

Title:

The Exodus Route considering all Biblical Information, Part 2

Abstract:

All biblical information, geographic information mostly with Google Earth Pro and some archaeological evidence were investigated to determine the exodus routes of Israel as accurately as possible. The plural “routes” is sometime used because of the distinctive phases of the 40-year journey. Some archaeological evidence points to the Red Sea crossing in the Gulf of Aqaba and the mountain of Horeb or Sinai to be in Saudi Arabia, which are not only consistent with biblical information but is strongly suggested by the Bible. Comparing the exodus route information in different books in the Bible and with some identified Google Earth Pro locations also indicates the disobedience of Israel in the last year before entering Canaan by wanting to go their own route, but God forced them by calamities to ask for rescue and to turn around and travel along the border between Edom and Moab eventually to the east of the Jordan river. This is Part 2 of the article.

Introduction:

Numbers 33 was used as the base for this article, and all the deemed relevant parts from other biblical parts were inserted in between the verses of Numbers 33, so that the whole history can be seen.¹ The aim was to show that this proposal was consistent with all biblical information, and the hope is that other proposals will also comply with this aim. One can only come closest to the truth of any biblical aspect if all biblical information on it is considered.

Notes regarding maps:

The maps (Figures 4 to 6) given further on in this document show the main routes of Israel in red, the route of the 12 spies in green, Israel’s travelling in the regions of Kadesh and the Seir mountains for about 38 years due to their disobedience in purple, and the route Israel probably wanted to follow to the east of the Jordan river in the last part of the exodus route, in white. The white route through the middle of Edom is the guessed passage through Edom which Edom denied them, and the white route to the south of Edom is one that many think they actually took, but it is argued in this paper that it was not the route as instructed by God, and they eventually followed the red route between Edom and Moab to the east of the Jordan river. However, note that this last proposal has no bearing on the location of the Red Sea crossing nor that of Mount Horeb.

The names highlighted in yellow on the maps, are the names of places that could be found on Google Earth Pro, some with strong confirmation and others with weaker confirmation such as only on names on photos placed on Google Earth Pro.² The names that are not highlighted, could not be located, but their positions are reasonable guesses based on the names before and after them that could be located. It is important to indicate all given biblical locations because without doing so many published maps missed some important potential detours and insights in the route. An example of this is the possible disobedience of the Israelites after Mount Hor leading them to first travel south and then turn around north before crossing to the east of Moab.

Biblical and geographical information:

Numbers 33:1 to 18 were discussed in Part 1, and there the motivation was given to take Rithmah to be at Kadesh.

Num 33:18 And they set out from Hazeroth and camped at Rithmah.

During this first time at Kadesh, or then possibly Rithmah, 12 spies were sent out to investigate Canaan. The next Scriptures show where they went and that they returned after 40 days to Kadesh. Figure 4 shows the approximated route of the spies in green.

- Num 13:21 So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, near Lebo-hamath.

Rehov and Hamath can be found on Google Earth Pro. The change over time from “b” to “v” is a phenomenon called betacism.³ and is often found. Negeb in the next verse which is now known as Negev is another example.

- Num 13:22 They went up into the Negeb and came to Hebron. Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, were there. (Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)
- Num 13:23 And they came to the Valley of Eshcol and cut down from there a branch with a single cluster of grapes, and they carried it on a pole between two of them; they also brought some pomegranates and figs.
- Num 13:24 That place was called the Valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster that the people of Israel cut down from there.
- Num 13:25 At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land.
- Num 13:26 And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh. They brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land.

Ten of the 12 spies then convinced the Israelites that they can't conquer Canaan, even though God commanded them to invade Canaan. The Lord then postponed the invasion for about 38 years. Immediately after stopping the invasion, most of Israel wanted to go ahead with the invasion, but God forbade it. They tried to carry on despite being warned not to, but were then defeated by the Amorites, the Amalekites and the Canaanites from the mountains (– see Deuteronomy 1:44 and Numbers 14:45).

Numbers 16 tells of the revolt of Korah, Dathan and Abiram and their gang of 250, and their demise, as well as 14 700 Israelites who were killed by a plague until Aaron went and stood between the deceased and the living.

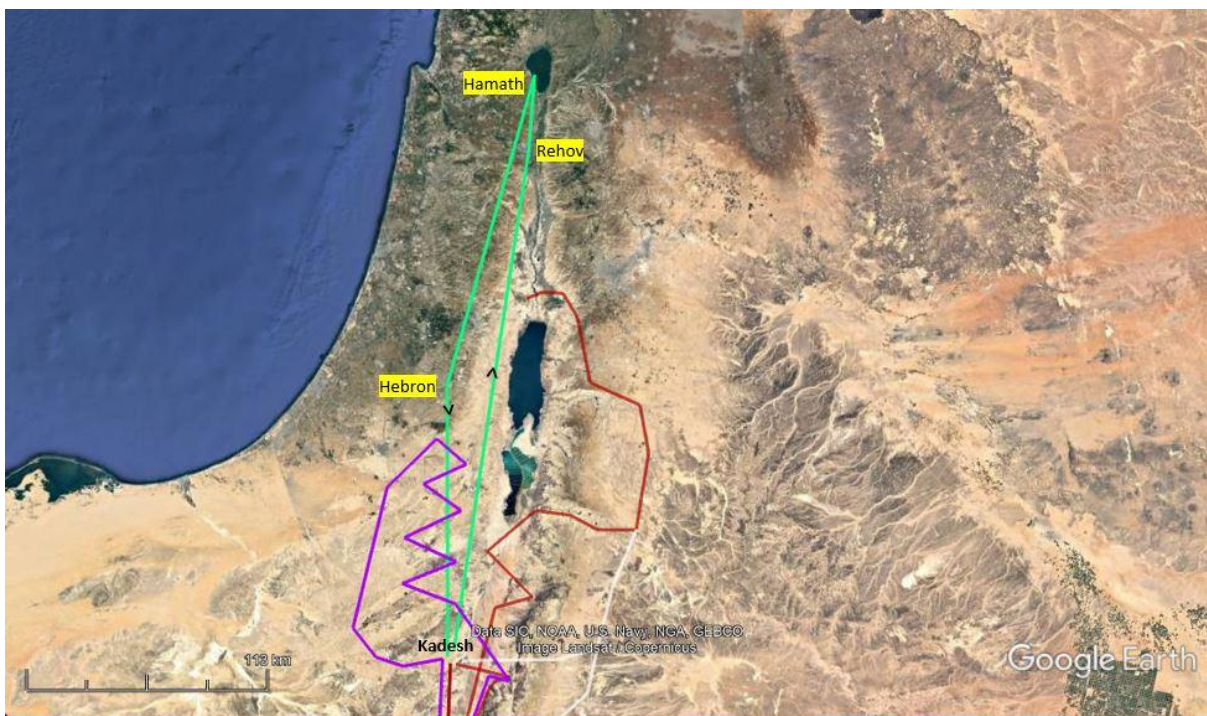


Figure 4: The journey of the 12 spies, from Kadesh back to Kadesh

Num 33:19 And they set out from Rithmah and camped at Rimmon-perez.

Figure 5 is a proposal of Israel's wandering in the wilderness for 38 years. Most of these camping sites could not be located. But it is important to still show them so that the coherency of different pieces in the Bible can be seen.

Rimmon-perez was perhaps close to Ramon that can be found on Google Earth Pro. Ramon is the name of an erosion valley in Israel. The meaning of Rimmon-perez is “pomegranate of a breach”⁴. A burst open ripe pomegranate gives the image of an erosion valley such as found at Ramon. The

prismatic rock columns found at some places in Ramon may appear like pomegranate seeds sitting in the fruit.

Num 33:20 And they set out from Rimmon-perez and camped at Libnah.

Shani-Livne and Livne can be found on Google Earth Pro; it is assumed that Livne was called Libnah, but no confirmation of this connection could be found on the Internet. All the next places up to Moseroth could not be found, so they were put arbitrarily on the map of Figure 5. They are deemed necessary to show so that a potential route compliant with all the biblical information is indicated.

Num 33:21 And they set out from Libnah and camped at Rissah.

Num 33:22 And they set out from Rissah and camped at Kehelathah.

Num 33:23 And they set out from Kehelathah and camped at Mount Shepher.

Num 33:24 And they set out from Mount Shepher and camped at Haradah.

Num 33:25 And they set out from Haradah and camped at Makheloth.

Num 33:26 And they set out from Makheloth and camped at Tahath.

Num 33:27 And they set out from Tahath and camped at Terah.

Num 33:28 And they set out from Terah and camped at Mithkah.

Num 33:29 And they set out from Mithkah and camped at Hashmonah.

Num 33:30 And they set out from Hashmonah and camped at Moseroth.

Moseroth and Moserah are according to the Hebrew explanations in the KJV+ probably the same place.⁵ Aaron died at Moserah later on as described in Deuteronomy 10:6. Numbers 20:7 and 8 and Numbers 33:38 and 39 described that Aaron died on the mountain of Hor. Therefore Moseroth, Moserah and Hor are at least close together, with Moseroth and Moserah probably the camping locations and Hor the mountain peak. Aaron did not die at Moseroth during the camping of Numbers 33:30, but only later when they returned to this place.

Num 33:31 And they set out from Moseroth and camped at Bene-jaakan.

Israel moved from the camp at Hor to Bene-jaakan, while at a later stage when Aaron died, they moved oppositely from Bene-jaakan to the camp at Hor (– see the discussion at Numbers 33:37 below).

Num 33:32 And they set out from Bene-jaakan and camped at Hor-haggidgad.

Num 33:33 And they set out from Hor-haggidgad and camped at Jotbathah.

Yotvata can be found on Google Earth Pro.

Num 33:34 And they set out from Jotbathah and camped at Abronah.

Num 33:35 And they set out from Abronah and camped at Ezion-geber.

Ezion-geber was on the Edom side of Eloth at the Red Sea according to 1Kings 9:26. There can't be any doubt that this location at the Red Sea is at the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba.

- Deu 2:1 Then we turned and journeyed into the wilderness in the direction of the Red Sea, as the LORD told me. And for many days we travelled around Mount Seir.

The suggestion is that the meaning of “in the direction of the Red Sea” is “by the way of the Red Sea”, as written in the KJV Bible.⁶ It is quite feasible that the big valley from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba (also called the Red Sea), was called the way of the Red Sea by the people in that region. Deuteronomy 2:1 summarizes all the travelling of Israel from their first time at Kadesh until they eventually left the region of Mount Seir to go to the east of the Jordan River.

Num 33:36 And they set out from Ezion-geber and camped in the wilderness of Zin (that is, Kadesh).

This is the 2nd time that the Israelites camped at Kadesh, a short while later they would be at the border of Moab at Iyim (– see Numbers 33:44 and 45) and the Zered stream at the same border. Miriam died during this 2nd time at Kadesh according to Numbers 20:1. Numbers 20:2-13 described how Israel complained again about water, Moses had to speak to the rock for water but he struck it in anger, and therefore he and Aaron were disallowed to ever enter Canaan. This place was also called Meribah.

Thereafter Israel wanted to travel through Edom, but Edom did not allow them (– see Numbers 20:14-22).

Num 33:37 And they set out from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the edge of the land of Edom.

Between Kadesh and Hor, the Israelites were again at Bene-jaakan according to Deuteronomy 10:6. Moserah is close to Hor as explained above. According to Deuteronomy 10:6 they moved from Bene-jaakan to Hor, in the opposite direction as previously described in Numbers 33:31.

This confirms the to and fro travelling in the region of the Seir mountains as mentioned in Deuteronomy 2:1 and 3. Figure 5 shows how it could have worked.



Figure 5: Travelling in the wilderness, from Kadesh back to the 2nd time at Kadesh

Num 33:38 And Aaron the priest went up Mount Hor at the command of the LORD and died there, in the fortieth year after the people of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month.

Num 33:39 And Aaron was 123 years old when he died on Mount Hor.

Num 33:40 And the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negeb in the land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the people of Israel.

According to Numbers 21:1-3 there was a battle here which Israel won before they left Hor. This also confirms that Israel was told to travel north in the direction of Arad relative to Hor as per God's command in Deuteronomy 2:3, not south. Google Earth Pro shows that Arad lies to the north of Hor; both can be found on Google Earth Pro; the latter indicated as the mountain and tomb of Aaron.

Num 33:41 And they set out from Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah.

Between Hor and Zalmonah they passed Gudgodah and Jotbathah according to Deuteronomy 10:6 and 7. Hor-haggidgad, mentioned in Numbers 33:32 and 33, is assumed to be the same place as Gudgodah because both lie between Hor and Jotbathah and there is some phonetic similarities. Jotbath and Jotbathah are the same as is clear from the Hebrew word in the KJV+, and is found as Yotvata on Google Earth Pro. It lies south of Hor, thus Israel disobeyed the Lord's instruction to proceed north as per Deuteronomy 2:3.

- Deu 2:3 You have been traveling around this mountain country long enough. Turn northward
- Deu 2:4 and command the people, "You are about to pass through the territory of your brothers, the people of Esau, who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. So be very careful."

Note that this last verse allow Israel to have travelled on or close to the border between Edom and Moab from the Arabah valley to the east of Moab.

Thereafter Israel complained about no water as per Numbers 21:5 at probably Gudgodah because the next stop was Jotbathah which had lots of water according to Deuteronomy 10:7. The snakes were encountered after Hor and before they got to Oboth as per Numbers 21:4-10. At Jotbathah they turned around and travelled according to God's instruction north to Zalmonah, then to Punon

and then to Oboth (– see Numbers 33:42 and 43). It therefore appears that the snakes were encountered at Jotbathah where there was also lots of water.

It is deduced that Moses did not travel from Hor to Gudgodah and Jotbathah, therefore he skipped those two places in his recount in Numbers 33:41. More motivation for this follows from Numbers 21:4-7 and Deuteronomy 10:6 and 7. It is rather speculative and is as follows, but it is addressing some difficult biblical passages which any Bible believer should not ignore when trying to come up with a better explanation.

- Num 21:4 From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way.

They did not travel here north as instructed by God in Deuteronomy 2:3, but south from Hor in the direction of the Red Sea, because they might have been unhappy with the northerly route God instructed. Numbers 21:4's "became impatient on the way" sounds strange here because they should now be on their last journey to Canaan. A better translation could have been "were unhappy with the instructed way". Numbers 21:4 does not state that God told them to travel towards the Red Sea, simply that they did so. According to Deuteronomy 10:6 and 7, Israel travelled from Hor to Gudgodah and Jotbathah, and Google Earth Pro shows that Jotbathah (Yotvata) is south of the mountain of Hor.

- Num 21:5 And the people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food."

They spoke against God and Moses, and complained about no water, and then moved even more south to Jotbathah where there was water according to Deuteronomy 10:7.

- Num 21:6 Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died.

The assumption is that this was at Jotbathah.

- Num 21:7 And the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people.

It is strongly suspected that Moses did not travel with Israel to Gudgodah and Jotbathah, because it was contradictory to God's instruction in Deuteronomy 2:3 to travel north. Numbers 21:5 states that Israel spoke against God and Moses, which does not necessarily mean they spoke here directly with Moses. This might be confirmed by Numbers 21:7 which may mean that they went back to where Moses was as indicated by the words "came to Moses and said".

In Deuteronomy 10:1-11 Moses is telling Israel how he had to carve the stone tables for a 2nd time for the Ten Commandments to be written on, that he had to make an ark for them, that he had to climb Mount Sinai for God to write the Ten Commandments, that he descended and put them in the ark, that God chose the tribe of Levi to carry the ark, that he prayed 40 days and nights that God would not destroy Israel, that God listened to his prayer and told him to stand up and lead Israel into the promised land. Moses is telling this history just before Israel would have crossed the Jordan river into Canaan according to Deuteronomy 9:1. But in the middle of his history telling, he inserted the words of the next two verses, just before verse 8 where he reminds them that the tribe of Levi should carry the ark in front of them whenever they proceed with their journey:

- Deu 10:6 The people of Israel journeyed from Beeroth Bene-jaakan to Moserah. There Aaron died, and there he was buried. And his son Eleazar ministered as priest in his place.
- Deu 10:7 From there they journeyed to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land with brooks of water.

The events of verses 6 and 7 were about 38 years after the rest of Moses' history telling before and after these two verses. The suggestion is that Moses inserted this here because it was an example he wanted to highlight where the ark did not lead the way, they travelled south against God's instruction, and therefore Moses would unlikely have travelled with them to Gudgodah and Jotbathah.

It was also illogical to travel here south and just thereafter turn right around to travel north, as they did – the locations of Hor, Yotvata and Punon according to Google Earth Pro make this clear. They travelled south in disobedience, because they wanted to go to the east of Jordan

around the south of Edom and then with the Kings Highway northwards – see the southern white line on the map in Figure 6 below.

Num 33:42 And they set out from Zalmonah and camped at Punon.

There is a photo reference on Google Earth Pro to Punon near the place that is now called Feynan.

A website confirms this location.⁷ The maps in some study Bibles also confirm this location.^{8,9,10}

Num 33:43 And they set out from Punon and camped at Oboth.

Ovot can be found on Google Earth Pro, and it could be confirmed as the Oboth of the exodus because it is close to Punon and the maps in some study Bibles also confirm this location.^{8,9,10}

Num 33:44 And they set out from Oboth and camped at Iye-abarim, in the territory of Moab.

- Deu 2:8 So we went on, away from our brothers, the people of Esau, who live in Seir, away from the Arabah road from Elath and Ezion-geber. And we turned and went in the direction of the wilderness of Moab.

Israel has now left behind the Edomites and the places mentioned in Deuteronomy 2:8. The Arabah road is the big valley between the Gulf of Aqaba and the Dead Sea.

Num 33:45 And they set out from Iyim and camped at Dibon-gad.

Iyim is the same as Iye-abarim as can be seen when compared with the previous verse. After Iye-abarim they camped at the Zered stream, then they camped at the Arnon river, and they got water from the well at Beer (– see Numbers 21:11-13 and 16). According to Deuteronomy 2:9, God instructed Israel to travel peaceful through Moab. At the Arnon river the Amorites, who took the land between the Arnon and the Jabbok rivers from Moab and reigned with the Midianites, tried to prevent Israel to travel though the land. Kings Sihon and Og of the Amorites attacked Israel and were defeated (– see Num 21:21-35). These Midianites were defeated a little later as per Numbers 25:16-18 and Numbers 31.

Num 33:46 And they set out from Dibon-gad and camped at Almon-diblathaim.

Dibon can be found on Google Earth Pro; it is reasonable to think Dibon-gad was close to Dibon.

Dibon is also mentioned in Numbers 21:30.

Num 33:47 And they set out from Almon-diblathaim and camped in the mountains of Abarim, before Nebo.

Moses died here a little later; see the discussion below just after Numbers 33:49. According to Deuteronomy 3:27 and 34:1 the mountains Abarim and Pisgah are the same.

Num 33:48 And they set out from the mountains of Abarim and camped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho;

Num 33:49 they camped by the Jordan from Beth-jeshimoth as far as Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab.

These are still called the plains of Moab, even though Israel took it from the Amorites, because the Amorites took it from the Moabites (– see Numbers 21:21-35). Also see Deuteronomy 1:5 where the land of Moab is mentioned east of the Jordan river.

Abel-shittim is the longer name for Shittim of Numbers 25:1. In Numbers 25 it is described how the Israelite men whored with the Moabite and Midianite women who came to them. The Lord then punished them with a plague killing many until Pinehas, grandson of Aaron, killed an Israelite man and a Midianite woman with a spear in the man's tent.

Thereafter, according to Numbers 31, Moses sent out the Israelites to destroy the Midianites, with their 5 kings. These Midianites don't include all of them down to Midian including Moses' in-laws, but only the Midianites and their 5 kings who reigned with the Amorite Sihon in the land they previously had taken from the Moabites (– see Joshua 13:21). This is far from Midian that lied southwest of Horeb in the Arabian Peninsula.

After the events at Shittim, Moses appointed Joshua as his successor, he went back to the mountain of Nebo, he saw Canaan from there and then he died, as recorded in Numbers 27:12-23, Deuteronomy 31:7, 8, 14, 15, Deuteronomy 32:48-51 and Deuteronomy 34:1-6.

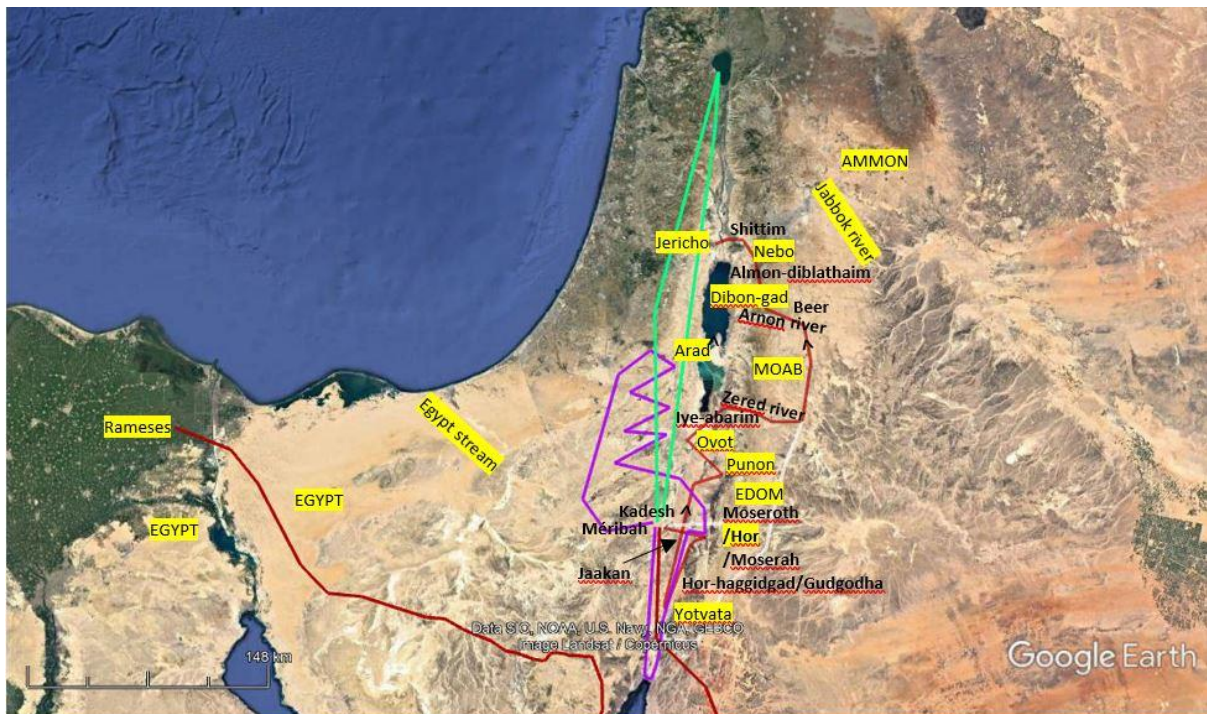


Figure 6: From Kadesh to Jericho

Archaeological evidence:

Certain archaeological evidence supports the crossing to be at Nuweiba through the Gulf of Aqaba:¹¹

- There is adequate space at the shore for an assembly of 2.5 million people.
- There is a shallower but broad uplift in the bed of the gulf at that point from the western to the eastern shore.
- The uplift has a sandy and relatively smooth surface with low slopes although it does currently drop to about 900 m below sea level at its deepest point according to Google Earth Pro. On average this means downhill and uphill slopes of about 9%; thus not too steep. Another possibility is to the south at the mouth of the gulf to the bigger Red Sea, where the seabed is less than 300 m deep, but it does have steep slopes. Nuweiba seems to be more feasible regarding all evidence.
- On the uplift at Nuweiba coral structures are found with shapes and sizes complying with corals having formed on wheels and axles that could have been those of chariots at the time of the exodus. The first such claims were made in the 1990s, but they were confirmed in 2019 by divers and cameras on a remotely operated underwater robot. Some of these coral structures reportedly confirmed metal strips complying with wheels and spokes as shown by metal detectors. However, solid evidence is still wanted. Note that it is not a simple matter of lifting a structure from the water and properly examine it – it is not allowed by the authorities in this politically unstable region.

Conclusion:

Looking at all the information in the Bible, a strong case can be made for Mount Sinai or Horeb to be in the current Saudi Arabia. Likewise, all the information points to the Gulf of Aqaba in the Red Sea to be the crossing point through the Red Sea rather than the Gulf of Suez, and even less so the Great Bitter Lake or any shallow marsh. The location of Kadesh could be determined reasonably well. A novelty in this paper is the finding that the Israelites first travelled south after burying Aaron at Mount Hor, despite God instructing them to travel north. They then encountered a lack of water and thereafter snakes, probably at Jotbathah, asked Moses for help by praying to God, and God then instructed Moses to make a snake of copper and put it on a pole so that only those looking at the snake, would be healed. This was a clear reference sign to Jesus on the cross who would die some 1500 years later for the sins of the world, to become the only Saviour of the world. The Israelites then turned around and travelled north as they were originally instructed by God, crossed to the east of the Jordan river eventually, by travelling along the

border between Moab and Edom close to the Zered river, and then north eventually to the east of the Jordan river.

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