

# Route Over Which Moses Led the Children of Israel

By Franklin E. Hoskins, in the National Geographical Magazine.

A few years ago a young woman about to visit the Holy Land called on an old lady friend who loved her Bible and read it frequently from beginning to end, and told her that she soon hoped to see Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Galilee, and all the places associated with the life of Christ. The old lady put



Hazeroth, a beautiful oasis where the Children of Israel tarried seven days, when Miriam, the sister of Moses, was smitten with leprosy

down her work, removed her silver-rimmed spectacles, and exclaimed: "Well now! I knew all those places were in the Bible, but I never thought of their being on the earth!"

It may therefore interest many of the readers of this Magazine to know that the Desert of the Exodus has an actual existence upon the face of the earth, and that the route of the Exodus is being mapped and studied and photographed by enthusiastic scholars and travellers with results as interesting and as brilliant in their way as attended the modern exploration of the Holy Land and Egypt.

It brings the doings of the Children of Israel in the Pentateuch much closer to modern life when we realize that the route of the Exodus is cut in its first section by the Suez Canal, one of the greatest enterprises on our planet, and that the Mecca Pilgrimage Railway follows that route in its upper stretches from a point near the Red Sea, Zalmoneh, northward for more than 10 miles through Edom and Moab, and again from Rabbath Ammon another 62 miles to Edrei, once the capital of Og, King of Bashan (Numbers 21: 33), but now a railroad centre where the three lines, from the seacoast at Carmel, from Damascus and from Mecca meet.

Many will be surprised to learn that a telegraph wire now stretches through the desert from Suez to Tor, a little port just below Mount Sinai; that another wire connects Damascus via Maan with Akaba opposite Ezion-geber on the Red Sea; that a steam launch now navigates the Dead Sea and the Jordan River below Jericho, and that Thomas Cook & Son have added "Sinai and the Desert of the Exodus, Edom, and Moab" to their wall signs and tourist routes.

## A Day for Each Year of the Exodus

It has just been the great privilege of the writer, in company with Dr. John F. Goucher, of the Woman's College of Baltimore, and Mr. S. Earl Taylor, of New York, to follow the route of the Children of Israel from Egypt through the Sinaitic Peninsula, Mount Seir, Edom and Moab, Amman and the Jabok. It was a journey of about a thousand miles on camels and horses, and occupied about 40 days—a day for each year of the Exodus. We camped literally within the Old Testament, pitching our tents 32 times between the Nile and the Jordan. It was a physical review of some of the greatest events and characters in human history.

There was a strange thrill in dating letters from "The Jabok (Gen. 32:22)," where Jacob wrestled with the angel; from "The Nile (Gen. 41:1)," where Joseph first came into contact with Pharaoh; from "Sinai (Exodus 33:11)," where Jehovah spoke with Moses face to face, and from "Nebo (Deut. 34:6)," in the land of Moab, where Moses had his only view of the Promised Land, and where "the angels of God upturned the sod for that lonely and unknown grave." While it cannot be insisted too sharply that the Exodus is no imaginary journey, there is a sense in which the old lady was right, for so many of these events and places belong to the geography of the human soul in its exile, its bondage, its wanderings, its glimpses of the Promised Land, and its return to home and heaven at last.

Crossing the Suez arm of the Red Sea and journeying "three days in the wilderness," we spent a quiet Sabbath among "the palms of Elim" and drank from its "springs of water." Another six days' journey carried us along "by the Red Sea," through "the wilderness of sin," past Rephidim to Mount Sinai, on whose sublime summits we spent a part of our second Sabbath. Another five camps carried us down from Sinai past Hazeroth, through the "wilderness of Paran," and well up along the coast of the Gulf of Akaba to Elath, and Ezion-geber.

Crossing the great cleft of the Araba south of the Dead Sea, we climbed into the mountains of Edom and from the summit of the traditional Mount Hor had, like Aaron, our first glimpse of the Promised Land. Then followed a series of camps by the Arnon, along the breezy plateaus of Moab, culminating in a never-to-be-forgotten Sabbath on Nebo itself, with its matchless view embracing so

much of all succeeding Bible history, not forgetting Greece and Rome and the empires lasting till the present hour.

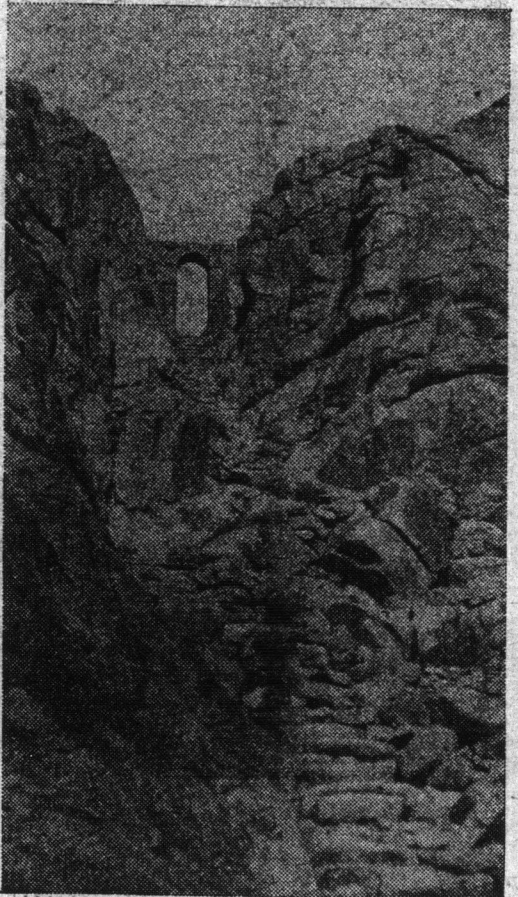
For over against the sky-line, neglecting every other feature in the wide expanse as seen from Nebo, rises the Mount of Olives, where Russia, Austria, Germany, and the other Christian nations of the West are still striving for possession of the Promised Land, while

little difficulty in conceiving what may have happened in combination with "a strong east wind."

There is good authority for an entire stoppage of the flow of the Jordan by a landslide near Tell ed-Damiek during the 13th century, and those who saw people walk across the brink of Niagara Falls, when the river bed was almost dry by reason of an ice gorge above, will not tarry long on the passage of the Jordan.

After we left Elim and were approaching the seacoast one of our cameleers suddenly rushed ahead of us some 25 yards and a moment later returned with a live quail in his hands which he had just caught. This event occurring at the very region where the Children of Israel were so abundantly fed by the flocks of quails, wearied by their flight over the Akaba arm of the Red Sea, was a wholly unexpected exemplification of the phenomenon of the Bible. It was the same east wind blowing over the same sheet of water into the maze of valleys that brought us our quail so weary as to be easily caught by the Bedawy of today. There is abundant confirmation from other sources that our experience was by no means unique.

The problem of the rainfall in the Sinaitic



Gateway to the Stairway to the Top of the Mountain of the Law

Peninsula, which does not seem to have changed since 5000 B. C., has an all-important bearing upon the population before the days of the Exodus, and a no less important bearing upon the numbers of the Children of Israel who went out at that time. There are many separate lines of argument and research converging upon the commonly accepted figures which must reduce them to but a small portion of the 3,000,000 often spoken of.

## The Army of 600,000 Fighting Men Impossible

The climatic conditions being unaltered, the ancient population must have been about the same as that of today, 5,000 or 6,000 people. If the Children of Israel were about equally matched with their enemies at Rephidim then there could not have been 600,000 fighting men. The land of Goshen, at the mouth of the Wady Tumilat, included an area of not more than 60 to 80 square miles, and could not have supported more than 20,000 people at the utmost. 600,000 fighting men would imply at least 3,000,000 people, which would equal if not exceed the whole population of the delta, and there is no trace of such a depopulation of this section of Egypt at the date required.

The crux of the figure, however, comes in the two census lists in Numbers I and XVI. Those who are interested in the most modern solution of this difficulty will find the full statement in Petrie's Researches in Sinai, where the word "thousand" is taken to mean "group" or "family," and the results in figures reveal some startling mathematical facts.

While in Sinai we inquired carefully of the monks concerning the rainfall, and the head of the monastery, who has lived there since 1866, a period of 43 years, told us that not infrequently there were periods of three and four years in which no rain fell. The winter of 1907-08 was one of "much snow," but the total fall did not exceed 20 inches. Up to February 27, 1909, neither rain nor snow had fallen during the winter of 1908-09.

## Moses

The problem of the large numbers is intimately connected with the problem of the documents. Too much has been made of the composite nature of the Pentateuch and wholly erroneous conclusions drawn from fragmentary data. The best Egyptologists now accept Moses as the historical character, and his education of Egypt makes it certain that he and those about him were well accustomed to writing. They also accept the fact that

the Israelites sojourned in Egypt, and that an exodus from there to Palestine took place.

The duplications and variations in the text of Genesis and Exodus (once the despair of the literalists) are now seen to be "the strongest proofs that written documents were before the editors of the Pentateuch, and that they were so ancient and revered that no unification was to be tolerated. This fact itself opens the door for a correction of the figures of the Exodus on exactly the same basis as other figures have been modified in the Old Testament text. Those who have examined the oldest manuscripts of the Bible, and have faced the known difficulties of transmission by copyists and translators through a few centuries, will have little difficulty in accepting emendations proposed and forced upon us by incontestable facts from other sources.

The impressions of the writer, after the most careful thought of the problem of the numbers, is this: To lead any number of people through the Peninsula of Sinai under the circumstances of the Exodus was one of the greatest undertakings of human history. To have led 3,000,000, with their flocks and cattle, was a physical impossibility, and would have involved an unbroken series of miracles far beyond the claims of the most ardent supporters of the "miraculous" in the series in which that word has been used and abused. But the writers of the Pentateuch make no such claims as this would certainly involve. The reduction of the numbers, for perfectly justifiable considerations, relieves the situation of its most perplexing elements and brings the whole movement well within historical limits without one iota from the divinely ordered plan.

Critics seated thousands of miles away in distance and three thousand years later in time have formulated doubts and queries, have raised imaginary difficulties which vanish into thin air when the observant traveller enters the almost changeless Peninsula of Sinai with the Bible in his hand. Some have gone so far as to deny that the inspired writers had the Sinai region in mind at all. Nothing could be more gratuitous and farther from the truth. The Bible writers plainly knew that country as well as George Washington ever knew the country between Boston and Yorktown, and the writer, after 26 years in Bible lands and many journeys into these more remote portions, would record his convictions that the geography of the Bible fits the land as the key fits the lock, and each succeeding generation of men will realize this more clearly.

## The Route of the Exodus

The Bible record is complete as to the route of the Exodus, but many fail to realize this because the history of the journey is scattered through six of the Old Testament books, the record changing back and forth from one place to another nearly 100 times. Mr. W. S. Huchincloss, C. E., in his little booklet "To Canaan in One Year" has made a scholarly and valuable contribution to the problem of the Exodus in assembling and harmonizing all the Bible references and il-

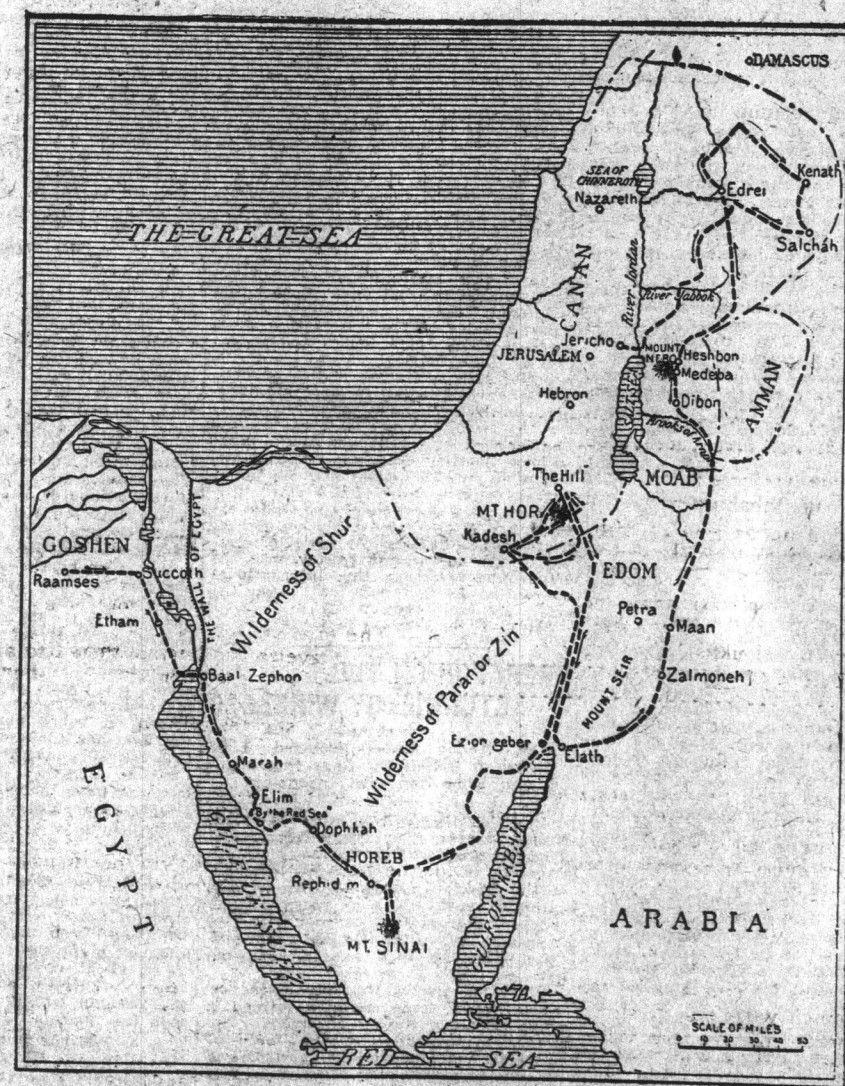
taken into account; hence the course shown is topographically correct." This map and accompanying letter-press was one of the most valuable books of reference that we carried with us into the wilderness.

In general it may be said that the first section of the route from Raameses to Sinai is known perfectly and the recovery of most of the ancient names simply a matter of time. The fourth and last section of the route from Elath, on the Gulf of Akaba, to Jericho is also well known and it is of enchanting interest to note that on this section all the most prominent towns mentioned in the books of Exodus and Numbers retain their ancient names till this present hour. Maan, Dibon, Madaba, Heshbon, Amman, Edrei, Kenath, Salchad and Jericho are all found on our modern maps and are well-known towns to travellers in that region. It is perhaps not too much to say that on the first and last sections nine-tenths of the ancient names will be recovered clinging to the ruins and valleys and mountains of those regions.

The second section of the route, between Sinai and Ezion-geber, is now well known, but because it is an almost uninhabited desert the recovery of the ancient names has not progressed so far. But several of the more important locations have been fixed and we have pleasure in presenting on pages 1034-5 some unique views of Hazeroth and the country about Ezion-geber (Akaba).

The loop section of the route from Ezion-geber into the Wilderness of the Wandering and back to Elath is the least well-explored portion. It contains the well-known names of Kadesh Barnea and Mount Hor, where Aaron died and was buried. Thirty-eight years of the journey were spent about Kadesh, and it is here, if anywhere, that actual remains of the Exodus may some day be found. The site of Kadesh Barnea has been made the subject of dispute, but it is almost certain that the modern Ain Kadis, with its copious spring, Kadesh. An equally vigorous dispute still continues concerning the identification of Mount Hor. Mr. Auchincloss accepts the Jebel Madura, not far from Kadesh, but tradition as old as Josephus, accepted by Jerome and supported by the unanimous traditions of the Mohammedan and Jewish writers identify Mount Hor with Jebel Neby Harun about six miles south of Petra. The Petra Mount Hor is by far the most imposing mountain (5,900 feet) and the view from its summit embraces more of the Promised Land than Aaron could have seen from Jebel Madura.

Out of about 80 place names on or near the route as plotted by Mr. Auchincloss, at least 40 are known and identified with all certainty; ten more tentatively located; another ten have been conjectured, leaving only 15 or 20 of minor importance that are practically lost. Ancient names often itinerate with the changing currents of human life about a certain locality so that many of the names now uncertain will be picked up clinging to natural features or obscure ruins. A number



Map Showing Route of the Exodus

lustrating the route by an itinerary map. In order to bring out the names of the places with greater clearness he has omitted the mountain ranges and gorges, but "in plotting the line of march both their location and the gradients overcome have been carefully

of the camping places of the Children of Israel were named from events occurring within the camp and may have left no trace in the wilderness.

The Peninsula of Sinai, within which lies the first two sections of the route, is that

triangular region between the northern end of the Red Sea from Suez to Akaba, a distance of 200 miles, lies in the triangle. The other two sides of the triangle are the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Akaba, each for 140 miles, being a continuous remarkable rift upon our Dead Sea and the Jordan.

The area of this triangle proper, is a little less than 100,000 square miles. It is one vast desert relief along the seacoast and deep work of rocky valleys. In both seacoasts are vast stretches of sand dunes, and great wastes of sand glistens under the sun.

## The Huge Granite Range

But just south of the peninsula, like a great light-house, rises the huge granite range to a height of over 8,500 feet of Serbal (6,730 feet), Mus Catharine (8,536 feet) all whose diameter is not more than 10 miles. Geographically this mass is granite, or "in more part" of colorless quartz, flesh-colored hornblende, and black slate. Most impressive sights of the days of creation these crystals undergone no geological changes since the beginning of time, and transitions that have so come face of our planet elsewhere.

Only at their bases do mountains show any traces of the waves and the winds. Crushed and ground their peaks into colored sands which fill the gulfs and bays of the region. Rising majestically from the setting of desert and sea, a cleft and rifted and shattering of sublime cliffs, awful precipices, and which roll like billows far tall blue of the heavens.

Long before the days of range was known as Horeb of God, and into this maize work the Children of Israel, forty days or more after the bondage of Egypt on Nile. Here among these majestic granite peaks the onths while Moses, under transformed the mass of H Israel, the Chosen People, man history.

## The Best Moral and Religious World are Linked with Geological Formation of

Of course these mountains have been encrusted with shrines, but somewhere in the circle of 30 miles took place important transactions of the closest contact with God. The of the Covenant, the manifestation, the giving of the laws, and the setting up of events that loom large in the destiny of the race. He describable beauties and granite mountains Moses led of a civil code and institute of religious worship.

It is no accident that the Divine Law, the foundation of all the best moral and religious world, are linked with the formation of our planet. The correspondence between of Sinai and the unchanging truths.

## The Inhabitants

The Peninsula of Sinai is its dwindling inhabitants of food and water. All told number more than 600 souls divided into four main tribes ruled over, by sheikhs who followers before the government as judges and referees in disputes. These Bedouin tents, which are always pitched and away from the route. When travellers enter the Peninsula is spread by means as mysterious and hungry fellows with hasten from every tribe and even weeks over the route to share in the transport of their outfit.

Our group of 16 was led by madi. He was a wide-awake about as much work out of it as any one could have expected of life, their never-ending conversation, their dress, preparations for the night of their camel harness around a fascinating subject of study.

The Peninsula must always be populated because so scanty water and means of subsistence population would average on every two square miles (6 land with 200 to the square mile with 250, and Oklahoma will live, largely on supplies from