

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



**PATREON**

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expositor-series-1.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php)

*PHYSICAL AND HISTORICAL PROBABILITIES  
RESPECTING THE AUTHORSHIP AND AU-  
THORITY OF THE MOSAIC BOOKS.*

VI. THE EXODUS.

THE book of Exodus, as we have seen, is the main stem of the Pentateuch, that to which its roots in Genesis converge, and that which supports its branches, foliage and fruit in Numbers, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Everything in Genesis has its end and object in the emigration from Egypt, and the Exodus itself is that which sustains the historical fabric of the law and the conquest. The whole thus constitutes one grand symmetrical literary structure, linked with contemporary historical facts, and constituting the basis of Christianity itself. This great event may therefore form a suitable termination to the present series of papers.

Modern discoveries have enabled us to place the Exodus more satisfactorily than heretofore in connection with contemporary Egyptian and Palestinian history, and to appreciate every step of the march of Israel in search of liberty. Formerly this was difficult, in consequence of the unsettled state of Egyptian chronology and want of topographical information, while our Biblical historian is careless even of the personality of the rulers of Egypt. To the writer of Genesis and Exodus they are collectively merely Pharaoh, just as we now speak of the Czar, the Sultan or the Khedive, with scarcely a thought of the individual name of the potentate in question. The historian of the Exodus is fortunately more particular as to topography, and the

careful surveys of modern times have enabled us to follow his footsteps in a manner impossible at any previous period between the Exodus itself and the present day. The inscriptions and other records of the Pharaohs of the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties are also coming forward in a remarkable manner in aid of the comparative chronology.

We may select a few facts bearing on questions of place and date, in evidence of the contention that the writer of the book of Exodus is a contemporary of the events he describes, and that his chronology and topography are confirmed by modern investigation. Miracles indeed now thicken upon us as compared with the narratives in Genesis; and this to some minds gives a mythical air to the narrative with which they are associated, simple and natural though it is in itself. It is, however, in the great critical periods of nations and of the world that such deviations from ordinary uniformity become most necessary and reasonable; but in Exodus they are wonders of the true Mosaic type, mostly beneficent in object, effected by natural means, and described in a manner to show accurate observation of facts.

Naville's discovery of the site of Pithom in the eastern part of the Wady Tumilat leading from the Nile to the ancient head of the Red Sea, and the farther identification of Gesen and the City Rameses at the western end of the same valley, have fixed the point of departure of the Israelites and the earlier stages of their journey. The fact ascertained by its structure and inscriptions, that Pithom was a store or arsenal city built by the great Egyptian king Rameses II. has established the time of the oppression. The evidence that Pithom and Heroopolis were one and the same, and that this city was near the northern end of the Red Sea, then extending all the way to Lake Timsah, removes a number of geographical doubts, so that we may

now proceed with some confidence in our enquiry as to the facts, whether physical or historical.

A preliminary question is that of the time of the sojourn of Israel in Egypt, and I am glad to see that attention has been directed to this point in *THE EXPOSITOR* of December, 1893.<sup>1</sup> Those who have read that article will easily comprehend the following facts.

To a cursory reader of Genesis and Exodus in the English versions, the period of the sojourn in Egypt seems to have been 400 or 430 years. In Genesis xv. the prediction to Abraham runs thus: "And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them; four hundred years." Here it does not at first appear to the reader that the period of 400 years covers not merely the affliction but the whole sojourn, though this is evidently the intention. In Exodus xii. 40 and 41 the termination of the period is given with great precision as follows: "Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who dwelt in Egypt<sup>2</sup> was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." Here again the sojourning is that in Canaan as well as in Egypt. This we learn in three ways: (1) the genealogical lists in the same book show that the residence of the Israelites in Egypt from the time of the immigration of Jacob extended only about 216 years; (2) the Septuagint translation, to remove what seemed an ambiguity, or perhaps because their manuscripts were different from ours, add the words "and in the land of Canaan"; and this is just the sort of question on which we should specially value the authority of the Sep-

<sup>1</sup> *The Sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt*, by the Right Rev. the Bishop of Bath and Wells.

<sup>2</sup> R.V. changes this for the worse.

tuagint; (3) the Samaritan Pentateuch agrees with the Septuagint; (4) Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians states the whole period from the covenant with Abraham to the giving of the law at 430 years. We are thus enabled to conclude that the date so minutely given, even to a day, in Exodus xii. may be reckoned from the entry of Abraham into Canaan, and that the period of 430 years covers the whole of the sojourning which was to be the lot of his posterity till their return to Canaan as a conquering nation. This enables us also to see in this chronology the hand of Moses. It was not his mission to regard the Israelites as merely the descendants of an immigrant Syrian chief who had come into Egypt about two centuries previously, but to direct his people to the promise made to Abraham, and to have them regard the whole of the sojourning, whether in Canaan or in Egypt, as one episode in their history, to be terminated by their possessing the promised land. To Moses the oppression is merely the means of obliging Israel to fulfil its divinely ordained destiny, which it must fulfil whether Pharaoh and the Egyptians are friendly or hostile.

This wide grasp of the situation which many even of modern writers fail to take, befits the mind of the great Hebrew leader and the divine impulse that animated him. Paul, actuated by the same spirit, takes the same view.<sup>1</sup>

Some important historical conclusions hang on this question. Those who regard the 430 years as the time of the residence in Egypt are obliged to place the entry of Joseph into that country in the reign of one of the foreign invaders known as the Hyksos or Shepherd kings, before the eighteenth Egyptian Dynasty, thereby raising a host of difficulties, such as the unlikelihood of the land of Goshen being open to occupation by the Israelites, the incongruity of a

<sup>1</sup> For an excellent summary of the evidence in favour of the shorter chronology, I may refer to Dr. Kellog's Lectures on "Abraham, Moses and Joseph," New York, 1887.

hatred of shepherds on the part of the invaders, who were themselves shepherds, the thoroughly native surroundings of Joseph in the history, and the impossibility of the Israelites having escaped being involved in the fierce and destructive warfare between the native Egyptians and the Hyksos, ending in the expulsion of the latter. On the other hand, the shorter date, say of 215 to 218 years, brings the deportation of Joseph into the later part of the reign of Thothmes III., the greatest king of the eighteenth Dynasty, which succeeded the Hyksos, a king whose character and relations with Syria and its tribes fit in thoroughly with the Mosaic narrative, as do the subsequent events of Egyptian history up to the Exodus. We cannot look on the benevolent yet sagacious countenance of Thothmes, as represented on his statues, without feeling that he was a man likely to patronize Joseph, and we know that his immediate successors, the Amenhoteps, were friendly to Semitic peoples. Were it possible to devote one of these articles to the life of Joseph, all these points could be fully illustrated with great benefit to our comprehension of the history of the great Hebrew minister, which has been disjointed in its historical aspect by the leaning of Egyptologists to the longer date.

It is noteworthy here that on the correct chronology the two fine obelisks from On or Heliopolis, now in London and New York, must have been set up in the time of Joseph, and by his patron, Thothmes III., whose inscription occupies the central and original lines on the four faces. The lateral lines were added by Rameses II., the oppressor of the Israelites, who "knew not Joseph." Thus these obelisks, so strangely transferred to the chief cities of the two sides of the Atlantic, are monuments of two epochs when Hebrew and Egyptian history came closely into contact.

One other little point is too tempting to be passed by. In the twenty-third and following years of his reign Thothmes

III. invaded Palestine, defeating its allied kings at Megiddo, and reducing them to the condition of tributaries. He inscribed a list of the tributary tribes on the temple of Karnak, where it still exists, and has been copied and compared with the Semitic names of places and tribes in Palestine.<sup>1</sup> Among the names are two which have been read "Jacob El," and "Joseph El," the first near Hebron, the second farther north,—the addition of the name of God (El) to the names being supposed to indicate a special religious aspect, or to be similar to what we see in such names as Israel and Ishmael. This is inexplicable to those who hold to the long period, because on that theory the migration of Jacob to Egypt must have occurred about two centuries before the campaign of Thothmes, and such names could, in that case, be only survivals from an earlier date, a very unlikely supposition in the circumstances. According to the correct chronology, all fits into place. Jacob must have settled in Egypt about the fortieth year of Thothmes III. In the twenty-third year of Thothmes he was still in Canaan. Further, we learn from Genesis that he had divided his tribe and his flocks into two bands, one at Hebron, the other as far north as Dothan; and Genesis also intimates that he had already promoted Joseph, though then a mere boy, over his brothers;<sup>2</sup> so that one of the divisions might be known as that of Jacob, the other as that of Joseph. We may even suppose that the brothers in charge of the Shechem or Dothan flocks may have purposely named them as Joseph's, that he, if he were to be promoted over them, might share in the ignominy of subjection to Egypt and in the loss of the tribute payment. In any case we can readily understand the officers of Thothmes registering the two divisions of the tribe of Jacob, or Israel, in this

<sup>1</sup> See Maspero and Tomkins, *Transactions of Society of Biblical Archaeology*, and *Transactions Victoria Institute*.

<sup>2</sup> The "coat of many colours" is a proof of this.

way.<sup>1</sup> Further, when Jacob afterwards went to Egypt, he could be represented as already a vassal of the Pharaoh, and merely changing his habitation from one part of his dominions to another. Had Jacob known of those lists of Thothmes which remain to our own time, he could have referred to this relation. At the same time, the recent expulsion of the Hyksos must have left much land in Lower Egypt open to occupation by the Israelites. Thus, what in one view of the chronology is an insoluble enigma becomes a remarkable coincidence. All this must have been well known to Moses and his contemporaries, but was not likely to be known to Israelites in later times. It would seem indeed as if even such native authorities as Manetho were mistaken as to these matters. The inscriptions of Thothmes remain, however, to tell their tale.

In like manner our shorter chronology brings the advent of the king who knew not Joseph to the time of Horus or Seti I., the earliest kings of the 19th Dynasty, who are known to have been hostile to the Semitic proclivities of the later kings of the preceding Dynasty. It brings the height of the oppression into its proper place in the long reign of Rameses II., and the Exodus into one of the short reigns which succeeded; while, as we shall see, it makes the Exodus itself one factor in the obscure ending of the great nineteenth Dynasty, and its replacement by the twentieth.

It has been objected to the shorter chronology that it does not give time for the multiplication of the Israelites to the millions of the Exodus. But we are not to limit the tribe of Jacob to the threescore and ten souls of his family. If Abraham could muster three hundred and eighteen fighting men "born in his own house," the tribe of Jacob could scarcely have been less numerous, and, besides, we are told

<sup>1</sup> At the time of the Exodus, also, the northern site was assigned to the posterity of Joseph as properly theirs.

that the increase of the Israelites in Egypt was exceptional (like that of some communities in Western America in recent times), and many foreigners must have attached themselves to them in the time of their prosperity.

It was at one time supposed that Egyptian history gave no account of the Exodus, and Manetho would seem to have confused this event with the expulsion of the Hyksos; but the certain identification of the Pharaoh of the oppression with Rameses II., and of the Pharaoh of the Exodus with the last of the nineteenth Dynasty, removes this defect. A later king, Rameses III., belonging to the twentieth Dynasty, has left us an autobiographical sketch, now known as the great Harris Papyrus, and in the introduction to this he narrates the causes which brought Setnekt, his father, to the throne as the founder of a new dynasty. This introduction has been translated by Eisenlohr, Brugsch, Birch, and Chabas.<sup>1</sup> The translations differ somewhat in their details, but are summed up by Birch in the following statement:<sup>2</sup>—"The interval between Siptah, the last king of the 19th dynasty, and Setnekt (the first king of the 20th) was one of much disturbance. From the great Harris Papyrus it appears that a great exodus took place from Egypt. In consequence of the troubles for many years it says there was no master." It also makes mention of one Arisu or Areos, a Syrian, as a leader in these disturbances. In other words, within about twenty years of the close of the long and pretentious, if not glorious, reign of Rameses II., the nineteenth Dynasty came to an end in disaster and anarchy, out of which arose a new dynasty. As to the details of this revolution there are no doubt some differences of opinion; but I think the majority of Egyptologists will accept the following general statements. Rameses II. died after a reign of sixty-seven years. He was succeeded by one

<sup>1</sup> *Trans. Soc. Bib. Archæology*, vol. i. *Records of the Past*, vol. viii.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Egypt*, p. 186.

of his sons, Meneptah, who was somewhat aged before his accession, and seems to have reigned only eight years. The principal event of his reign is an incursion of Lybians and others from the West, which was repelled; but his annals contain no mention of any rebellion of slaves in Egypt. He seems to have died peacefully, and to have been buried with his fathers. Nevertheless, he has been often regarded as the Pharaoh of the Exodus; but this probably arises from confounding him with one of his successors who has the same or a very similar name. He was succeeded by his son, Seti II., or Seti Meneptah. His reign also was short, probably only four years, and he seems either to have been slain in civil strife or to have had to flee to Ethiopia, a usurper, Amenmes, of whom little is known, apparently taking his place. He was replaced by the legitimate line in the persons of Siptah or Siptah Meneptah<sup>1</sup> and his queen Ta-user. After reigning seven years, Siptah disappears mysteriously, leaving an unoccupied tomb, afterwards plastered over and occupied by his successor, and apparently no heir who could succeed him, as his queen Ta-user is reckoned by Manetho as the last sovereign of the Dynasty. At this time occurred the great Exodus and the anarchy referred to in the Harris Papyrus. Whether the Arisu of the papyrus represents the leader of the Exodus or an invader who took advantage of the anarchy, is not yet certainly known. In any case, out of the anarchy arose Setnekt, or Set the victorious, the founder of the twentieth Dynasty. Rameses III., an able and successful ruler, was his son; and it was in his reign that the Harris Papyrus was written. That Siptah was the Pharaoh of the Exodus is rendered probable by his sudden disappearance while still a young man or in the prime of life, by his unoccupied tomb, by the attempted regency of his queen, and by the anarchy which followed. I may add that Siptah, as photo-

<sup>1</sup> Possibly a brother of Seti II.

graphed by Petrie from a bas-relief on his tomb, shows the fine features of Rameses II., his grandfather, but cast in a weaker mould. He may have been as proud as Rameses II., but without his force of character, and is altogether such a person as we should expect in the haughty, petulant, yet vacillating ruler with whom Moses negotiated, and whose weak character was hardened by God to his destruction.

On the above view the comparative chronology of the life of Moses will stand thus :—

Birth of Moses :	38th year of Rameses II.	
Flight of Moses to Midian :	78th year of Rameses II.	
Moses in Midian, 41 or 42 years, or, allowing for overlaps and preliminaries of Exodus, 40 years.	} 18 last years of Rameses II. 8 years of Meneptah. 3 or 4 of Seti II. 5 of Amenmes. 7 of Siptah.	
Moses returns, Exodus :		Last year of Siptah.
Israel in the Wilderness : 40 years.		Anarchy and Setnekt. 30 years.
		Rameses III., 10 years.
Israel enters Canaan 10th year of Rameses III., and only one or two years after his successful raid into Palestine, in which he weakened the Hittites and other tribes preparatory to the conquest by Joshua. <sup>1</sup>		

This remarkable parallelism of events, rendered in the highest degree probable by the most recent discoveries, strengthens the conviction that in the early chapters of Exodus we are dealing with contemporary annals, and with the autobiography of the great law-giver.

Let us now glance at the topography of the earlier part of the Exodus, that we may note the geography as well as the chronology of our author. The traveller who journeys by the railway from Cairo to Ismailia, taking with him a

<sup>1</sup> He was perhaps the "Hornet" referred to in Exodus xxiii., Deut. vii., and Joshua xxiv. ; for the hornet or wasp was the emblem of Lower Egypt.

good map of the district, can appreciate at a glance the character and position of the land of Goshen and the facilities for exit to the East by the Wady Tumilat. This strip of fertile land, stretching across the desert, was originally the channel of a branch of the Nile flowing eastward into the Red Sea, which then extended, along the depression of the old Bitter Lakes, nearly or quite to Lake Timsah. Even before the time of Moses, the gradual silting up of the sea and the slight changes of level which this region has undergone had rendered it necessary to improve the outlet by artificial canalisation, a process continued and extended at intervals down to the present time, when the Sweetwater Canal irrigates the valley and carries the Nile water as far as Suez. This beautiful valley and a tract at its western end, rich in corn lands, pasturage and date palms, constituted the districts of Rameses or Goshen on the West and of Thukot or Succoth on the East. Of the former the capital was Rameses, of the latter Pithom. Both were fortified towns, built by Rameses II. with the forced labour of the Hebrews and of foreign captives, in order to form arsenals for his armies on their march to his eastern expeditions, and to keep in check the discontented Israelitish population.

If now we read the twelfth to the fifteenth chapters of Exodus with this topography before us, we find ourselves in presence of the following stages of the Exodus:—

(1) The Israelites, gathering at and near Rameses, where a large body of them was probably ordinarily stationed. The Egyptian Court may at the time have been in Rameses itself or at Bubastis, or even at Zoan on the north.

(2) Negotiations going on between the Israelites, through Moses and Aaron, and the Pharaoh, respecting the desired permission to go into the desert to sacrifice. In these negotiations neither party was desirous to push matters to extremity; because if the Israelites were to move without

permission, they would expose themselves to destruction by the Egyptian army, and the king was reluctant to provoke a servile war which might lead to invasion from the East, while there is reason to believe that his own position at home was not very secure. Besides this, Moses, as an old statesman of the time of the Great Rameses, was "as a God" to Pharaoh, so great was his prestige in the eyes of the Egyptians and the young king. On the other hand, the Pharaoh's heart was hardened against any concession.

(3) At length, through a succession of calamitous plagues, conveying a strong impression of the Divine anger against the ruler of Egypt, the resolution of the king is broken and he allows the slaves to go. They have been prepared for this, and depart in haste, as if thrust out, and no doubt anxious to place themselves out of the reach of pursuit in case the fickle Pharaoh should change his mind.

(4) Their route is not by the direct desert way to the north-east (the way of the Philistines), but eastward along the Wady Tumilat, the same route now followed by the railway and pursued by Wolseley in his memorable campaign.

(5) Passing through the land of Rameses, they reach Succoth, of which Pithom was the capital, and encamp within its boundaries, somewhere between Tel-el-Kebir and Pithom. They next proceed eastward to Etham, on the edge or border of the desert and again encamp. If we ask the precise place of this second encampment, it may I think be easily determined. Three miles east of Pithom the fertile valley widens into the oasis of Abu-suer, beyond which the desert rises in stages of hard gravel and sand with one sand-hill 90 feet high, commanding an extensive view both to the west and east as well as to the south. Here they would find plentiful pasturage and water, could watch the approach of any pursuing force, and could gather in stragglers, or those who had been tardy in following. From this place,

by passing to the north of the present Lake Timsah, only four miles distant, a direct route through the desert to Palestine was open to them.

(6) But now by Divine direction they swerve from this direct way of escape, and turn, at right angles to their former course, to the south; apparently delivering themselves into the hands of their enemies, who, aware of the movement, at once enter into pursuit and come up with the retreating Israelites somewhere on the shore of that northward extension of the Red Sea then reaching past the old Bitter Lakes.<sup>1</sup>

(7) They were to encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the Sea, over against Baal-Zephon,<sup>2</sup> a very precise designation of locality if we could discover the three points given. We may perhaps identify Pi-hahiroth with a place about 18 miles from Pithom and on the shore of the sea, known to the Egyptians as Pi-kerehet. This is Naville's identification, who however supposes the place to be Jebel Mariam, only 14 miles from Pithom. It was more likely farther down, at or near the place now called the Serapium near the old Bitter Lakes.<sup>3</sup> Migdol, or the watch tower, I am inclined to regard as a natural feature, most probably Jebel Shebremet, a northern outlier of the Geneffeh hills, though there may have been an Egyptian fort at this place. Baal-Zephon seems to have been a mountain on the opposite side of the sea, perhaps the northern peak of Jebel er Rabah, which would correspond with its name "The Lord of the north." My own conclusion, based on a careful consideration of the strategic features of the ground, was that the place of crossing was near the south end of the old Bitter Lakes a little to the south of the pass between Jebel Shebremet and the sea. Naville prefers a more northern

<sup>1</sup> Now again submerged by the Canal.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus xiv. 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> The term Pi-kerehet implies that the place had a temple of Serapis.

locality ; but after reading his latest exposition of his views in his address to the Victoria Institute (1893), I am inclined to adhere to my original opinion.<sup>1</sup> The difference however amounts to only a few miles in the place of crossing, and leaves the main facts unchanged ; though Naville's view implies bad generalship on the part of Moses, or that Pharaoh came upon his flank earlier than one would infer from the Biblical narrative or than was probable in the circumstances.

These points being premised, we may now ask the question how they agree with our supposition that the history is the testimony of a witness of the events, acquainted with the nature of the country and aware of all the conditions, Divine and human, under which the movement was to be effected.

That the people should not proceed by the short northern route "the way of the Philistines" was an obvious dictate of prudence. It passed near important fortified towns, and would lead to a direct and immediate conflict with a powerful military nation. On the other hand, the route by the Wady Tumulat was in the first instance through a practicable and well-watered country, inhabited by a friendly population, and with no fortified place other than Pithom. All went well accordingly with the fugitives, till they arrived at Etham<sup>2</sup> on the edge of the wilderness, and on the eastern boundary of Succoth. Here, if they pursued a straight course, they had before them a desert journey of several days in which Pharaoh was not likely to follow them, but at the end of which they might expect to meet hostile Canaanites. But why turn at this point and place the Red Sea between themselves and safety. The immediate reason is said to have been, not dread of the

<sup>1</sup> Reasons are stated in detail in *Modern Science in Bible Lands*.

<sup>2</sup> Etham has been supposed to be a defensive wall or fortress, but Naville is probably right in identifying it with a district at the edge of the desert, named *Atuma* by the Egyptians. The "edge" or border of the desert is at this place very well defined.

wilderness or of the hostile Canaanites, but to induce Pharaoh to follow to his own destruction. In other words, it was placing an army in a position of difficulty in order to provoke an attack. The objects to be gained, if successful, would be to incapacitate the Egyptians from farther pursuit, to gain prestige in the opinion of all the neighbouring nations, and to be in a position to lie over for a time in the peninsula of Sinai to organise before attempting the conquest of Palestine. Still it was a bold and dangerous movement, even admitting that the Red Sea was known on certain rare and exceptional occasions to be fordable near Pi-hahiroth. We can readily believe that this was Divine rather than human strategy, and that only a strong faith in the guidance of God could induce any leader to attempt it.

After exploring the country around Ismailia and toward the site of old Pithom, and south toward Suez, I placed myself one evening on the rising ground between Ismailia and the site of Pithom, near to where the Etham encampment probably was, and endeavoured to realize the thoughts and plans of the leader of Israel. He had already had some experience of the confusion and difficulty of the march of the host and the mixed multitude; and casting his eye anxiously westward may have seen crowds of stragglers, loiterers and new recruits struggling to reach the camp, and to find their appropriate places, and may have thought of the consequences of a charge of Egyptian chariots against the rear of such a body, encumbered with every kind of impedimenta and without regular organization. Looking east, he could see the long stretches of desert over which the way lay to the promised land, yellow and dreary, with few wells, and with predatory tribes to embarrass his movements. The moment was an anxious one, for next day must commit them to the dangers and privations of the desert journey, though it might free them from the risk of

immediate pursuit on the part of Pharaoh. The intimation of the Divine will that the host must move southward, may have been a relief in the circumstances, though how it would result was a matter of faith. Looking in this direction, the leader could see the whole region as far as the steep high ridge of Jebel Attaka forty miles distant. In the foreground the eastern end of the Wady spread out into a plain, partly watered and cultivated, but affording no protection to the flank of the marching multitude, should Pharaoh pursue and attack them. At the distance however of fifteen miles the conical mass of Jebel Shebremet jutting from the Geneffeh range closes in the plain to a narrow pass;<sup>1</sup> and, once there, a pursuing chariot force could strike only the rear of the host, and this in a narrow space which might be defended against it. So far the position of affairs was plain, all beyond was uncertain. We may be sure, however, that the camp was raised as early as possible in the morning, and that a push was made to occupy the Migdol or Shebremet pass in time to protect the people from any attack in the rear.

Egyptian scouts must have dogged the march, for the change of direction was no sooner made than it was known to Pharaoh, and his immediate resolve was to take advantage of the movement. So rapidly were his arrangements made, that his chariot force, forming the van of his army, and probably led by Siptah himself, made its appearance in the evening, while the wearied Israelites were preparing to pitch their tents by the side of the sea near Pi-hahiroth, and were possibly settling a rear-guard across the pass to protect them through the night. But the sight of the broad line of advancing chariots struck terror into the people, and apparently banished all thought of resistance. The despair, the reproach of Moses for bringing them into this strait, his

<sup>1</sup> I think Shebremet itself was the Migdol of the narrative; but there may have been a watch-tower or post on the mountain to protect the pass.

attempt to encourage them to stand fast, the crying of Moses to the Lord, and the final order to go forward into the sea, are all vividly pictured in Exodus xiv., as by the pen of an actor in the scene. But the Egyptians did not at once attack. The hour was late and the pass was narrow, and the cloudy pillar in rear had some terrors for them, though it failed to give courage to the Israelites. In the meantime, by a Divine arrangement in favour of the fugitives, one of those strong north-east winds, which at some seasons course along the Red Sea Valley, drove out the ebb-tide so as to leave a practicable passage across, just as in modern times, before the construction of the canal, a precarious crossing could sometimes be effected at low tide above Suez. Moses is directed to cause Israel to advance into the sea. It was no holiday procession. They were wearied with a day's march and in the midst of preparations to encamp. Beaten with the wind and drenched with the rain, they had to descend in darkness into the muddy sea-bottom, and painfully, and we may be sure with many fears, to make their way across. Dread of the pursuers no doubt lent speed to their movements, and it may have been a somewhat tumultuous and hurried flight. They crossed in safety, and as the morning dawned on them they must have experienced that great revulsion of feeling to which voice was given in the impromptu song of Moses and the chorus of Miriam and her companion maidens.

In the meantime the Egyptians, puzzled perhaps at first with the noise and commotion among the fugitives, discovered towards morning what had happened, and rushing forward in pursuit, plunged into the sea-bed, which they hoped might still give them time to cross. But they were engulfed in the swiftly returning waters.<sup>1</sup> So perished Siptah Menepthah, his best officers, and the finest chariot force in

<sup>1</sup> The extreme rise of spring tides at Suez is nine feet—an amount quite sufficient to produce a destructive “bore” in the circumstances referred to.

the world. Egypt was left without a king, without the flower of its army, and without its servile population, and became a prey to the anarchy and confusion incident to so sudden and unexpected a revolution. Jehovah had triumphed gloriously. Pharaoh's chariots and his host he had cast into the sea. His "chosen captains" were drowned in the Red Sea. We could not be certain from the history or the song that Pharaoh himself perished: perhaps the narrator himself did not certainly know this; but the empty and usurped tomb in the valley of the kings at Thebes now tells the story.

We may not trace further the march to Sinai. This has been admirably done in the report of the Ordnance Survey with its beautiful maps and photographs, and has been well followed up by the late Mr. E. H. Palmer, in his work the *Desert of the Exodus*, in which he ably sums up the conclusions of the Survey as proving for all time that the narrative of the Exodus must have been written by an observant and highly intelligent contemporary.

We have now reached the point where Moses becomes his own biographer; and here every sentence bears witness to his hand, his head and his heart, in such a manner that the most obtuse can scarcely fail to see the evidence of his authorship. It is true however now, as of old that they who will not hear Moses and the prophets would not be persuaded if one should rise from the dead, even though the risen one should be Christ Himself.

It is to be observed that this and the preceding articles are intended merely as specimens of a line of argument furnished by physical and historical facts which are daily growing in cogency, and of which we have had space to notice only a very few. In one respect it was familiar to many of the older divines in "uncritical" days; but the discoveries of our time have strengthened it in ways which

they could not anticipate, and which now enable us with scientific certainty to assign dates to documents heretofore subjected to doubt, and to place ourselves more distinctly on the standpoints of their writers. Should life and strength permit, and should there be demand, nothing could give greater pleasure to the writer than to treat other portions of early Bible history in a similar manner, or to answer questions as to points unavoidably passed over. In the meantime he places these papers before Bible students in the hope that they may at least prove suggestive, and may thus not be without utility in present circumstances.

J. WILLIAM DAWSON.

*THE SECRET OF JESUS.*

It would be difficult to name men of finer, gentler natures than Renan and Matthew Arnold, and it is deeply interesting to observe how they are affected by Christ. For Renan Christ was an incarnation of infinite kindness, irresistibly lovable, and known always the better the longer He was loved. Renan's expressions of love for Christ became more fervent with every decade of his life, and it is hardly a metaphor to say that at last he died on his knees, invoking Christ by the name of God. And yet, in relation to the mightier teachings of the Jesus of the Gospels, and the mightier wonders of Christianity as a phenomenon of world-history, what is the Christ of Renan after all but a beautiful phantom, exhaled from the fountains and the blue mists of the Palestine hills in Spring? And there was a tenuity in the manhood of Matthew Arnold, noble and fine as his genius was, that incapacitated him too for seeing more than a very little way into the secret and the system of Christ. "Sweetness and light." A pretty phrase. An