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THE SEASON OF CALEB'S RECONNAISSANCE.

By Captain A. E. HAYNES, R.E.

READERS of the Palestine Exploration Fund *Quarterly Statement* may have remarked a passage in the Variorum Bible (Teachers' Edition),¹ which is, I think, not altogether beyond question. The passage is in the Historical Epitome, and details the march from Mount Sinai for the Promised Land; it runs thus:—"The March.—In the 14th month after the Exodus, the Covenant-nation leaves Sinai for Canaan (the usual 11 days' journey occupy four months, Deut. i, 2; Numbers x, 11, with xiii, 20), and encamps in the wilderness of Paran." There are two statements in this passage, either of which appears to be due to some preconceived notion, such as the Bible narrative does not give colour for; they are:—

- (1) That the journey from Horeb to Kadesh-Barnea *usually* took 11 days.
- (2) That in the case of the Exodus it took four months.

The statement (1), which is born of the distance between the district of Jebel Musa in the Sinaitic Peninsula and district to which Kadesh is generally assigned, is founded on Deut. i, 2. It is well known, however, that the word *journey* in this verse is inserted by the translators; the verse itself rather signifying that in this particular journey of the Exodus, the time occupied in the journey from Horeb to Kadesh-Barnea was 11 days. This verse, which might mean either that 11 days, exclusive of halts, were occupied in the journey, or that the journey took 11 days in all, can be supported by other data given in the scriptural narrative. This support, which has been strengthened by recent analytical researches of scholars, would require a special paper for its examination, and cannot be dealt with here; suffice it to say here that 11 days may be assumed to be the minimum time occupied by the Israelites in going from Horeb to Kadesh-Barnea.

When we come to statement (2) we find an allowance of four months given for the above journey in order to fit in with Numbers xiii, 20, which, following on the orders given by Moses to the spies, states that "the time was the time of the first-ripe grapes." It appears that there is but little warrant for this large allowance of time for the journey; for the Calendar which is published in the same edition of the Variorum

¹ "The Variorum Teachers' Edition of the Holy Bible" (printed by Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1880) with which is incorporated the "Aids to the Student of the Holy Bible." On p. 86 of the "Aids," the words given above are found.

Bible gives data of the seasons that fit in with much greater accuracy with the minimum time of 11 days given in Deut. i, 2.

Numbers x, 11, gives the date that the Israelites started from Mount Sinai as the 20th day of Zif, the second month of the Jewish year. If we take the minimum allowance for the time of the return of the spies, viz. :—11 days for the journey from Horeb to Kadesh-Barnea, and 40 days for the duration of the reconnaissance (Numbers xiii, 25)—we reach the date of the 12th of Tammuz. On the other hand, if we allow four months for the journey, and forty days for the reconnaissance, the spies would not have returned until the beginning of the month of Bul.

Now Numbers xiii, 23, states that the spies, on their return, brought from the Valley of Eshcol a cluster of grapes which they bore between two on a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates and the figs. A reference to the Calendar will show that the earlier date of Tammuz is much more suitable to this narrative than the month of Bul. In the former month we are told that various fruits are ripe (in the previous month, Sivan, the grapes begin to ripen), and the country becomes parched and dry, the Bedouin being driven from the valleys to feed their flocks on the mountain pastures. In the month Bul, on the other hand, ploughing and seed-time would have commenced, and the rains be well begun, while the grapes would have entirely disappeared from the greater part of the country. True we are told that on the hills the seasons are about a month later than those given in the Calendar, but then the seasons in the valleys are stated to have been one and a half months earlier, and we are told the grapes came from the *valley* of Eshcol.

Again, we have the report of the spies (Numbers xiii, 27), "the land floweth with milk and honey." Honey, we are told in the Calendar, is collected in the months of Sivan and Tammuz, in the Jordan Valley; whereas after the latter month the country is parched and dry, and milk would be by no means plentiful.

December 22nd, 1895.

REMARKS ON THE DESERTS OF THE HOLY LAND.

By J. G. O. TEPPER, F.L.S.

IN reading some of the back numbers of the *Quarterly Statement*, I find that the writers disagree as to the route taken by the Israelites; one of the chief objections to particular ones being, that such a tract could not have furnished sustenance for man and beast.

This objection would be a very conclusive one, if it were not based on the assumption that those deserts (Tih, &c.) were then very like what they appear now to be, viz., devoid of vegetation and water. This, however, is by no means quite sure. Australia, notably the drier portions, affords a very striking analogy, in my opinion, how a fair,