

THE RED SEA AND MT. SINAI

[Information here obtained principally as a result of watching an approximately 1-hour videotape entitled “The Exodus Revealed: Search for the Red Sea Crossing.” It was produced in 2001 by Discovery Media Productions and distributed by Questar, Inc.]

Galatians 4:25 says that Mt. Sinai is in Arabia. The problem with the traditional site for Mt. Sinai, which is located in the southern end of the peninsula between the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqaba, is that this was never in the ancient territory known as Arabia.

Josephus, the 1st century A.D. Jewish historian, places Mt. Sinai in Midian, which was located in northwest Arabia.ⁱ

Exodus 3:1ff. tells us that Moses took his father’s-in-law flock to the foot of Mt. Horeb (i.e., alternate name for Mt. Sinai), and that Jethro (his father-in-law) was “the priest of Midian”. Scholars know that Midian was always located on the eastern side of the Gulf of Aqaba. So if Moses led Jethro’s flock to Mt. Sinai, then he certainly did not cross the Gulf of Aqaba, nor did he take them scores of miles around the north side of that body of water in order to get them to the traditional site for Mt. Sinai. That is simply unbelievable! Besides, Jethro was “the priest of Midian,” which meant that he would not have been in the habit of taking his flock out of Midian (which is where they’d be if they were on the west side of the Gulf of Aqaba). This, then, is strong evidence that Mt. Sinai was located on the east side of the Gulf of Aqaba, in perfect agreement with Josephus and Paul.

Exodus 12:41, 51; 13:3-4, 17-18; 14:11-12, especially when allowed their full cumulative effect, are quite clear in teaching that BEFORE the Israelites crossed the Red Sea they were already OUT of Egypt. This eliminates ALL of the traditional sites for the Red Sea crossing because each and every one of them would mean that the Israelites, who were first on the west side (before they crossed it), were STILL in Egypt before they crossed the Red Sea.

Exodus 14:3 states that Pharaoh announced with delight that “the wilderness has closed them [Israelites] in.” Taking this literally as it reads means that there must have been mountains or some such tall structures which closed them in with their backs up against the Red Sea. The problem is that no such terrain exists on the western side of ANY of the traditional sites for the Red Sea crossing, and neither does such terrain exist at all on the eastern border of Egypt.

Scholars have always assumed that what we now call the Gulf of Suez was the Red Sea of the Israelites’ crossing. But the truth is that it is a gulf which is part of the Red Sea. And what we now call the Gulf of Aqaba (on the other side of what we now call the Sinai Peninsula) was just as much a part of the Red Sea as the Gulf of Suez was. Furthermore, there IS terrain fitting the language of Exodus 14:3 in one particular setting on the western shore of the Gulf of Aqaba.

In 2000, a second team of researchers explored the Gulf of Aqaba and found (with some help from satellite photography) the only site which was hemmed in by mountains up against the west side of

the Gulf of Aqaba AND that was sufficiently large to contain the 2-3 million people (i.e., the probable number of Israelites & Egyptians who left Egypt). It is located about 60% northward from the southern end of the Gulf of Aqaba; in other words, it is just a little past the half-way point, closer to the northern tip than to the southern tip of that Gulf. Furthermore, while most of the Gulf of Aqaba would be extremely difficult to cross even if the water were removed (especially for children and the elderly), this particular site is quite flat all the way across the Gulf.

Even more intriguing, diving teams discovered a lot of coral growth along this path and just off the path, growth which took highly unusual shapes. This means that they were growing on physical objects on the bottom of the sea bed. These shapes often took the form of wheels and axles, sometimes two wheel-like shapes with an axle shape between them, with the distance approximating the actual size of Egyptian chariots/wheels known from antiquity.

Then the most amazing discovery was a metal alloyed chariot wheel on the bottom of the sea bed there. Coral will not grow on that material, so there it was just lying on the bottom by itself. And it matched the size and number of spokes known to be used by ancient Egyptians. They could not remove any of these things, of course, both for legal reasons and in order to preserve them (they'd be damaged or destroyed if removed from the water; they'd simply crumble).

On the NE side of the Gulf of Aqaba there are local legends that a certain mountain over there was the Mountain of Moses. There are also local traditions which name things, like the "well of Moses," etc. Interestingly, there is one mountain in that region whose top appears to be burned, but it does not show a burned look all the way down, which it might if a volcano had erupted and lava had flowed from its top. Exodus 19:18 says that the Lord descended on Mt. Sinai "in fire". Although this is not proof that this mountain is Mt. Sinai, it is certainly intriguing.

ⁱ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Bk. 2, Ch. 11.1, 12.1.