

This Is PETRA!

This second article reveals Petra's mysterious past, the dozens of instances it is mentioned in Bible history. No other city was more important in the first exodus. Why? Does Petra's past reveal its future?

by Herman L. Hoeh

WHY should the valley through Petra be named after Moses if Moses was never there? Could it be that Moses and the children of Israel actually assembled in Petra before entering the Promised Land?

Why are so many chapters in the Bible devoted to the minute details of the journey of Israel from Egypt to Palestine? Have these chapters *hitherto undisclosed, but vital, meaning for us today?*

After Mount Sinai—Where?

Today, almost no one supposes Israel ever saw Petra. Yet not more than two centuries ago it was common knowledge among scholars that Moses, Aaron, Miriam and the children of Israel journeyed through Petra!

Now notice what really happened when Israel was about to leave Mt. Sinai. It is found in Numbers 10:11-12. "And it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year [after the Exodus], that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle. . . . And the children took their journeys"—the original Hebrew reads "set forward by stages" (Jewish trans.)—"out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran."

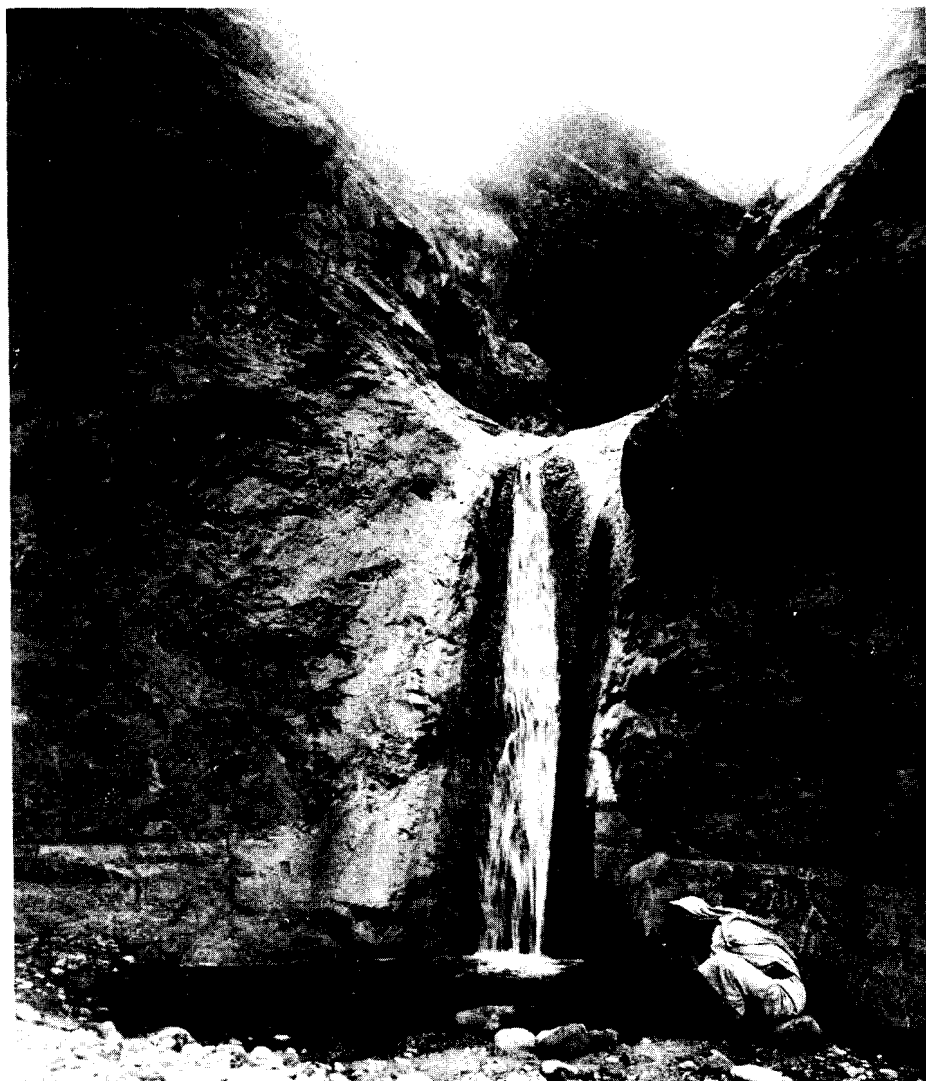
From Numbers 9:15 to 23, we learn that the encampments of Israel were determined by the movement of the cloud above the tabernacle. When the cloud was stationary, the people abode in their tents. When the cloud ascended and moved forward, the people followed it. The Eternal—the God of Israel, who later came in the flesh as Christ—was in that cloud! He was leading Israel. He determined their movements. Where did He take them? To "the wilderness of Paran," says Num. 10:12.

But where is Paran?

Men assume it may mean the Sinai Peninsula, southwest of Palestine. They are only guessing! THEY don't really know! Where does the Bible say it is?

First, let's understand what the word "Paran" means. *Young's Concordance* gives the surprising definition: "FULL OF CAVERNS." *Paran* comes from the Hebrew root meaning "TO DIG OUT," or "TO CUT OUT," according to the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*; hence, "to embellish or decorate" (*Strong's Concordance*).

Here is a wilderness famous for a



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The Wadi at Siyyagh waterfall — the sole present source of water in Petra!

place in it which is *full of caverns or caves!*—embellished or decorated with tombs! Is this place Petra? We shall see. Certainly no city is more famous for its beautifully carved caves than Petra!

Notice also that Ishmael—the ancestor of the Arabians—"dwelt in the wilderness of Paran" (Gen. 21:21). It does not say he dwelt in Sinai. The scripture reads *Paran*. And where is the ancestral home of the Arabs? In Arabia, east of the Sinai Peninsula! That indicates that the wilderness of Paran borders on Arabia!

Now turn to Numbers 12:16. Note

what it says—the children of Israel pitched their tents "in the wilderness of Paran." From here Moses sent the twelve men to spy out the land of Palestine. "And Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran according to the commandment of the Lord" (Num. 13:3).

After 40 days "they came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to KADESH" (Num. 13:26). Kadesh is a city (Num. 20:16).

What Does "Kadesh" Mean?

Why was this city called "Kadesh"?

"And the Lord's anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the Lord was consumed" (Numbers 32:13).

Kadesh was never referred to as Kadesh-barnea until after the Israelites *wavered* in their faith and had to *wander* as a punishment (Numbers 32:8). The significance of the name *barnea*, then, is "the wandering sons."

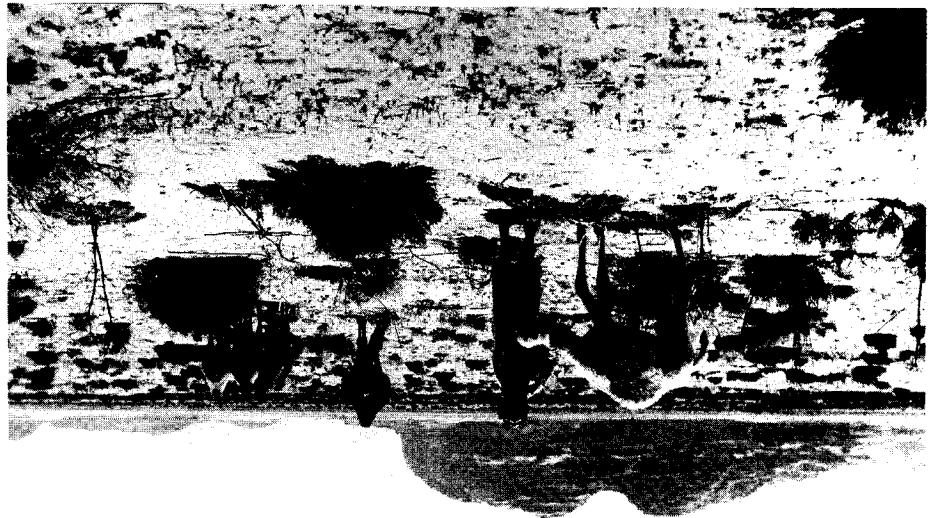
Observe, now, in what mountain range Kadesh is to be found.

Located in Mount Seir!

"And we journeyed from Horeb, and went through all that great and dreadful wilderness which ye saw, by the way to the hill country of the Amorites, as the Lord our God commanded us: and we came to Kadesh-barnea" (Deut. 1:19).

The Gulf of Aqaba, looking south-west toward hills of the Sinai Peninsula.

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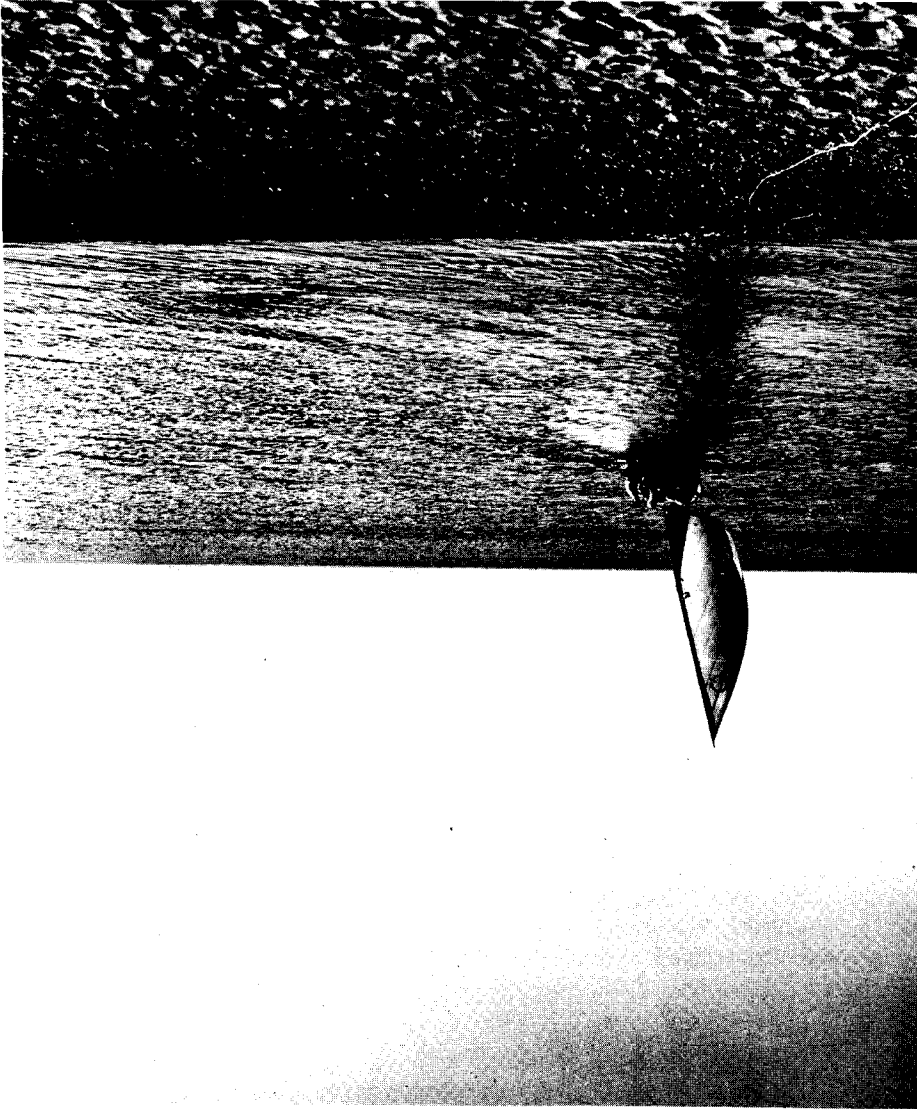
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The Arabah. This typical Arab desert—Negeb el Shuk—borders wilderness of the wandering.

In Hebrew, the word *Kadesh* means "holy." (See *Young's Concordance*.) What made the place holy? God dwelt over the tabernacle. The cloud *abode* in the wilderness of Paran in Kadesh. God's presence sanctified the city and gave the name Kadesh to it.

Kadesh has more than one name. In the book of Numbers, God commanded Israel to go up and possess the land, beginning from "*Kadesh*" (Num. 13:26). But in Deuteronomy 9:23 we read: "Likewise when the Lord sent you from *Kadesh-barnea*, saying, Go up and possess the land which I have given you; then ye rebelled. . . ." *Kadesh-barnea* is therefore another name for Kadesh.

Why should the city of Kadesh also be called "Kadesh-barnea"? The Hebrew word *barnea* comes from two Hebrew words, *bar* and *nua*. The root meaning of *nua* (sometimes spelled *nua*) is "to waver or wander." It is often translated in the Old Testament as "*wanderer*," "vagabond," "fugitive." *Bar* means "son." It is used in such expressions as *Barmaeus*, meaning "the son of Timaeus" (Mark 10:46), "Simon Bar-jona"—"Simon the son of Jona" (Mat. 16:17).

It was at Kadesh (Numbers 13:26) that the Israelites *wavered* in their faith. They refused to trust God (Num. 14:1, 11). As a punishment they had to *wander* or be fugitives in the wilderness.



The "hill country of the Amorites" is defined by Moffatt in Judges 1:36 as extending "from the Scorpion Pass ["Ak-rabbim" in King James Version] to *Sela* and beyond it." *Sela* is Petra!

Consider another vital point. To reach Kadesh from Horeb or Sinai [Horeb is another name for Sinai (Mal. 4:4 and Deut. 4:10-13)], the usual 11-day route went "BY THE WAY OF MOUNT SEIR"! Or, in other words, Israel journeyed BY THE MOUNT SEIR ROAD! But where is Mount Seir?

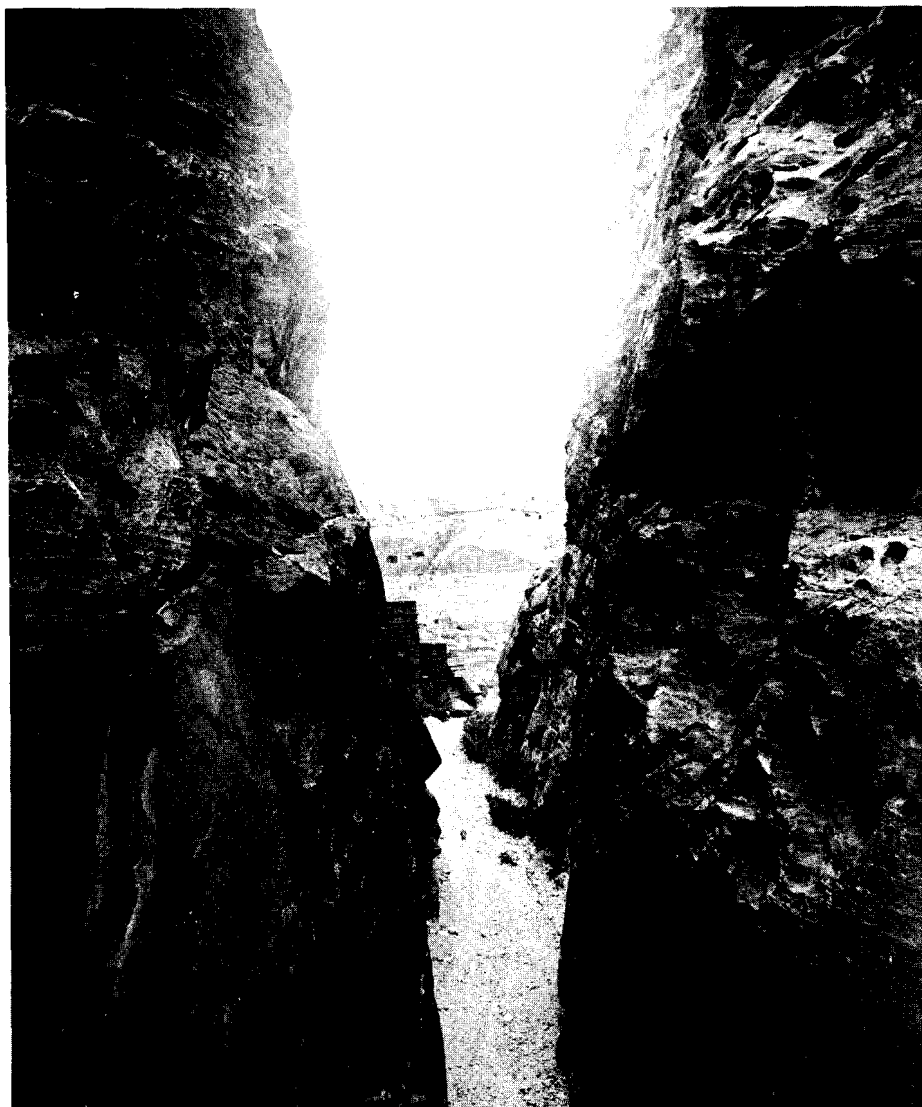
Mount Seir is that chain of mountains between Arabia and the Arabah or "plain" mentioned so often in the Bible. It lies *east of the Arabah* and extends from the Gulf of Aqaba north to near the Dead Sea.

Most maps in the back of a Bible will have these places located correctly. These maps, however, misplace Kadesh. The "Kadesh" usually located in the Sinai Peninsula is not the city Moses describes, but is the "Kedesh" of Joshua 15:23 instead—another place altogether.

Now consider this: if the wilderness of Paran and Kadesh were in the Sinai Peninsula southwest of Palestine, THERE WOULD BE NO REASON FOR TRAVELING BY THE WAY OF MOUNT SEIR!

The only reason one would have to travel by the Way of Mount Seir—or by the Mt. Seir Road—is that Paran and Kadesh lay *east* of the Sinai Peninsula—in other words, *in the vicinity of Petra!*

Take another scripture—Deuteronomy 1:6-7: "The Lord our God spoke unto us in Horeb, saying: 'Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain; turn you, and take your journey, and go to the hill-country of the Amorites and unto all the *places nigh thereunto*, IN THE ARABAH [in the King James Version it is called "the PLAIN"], in the hill-country, in the Lowland, and in the South, and by the sea shore. *Of the Mediterranean, the*



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Passing to the right from El Khazne, we see the ruins of the ancient Roman theatre.

God, He sternly told them: "Surely they unto Hormah"! (Deut. 1:42-45.)



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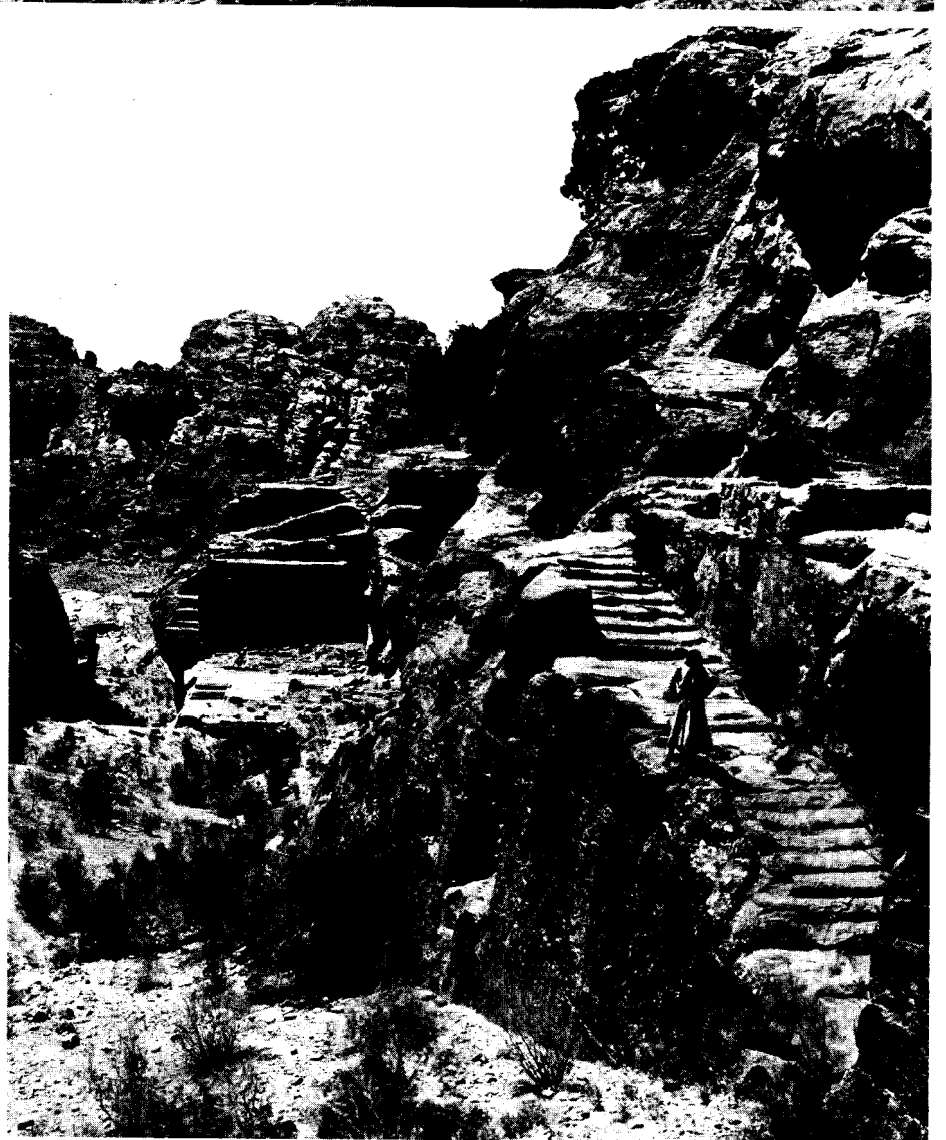
High above the Petra valley is this ancient altar of sacrifice or high place. View from the north.

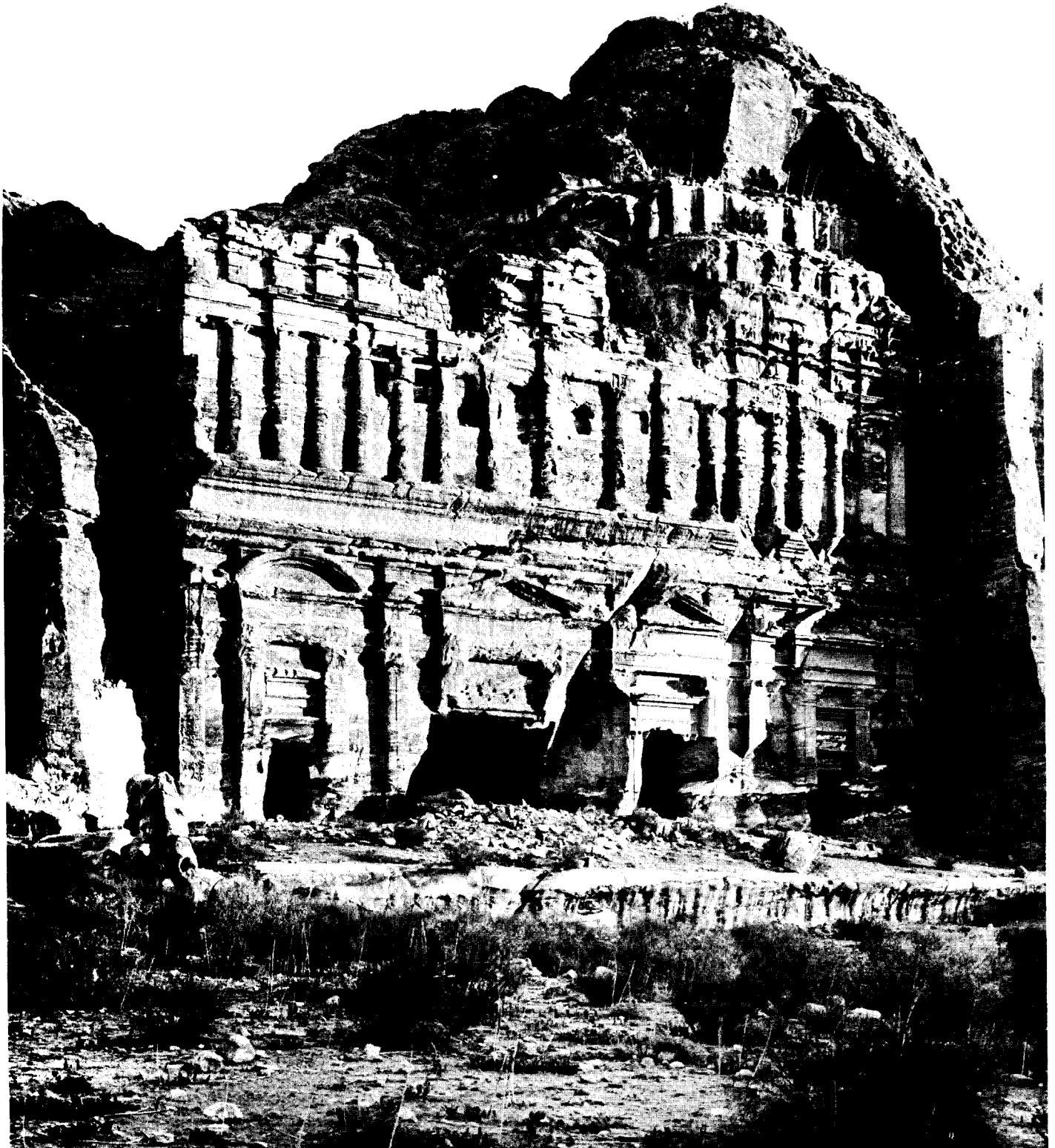
Right, Petra's famous stairway to the Great High Place and Funeral Chapel.

journey into the wilderness. This is the wilderness which they had asked to die in (Num. 14:2)—and in it they were going to die! Moses called it "that great and dreadful wilderness" —the edge of which they passed through when journeying from Sinai to Mount Seir (Deut. 1:19).

This wilderness in the Sinai Peninsula has been called throughout history simply *Et Tih*—meaning "the Wilderness"; or *Bādiyat et-Tih Beni Israel*—meaning "the Wilderness of the Wanderings of the Children of Israel." This designation runs back in the Arabian historians as far back as we have any track of their name for this desert," says Trumbull, on page 67 of *Kadesh-barnea*.

Nowhere in all the Bible is this area ever called Zin or Paran! It is entirely mislabeled on most Bible maps today. Nearly 37½ years were spent wandering





Unusual Tomb in Stories, now badly eroded.

in this desolate, arid region. *No notice is taken of any wilderness encampments during those years.* Only a few major events occurring during the period are recorded in Numbers 15 through 19.

Encampments Listed in Order

Before we proceed further, let's consider Numbers 33. This entire chapter is devoted to the encampments of the children of Israel. This list of seemingly unimportant encampments *may have far more importance for us today than we dream!* Everything is placed in the Bible for a purpose!

Turn now to Numbers 33. Beginning with verse 1: "These are the journeys of the children of Israel. . . . And Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys BY THE COMMANDMENT OF THE LORD." Then Moses lists the stop-overs to Sinai (verse 15).

We have read in Deuteronomy 1:2 that the trip could be made from Sinai to Kadesh in eleven days of normal travel. The Israelites took longer, of course. Sometimes they remained a week (Num. 12:15) or a month (Num. 11:20) in one location before moving.

In the list in Numbers 33, the name "Kadesh" appears only once as an encampment (verses 36-37). In this list it appears just before the short journey to Mt. Hor. It is therefore the *second time* Israel entered Kadesh. Since the children of Israel were in Kadesh twice, it is hardly likely that the first stop there should have been omitted in Num. 33.

Nor indeed is it!

In Numbers 12:16, observe that the camping points between Hazeroth and the wilderness of Paran are skipped over. In Numbers 33:18-30 you will find them listed. Mt. Shapher (verse 23) is one of the famous mountain peaks in the Mt. Seir range. "The Mt. Shapher of Moses . . . is the Jebel Shafeh of the Arabs, [which gave its name to] the mountain range lying NNE [north-northeast] of Akabah, and extending from the head of that gulf to the neighborhood of Petra and Mount Hor," wrote Charles Forster in *Sinai Photographed*, p. 144. This one peak gave its name to the entire range of mountains inhabited by the descendants of Seir.

The remaining stops after Mt. Seir to *Bene-Jaakan* (verse 31).

Bene-Jaakan is Kadesh!

Notice Numbers 33:37. In the fortieth year of the exodus, Israel journeyed from *Kadesh* to Mt. Hor where Aaron died. But when Moses related *the same movements* orally, he said: "And the children of Israel took their journey from Beeroth [Beeroth means "wells"] of *the children of Jaakan* to Mosera: where Aaron died" (Deut. 10:6). This

scripture indicates that Mosera is another name applied to Mt. Hor and that *Bene-Jaakan* is another name for *Kadesh*. Mosera means "chastisement" in Hebrew (*Young's Concordance*). It was at Mt. Hor that Aaron died as a chastisement for disobeying God at Kadesh. It is certainly a fitting name for the Mount.

Now what does "Bene-Jaakan" mean?

The name "Bene-Jaakan" is merely another way of saying "children of Jaakan." The usual Hebrew word for child or son is *ben*. So the locale designated Bene-Jaakan is the place where the descendants of Jaakan settled. But who was Jaakan?

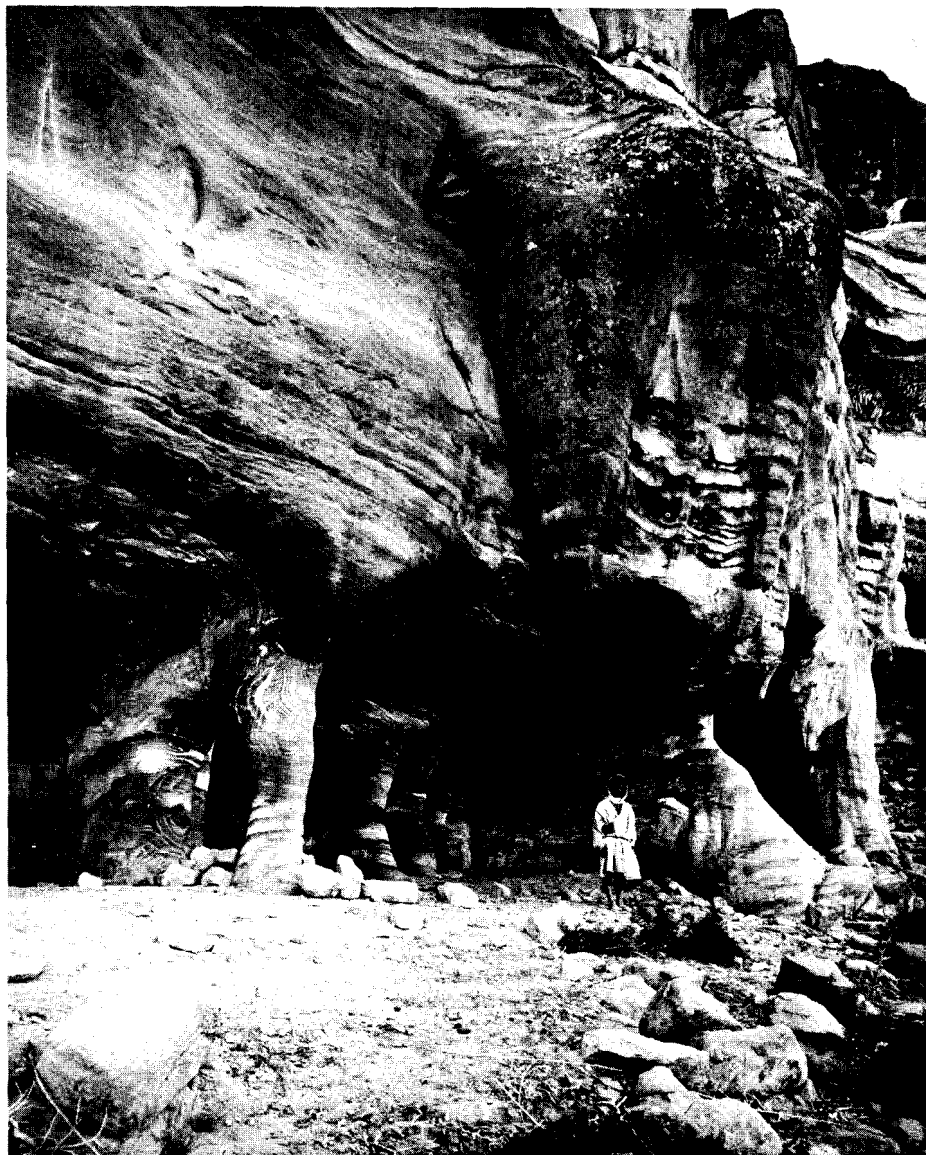
Jaakan is spelled Jakan in I Chronicles 1:42 and Akan in Genesis 36:27. Jaakan was a son of Ezer. Ezer was a son of *Seir the Horite* (Gen. 36:20-21). The word Horite means *cave-dweller* according to all authorities. That makes the children of Jaakan Horites or cave-

dwellers. And what city in Mt. Seir is more famous for its caves than Petra? History tells us that the *Horites originally cut out the gaping caverns in Petra!*

Certainly Bene-Jaakan is another name for Petra!

The few children of Jaakan at Kadesh did not resist the Israelites when Israel came to Kadesh the first time, or else they would not have been there to meet the Israelites nearly 40 years later! It appears also that a few of the Kenites dwelt around Petra and dominated the region. The Kenites had their strong dwelling place "in a rock"—"in Sela" according to the original Hebrew (Num. 24:21). Sela is Petra. Moses' father-in-law—a priest himself—was a Kenite (Judges 1:16) probably from Sela, where the children of Jaakan also dwelt.

And isn't this also an indication that Moses' experiences in the wilderness for 40 years prior to the exodus were to



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An ancient eroded exterior of a tomb at Petra.

fit him to lead Israel to the safety of Kadesh before entering the promised land?

Is this also why several of the ministers have visited Petra today?

But to return to Numbers 33. After leaving Kadesh the first time, the children of Israel did not need to stop at Mt. Hor. They proceeded southwest into the Arabah and came to Horhagidgad, then to Jotbathah, then to Ebronah (verses 32-34). This took them into the Sinaitic wilderness *where no further encampments are recorded* for about 37 years! We do not need to know the route of their miserable wanderings.

The account in Num. 33 next picks up the journey of Israel from Ezion-gaber to Kadesh again (verses 35, 36) about the beginning of the fortieth year after the exodus.

The Return to Kadesh

Thirty-nine years have now elapsed since the Exodus from Egypt. "Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, to the desert of Zin in the first month [of the fortieth year, according to Josephus]: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam [the sister of Moses] died there, and *was buried there*" (Numbers 20:1).

The Bible records that Miriam was buried in Kadesh. In William Whiston's footnote in *Josephus' Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. IV, ch. iv, sec 7, we read that "her sepulchre is still extant near PETRA, the old capital city of Arabia Petraea, at this day; as also that of Aaron, not far off!"

Now notice what happened next. "And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. . . . And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and *speak ye unto the ROCK* before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them *water out of the ROCK*: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts to drink."

Then "Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the ROCK, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must *we* fetch you water out of this ROCK? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the ROCK twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also."

"And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron. Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel"—God had ordered Moses to speak to the ROCK, not to strike it, to

show that it was God alone who could produce the water at the precise moment—"therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (Numbers 20:2, 7-8, 10-12).

What *rock* is it that Moses struck? It is SELA in Hebrew!

"SELA" Another Name for PETRA

There are two Hebrew words commonly rendered rock. One is *sela*, the other is *tsur*. The word *tsur* may mean "a cliff, a rock, a boulder."

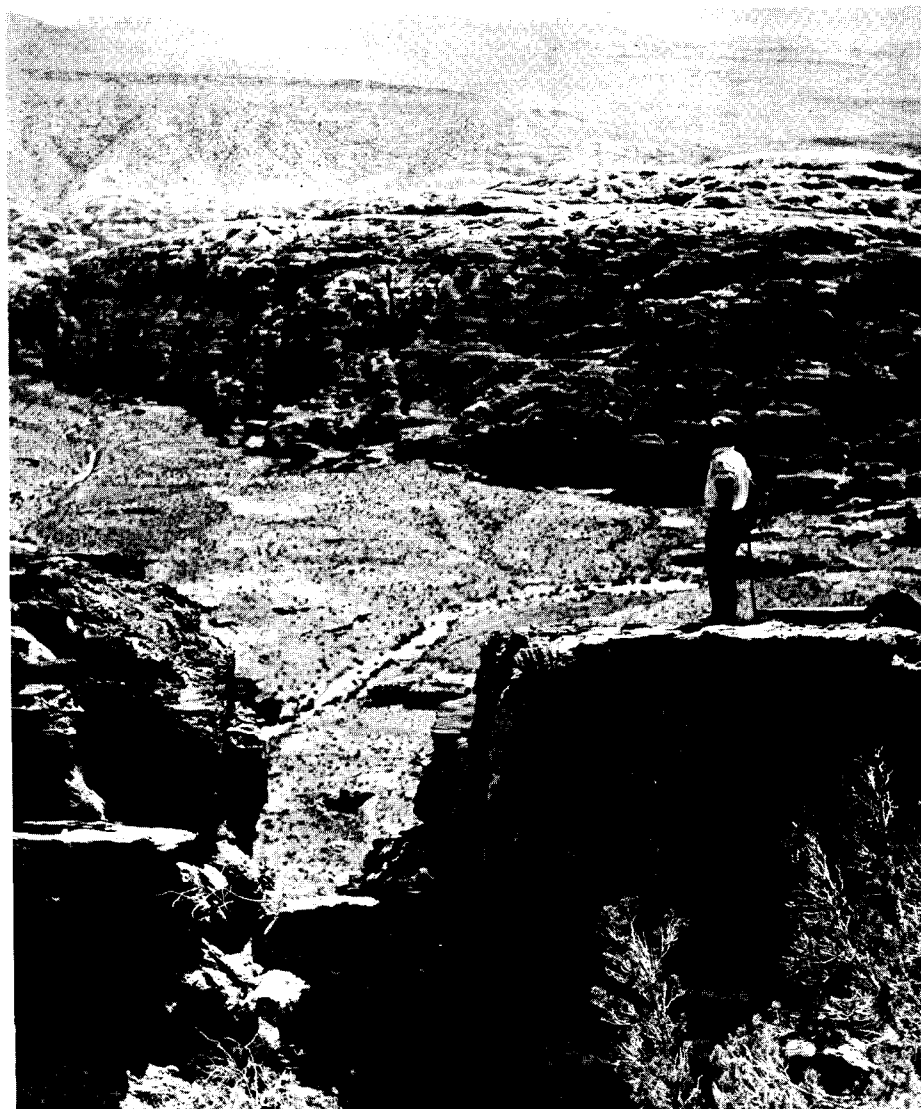
When Moses struck "the rock in Horeb," 39 years before, he did *not* strike Sela or Petra. He struck *tsur*! Observe: "Behold, I," spoke God to Moses, "I will stand before thee there *upon the rock* [tsur] in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock [tsur], and there

shall come water out of it. . . . And he called the name of the place Massah [meaning "temptation"], and Meribah [meaning "strife"], because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?" (Exodus 17:6-7).

This rock—*tsur*— is referred to spiritually in I Corinthians 10:4: "And they did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that *followed* them [a better translation is "went with them"]: and that Rock was Christ."

The waters which sprang from the two different rocks, nearly 39 years apart, were both called "Meribah" (Exodus 17:7; Num. 20:13, 24). That has led some to confuse the events.

(Please continue on page 16)



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From high up on Umm el Biyarah looking down on Petra Valley far below. The Khubta Ridge and the desert plateau lie far into the distance.



of the Prophet Aaron. It is the traditional site of the death of Aaron.

Josephus, the Jewish historian in the time of the apostles, tells us that Aaron died on one of the "high mountains" which encompasses "Petra"! Mt. Hor is by Petra!—"by the coast of the land of Edom" (Num. 20:23).

If you will scrutinize modern Bible maps you will see that some scholars speculate that Mt. Hor might have been Mt. Madurah in the Negeb, in the South of Palestine. But this area was well within the promised land. God never gave it to Edom. It is far to the west of Edom's borders. It is not where Aaron died. Aaron died on the southern border of Edom in Seir.

(To be continued next issue)

In obvious need of repair, left, is this Step Couloir ascending el-Khubta Heights in Petra.

Jebel Harun, the site of Aaron's death.

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This Is PETRA!

(Continued from page 10)

Meribah means "strife." In *both* instances the children of Israel *strove* with God. To distinguish between the two, Moses was inspired to use the expression "Meribah in Kadesh" (Num. 27:14), or "Meribah-Kadesh" (Deut. 32:51), for the later strife over water *at Sela*.

About four months have now elapsed since Israel came to Kadesh the second time. "And the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh, and came unto Mount Hor. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people" (Num. 20:22-24).

Where Did Aaron Die?

The same event is recorded in Numbers 33:37-38.

A little to the southwest of Petra is a 4800 foot mountain called *Jebel Nebi Harun* by the Arabs. It means Mount

