divided. The Israelites made the crossing on dry land.

That the Israelites did actually adopt the southern trade route with the Tor crossing appears in the narrative, and is included in this paper under the heading "On the Trail."

The subsequent stages of the Exodus cannot be dealt with in the time available for the paper to be read. These are "The Crossing of the Sea of Reeds," "From Tor to Akaba," "From Akaba to Sinai in Midian."

If Members so desire, these stages might be taken as extra to the paper, but the time allotted for discussion intervenes.

#### ON THE TRAIL.

*Exod. xiv, 2.*—The first indication of a possible solution was gained from a commentary by David Davidson, LL.D., published in *The Comprehensive Family Bible*, by Blackie and Sons, Edinburgh, in 1855. Instead of taking Pi-hahiroth, Migdol and Baal-zephon as the names of cities, these are given their actual meaning as translated from the Hebrew.

1. Pi-hahiroth—"a strait or passage between mountains, or a bay, perhaps the opening of the Gulf of Suez."

2. Migdol—"a tower, may have been a fortress for the protection of Pi-hahiroth."

3. Baal-zephon—"Lord or Master of the Watch."

In order to verify these equivalents recourse was made to modern scholarship.

1. Pi-hahiroth. Bishop Wordsworth's commentary gives "mouth of passes or rocky straits."

Dr. Cheyne, Oriel Professor of Interpretation, Oxford, gives "entrance to the gulfs."

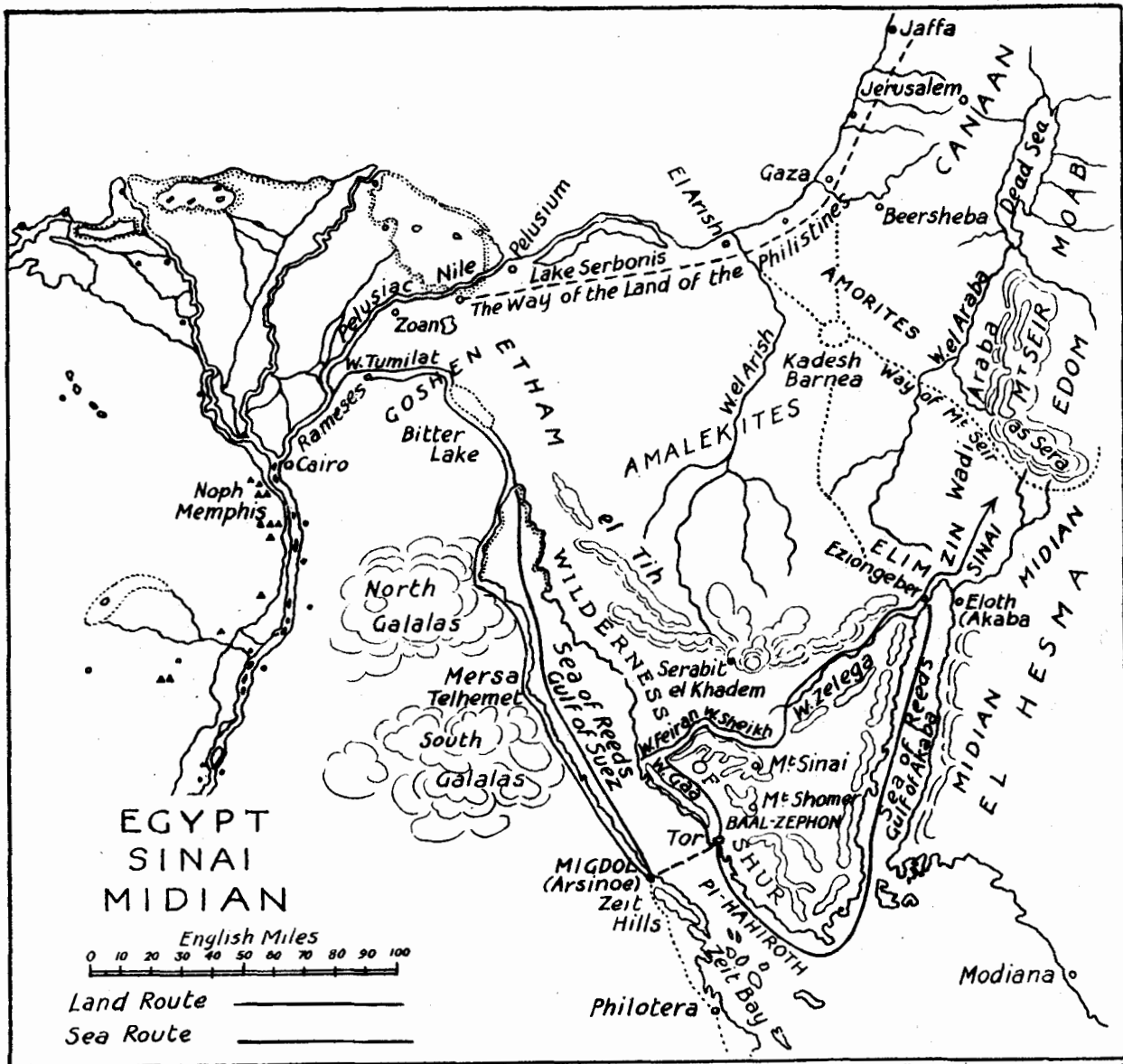
The word evidently means the entrance to a defile or pass by land; the entrance to a strait or gulf by sea.

2. Regarding Migdol, Professor Peet says this is a Semitic word meaning "a tower." The name was adopted by the Egyptians and given to several cities and towns. There were six Migdols in the Delta alone. It also means, and generally implies, a fortress.—*Egypt and the Old Testament*, by T. Eric Peet.

3. Baal-zephon gave some trouble, but in the Authorised Version of the Bible, published with Concordance and Index to proper names, the meaning of Zephon is given as "a looking out." Baal-zephon would then mean "Lord of the look-out," suggesting either a high mountain or some prominent landmark. The Hebrew lexicon gives Zephon—"North." The explanation given by a Hebrew scholar for the rendering of Zephon as "a watch" or "a looking out" is that both Zephon and Mizpah (also "a watch" or "looking out") are from the Hebrew root *tsafah* "to watch" (or *Zaphah*, as it would be rendered in English Biblical transliteration); and the word Zephon meaning "north" may bear *from the root* the alternative meaning of "a watch" or "a looking out," as given in the two commentaries referred to. The north being the constant point for "the watch" or "the look out," these meanings are in association.

Thus we have to find some prominent landmark which may bear the title "Lord of the Outlook," "Lord of the North," or "Lord of the Watch," in close association with Pi-hahiroth, "The mouth of the straits."

By giving their equivalent meaning to the three key words Pi-hahiroth, Migdol and Baal-zephon we can now put the executive orders which Moses received into more intelligible form.



“Yam Suph” is given its true meaning, “sea of reeds,” instead of Red Sea, and “pasture lands” substituted for wilderness. The result is as follows:—

*Exod. xiii, 18.*— . . . “God led the people about, through the way of the pasture lands to the sea of reeds.”

*Exod. xiv, 2.*— . . . “Speak unto the children of Israel that they TURN, and encamp before ‘the mouth of the straits,’ between the fortress and the sea, over against the ‘Lord of the Watch’: before it shall ye encamp by the sea.”

Note the emphasis on Baal-zephon—“over against” and “before it.”

*Exod. xiii, 20.*—Now we must follow the trail from the concentration at Etham “on the edge of the wilderness.” This implies that the Israelites were now encamped beyond the populated area, facing east.

At Etham they receive orders—to TURN, and (by following “the way of the pasture lands to the sea of reeds”) to encamp before “the mouth of the straits.”

It is clear that they could turn in two directions only; northwards to the Mediterranean Sea, or southwards by the Gulf of Suez.

This order “to turn” corresponds with the phrase “led the people about” in *Exod. xiii, 18.*

The direction now given to the migration must have been southwards; and the immediate suggestion is that, the northern trade route being ruled out, Moses resolved to conduct the migration by the alternative southern trade route with the Tor crossing.

Let us assume, however, that hitherto no indication has been given as to whether the migration was to follow the eastern or the western side of the gulf. We merely note the destination given—“the mouth of the straits.”

Migdol is required to define the limits of the encampment—“between the fortress and the sea.”

The key to the actual position of the camp now lies in the identification of Baal-zephon.

The name itself, Baal-zephon, suggests that this “Lord of the Outlook,” “Lord of the North” or “Lord of the Watch,” must be some landmark altogether outside of Egypt, where certainly no worship of Baal existed. The name is Semitic and might be connected with some temple of Baal worship in Sinai,

possibly in the neighbourhood of Serabit el Khadem where the worship of Baal was established. But no amount of research among ancient maps shows this name Baal-zephon in Sinai. We only know for certain that the camp was to be pitched "over against" Baal-zephon—that is on the *opposite* shore to this landmark. Taking into consideration the perils of the route by the eastern shore, and the security offered to the migration along the western shore, the possibility of Baal-zephon being on the Sinai side of the gulf is suggested. It is noteworthy that the temples of Baal were sited always on the summit of a mountain or a hill.

Let us, then, in imagination follow this route down the western shore, and endeavour to locate some Sinai landmark so prominent that no doubt could arise as to our being "over against" it. The "Lord of the Outlook" suggests the highest peak of the mountain range of Sinai. Consulting the latest ordnance map of Sinai, this is found to be Mount Shomer (8,530 ft.), over 1,000 ft. above Mount Sinai (7,450 ft.).

From its dominating position Mount Shomer would certainly be the most conspicuous landmark of the Sinai peninsula. Its prominence is clearly shown by the panorama sketch in the Admiralty chart, as viewed from opposite Tor. The title "Lord of the Outlook" seems well bestowed.

The still more striking appearance of Mount Shomer viewed from the south in mid-ocean is given on the panorama sketch by C. Muller, 1855, accompanying his interpretation of Agatharchides, 120 B.C., in the British Museum, Map Room.

Mount Shomer shows over the top of Gebel el Thebt.

This great mountain is visible to mariners coming up the Red Sea, to whom it would be known as the "Lord of the North"

The question now is whether Shomer can have any association with "Lord of the Watch." The English Bible gives Shomer as a Hebrew name in II Kings xii, 21 and in I Chron. vii, 32. The root is shamar, "to watch"—Shomer means "one that watches," and so "The Watchman"—bearing close relation to "Lord of the Watch."

These three alternatives, Lord of the Outlook, Lord of the North, and Lord of the Watch, seem, in conjunction, to apply sufficiently closely to Mount Shomer as to render its identification with Baal-zephon not unreasonable.

Thus in *Exod. xiv, 2*, the Israelites are ordered to TURN, and to encamp before the mouth of the straits, between the fortress and the sea, over against the highest mountain of the Sinai peninsula; known to the Egyptians as Baal-zephon—"Lord of the Watch"—and later bearing the Hebrew name Shomer—"The Watchman"—by which it is still called.

The encampment "over against" The Watchman must have been on the western shore of "the sea of reeds," and immediately opposite Tor at "the mouth of the straits."

We may now conclude that Moses did actually adopt the southern trade route for the conduct of the Exodus from Egypt to Midian. There must be some vagueness in our appreciation of the exact position of "the mouth of the straits." This is described as "before" the Watchman in *Exod. xiv, 9*, and *Num. xxxiii, 7*. This was a local consideration and would require no closer definition for Moses to determine the location of the camp. He was further guided as to its limits—"between the fortress and the sea."

In this passage the open sea is referred to, not the "sea of reeds." This fortress must have been "over against" The Watchman and so directly opposite Tor. It guarded the western side of the Tor crossing, in the position shown as Arsinoe.

The camp was to extend from this point towards the open sea. The left of the camp was thus definitely fixed and its right depended on the frontage required, possibly five miles. This is an important point to note, because the formation "by the sea" must have been in line of tribal divisions facing the sea, not in column.

They were in this line formation when they became aware of the approach of the Egyptian army. The Gulf of Suez was "dried up" near its mouth. The Israelites crossed over to the Tor side, in line of divisions.

*Exod. xv, 27*.—The Egyptians, in their attempt to overtake them, were drowned by the sea "returning to his strength."

Several months may have elapsed before Pharaoh and his government recovered from the shock of the death of all the firstborn in Egypt. This period covered the concentration at Etham and the march to Pi-hahiroth. The Egyptian government must have been kept informed of the progress of the migration southwards. They probably expected this to follow the coast



of the Red Sea, out of Egyptian territory into Nubia. The encampment at the mouth of the straits would appear to them to be a check, due to the physical difficulties of the country—"the wilderness hath shut them in."

The decision to attack seems based on this misapprehension. To the Egyptians it seemed that the God of the Hebrews had deserted them. Now was their opportunity.

The destruction of the Egyptian army was determined. The governing motive appears in Exod. xiv, 1-4 : the order, v. 2 ; the purpose, v. 3 ; the effect, v. 4.

The conclusion—"That the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord"—was the motive.

#### DISCUSSION.

Lieut.-Col. F. MOLONY said : As I prepared the maps for this paper, and also for Mr. Mitchell's paper on the same subject last May, there is a matter which I ought to bring to your notice.

The Bible implies that Pi-hahiroth, Migdol and Baal-Zephon were close together, but there is very little evidence as to where they were situated. Both Mr. Mitchell and Col. Robertson place them at the bottom of their maps, so that you may think that they corroborate each other. This, however, is not so, because Mr. Mitchell's map does not extend nearly as far south as Col. Robertson's. It is known that the Red Sea extended at least as far as the Bitter Lakes in Moses' day ; but the part between Suez and the lakes must have been very shallow. The Bible says that it was a strong wind that dried the passage, and experienced men know well that wind can have a surprising effect on a long stretch of water. If the wind changed suddenly at half-flood tide, the water may have come back like a bore or moving wall ; but the mention of "wall" in Exodus xiv, 22 and 29, probably only means "defence."

It seems that we shall be wiser to invite the rising generation to believe that a great mental miracle was worked (inasmuch as Moses was told where to move the Israelites to, in order that they might be in a position to take advantage of what God was going to do). That is better than asking them to believe in a great physical marvel, like the drying out of one of the deep parts of the Red Sea.

To turn to another subject, our Lecturer maintains that Sinai must have been in Midian, and therefore north-west of the head of the Gulf of Akaba.

But there are very strong arguments in favour of the traditional site, Jebel Musa Sufsafeh. These are well given in Palmer's book on Sinai, revised by Sayce (S.P.C.K.). They argue that the Midianites had right of pasturage up the Jebel Musa, where the climate is known to have been wetter in Moses' day than it is now.

We noted in South Africa that, after a dry summer, when the grass on the lowlands was parched, there was still luscious grass in the cups or depressions on the mountains. We expect to find rocks, snow and moss on mountains, but dwellers in tropical and sub-tropical regions expect good vegetation on mountains up to 8,000 feet high.

When Moses was keeping Jethro's flocks, he probably noted that the grass on the lowlands was getting useless. Accordingly, he enquired whether there was better grass on the mountains to the south-west or north-east, and heard that it was best near Sinai. He then moved his flock 95 miles to there, and afterwards described it as moving them to the backside of the wilderness.

The Rev. H. C. MORTON, B.A., Ph.D., said : I join most heartily in the thanks to Col. Robertson, who has given us a most interesting paper on an important Bible topic.

May I first venture to suggest that the route of the Exodus is one question, and the position of the Mount of the Law quite another : and it would be better not to deal with them together ?

As to the route, I feel obliged to differ from the Lecturer. That Moses should have led the people 100 miles south into the southern third of the great mountain mass of the Sinai Peninsula, where they would have been in dire peril of Egyptian attack, seems entirely unlikely. Col. Robertson suggests that Moses led them down the west side of the Gulf of Suez and then crossed the sea opposite Tor : that then they proceeded, partly by sea, up the Gulf of Akaba north again, and then proceeded to Mount Horeb in Midian.

Two or three years ago, I went down the Gulf of Suez and stayed up almost all night to view the Peninsula through my glasses from the earliest rise of dawn. A very keen navigation officer pointed

out the features of the coast and the mountains. We passed many, many miles of mighty jumbled rocky mountains before we reached the site of Tor. It would have been a terrible journey for the vast host of men, women and children down the west side of the Gulf, and then when the sea was crossed they would have been in a most perilous position. It seems an utterly unlikely route.

But one record seems finally to settle the matter. Exodus xv, 22, actually gives us the route, and it is quite different from the one Col. Robertson gives. It says: "So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; and they went out into the Wilderness of Shur, and they went three days in the Wilderness, etc." The Wilderness of Shur we know. It is the Wilderness of the Wall, and the Wall ran from the Mediterranean to the head of the Gulf of Suez. It lies due east, not south at all. From there they went on to Elim, which the Colonel identifies with Ezion-Geber, at the head of the Gulf of Akaba. The route down the west side of the Gulf of Suez to a point opposite Tor would have necessitated retracing the three days' march back to the west side, crossing the sea or the Wall again, and then 100 miles down the west side. This is unthinkable.

But to me it seems most probable, if not certain, that the Mount of the Law was not in the Peninsula but in Midian. The Colonel has the late Prof. Sayce on his side in this contention. Not that the Rock of Oreb in Midian (Isaiah x, 26; Judges vii, 25) is the same word as Horeb. The first consonant of Oreb is "Ayin," and of Horeb is "Cheth," and they cannot be identified. Nor do we know of a Mount Horeb in Midian. That is a perplexity upon which perhaps Col. Robertson can cast some light—for one would expect the Mount of the Law to be famous. But at least three passages of Scripture seem to shut us up to Midian, and to shut out the Peninsula of Sinai.

First, Deuteronomy xxxiii, 2, says: "The Lord came from Sinai and rose up from Seir unto them." That appears clearly to fix Sinai in Mount Seir, which was far away from the peninsular site.

Second, Exodus iii, 1, tells us that Moses led the flocks of his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, "to the mountain of God, even to Horeb." Now, it is so unlikely that Moses would have led the flocks 100 miles away from Midian and far into the territory of Egypt—for Egyptian dominions extended at this time right across

the peninsula and up through Canaan and into Syria—that it is really impossible. We are shut up to the conclusion that the Mountain of God was a Horeb in Midian.

And third, Exodus xvii, 6, where God says: “Behold I will stand before thee upon the rock in Horeb.” That would be a most strange utterance if the Horeb had been in the Peninsula. The Peninsula is a great mass of rocks. “The rock in Horeb” could hardly have any meaning there. It is all rocks. It must have been elsewhere: and the whole history of Moses and of God’s revelation to him, apart from Egypt, centres in Midian.

Col. A. H. VAN STRAUBENZEE wrote: I think that the lecturer has over-estimated the time taken from leaving Egypt until the crossing of the Red Sea. The details of these days, as given in *The Companion Bible*, are as follows:—

“Month of Nisan.

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|----|------|--|
| 14 | Day. | Passover lamb killed in the evening.   |
| 15 | „    | Removed from Rameses and pitched in Succoth.   |
| 16 | „    | They took their journey from Succoth, Exodus xiii, 20; Numbers xxxiii, 5.  |
| 17 | „    | On the way to Etham.   |
| 18 | „    | Encamped in Etham in the edge of the wilderness, Exodus xiii, 20 (Pursuit begins).                                     |
| 19 | „    | They remove from Etham and turn again.   |
| 20 | „    | Unto Pi-hahiroth between Migdol and the sea, Exodus xiv, 9.  |
| 21 | „    | (7th day). An Holy Convocation. The Pillar of Cloud goes behind Israel and stood between them.                         |
| 22 | „    | (1st day of Second Week). Jehovah troubled the Egyptians. Exodus ends. Moses’ song of praise, Exodus xiv, 24, 27, 30.” |

The spiritual significance of this calendar of events is full of interest to the student of Holy Scripture. The number 6 is man’s number—7 the Divine number—8 the resurrection number. Six days they marched. They rested on the seventh day, and came forth to resurrection ground on the eighth.

One speaker inquired as to whether God had to cause a further miracle to feed such an army during the Exodus. In Exodus xiii, 18, we are told that they went up harnessed (armed) out of the land of Egypt. Again, in Exodus xii, 38, it is stated that a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle. Thus every provision appears to have been made for the journey.

In the paragraph, "Life of the Israelites in Egypt", the lecturer observes, "the period of bondage, however severe, did not involve the whole manhood of the people." The 430 years was divided into two periods of 215 years each. The first 215 years were "sojourning," meaning a residence in a foreign land without the rights of citizenship. The second half, on the other hand, was a dwelling fixedly among the inhabitants, and as the bondage came at the end of this period, at the hands of a Pharaoh of another dynasty, it probably may not have lasted more than one generation of 30 years.

#### AUTHOR'S REPLY.

I much appreciate the kindly spirit in which these criticisms are directed. To the points raised I reply, very briefly, as follows:—

1. Col. A. H. van Straubenzee. The *Companion Bible* treats the migration as a tourist party, not a race movement. No one experienced in movements on a large scale, with consideration of supply and transport, would suggest that the successive stages of the narrative were taken on consecutive days.

There is no indication of how long the Israelites were within Egyptian territory before the crossing of the sea. The detail of the "Exodus week" given in the *Companion Bible* is bad imagination, compiled under the idea of some spiritual significance with no regard whatever to practical possibilities.

Questions of supply and transport must have been arranged for before the departure from Goshen. Provision of manna daily began only on the conclusion of the migration.

The 430 years covered the whole period from the departure of Abraham from Ur, to the Exodus. The Israelites were in Egypt for 210 years. I agree that the "severe affliction" occurred in the last generation.

Lieut.-Col. F. Molony. The key to the whole problem lies in the identification of Pi-hahiroth, Migdol and Baal-Zephon of Exodus xiv, 2. Col. Molony makes the assumption "that the Red Sea extended at least as far as the Bitter Lakes," as if this were a known fact. I am perfectly aware of the theory but can find nothing to support it. It makes the miracle "easier" for the Almighty certainly, and explains it away to the satisfaction of those who cannot take the Bible narrative as it stands.

From the Guide Book to the Egyptian Collections in the British Museum, p. 5, we learn—"Lake Timsah (*i.e.*, Crocodile Lake) and the Bitter Lakes which were originally mere swamps, came into existence with the making of the Suez Canal." Timsah was certainly a fresh water swamp in ancient times, as crocodiles do not inhabit salt water.

Strabo (xvii, 25) says that the canal to the Red Sea, from the Nile passed through the Bitter Lakes and made them fresh. There is absolutely no evidence that either the Gulf of Suez or the Gulf of Akaba extended northwards beyond their present limits.

Most Bible maps show the "Itinerary of the Exodus" as passing through the Bitter Lakes, and then down the eastern shore of the Gulf of Suez into southern Sinai. The absurdity of this solution needs emphasising. If Moses intended to conduct the migration from Etham down the eastern shore of the Gulf, what purpose would be served by encamping west of the Bitter Lake, and thus placing an impassable obstacle between his camp and his line of march? Obviously his route would be round the north end of the Bitter Lakes, with no obstacle to his passage southwards.

Contrary to Col. Molony's preference for a great "mental miracle," whatever that may be, I hold strongly that the great physical miracle did take place, as recorded—"in the depths of the sea"—at the mouth of the Gulf of Suez, and on a frontage of at least five miles.

As regards the arguments in favour of the traditional site. The Arab historian Makrizi states that the Feiran district was originally the headquarters of the Amalekites. If any "grazing rights" existed, the Amalekites held them, not the Midianites on the eastern side of the Gulf of Akaba. Moreover, the Midianites had every variety of altitude for grazing pasture within their own territory, extending northwards to the *as Sera* range of Mount Seir, or Edom.

The idea of Moses moving the Midianite flocks and herds out of Midian, over 100 miles of rugged mountainous country into the Feiran district is simply fantastic, and entirely loses sight of the thousands of armed tribesmen and followers engaged in safeguarding the flocks and herds, which constituted the sole wealth of the nomadic Midian nation, of which Jethro was the "priest" or chieftain.

As to the location of Sinai in Midian ; this is supported by Beke, Wellhausen, Sayce, Moore, Shede, Gall, Gunkel, Meyer, Schmidt, Gressman, Haupt, and Alois Musil in *The Northern Hegaz*. Sir Richard Burton, writing in 1883, summed up the various sites supposed to be Mount Sinai as follows:—"The so-called Sinai (Jebel Musa) is simply a modern forgery, dating probably from the second century A.D.; the first Mount Sinai (Jebel Serbal) was invented by the Copts, the second (Jebel Musa) by the Greeks, the third (Jebel Musa) by the Moslems, and the fourth (Jebel Susafeh) by Dr. Robinson."

I can find no support worth considering for the traditional site of Mount Sinai, which is shown clearly in my book to have been a low hill in close proximity to the camp, and *not a great mountain* as is generally supposed.

Rev. H. C. Morton. I am unable to follow Dr. Morton's criticism. He appears to have interpreted my route in a sense quite other than the one I have endeavoured to set forth. But as misunderstanding may easily have arisen from my omission of the latter part of the verse in quoting Exodus xv, 22, I will now rectify this. The "wilderness of Shur" comprised the western coast belt of the Sinai peninsula, the region "over against Egypt" as defined in 1 Samuel xv, 7.

Dr. Morton makes the assumption—"The Wilderness of Shur we know. It is the Wilderness of the Wall, and the Wall ran from the Mediterranean to the head of the Gulf of Suez." He presents this assumption as an accepted historical fact. But it is theory only, and I am well acquainted with it. There is, however, no evidence of the existence of this Wall, and Dr. Morton quotes no authority to support his assumption.

Shur certainly means "wall." On the theory of an artificial wall extending from the Mediterranean to the Gulf of Suez, Sir J. W.

Dawson, in *Egypt and Syria*, says: "There is an antecedent improbability in the name Shur being derived from any such erection," and attributes the name to the sharp escarpment of the Tih range. C. R. Condor says: "Shur was the coast region under 'the wall' of the Tih." (*Int. Bible Ency.*, p. 3065.)

The coast belt "over against Egypt" extended from the head of the Gulf of Suez to the apex of the Peninsula. This was the line of retreat taken by the Amalekites after their defeat by Saul, affording them the only way of escape into the mountain region of Feiran, which the Arab historian Makrizi says was originally their tribal headquarters. This district is inaccessible from the central plateau, except by two very bad tracks allowing camels to pass in single file, but impracticable for large numbers.

And the Amalekites most certainly did not retreat on to an artificial wall between the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Suez!

By the crossing of the sea at Tor the Israelites arrived within the "wilderness of Shur." Then followed a march of three days; on the third day they found no water, having arrived at the watershed separating the el Gaa from the Wadi Feiran. Thence the track lay across the Peninsula to Elim, by the Wadi Zelega. This landward march was practicable only for men, and the flocks and herds. The main body of the migration must have had ship transport to Elim.

Sinai, however, which was on the farther side of Sin (or Zin) from Elim, and was therefore within the land of Midian, constituted the real terminus of the exodus. For lack of time I was only able to discuss the first part of the journey, but if any are interested to pursue the subject to its conclusion, they will find it more fully treated in a book under the same title—*On the Track of the Exodus*—which was published in October.