waste products of copper foundries indicate that the peninsula was once better wooded than now, of which indeed we have express testimony of post-Christian date. At present the dominant feature is bare walls of rock, especially in the primitive formations; the steep and jagged summits have a striking effect, which is increased by the various colours of the rock and the clearness of the atmosphere. The deep-cut valleys are filled by rushing torrents after rain, but soon dry up again. In the S. the centre of the main mountain mass is Mount Catherine (8540 ft.), Omm Shōmar to the S.E. being little lower; this peak and N. of it Mount Serbāl (6750 ft.), which rises more immediately from the plain, dominate the Kâ'ah, a waste expanse of sand strewn with pebbles, which occupies the S.W. margin of the peninsula. In the Kā'ah is the village of Tūr, and at the S. promontory (Ras Mohammed) is the little hamlet of Sherm. The Sinai group as a whole is called by the Arabs Jebel al-Tūr; the name Sînâ in Arabic comes only from books. The area of the peninsula is about 11,200 sq. m.; the population is four to five thousand souls, chiefly Bedouins of various tribes, whose common name, derived from Tūr, is Towara. They have sheep and goats, with which they retire in summer to the higher lands, where there is good pasture ground, and where springs are comparatively common. On the chalk and sandstone water is scarcer than among the primitive rocks, and often brackish. Though the rocks are bare, there is always vegetation in the dales, especially acacias and tamarisks; from the latter (T. *mannifera)* manna is still derived in quantities that vary with the rainfall. On the hills grow aromatic plants, especially *Thymaceae.* The fauna includes the ibex, hyrax and hyaena; the panther too is sometimes found. Flights of quail have been observed. In some valleys there are well-kept gardens and good date-palms; the most noted oasis is that of Feiran, in the N. W. of the peninsula, which is watered by a perennial stream. Whether Feiran is the Rephidim of Exod. xvii. is a question which, like the identifica­tion of the other stations of the Israelites, depends on the localiza­tion of the Mountain of the Law.

There is no genuine pre-Christian tradition on this subject. The chief authority for the ancient sanctity of Mount Sinai is Antoninus Martyr (end of the 6th century), who tells that the heathen Arabs in his time still celebrated a moon feast there. As *sin* means “ moon,” this feast has been connected with the name of Sinai, but the proposed etymology is not certain. Of heathen origin, too, are the many Nabataean inscriptions of Sinai, found especially in the Wãdy Mokatteb (in the N.W.), and sometimes accompanied by rude drawings. The language and character are Aramaic, but the proper names are mainly those of Arabs, who passing by graved their names on the rocks. That they were pilgrims to Sinai cannot be made out with certainty. The inscriptions date from the early years of the Christian era, when the Nabataean kingdom was at its height.

In early Christian times many anchorites inhabited Sinai, living for the most part in the caves, which are numerous even in the primitive rocks. Then monasteries were built, the most famous being the great one of St Catherine in Wãdy el-Dēr (the valley of the monastery). On Serbāl, too, there were many granite dwellings, and in the neighbouring Pharan (Phoenicion), which was a bishop’s see, there were, as the ruins show, churches and convents.

The question then is whether when the hermits first settled in the peninsula there existed a tradition as to the place of the Mountain of the Law, and whether they chose for their residence a spot which was already traditionally consecrated by memories significant to the Christian as well as to the Jew. No assertion of the existence of such a tradition is to be found in Josephus, who only says that Sinai was the highest mountain of the district —a description which might apply to Serbāl as seen from the plain below. Eusebius uses expressions which may also seem to point to Serbāl as the place of the law-giving, and it must be admitted that the tradition which seeks the holy site in the group of Jebel Mūsā *(i.e.* the mass of which Mount Catherine is the highest peak) is not older than the time of Justinian, so that the identification with Mount Serbāl seems to have greater antiquity in its favour. In later times Jebel Müsä and Serbāl had each its own tradition, and the holy places were pointed out at each; thus from the monastery of St Catherine a path of granite steps was constructed up to “ the Mountain of the Law,” but similar steps are found at Serbāl. That these traditions are not decisive, however, is admitted, more or less, even by those moderns who, like Lepsius, Ebers, Bartlett, give their voice for Serbāl. Most authorities still prefer Jebel Mūsā or some point in that group, but they again differ in details. First of all there is much difficulty in determining the route by which the Hebrews approached the mountain. Then comes the question of finding a suitable plain for their encampment under the mountain, which is best met if, with Robinson, Stanley, Palmer and others, the plain is taken to be that of al-Rãhe and the overhanging moun­tain to be Jebel Sufsāfeh. The latter is over 6300 ft. high, and consists of pasture ground; it does not fit all the details in Exodus, but this objection is quite as strong against the tradi­tional site on Jebel Mūsā (Mount Moses), which lies farther S. Jebel Mûsã has been accepted by Tischendorf, Laborde, Ritter, Strauss, Farrar, and many others; on this view the Israelites must have encamped in the narrow Wādy al-Seya'īyeh, N. of the mount. But the absence of exact topographical detail on the part of the Biblical narrators, who always speak of Sinai as if it were a single summit and give no hint about several summits of which it is one, shows that in their time there was no real tradition on the matter, and that all attempts at identification are necessarily vain.

Literature.—Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria, &c.* (London, 1822); Leon de Laborde, *Voyage de l'Arabie Pétrée* (Paris, 1830-1836); Robinson, *Biblical Researches* (London, 1841) ; Lepsius, *Reise* (Berlin, 1845); Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine',* Fraas, *Aus d. Orient* (Stuttgart, 1867); *Ordnance Survey of the Pen. of Sinai* (South­ampton, 1869, 3 vols.); Palmer, *Desert of the Exodus* (Cambridge, 1871); Ebers, *Durch Gosen zum Sinai* (2nd ed., Leipzig, 1881); Baker Greene, *The Hebrew Migration* (London, 1883); Hull, *Mount Seir, Sinai and West Palestine* (London, 1885). See also the Palestine Society’s *Quarterly Statement, passim.* (A. So.)

2. *The Peninsula: Recent Research.—*The peninsula of Sinai is about 230 m. in extreme length and 150 m. wide, or nearly the size of Ireland. It is practically waterless and barren, the population being not a thousandth of that on an equal area in England. The S. part is a high mass of schists and granite, deeply cut into valleys; it is overlaid by carboniferous sandstone, and limestone, capped with tertiary basalt, flows in the mining region. The N. part is an expanse of cretaceous limestone and nummulitic tertiary limestone, sloping down to the Mediter­ranean. The steep valley of the Gulf of Suez has been greatly deepened—if not formed—since the tertiary limestone was deposited, the beds dipping down sharply to the sea. The only water supply of any importance is that in the Wady Feiran; elsewhere only small water-holes preserve enough for a few persons, but fresh water can be obtained along the shore route by digging.

The difficulty about the numbers of the Israelites who lived here has lately been treated on a fresh basis. That they were not more numerous than the previous inhabitants is shown by the difficulty in conquering the Amalekites at Rephidim. In the census lists of the Book of Numbers the hundreds of people in each tribe are in most cases 4 or 500; 2, 3, 6 or 700 are rare; 0, 1, 8 or 900 do not occur. The hundreds are therefore inde­pendent of the thousands prefixed to them: and as *alāf* means both a “ thousand ” and a “ family,” it is proposed that the original census was in numbers of tents or families, and hundreds of people; and that later the family numbers were mistaken for thousands. Other points agree in this view, such as the number of persons in a family, the similarity of hundreds in the census before and that after the wanderings, and the actual size of Goshen, from which they came, and the population of Sinai where they settled. Thus the total numbers were 5730 people. The internal evidence that the census lists are original documents is very strong, though they have been misunderstood by later compilers. It is impossible to suppose a population trained in Egypt not having the ability to keep some tribal