

### JOSHUA

#### Lesson 3 - Introduction Conclusion

I hope you're enjoying our walk through the history of Israel as we prepare to transition from studying the Torah to studying what is known as the books of the Former Prophets. And the Former Prophets begin with the books of Joshua and then Judges.

Last week we looked at one of the most profound, earth shaking, and yet little-known prophecies in the Bible: the Cross-Handed blessing of Jacob that he bestowed upon his grandchildren Ephraim and Manessah. These two grandchildren were the Egyptian sons of Joseph; they were Egyptian because their mother (Joseph's wife) was an Egyptian. As part of this Cross-Handed blessing Jacob also adopted Ephraim and Manessah away from Joseph, and made them as his own sons. Thus he was legally able to give to Ephraim (who was the younger of the two grandchildren) the rights of the firstborn that should have belonged to Jacob's true, physical firstborn son Reuben.

We also reviewed that two of the 12 tribes of Israel eventually became dominant over all the others: Judah and Ephraim. After the death of the 2nd king of a united Israel (Solomon), the nation disintegrated into civil war and became split into two separately governed Kingdoms: that of Ephraim (typically and erroneously called Israel in our Bibles) and that of Judah. Ephraim was a conglomerate of 10 of the 12 tribes, Judah of the remaining two. But Ephraim had a larger desire to be like their pagan neighbors than to emulate and obey God, and so the Lord led Assyria to conquer the Kingdom of Ephraim and scatter those 10 tribes that they represented all over the Asian (and to a lesser degree African) continent. Thus was born the legend of the 10 lost tribes of Israel.

Ezekiel tells us of a time in the near future when Judah and Ephraim will both come back from their exiles and be present in the Promised Land. I told you that this exact thing is in process right now, as I speak, although it will go through some serious hiccups and is not yet completed.

So let's resume our study today with Israel's time in Egypt.

#### ISRAEL IN EGYPT

Let's return to our discussion of the time of Joseph. It's a little after 1800 B.C., and the 12 tribes of Israel, now in Egypt, will remain there for the next 4 centuries. At first as guests, then citizens, later as slaves.

Much has been written about the time Israel, the Hebrews, spent in Egypt; most of it expressing skepticism that they were even there. Interestingly, the problem is not that a large center of ancient Hebrew culture hasn't been found in Egypt..... for it has. The problem is with the timing, the dating; according to archaeologists, the Hebrew culture found in Egypt does not match with the biblical time line of WHEN Israel was supposed to have been in Egypt; therefore, many scholars say the bible story of Israel's captivity, and exodus, must simply be a folk tale.

But the issue of whether or not Israel was actually ever in Egypt is really no longer in doubt: Egyptologists have indeed found the remains of an enormous Hebrew community in Egypt in the land of Goshen (a region of Egypt), right where the bible says they were. This community was estimated to have been able to accommodate at least 2 million people. It is called in scientific circles by its archaeological name, Tell ed-Daba. By its most recent historic name, it's called Avaris. And, it is located right next to Pi-Rameses, the great city of Pharaoh. It all matches up perfectly with the biblical account, except for one thing: because of the currently accepted dating system, using what scientists call "Regnal Dating", that is dating based on the incredibly incomplete and often baseless line of Egyptian royalty, archaeologists say this city of Hebrews existed at the wrong TIME!!

So, understand, you should listen with much skepticism to A&E, the History Channel, Discovery, and others, that most often attempt to refute the biblical accounts. Archaeologists have indeed found many biblical cities, but because the scientists want to stick to the outdated and largely discredited Regnal Dating system, they refuse to acknowledge these biblical archeological finds.... not because they're not there, but because they supposedly occur in the wrong time.

Well, back to our account of Israel in Egypt.

The Bible is silent from the time of the death of Y'hosef (*Joseph*), who died at the age of 110, until the birth of Mosheh (*Moses*), a period of about 300 years. Extra-biblical sources indicate that for the first 150-200 years after their arrival in Egypt, the Israelites prospered and their numbers grew. The succession of Semite (not Egyptian) Pharaohs is tolerant of the Israelites, likely due to their realization of the family attachments to these distant relatives. They also remember, and continue to honor, the promises made by Pharaoh to Joseph, Joseph's decrees granting Israel citizenship and land, and Joseph's historical position as a sort of savior of Egypt.....saving them from famine. But, Egypt is now in turmoil. Y'hosef died about 1700 BC. Memories and promises can be short-lived things.

Egypt at this time was two nations: Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt. In addition, warlords, tribal chieftains, governed a few areas within the boundaries of the formerly unified nation. It is helpful for us to know that the names Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt are exactly reversed according to our current traditions of indicating direction. Upper Egypt is to the south, while Lower Egypt is to the north.

After years of failed attempts by dozens of factions seeking power, an army led by an Egyptian general from Thebes (modern-day Luxor) finally overthrows the detested foreign Pharaoh. It's

about 1600 BC and the new Pharaoh, an Egyptian, feels no obligation to Y'hosef's (Joseph's) 200 year-old decree regarding the Israelites. The driving need is to re-unite the fractured Egyptian society and to re-establish a strong central government. To accomplish this a common cause is needed. Changes are made. Overnight, the large Israelite population residing in Egypt is made the scapegoat for the nation's problems, and they are suddenly regarded as a threat to the throne. This scenario, with the Israelites, later called Jews, being blamed for a nation's problems and persecuted for it, will repeat itself time and again in the future.

Within a few years private ownership of property, which helped the Israelites achieve prosperity in Egypt in years past, was outlawed. The new Pharaoh, an Egyptian, decreed that the temples to the gods would now own 20% of the land, with the remainder belonging to Pharaoh alone. Peasants had no choice but to work the land as little more than serfs. Most Israelites had been reduced to peasants.

Egypt, propelled by a horrific memory of foreign control and shameful subjugation, protected their borders at all costs. But, they also directed their hate and insecurity inward to the "foreigners", the Israelites whose population had exploded into menacing proportions. Egypt re-built her armies, meant not to only defend but to conquer, with Egyptians. The Israelites formed the foundation of the servant class work force for Egypt's ambitious building projects. Egypt's loyal nationalist army, together with the forced labor of the Israelites, allowed Egypt a return to glory and once again to become a player on the world stage.

The Israelites paid a high price for their master's imperialistic designs. Their lives were miserable, and without hope. Anti-Semitism was at fever pitch in Egypt. Even with the impossible conditions the Israelites suffered under, their numbers continued to increase which alarmed the populace and the Pharaoh. The Pharaoh, in an ancient method of birth control, ordered all male Israelite children killed immediately upon birth, to stem the tide.

### **MOSHEH (MOSES)**

Its 1400 BC. A baby boy is born to the Levite family of Amram and Jochobed [Ex. 2] (Levites are one of the 12 tribes of Israel). They hide the child and, knowing the Egyptian guard will soon discover their secret, embark on a desperate plan putting the baby's fate entirely into God's hands. An Egyptian Princess, finding this Levite baby floating in a waterproofed basket in the Nile, rescues the child from sure death, likely at the mouth of a hungry Nile crocodile. The Princess makes him her own and names him Mose. We call him Moses. Mose is an Egyptian, not a Hebrew, name, and it means, "born of". Mosheh, his Hebrew name means, "to draw out"..... that is, he was "drawn out" of the water of the Nile.

Moses was raised in the Palace of the Pharaoh, receiving nothing but the best. He learned math and writing, and was taught fighting skills, accounting, and court etiquette. He would have been given authority over others, and put his skills to use, by his 13th birthday. Most people of his time had an average life span of about 25 years, so maturing and assumption of useful duties occurred early by our standards. Yet, all evidence is that Israelites, for some reason,

had considerably longer life spans. Despite some Hollywood versions to the contrary, Mosheh (*Moses*) was always aware of who he was, and likely visited his birth mother often. She even suckled him for many months after he was plucked from the Nile, for his sister Miryam suggested as much to the Princess.

One day, when Mosheh (*Moses*) was grown, he saw an Egyptian soldier strike an Israelite slave. Mosheh killed the guard and buried him in the desert sand. Why would he have done such a thing? Notice that the soldier didn't kill the slave, nor maim him.....he merely struck him. Surely an Egyptian soldier striking a Hebrew slave was a common, everyday occurrence that he witnessed often. Egyptian law called for capital punishment for the killing of an Egyptian, no matter whom the perpetrator. Mosheh (*Moses*) well knew this. At the very least, Mosheh willingly threw away the royal life he could have chosen. Could it have been that Mosheh (*Moses*), guilt ridden and angry at being considered a half-breed by Israelite and Egyptian alike, and likely unwelcome in either camp, simply could no longer tolerate watching his people whipped like animals while he lived a life of luxury? In any case, Mosheh (*Moses*) found out, much to his surprise, that there were witnesses to his murderous act, so he fled the country.

He could not go to Canaan where the roads and cities were guarded by Egyptian troops who might recognize him; there would have been a warrant out for his arrest. Instead, he went to a place of little interest to any conquering nation, and where only the hardest souls attempted to live: the Sinai [Ex. 3]. After trekking across the Sinai, he crossed over to the other side of a finger of the Red Sea (now called the Gulf of Aqaba) and into the land of Midian, home to Bedouin desert wanderers. After an incident at a water well where Moses protected some local girls from being bullied, a Midianite priest takes him in, and gives him his eldest daughter as a wife. Mosheh (*Moses*) becomes a shepherd of flocks in a barren, primitive land. He spends the next several years contemplating the impulsive act that brought him here, fighting loneliness, trying to forget the privileged life he once lived in the Pharaoh's Palace, and learning to adapt to his new home. Seeking answers to why things are as they are; if all the gods of Egypt are false, as his father-in-law Yitro (*Jethro*) says, then who is God? Such are the things that can humble a man, and make him moldable.

About 40 years pass. Mosheh (*Moses*), now 80 years old, sees a flickering of light off in the distance, an uncommon occurrence in the desert wilderness [Ex. 3,4]. He goes to investigate. On a tall hill the Bible alternately refers to as "the Mountain of God" and Mt. Horeb (and later as Mt. Sinai), Moses finds a bush that shines as if engulfed in flame, yet it doesn't burn up. As he approaches it for a closer examination, a thundering voice forces him to his knees in fear. The God he has been seeking reveals Himself to Mosheh and tells him, "I will send you to Pharaoh, and you will free My people". This is not at all what Mosheh (*Moses*) had in mind for his life, and informs God of that. God, in His mercy, makes him promises. Mosheh responds skeptically. God produces proofs. Mosheh asks to please be excused from the task and offers some lame excuse about a speech impediment. God gets angry. Mosheh (*Moses*) accepts the assignment.

Moses informs his family of his supernatural experience and takes his wife and children and strikes out for Egypt. I suspect somewhere along the line he decides that what lies ahead is too risky for his family, and sends them back; because some time later, while leading the freed

Israelite nation through the wilderness, Exodus tells us of a reunion between Mosheh (*Moses*) and his family.

Mosheh's older brother, Aharon (*Aaron*), who will soon become the first High Priest of Israel, greets Moses upon his arrival in Egypt [Ex. 5]. Aharon (*Aaron*) has also been visited by God and informed of the plan. So, Aharon (*Aaron*) convinced the tribal elders, in advance of Moses' arrival, that Mosheh has been sent from God to free them. Mosheh and Aharon take God's message to free His people to the Pharaoh, who promptly rewards their efforts by increasing the Israelites already deadly workload. The tribal elders and the people are not thrilled with this turn of events, and blame Mosheh. Mosheh confronts God about it [Ex. 6].

God, at this point, says some things that might be easily overlooked in the oft-told story of Mosheh (*Moses*) and Pharaoh. But, what God says is truly momentous. In paraphrase, God says "I appeared to Avraham (*Abraham*), Yitz'chak (*Isaac*), and Ya'acov (*Jacob*), but I did NOT make myself known by my name: YHWH (Yehoveh). Say to the Israelite people: I am Yehoveh, I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians.....and I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God."

Here is a new beginning. A beginning with a promise from God to Mosheh and the Israelites, a people God is calling out to be His own. A personal God who wants to be known by His name, who detests Egypt, loves His people and will fight for them. This is the start of Israel's history as a nation.

Mosheh (*Moses*) visits Pharaoh again, and insists that the Israelites be freed. Pharaoh declines [Ex. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11]. Mosheh warns Pharaoh. Pharaoh is not used to being threatened. Pharaoh bristles with anger and refuses to let go of the Israelites. Pharaoh's refusal can be well understood when one considers that to allow the Israelites to leave would be tantamount to destroying the entire working class of Egypt. For, the Israelites represented not only the unskilled labor, but the best craftsmen as well. Imagine what would happen to the United States if all of our carpenters, plumbers, electricians, cement layers, steel workers, roofers, painters, and laborers of every variety suddenly disappeared. This is exactly what was being proposed to Pharaoh by Moses.

So, to attain the release of His people, something drastic was needed. Yehoveh attacks the Egyptians through their gods. The Nile turns to blood, frogs inundate the land, boils inflict the people, locusts attack crops, and finally, God lets the Egyptian people and their Pharaoh feel the devastation the Israelites felt at the time of Mosheh's birth: all firstborn die [Ex. 12]. Interestingly, this deadly curse applies to all Egyptian owned livestock as well.

### THE EXODUS

The plagues achieve their intended purpose; Pharaoh relents, and bids the Israelites good-bye. They leave. He changes his mind, and chases them to the edge of the Red Sea [Ex. 14]. Trapped, the people feel sure Mosheh (*Moses*) has made a grave error as their backs are against the deep waters and they now have no place to escape. God opens the sea for them,

even dries the sea bottom, and the Israelites escape to the distant shore. Pharaoh's troops give chase and are drowned when the waters that God opened for the Israelites come crashing down upon the Egyptian soldiers.

The exact site of the crossing is unknown, as is the exact route that the Israelites took when leaving Egypt. Liberal scholars claim that they didn't cross through the Red Sea at all, but rather over a large mud flat called the Reed Sea. However, this makes no sense because even if it was unnecessary that God open the waters for their escape, it's more difficult to understand how all those Egyptian soldiers drowned in the few inches of water that covered this mud flat. Many Bible researchers think what they crossed over was, indeed, at that time called the Red Sea, but is now called the Gulf of Suez.

There has been much scholarly research on this pivotal Biblical event, or better, miracle of God. And, as we well know, much faith has been required for Christendom to stand firm against the consensus of opinion among some of the most renowned Archeologists and Egyptologists that the entire thing is an improbable myth. Actually, there is the greatest archeological evidence that, at a minimum, the Exodus did occur, that the number of Israelites was large, and as we previously discussed, that the city where they were purported to live was of sufficient size to support a large Hebrew population.

Recently, however, some new light has been shed of the issue of the route of the Exodus, as well as the location of Mt. Sinai. I'd like to share some of that with you. I, personally, find the new evidence quite convincing, or I wouldn't even offer it to you. But, let me say up front that I am certainly not dogmatic about it, and reasonable people can differ.

Hopefully, we've well established where the Israelites were located in Egypt: and that was PRIMARILY in Goshen. So, knowing where they departed from, what would have been their route? Well, we know that God did NOT take them directly to Canaan through the most direct route, which would have been a road called the Way of the Philistines.

Instead, we are told God led them on a route "through the Wilderness". Even though we know that they were eventually going to wind up in Canaan, what was their first destination? Well, sometime earlier, God had instructed Moses that when he brought the people out of Egypt he was to immediately bring them to the Mountain of God. Today, we most often refer to the Mountain of God as Mt. Sinai. So, where is the mountain of God?

Let's backtrack for a minute to find out. Moses was still in the court of Pharaoh; but after he had killed the Egyptian and fled to avoid prosecution, we know that he went to the land of Midian. The location of the land of Midian is well established geographically through archeology and all manner of ancient records, so it is undisputed. Midian is on the western end of what we today call the Arabian Peninsula. There in Midian Moses encountered God on a hilltop.....the Burning Bush incident.

Exodus 3:1 tells us this about that event; ***"Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the Mountain of God"***. Verse 2: ***"And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush"***. Still in Midian, Moses had moved his

flocks toward the western side of the desert, the wilderness, where he resided.

Now, a little further down in Exodus 3, in Verse 12, we come to this all important statement; remember, we're still in the midst of the burning bush conversation with God when the Bible tells us this: "And, He (God) said, 'Certainly I will be with you (Moses), and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: ***when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain***".

So the same mountain that God gave Moses his walking orders to go fetch the people of Israel out of Egypt is the same mountain that Moses was to bring the Israelites to encounter God upon their exit from Egypt. So Mt. Sinai is not on the Sinai Peninsula, it's on the Arabian Peninsula. Could this be right? None other than the Apostle Paul says so. In Galatians 4:25 Paul says this: "Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia.....".

Don't get hung up on the Hagar term, because Paul was just using Hagar (mother of Ishmael) to make an illustration. The information important to our current subject is in the location of Mt. Sinai. Where does Paul say Mt. Sinai, also called Mt. Horeb, also called "the Mountain of God", is located? Arabia, which is where Midian is. Philo the great Jewish Philosopher also says Mt. Sinai is in Arabia. Josephus, who lived during the time of Christ, says it was common knowledge that Mt. Sinai is in the Arabian Peninsula.

So, if the mountain where the people of the Exodus went to receive the Law was in Arabia, why have all modern day Christian travelers, me included, gone to a monastery at the tip of the Sinai Peninsula that is identified as "Mt. Sinai", as the place where Moses received the 10 Commandments? Why do all the books of today show the route of the Exodus as going through that particular location?

Well, prior to about 300 AD, there was absolutely nothing culturally, traditionally, or historically in Egypt, Palestine, or Arabia, or anywhere else for that matter, that connected the tip of Sinai as the location of the Mountain of God.....Mt. Horeb, Mt. Sinai. It wasn't until Christianity had emerged as a fully gentile religion, and any element of Jewishness was now taboo and rapidly being removed from Biblical history, that the Sinai Peninsula was considered as being the place where the 10 Commandments, as well as all of the Torah, was received by Moses. And, some ascetic monks, in the 4th century AD, who were wandering through the area, and felt that a particular mountain on the tip of Sinai resembled some of the biblical description of the Mountain of God, decided it on. They even NAMED that particular mountain Mt. Sinai. From that, and nothing else, the Church concluded that this was the place Moses spoke of, built a church there, and that is that.

Now, let's look at one more issue: the Red Sea crossing. First I want to say that I'm not going to try to find a way using some rare, but natural, phenomenon as a way to explain the parting of the waters and the drying of the seabed. It was an act of God, a miracle impossible except by the Creator's own doing.

As is well known from times of antiquity there existed a trade route that went across the center of the Sinai Peninsula. In fact, it's likely that is the same route Moses used to first flee to

Midian as a young fugitive, and then return to gather the people of Israel from Pharaoh's hand. And, this known route leads to a long winding river bed, that goes through a mountainous wilderness area, that dumps out at the gulf of Aqaba.....a large, deep finger of the Red Sea, which separates the main body of the Sinai from the Arabian Peninsula. At the end of this gorge, that is the Pi-hahiroth, is a huge beach fully capable of holding 2-3 million people. Directly across the Gulf of Aqaba from this beach, that is, on the opposite shore, lies another beach of more than sufficient size for the fleeing Israelites to have gathered as they watched the waters crush and drown the Pharaoh's army. Here's the thing: this Gulf of Aqaba is very deep: up to 1000 feet in spots. What must be considered is that when God parted the water and dried the sea floor, the geography must not have been too steep of an incline from the beach to the sea floor, or too rocky or uneven for a couple of million people, with elderly, children, disabled, livestock, etc., to travel over.

Between the two beaches I've identified for you, one on each side of the gulf is a raised portion of seabed, lying only about 50 feet under the water. It is wide, sandy, and relatively flat. If the gulf were drained of water at this location, we would find a perfect land bridge between the two sides of the gulf, connecting the two large beaches.

Well, regardless of their route out of Egypt, the Israelites are now free, and out of Egypt, after 400 years. Actually, it was 430 years to the day after Jacob, Israel, entered Egypt at the behest of his son, Joseph, that the Israelites escaped Pharaoh's clutches. It's now about 1350 BC.

Though we are studying the Israelites, the rest of the world was not without activity. Far to the north, the Assyrians are a new and growing power, with empire building in mind. To the west, the Greeks are sailing as far as England and Ireland. In the Mediterranean, Crete, its highly advanced civilization, art, and science, perhaps surpassing even that of the Egyptians, suddenly disappears for reasons scholars still debate to this day.

Estimates of the size of the group that Mosheh (*Moses*) led are from 3 thousand to 3 ½ million people. The only numbers that the Bible gives us are that 600,000 men capable of bearing arms were included [Ex. 12]. If one considers the "arms-bearing age" to have been from about 17 to 40 years of age, it would be reasonable to multiply that number by 5 or 6 to account for women, children, and elderly males and females.

Many liberal scholars doubt the biblical reference to 600,000 males, for no other reason than it would indicate a vast horde of people tending to the largest number I have mentioned. All evidence points to that large number. The Egyptians were so afraid of the Israelites' enormous population that they took the drastic measure of killing the Hebrew firstborn males to slow their growth; this would only have harmed their aggressive building plans. And we know that for a long time after the Israelites left, building in Egypt crawled nearly to a halt and their civilization stalled. A few thousand Israelites in a land estimated to have been populated by 10 to 12 million people, mostly Egyptians, would have created neither alarm by their presence nor economic breakdown by their absence. If, however, perhaps a quarter of the population were Israelites (as suggested by the Bible), that is an entirely different matter, and would explain the severe economic downturn that occurred following their exodus. A number in the 2-3 million range is entirely probable.



God led the Israelites with a cloud in the day, and a column of fire at night [Ex. 13]. And, as we mentioned, during the first 3 weeks they traveled night AND day. After all, in the mind of Pharaoh, the Israelites were fugitives; escapees, not refugees.

The Israelites were acutely aware of God's presence with them. About a month into their journey, many realities of their changed living conditions began to settle in. Not the least of which is how a wandering horde of 2- 3 million hungry mouths is going to eat. They were allowed to take their flocks and herds with them, but grain was the staple food. Even if they had brought some grain with them, it would have lasted only a few days.....weeks at best.

Their route required them to stay away from known, natural food and water sources....they were in a desert wilderness that even today is inhabited by no more than 4000 people. But, even if they had followed such routes, it is unthinkable that there was any way they could have organized to provide for themselves the huge volumes of food and water required. Feeding 2-3 million people could only occur in very structured, sophisticated cities like the advanced and magnificent Egyptian cities they had come from: and here they were, displaced city slickers suddenly turned into wandering tent dwellers. They didn't have a clue how to survive in such a place.

The US Army Quartermaster has calculated what it would take to provision 3 million people. On a daily basis it would take at a minimum: 11million gallons of water, and the capacity of all the freight cars of two trains, each a mile long, for food, **daily!** This would not account for the food and water required for their flocks and herds. God solved the problem most elegantly. He simply rained food from the sky, as needed, in the form of manna; a tasty nutritious food that was their primary food supply for the entire 40 years they wandered in the Sinai [Ex. 16]. Boring, but apparently healthy. And, as they needed water, Yehoveh (God's name) provided, even springing it forth from rocks, apparently in enormous volumes [Ex. 17]. By the way, upon entering the Promised Land, the manna stopped as quickly as it had started.

About 12 weeks after leaving Egypt, they arrived at the foot of Mt. Sinai, also called Mt. Horeb. The mountaintop that Mosheh (*Moses*) would ascend was ringed in clouds. God called to him, and it must have been like *déjà vu* as Moses remembered back 40 years to when he met God in the Burning Bush at this same location. There, God reiterated the promises He had made to Mosheh and the Israelites during the wringing out of Pharaoh's will back in Egypt [Ex. 19-31]. But Yehoveh (God's name) even went further. ".....if you keep my covenant.....then you will be My own treasure from among all the peoples.....you will be a kingdom of *cohanim* (*priests*) for Me, a nation set apart."

Mosheh climbs back down the mountain and assembles the people. Certainly, a couple of million people did not personally hear Mosheh's voice. But, to those leaders and elders who did hear Mosheh announce what God had just told him, they replied "All that the Lord has spoken, we will do!" He climbs back up the mountain, and receives the 10 Commandments. Actually, he goes up and down the mountain a number of times during which times much doctrine and law is given to Moses by Yehoveh (God's name). These laws and commandments are the Torah; we think of it as the first 5 books of our Bible. Modern Bibles use the word "Law" when translating the word "Torah"; this is a very large misnomer that we

shall explore later.

On one trip back down the mountain, Mosheh returns to find that many of the disgruntled Israelites had built a Golden Calf to worship [Ex. 32, 33]. Four hundred years in Egypt had polluted their worship, and many of their practices had become pagan and an abomination to God. The Golden Calf no doubt was a representation of the Apis Bull, a high deity of the Egyptians, of which the people were fully aware and likely participated in worshipping during their centuries in Egypt. Mosheh, infuriated, hurls the stone tablets of the 10 Commandments in a rage, and follows God's orders that the still faithful kill as many of the Calf worshippers as they could. A bloodbath ensues, and the rebels are purged.

It was at Mt. Sinai that the Levites were first anointed as God's priests, and Aaron as the first High Priest. Among the instructions God gave to Moses, was that an earthly model of God's heavenly dwelling place should be constructed to exacting standards. This Wilderness Tabernacle was an elaborate, richly decorated tent that was to travel with the Israelites. Around the tent, which consisted of two compartments, was a large courtyard where the priests would officiate as the Israelite worshippers brought their animal sacrifices to be slaughtered and burned on the Brazen Altar. Inside the tent were special ritual furnishings; the most famous of these being the Ark of the Covenant with its special lid, called the Mercy Seat. The Ark was placed in the rear-most compartment of the tent, the compartment called the Holy of Holies. It was there that Moses would meet with God when God called to Him.

After about a year camped at the base of Mt. Sinai, Mosheh leads the people to the oasis of Kadesh-Barnea [Num. 10, 11]. Kadesh was on the southern border of the land of Canaan, the land they had been sent to claim. It was a 150-mile journey of 11 days, but over some very rough, rocky, dry, scorching, terrain. The people grumbled all along the way. Now a little more than 15 months into their journey to the Land God had promised them, tempers were short. They didn't feel they could stand much more. Little did they know what would actually lie ahead. Mosheh's sister Miryam, one of his staunchest supporters, wonders aloud if God and Mosheh have a clue what they're doing. She is struck with Leprosy for her sin of contempt and disbelief [Num. 12].

Upon arrival at Kadesh, Mosheh immediately sends out spies to reconnoiter, knowing full well the promised land, Canaan, is inhabited by people who won't be thrilled at the prospect of 3 million uninvited foreigners showing up on their doorsteps [Num. 13, 14]. He wants to know what they're up against. Twelve spies are sent out, one from each tribe. They return with conflicting stories. Ten say that although the land is all God promised the inhabitants are big, strong, and well armed. That it would be suicide to engage them in battle. Y'hoshua (*Joshua*), a member of the tribe of Ephraim, and Kalev (*Caleb*) from the tribe of Judah, have a different impression. They think the Israelites should attack immediately, and stand on God's promise of victory. Not coincidentally, it would be the tribes of Ephraim and Judah that would one day become dominant over the other tribes of Israel, and the two tribes that Jacob would bless with the firstborn blessing to become the leaders of Israel.

Rumors spread around the encampment. The people have no interest in battle. Their expectation was that the hardest part of their transition to a new home would be the journey

itself. They whine and cry and tear their clothes in anguish, wondering why God would bring them here, just to die. Then, the unthinkable: mutiny [**Num. 21**]. They decide to appoint a new leader and do away with Mosheh. Bad idea. God decides He is going to judge these rebels with poisonous snakebites, sickness, and all manner of pestilence. Mosheh pleads with God to forgive the people's rebellion, and God relents. But, a price will be extracted for the people's actions: God declares that not one of the Israelites who are currently of an age of accountability will live to enter the Promised Land, except for Y'hoshua (*Joshua*) and Kalev (*Caleb*) who did their best to persuade their people to believe God. Sadly, for other reasons, this will apply to Mosheh as well.

So, standing at the threshold of centuries of promise, the Israelites are turned away, back into the barren desert. Only 2 years removed from dwelling in mud brick houses in Egypt's great cities 3 million Israelites now live as Bedouins still live to this day, journeying from oasis to oasis, living in goatskin tents.

### ENTERING THE PROMISED LAND

Finally, at the appointed time, the Israelites again began their move toward Canaan, the Promised Land [**Num. 20, 21, 22**]. This time, they didn't hesitate to move forward and follow God. They circled around and avoided the lands of Moab (named for a son of Lot) and Edom (another name for Esau), and took on a less formidable foe in Heshbon, north of Moab. They fought, won, and used the area as a staging ground for their attack of Canaan. Two tribes and half of another decided to go no further and to settle there, on the east side of the Jordan River, OUTSIDE of the Promised Land.

It's about 1300 BC, and the Israelites are standing on the east bank of the Yarden (*Jordan*) River, ready to take possession of Canaan. Mosheh dies [**Deut. 34**]. They mourn him for 30 days. Mosheh (*Moses*), the greatest prophet, is the only prophet to know God face to face. The Torah (first 5 books of the Bible) makes it clear that he had audible conversation with God throughout his ministry. Y'hoshua (*Joshua*) is then anointed the new leader, and beginning next wee will follow him as he leads God's people to their new home.