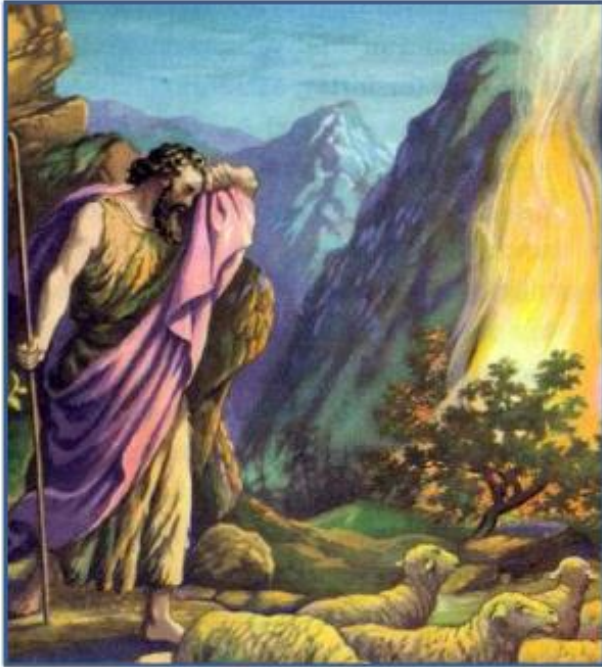


4. What Does the Bible Really Say About Moses?



Moses and the Exodus: The Rest of the Torah

The Book of Genesis, the first book of the Torah, takes readers from the beginning of time and space through to the time of the three great Patriarchs of Judaism; Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

The remaining four books of the Torah, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy describe the events surrounding the greatest of the Jewish prophets Moses and the laws that Judaism derived from that experience. It is the emphasis of the Laws of Moses, including the Ten Commandments along with a number of ritualistic and practical laws, that give the Torah its name.

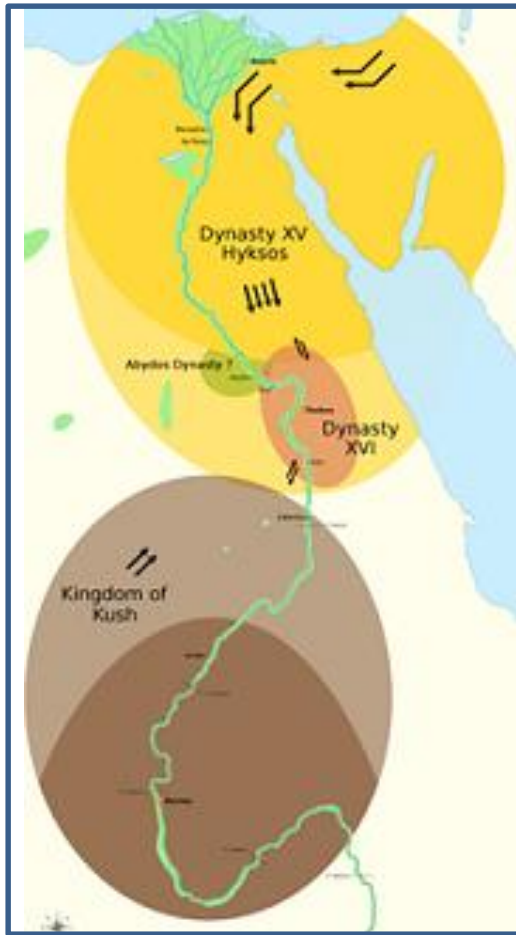
The name of the Book Deuteronomy itself means “second law”. By the time of Jesus, Jewish believers could count 613 *mitzvot* derived from “The Law”

This section will not devote itself to a discussion of the Jewish Law. It will focus instead on perhaps the most important event in Jewish history and the man who was the leader of that event, Judaism’s greatest and yet least probable prophet, Moses. In fact, Moses had been traditionally believed to be the person who had committed the Torah given to him by God to writing.

Setting the Scene

- **The final chapters of Genesis set the scene for the events that took place in the land of Egypt**
 - **Joseph is sold into slavery to the Ishmaelites (technically his cousins). They, in turn, sell him to an Egyptian official named Potiphar**
 - **Through a series of events, Joseph himself becomes an important advisor to a Pharaoh in Egypt who showed favor to Joseph**
 - **During a time of famine Jacob/Israel travel to Egypt to buy grain and encounter Joseph whom they fail to recognize**
 - **Joseph sells them the grain but hides a cup in their possession and, later, stops them on their way back home accusing them of theft**
 - **In the end, Joseph reveals himself and all is forgiven. Jacob and all his clan settle in the land of Goshen and find favor with Pharaoh**
 - **Jacob gives his final testament and dies. Genesis ends with the death of Joseph**

Who Were the Pharaohs Who Showed Favor to Joseph?



1720 BCE to 1290 BCE is a period of 430 years, exactly the amount of time that is stated in the Book of Exodus (Ex. 12:40)

- Not long after the birth of Abraham, the Lower Kingdom of Egypt was overrun by a people known as the Hyksos. The word Hyksos was first thought to mean Shepherd Kings. The current favored translation is Foreign Rulers
- Hyksos kings were likely Semitic people from the land of Canaan. These Hyksos kings were probably the kings who knew Joseph. The Jewish historian Josephus suggested that the Hyksos were actually the Hebrew people themselves (*Against Apion: Bk.1 Sect. 73*).
- The Hyksos seemed to have ruled Lower Egypt from @1720 BCE until sometime around 1570 BCE when they were driven from Lower Egypt . The new dynasty of Pharaohs re-united Upper and Lower Egypt. They were probably the Pharaohs “who did not know Joseph” and began to treat the Hebrew people harshly
- The Pharaoh at the time of Moses was believed to be Ramses II. He began his rule @ 1290 BCE.

What Exactly Was The Exodus?



- Finally, after the Angel of Death killed each first-born Egyptian male child on the night of the Passover, Pharaoh relented and the Exodus of the Hebrews out of Egypt was under way

The story of the Exodus is a familiar one:

- The new pharaohs wanted to keep down the growing population of Hebrews in the Land of Goshen so they first forced them into slave labor and then ordered their male children to be drowned
- Moses was a Hebrew child who was placed in a basket and set adrift on the Nile. He was found by an Egyptian princess and raised in Pharaoh's court
- Moses killed an Egyptian while trying to save the life of a Hebrew but was forced to flee Egypt when word got out
- God chose Moses as the instrument by which Pharaoh would release the Hebrew people from slavery
- Pharaoh refused to release the Hebrew people despite a series of plagues

When Did the Exodus Take Place?

There is no firm agreement about the exact dates of the Exodus. There are two extremes of estimates:

1491 BCE

Bishop Ussher was the Anglican Archbishop of Armagh in Ireland from 1625-28 CE. Bishop Ussher is famous for using the Bible to determine when the world was created. He selected 4004 BCE for that date, This same Bishop Ussher calculated the date of the Exodus as 1491 BCE

@1250 BCE

This more modern estimate point to Exodus 1:11 and its reference to two cities in Egypt, Pi-Thom and Pi-Rameses. Archaeology suggests that these cities were built at least two centuries after Ussher's estimated date.

None of the Above

This group falls into two camps: 1) The first camp agrees with the earlier date suggested by archaeologists but questions the accuracy of those dates. Estimates from this camp usually fall between 1350 BCE and 1150 BCE 2) the second camp are also archaeologists but they do not select any date. They find little archaeological evidence of any peoples as large as the Exodus would involve and so conclude that absence of evidence is evidence of absence. They don't believe the Exodus happened at all.

Potential Paths Available for the Exodus: Ancient Trade Routes Through the Promised Land; The Jezreel Valley and The Valley of Megiddo

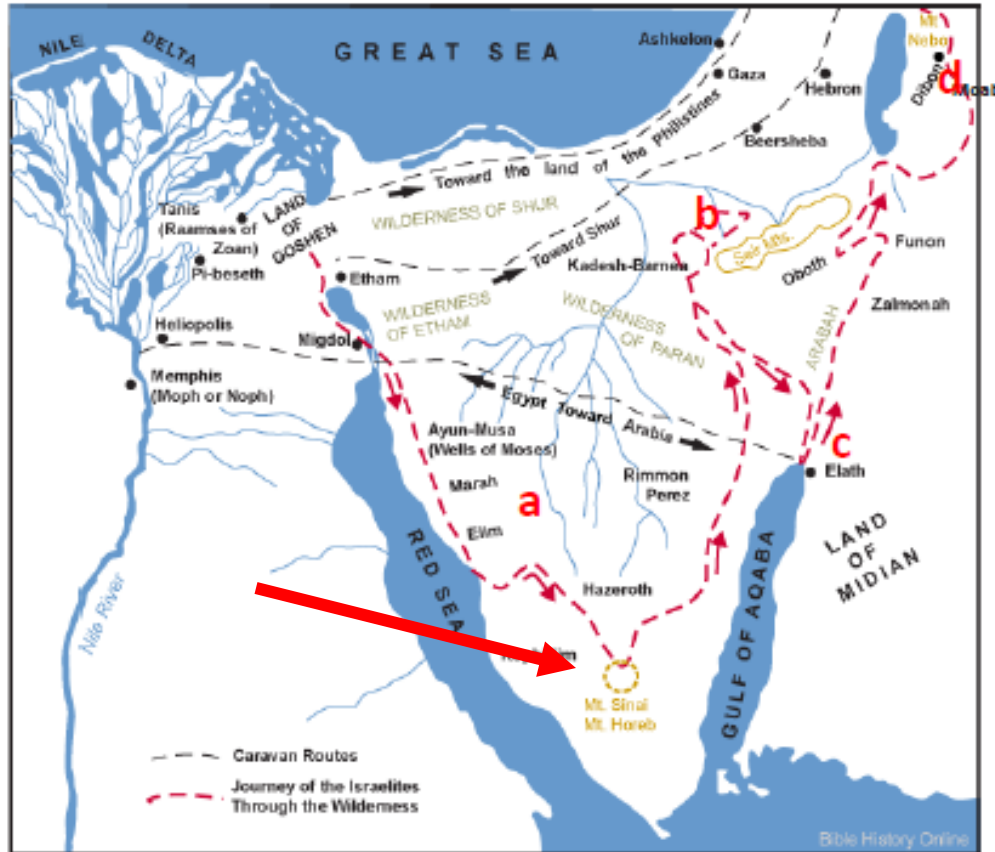


Sea Road
(Via Maris)

Hill
Road

King's
Highway

What Route did the Exodus Take?



- No one is certain of the exact route but some places were named;
 - a. Desert of Paran
 - b. Kadesh
 - c. Midian
 - d. Moab
- What seems clear is that the Israelites avoided the usual routes between Egypt and Canaan
- By the time of the Exodus, The “Sea People” (among them, the Philistines?) likely had already arrived in the region and taken over the coastal plain and the trade route that passed through it

Note: If the Exodus took place somewhat earlier than the late 1200s BCE, the coastal road was blocked as well at that time by a number of regularly-spaced Egyptian garrisons along the coastal road through Canaan. Note the traditional location of Mt. Sinai.

- The inland people were called “nephilim” (Num. 13:33 and Gen. 6:4) taken to mean giants

Did the Exodus Take Place At All?

Some scholars (Albrecht Alt, Martin Noth) have gone beyond wondering about the route taken by the Exodus. They have called into question whether there ever was an Exodus. They have even questioned whether Moses ever really existed. They point out two serious problems;

1. There seems to be no archaeological evidence of the passage of such a large group of people across the eastern Sinai even by Israeli archaeologists during the time that Israel controlled the land
2. The story of Moses has elements in it similar to other regional stories; the Egyptian Tale of Sinuhe and the Akkadian tale of Sargon

Rather than a single great Exodus, they offer what has become known as the Migration Theory. This theory holds that there was no Moses nor was there a single mass Exodus event. They suggest that different groups of people in separate waves migrated from Egypt over time to Israel. Supporters of this theory see the “**Children of (Jacob’s wife) Leah**” representing one wave, “**Jacob’s concubine children**” a second wave and the “**Children of (Jacob’s other wife) Rachel**” a third wave. These different peoples united into a confederation after they arrived. They then made up stories to unify the various peoples into one nation

Or Did a Single True Mass Exodus Take A Different Route?



- Scholar Frank Moore Cross offers a reason why there was scant evidence of an Exodus in the eastern Sinai. He believed the Israelites didn't pass that way
- Cross points out that when Moses fled from Egypt, he fled to Midian. Moses married the daughter of a priest of Midian. Moses lived in Midian for a long time and encountered the burning bush there. Midian also shows much evidence of developed civilization in the time frame of the Exodus
- Cross speculated that Jebel* al-Lawz in Saudi Arabia might be the location of the true Mt. Sinai and not the traditional Jebel al-Musa in the Sinai

* Sometimes spelled Jabel

Jebal al Lawz In Modern Day Saudi Arabia ?



The location of Midian is not known with any certainty but a number of scholars (e.g. John Philby, James Montgomery) agree that Midian is located in Saudi Arabia along the coast of the Gulf of Aqaba.



These drawings, found at the foot of Jebal al Lawz are suggestive of Exodus 32



This split rock in the area of Jebal al Lawz is suggestive of Exodus 17



This blackened top of Jebal al Lawz is suggestive of Exodus 19

Why Was Moses an Improbable Prophet?



A common speculation is that Moses was an Egyptian priest of monotheistic sun God Akhenaten (Atenmosis?) When Egypt banned the worship of Aten, he became simply Moses

Moses was an improbable person to have played such an important role in the history of the Jewish people. Consider these facts;

- Moses was a Hebrew (born to Amram of the tribe of Levi. He had a brother Aaron and a sister, Miriam) but;
- While it is commonly believed that Moses' name comes from a Hebrew root word מִשֶּׁה "drawn" as in "drawn from the water". Since Pharaoh's daughter named him, some scholars hold that the name Moses was more likely from an Egyptian root (mss) meaning "child of" (Thutmosis = child of Thoth and Rameses = child of Ra)
- Moses married two women, neither of whom was of Hebrew ancestry (Numbers 12:1 and Exodus 2 and 3)
- Moses sons, Gershom and Eliezer, were simply Levites, not *kohanim* as were Aaron's sons,
- Exodus (4:24) mentions that God considered killing Moses during the journey to Egypt to confront Pharaoh
- Unlike Joseph, even Moses' bones were not allowed to enter the Promised Land

Who Was Moses' Wife?



Exodus 2 tells us that Moses married a Midianite woman, Zipporah, daughter of Jethro/Reuel, a Midianite priest but.....

In the Book of Numbers (12:1-2), Miriam, Moses' sister and Aaron his brother mentioned that Moses was known to have a Cushite (Ethiopian) wife.

Did Moses have two wives? It seems so.

Many readers of the Bible may have missed this passage in Numbers. Director Cecil B. DeMille clearly did not miss it as shown by this scene from *The Ten Commandments*



In Book II of Josephus' work, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Chapter 10 tells the story of how Moses, then still a Prince of Egypt, led Egyptian troops in battle against Ethiopian armies. Moses was so successful that he laid siege to Saba, a royal Ethiopian city. A woman named Tharbis was the daughter of the king of the Ethiopians and was living in Saba during the attack. She fell in love with Moses and Moses took her as his wife in exchange for her surrender of the city. A legend can be found in a work of Sir Walter Raleigh "History of the World IV", that Moses forged two rings; one that would make Tharbis forget the marriage and the other to ensure that Moses would remember it.

Tharbis. Moses' First Wife

DeMille did not follow the details of Josephus' story but gives us a typical Hollywood "based on" version. In his version, Tharbis and her father are brought to Egypt and presented as "allies". Still, DeMille paid enough attention to know about the story found in Josephus' work which is more than I and many others did.



What's This About God Wanting to Kill Moses?



Chapter 2 of Exodus tells us that when Moses fled Egypt after killing the cruel Egyptian slave master, he fled to Midian. There he stayed with a priest Reuel (aka Jethro). And marries Jethro's daughter, Sipporah. In Exodus 4:24, God sends Moses to tell Pharaoh to set His people free or suffer the death of the first born male children of the Egyptians. Along the way.....

At a lodging place on the way, the LORD met Moses and was about to kill him. But Sipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it. "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me," she said. So the LORD let him alone. (At that time she said "bridegroom of blood," referring to circumcision.) Ex. 4:24-26

The interpretation of this odd passage of Exodus is the subject of much debate. One that I found interesting is the idea that the Midianites used circumcision as a rite of passage into adulthood. As a result, Sipporah forbade Moses from circumcising Gershom, Moses' first born (and still a child). Sipporah immediately understood what was going on and performed the circumcision. She then touched the foreskin to Moses because Moses himself was not circumcised since that would have given away the fact that he was a Hebrew child

God Acts Through Men: Moses and the Red Sea

One of the moral truths in both Judaism and Christianity is that God acts through those men who have faith in him. The parting of the Red Sea is simply one example of the many ways that God acts through Moses, albeit, a most dramatic example.



God Gives Moses the Law

As Moses climbs the mountain to receive God's Law, even his faith weakens. The faith of the people, even his own brother, weakens even more.



Paleo-Hebrew Alphabet Comparison



lahmed kaf yod teit khet zayin vav hay daleth gimel beit alef



tov sheen reish qof tzadei pay ayin samekh nun mem

DeMille was so detailed that he used the Paleo-Hebrew alphabet on the tablets rather than the Assyrian Block Script that we know today.

Moses Gives the Law to the People

Continuing the process of God acting through those who have faith in Him, God gives Moses the Law and then Moses delivers the Law to the people. It is obvious how greatly the incident on Sinai has changed Moses.



Did Moses Even Exist? Sargon

Who was Sargon?

Sargon, strong king, king of Agade, am I. My mother was a high priestess, my father I do not know. My paternal kin inhabit the mountain region. My city (of birth) is Azupiranu, which lies on the bank of the Euphrates. My mother, a high priestess, conceived me, in secret she bore me. She placed me in a reed basket, with bitumen she caulked my hatch. She abandoned me to the river from which I could not escape. The river carried me along: to Aqqi, the water drawer (origin of Moses' name?), it brought me. Aqqi, the water drawer, when immersing his bucket lifted me up. Aqqi, the water drawer, raised me as his adopted son. Aqqi, the water drawer, set me to his garden work. During my garden work, Istar loved me (so that) 55 years I ruled as king

Points of Comparison

Born in secret

Moses too was born in secret (but in a different context of secrecy)

Placed in a reed basket, covered with bitumen

Moses was also placed in a reed basket covered with Bitumen

Set in a river

Moses was set in a river (but not set into the current but left drifting among the reeds near the shore)

Recovered, adopted and led his people

Moses was drawn from the water, adopted and led his people

Did Moses Even Exist? Sinuhe

Sinuhe

Sinuhe was a Middle Kingdom Egyptian official who fled Egypt to Syria. As a guardian of Pharaoh Amenemhet's harem, he went on an expedition to Libya. When he learned of the Pharaoh's assassination he fled because he feared false accusations. Winds on the Nile blew him northward and he wandered through Palestine and Lebanon. He finally settled in southern Syria and married the oldest daughter of a chieftain in the region. Some years later, Pharaoh Sesostris I welcomed Sinuhe back to Egypt. The king forgave him and granted him gifts. From that point forward, Sinuhe remained in Egypt and was granted an honorable burial.

Points of Comparison

Was a member of the Royal Court of Egypt

Moses was a member of the royal court of Egypt

Was involved in a murder and had to flee

Moses was involved in a murder and had to flee

Married the eldest daughter of a foreigner

Moses married either Zipporah the daughter of the Midianite priest Jethro/Reuel or Tharbis, daughter of Ethiopian (Cushite) King Merops, or both

Returned to Egypt

Moses returned to Egypt (but wasn't quite welcomed or honored!)

Why Was Moses Never Allowed to Enter the Promised Land?



Unlike the Patriarchs who lived in and travelled through the Promised Land, unlike Joseph whose bones were carried by the Israelites into the promised land, Moses was not allowed to enter into the promised land

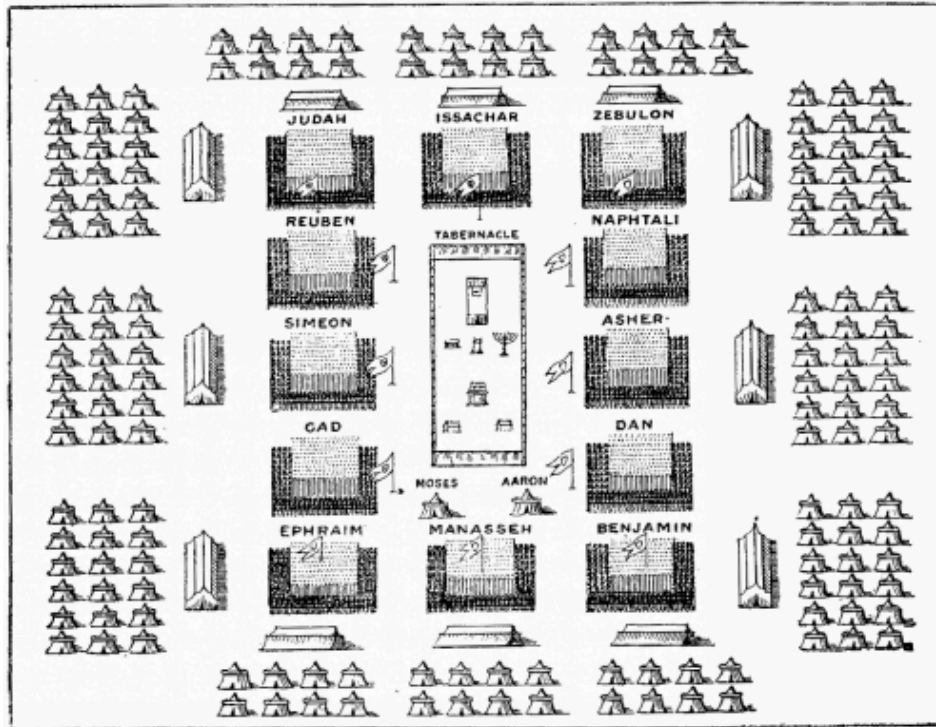
The reason for not allowing Moses to enter the Promised Land was that, when the people reached the Desert of Sin, they needed water and began to complain. The Lord told Moses to gather the people then speak to a certain rock and command it to bring forth water. Instead Moses struck the rock with his staff and water came forth. Moses failed to honor God whose word, not Moses' staff, was to have brought forth the water. For this, neither Moses nor Aaron could enter the Promised Land (Numb. 20)

*And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto **Dan**, (Deut. 34:1)*

Yet, the words of Deuteronomy 34:10 still ring loudest concerning Moses; **“Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face.”**

The Israelite Camp

E



N

W

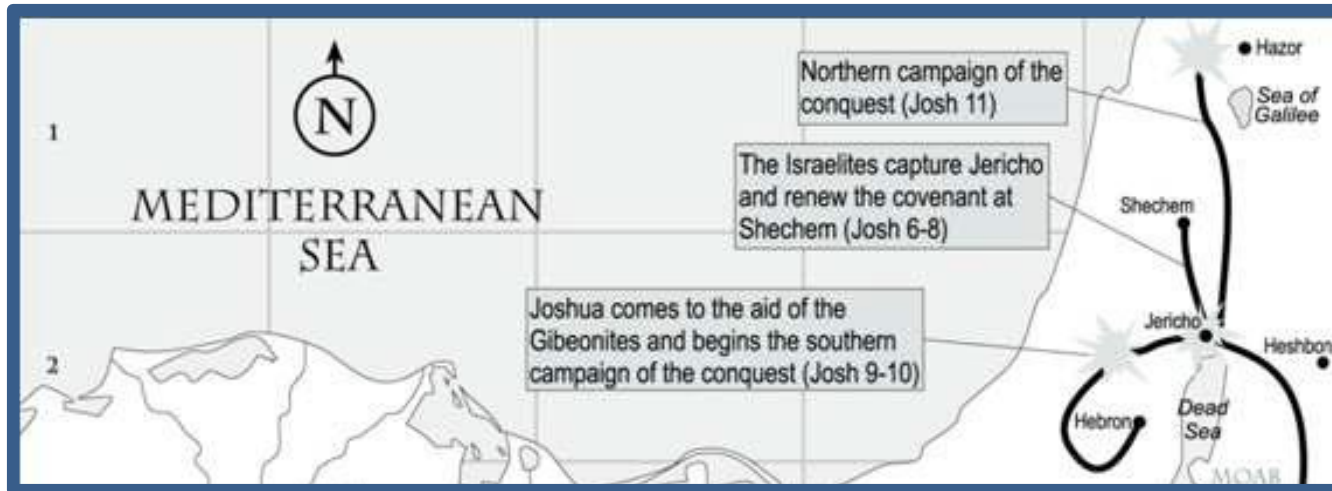
There is a debate about the location of the Tent of Meeting, the Tabernacle where the Ark of the Covenant was kept.

S According to Exodus 33:8 and Number 11:26, it seemed to have been located outside the camp.

However, according to Numbers 2:2, it was located in the middle of the camp, as illustrated here.

1. The tribe of Joseph was split in two, Ephraim and Manasse
- * Exodus 33 places the Tabernacle (the Tent of Meeting) outside the camp.

Joshua Enters the Promised Land



The Torah ends with the death of Moses. The Book of Joshua begins the Nevi'im (the section of The Prophets) and the Deuteronomistic History (more later)

Moses was only allowed to see the Promised Land, but not enter it. The task of conquering and then settling the Promised Land fell, not to Moses' aging brother Aaron nor to either of Moses' sons but to Joshua (Y'hoshua)

Joshua accomplished this task by waging three campaigns against the Canaanite tribes that lived there. Joshua put most of the tribes "to the ban" then divided the conquered territories among the twelve tribes of Israel. Archaeological remains of many (not all) cities in Canaan do show evidence of major destruction. Yet.....(later slide).

An interesting phrase in Joshua (Josh.22:22) shows God being addressed by three of his biblical names; El, Elohim and YHWH

Controversies Over the Capture of the Promised Land by Joshua (I)

- **Steles in Egypt and clay tablets from Ugarit tell of invasions of “Peoples of the Sea” to both the north and the south of Israel**
- **The Egyptians were successful in defeating the invaders. Some scholars have suggested that the Exodus of the Hebrews (and others) from Egypt may have been an attempt to flee from these invasions**
- **Ugarit, north of the land of Canaan (Lebanon area?), wasn’t so lucky. It was burned to the ground sometime around 1190 BCE**
- **The “Sea People” who invaded from the north swept south along the coastal plain and established their pentapolis (Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and Gath) along that plane. Pottery excavated from these cities was much like the pottery made by the Mycenaean Greeks with one exception. The clay used to make the pottery proved to be of local origin. So, were these Sea-Peoples Greeks?**
- **The Bible calls this particular group of Sea People Philistines. They proved bothersome to the people of Israel for centuries. When the Romans controlled Israel during the time of Christ, they called this region *Palestina***

Controversy Over the Exodus and the Capture of the Promised Land (II)

Another group of scholars who question the historical reliability of the Exodus and the conquest of the Promised Land by Joshua hold to a different theory. They claim that there was neither an Exodus from Egypt nor a conquest of Canaan, at least not from outside invaders.

These scholars believe that the Tribes of Israel represent a loose confederation of states that rebelled against the ruling Canaanites while the Canaanites were busy fighting off the Peoples of the Sea. They point to the names of the some of the Tribes of Israel as evidence;

- Asher (from Assur, the god of Assyria or Assherah a Canaanite goddess?)
- Gad (Gad was the name of a Canaanite God)
- Zebulon (a Canaanite phrase meaning “of the princes”, an epithet of Baal Hadad)
- Dan (perhaps one of the first tribes of Sea Peoples pushed inland by tribes arriving later. Dan is a root name often used to refer to Greeks. Recall the famous line from Vergil’s Aeneid “Timeo Danaos dona ferentes”)

Interestingly, the Bible indicates that Dan’s original allotment of land was the territory that became settled by the Sea Peoples, later known as the Philistines. Dan was forced to relocate to the northernmost part of the Promised Land when they were unable to conquer these Sea Peoples.