

The Good News

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We Saw PETRA!

Last July two more of our ministers viewed the mysterious ruins of Petra. Their trip opened up important facts about Petra that will surprise you!

by Herman L. Hoeh

SIX MONTHS ago, on a hot July day, Dr. Meredith and I found the door to Petra suddenly opened to us.

We had been notified upon our arrival in Syria that no tours would take us to Petra in the summer. July is never the tourist season in the Middle East! But when we came to Amman, the capital of Jordan, events broke fast.

We found a Lebanese businessman who let us hire his Syrian driver. Two days later we were riding horses down the rocky "Wady Musa"—the "valley of Moses"—leading into Petra.

An Unexpected Opportunity

This unexpected opportunity to view Petra and the surrounding countryside has since opened up the vital importance to us of the trek of Israel in the Wilderness under Moses.

Why, for instance, should the valley running 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?*

For years Mr. Armstrong has carefully watched events in the Kingdom of Jordan. Within its borders lie the mysterious, almost-forgotten ruins of the ancient city of Petra. Mr. and Mrs. Arm-

strong, together with many others in the Church, have long sensed the possibility that this city—hidden away in the fastness of a mountain-wilderness—is the place of escape which Jesus promised for His Church (Rev. 12:14).

Not Yet Revealed

We do NOT yet know absolutely where the prophesied place of escape may be. But the recent trips to Petra have led to uncovering important new BIBLE EVIDENCE strongly indicating Petra to be the probable place of safety! For almost unrealized is the fact that PETRA IS MENTIONED MORE OFTEN IN THE BIBLE THAN ANY OTHER CITY except Jerusalem, Samaria and Babylon!

You may remember that *Mr. Armstrong wrote in his Co-worker Letter from the Near East, in 1956, that the apostle Paul spent nearly three years in Petra in Arabia*, where he was taught of Christ. Even the Catholic Church historian Eusebius preserved a record of this. "According to old tradition . . . Paul visited Petra when he went into Arabia (Gal. 1:17)," states the *International Standard Encyclopaedia*.

Petra was Paul's place of *refuge and instruction!* Will it possibly be ours, *if we are accounted worthy to escape?* We must watch world events, as Jesus said, in order to know!

But first, let us notice the almost incredible record about Petra from the pages of the Old Testament.

Nearly all of you probably received

the 1956 PLAIN TRUTH which contained Mrs. Armstrong's account of Petra from her diary. She gave you a splendid *personal* picture of "roughing it" in Petra. The Old Testament gives the same vivid picture of Petra, surprisingly enough, in the journey of the children of Israel in the wilderness!

Scholars fundamentally agree upon the general direction of the route of Israel from Egypt to Sinai. *But today almost no two agree about where Israel went from there!*

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

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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 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 command-

ment 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”? In Hebrew, the word *Kadesh* means “holy.” (See *Young's Concordance*.) What made the place holy? God did! God is holy. God dwelled in the cloud 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 *nuwa*) 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 *Bartimaeus*, 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. “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 “*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 land of the Canaanites, and Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates” (Jewish trans.).

Did you notice that? Israel was to journey to the Amorite hill-country, where *Kadesh* was located. From there they were to enter the promised land from the east, to proceed westward to the shore of the Mediterranean, and then go north to Lebanon and the Euphrates (verse 21). *The first part of the promised land they would enter was the ARABAH—the wilderness just west of Petra in Mt. Seir!*

Here is just one more proof that *Kadesh* and the wilderness of Paran were *east* of the Arabah—east of the Sinai Peninsula—in *Mount Seir*, in the vicinity of *Petra*!

Israel Whipped in SEIR

But this is not all the evidence. Notice! When Israel refused to trust God, He sternly told them: “Surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them see it” (Num. 14:23). Upon receiving

this rebuke, they imperiously said: "Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised: for we have sinned. And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord. . . . Go not up, for the Lord is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. . . . But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: . . . Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah" (Numbers 14:40-45).

Notice where this disaster befell Israel. The people were defeated even to Hormah. Where is Hormah?

"And the Amorites"—who were Canaanites—"came out against you, as bees do, and destroyed you in SEIR, even unto Hormah"! (Deut. 1:42-45.)

It was *in Seir*—in the mountain range where Petra is located—that Israel was handed this severe defeat. This was not

somewhere in the Sinai wilderness. This was *in Seir*. The Bible says so!

Yet Another Proof!

Kadesh is also said to be located in "the Wilderness of Zin." "For ye rebelled," God told Moses, "against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes: that is the water of Meribah *in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin*" (Num. 27:14).

Since Kadesh is located in the wilderness of Paran and in the wilderness of Zin, it certainly appears that Zin and Paran are two different names for the same wilderness, doesn't it? What does "Zin" mean? Here is the answer!

The spies began to search the promised land *from* the city of Kadesh-barnea. That is recorded in Deut. 1:19-23. Kadesh was their starting point. It was an important city on the border of the promised land. It was in fact one of the

promised "gates of your enemies" (Gen. 22:17). But according to Numbers 13:21, we discover that "they went up, and searched the land *from the wilderness of Zin*. . . . And they returned unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh" (verse 26).

The Wilderness of Zin is mentioned no less than 10 times in the Bible. Invariably the only *city* associated with it is Kadesh. Kadesh is also the only *city* associated with Paran. Remember that Paran means "caverns." But what does *Zin* mean?

It comes from the Hebrew root meaning a mountainous *crag*, as if piercing the sky! (See *Strong's Concordance*.) Here is what the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* says: Zin "may mean the 'wall' of rock within which the wilderness of Zin lies"!

What better description could we find for the region of Petra than this! Petra is famous for its stupendous crags jutting high into the sky. Is it a coincidence that Petra—with its rocky crags and its caves—is the only city in the region of Arabia from which the words Paran and Zin can both be derived?

Some have been confused between the "Wilderness of Zin" and the "Wilderness of Sin." They are *not* the same. They are spelled differently in Hebrew. The Wilderness of Sin was reached by Israel *before* they even came to Sinai (Exodus 16:1). The wilderness of Zin was reached *after* Israel departed from Sinai. Sin was northwest of Sinai. Zin was far to the northeast of Mount Sinai.

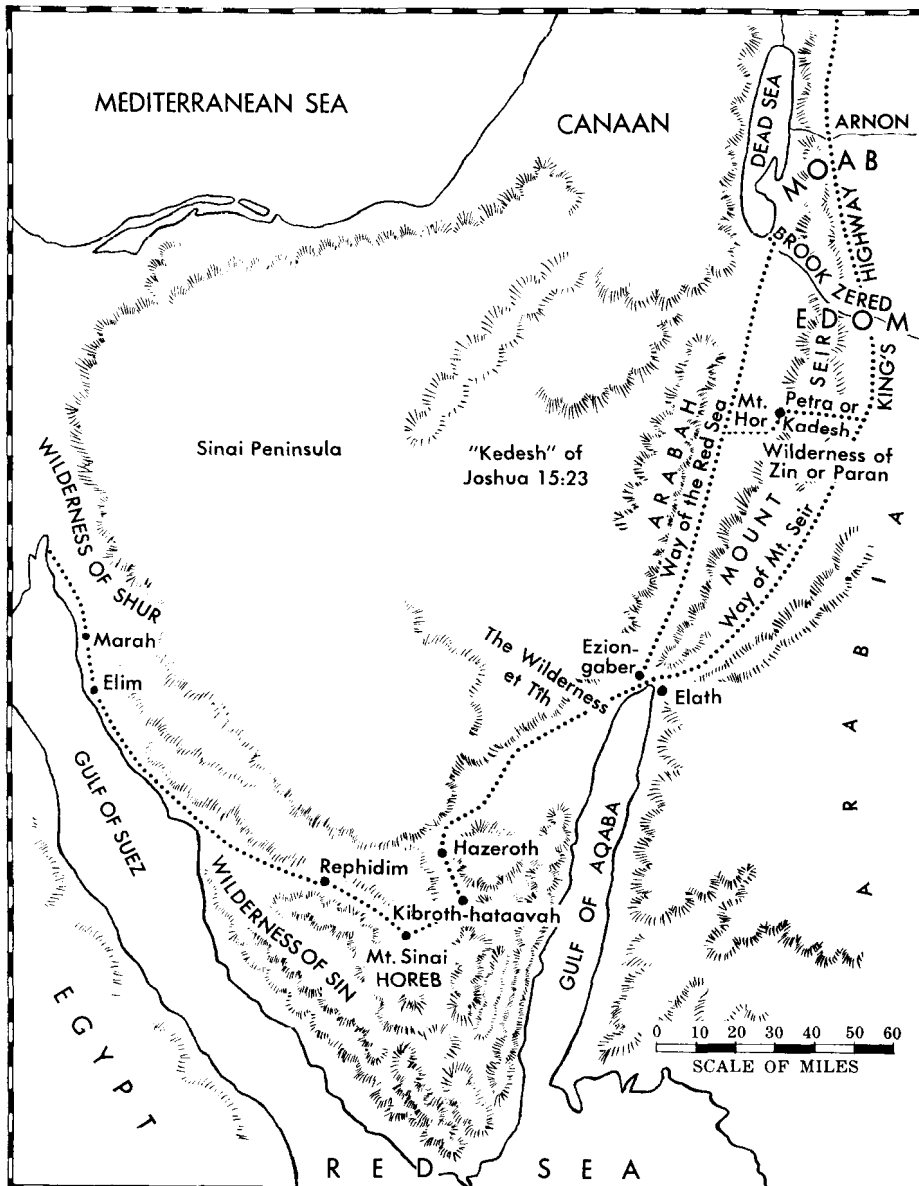
Where Was the "Wilderness of Wandering"?

The epoch-making night following the return of the 12 spies, "all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept" (Num. 14:1). Their anger rose to rebellion next day. They hurled the accusation "Would God we had died in this wilderness" (verse 2).

When God heard it, He ordered Moses to tell the people: "Tomorrow turn you, and get you *into the wilderness* by the way of the Red sea" (verse 25, last half).

Remember, Israel was already in the wilderness of Zin or Paran. Now God orders them to leave Kadesh and go into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea—that is, by the Red Sea Road. They reached Kadesh by the Mount Seir Road. Now they are to leave *by another route* for an area called "the wilderness."

After their crushing defeat that morning at Hormah, Moses reported: "And ye returned and wept before the Lord; but the Lord would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you. So you abode in Kadesh *many days*"—how long? "According unto the days [the forty days of anxious waiting for the



spies' return] that you abode there" (Deut. 1:45-46).

God would not let them remain in Kadesh any longer. He was determined that they were to leave *that day* for the wilderness, rather than enter Palestine. They did not deserve the promised land. They despised it. The *many* days of waiting, in which they dwelled in Kadesh, comprised over 40 long days. When the spies returned, they rebelled. Thus, instead of entering the land of Canaan, Moses wrote: "Then we turned, and took our journey *into the wilderness* by the way of the Red sea, as the Lord spake unto me" (Deut. 2:1).

The children of Israel now move southwest from Kadesh. They take the road that leads to the Red Sea in order to 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 *Badiyat 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 *mis-labeled* on most Bible maps today. Nearly 37½ years were spent wandering 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 stopovers 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 Shafah 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. Shapher take us east along 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?

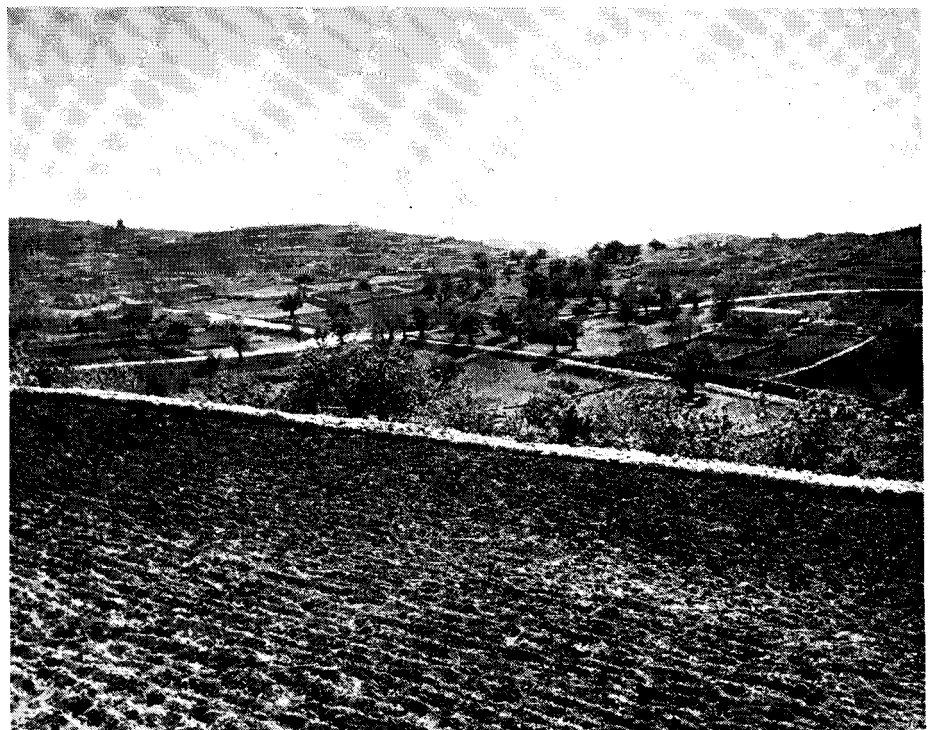
Jaakan is spelled Jakan in I Chronicles 1:42 and Akan in Genesis 36:27. Jaakan was a son of Ezer. Ezer was a son of *Seir the Horite* (Gen. 36:20-21). The word Horite means *cave-dweller* according to all authorities. That makes the children of Jaakan Horites or cave-dwellers. And what city in Mt. Seir 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 children of Jaakan had wells dug for water (Deut. 10:6). Dr. Meredith and I had an interesting experience in Petra with water and the Bedouins. In order for us to find water to drink, (Please continue on page 10)

The Valley of Eshcol today. From this once-fertile area the Israelite spies cut down "one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff" (Num. 13:23).

—Westminster Films



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 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!—usually spelled "SELAH" in the King James Version.

"SELA" Another Name for PETRA

The first time the word "sela" appears in the Bible is in this account at Kadesh. Sela means a "lofty, craggy rock; the rock-city of Idumaea" (*Strong's Concordance*). The "rock-city" is Petra. The Old Testament often calls Petra "Sela" or "Selah."

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."

Upon that very rock the Lord stood when Moses struck it in Horeb. That rock may very well be Jacob's pillow (Genesis 28:11, 18), still to be seen today in Westminster Abbey. That physical rock which accompanied or "went with" Israel represented Christ (Deut. 32:4; Psalm 18:31).

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. *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*. The place of the first strife is sometimes called Massah (Ex. 17:7) to distinguish it from Kadesh.

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 of the Prophet Aaron. It is the traditional site of the death of Aaron. Dr. Meredith and I were able to view it from atop the crags of Petra at *ed Deir*—a lofty, carved monastery.

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. This was as far south in the Mt. Seir range as Edom had yet settled.

Where Was the King's Highway?

When Moses and the Israelites were at Kadesh they sent messengers to the king of Edom asking permission to "go by the king's highway" (Num. 20:17). Edom refused passage.

"And the children of Israel said unto him, We will go by the highway: and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it." In response to this second request we read: "And he said"—this is Edom's reply—"Thou shalt not go through." They refused again. "And Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand. Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border: wherefore Israel turned away from him" (Num. 20:19-21).

Israel was not permitted to go through Edom by the King's Highway. Where was this highway?

Part of it may still be seen today. It lay *east* of the Dead Sea and *east* of Mt. Seir. It is nearly identical with today's main-traveled road from Amman to the Gulf of Aqaba. *All of us who have visited Petra have had to travel the same general route of this ancient highway!* It is the only highway in the region!

This route east of Palestine and Mt.

Seir has always been known in history as the King's Highway.

What was Israel going to do, now that Edom refused them passage by this route?

Journey NORTHWARD in the Arabah

Just before Israel moved from Ezion-gaber to Kadesh, the second time, God said to Moses: "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough; turn NORTHWARD. And command thou the people, saying: 'Ye are to pass through the border of your brethren the children of Esau, that dwell in Seir . . . contend not with them'" (Deut. 2:2-5).

After Kadesh was reached and the King's Highway closed to them, Moses summarizes the next few months by saying: "So we passed by from our brethren the children of Esau, that dwell in Seir, *through the way of the Arabah* [the King James Version has "plain"], from Elath and from Ezion-gaber" (Deut. 2:8).

Did you notice that?

In the last year of the wilderness wandering the children of Israel proceeded NORTHWARD to Kadesh through the Arabah, which lies west of Mt. Seir. They passed from Elath to Ezion-gaber to Kadesh through the Arabah. This time they entered Kadesh in Mt. Seir *from the southwest*, not from the east as they did almost 38 years earlier. "From the Araba travellers approach by a track which . . . enters the plain of Petra from the south" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, article "Petra"). Moses purposed to go east through Kadesh in order to reach the King's Highway. When refused, Israel had to turn back, pass by Mt. Hor, and *continue northward* through the Arabah to by-pass the territory of Edom.

Most Bible maps would have the children of Israel going southward around Mt. Seir and then taking the King's Highway in order to by-pass Edom! It shows how little most scholars read their Bibles. Israel had to go *west* of Edom through the Arabah in order to avoid cutting through the border of Edom.

Upon leaving Mt. Hor, Israel journeyed to Gudgodah and to Jorbath (Deut. 10:7). These two places on the road from Petra to the Arabah Road are probably spelling variants of the two locations—Hor-hagidgad and Jotbathah—which Israel stopped at about 38 years earlier when leaving Kadesh the first time (Num. 33:33).

This clearly proves that the Eternal was leading the children of Israel into the Arabah from Kadesh both times—the first time *southward* by the Red Sea Road into the wilderness; the second time by the same Red Sea Road *north-*

ward to compass the land of Edom (Num. 21:4). This road is called the "Arabah Road" in Deut. 2:8, because it ran the length of the Arabah, north and south of Petra.

When the Canaanites heard that Israel was proceeding *northward* (Deut. 2:3, 8), "by the way of the spies" (Num. 21:1)—that is, by the way which the spies used to enter Palestine when they searched the land 40 days—then the Canaanites fought Israel and were this time defeated (Num. 21:3).

These verses show that Israel proceeded *northward*, not southward, on the Arabah Way—the "Way of the Plain," sometimes called the "Way of the Red Sea." To go the way of the Red Sea does not mean one has to go to the Red Sea. It would, of course, be the route leading to the Red Sea, but one may be going *in the opposite direction on the road*—just as Israel did! This Arabah road stretched from the Gulf of Aqaba northward to near the Dead Sea.

En route north, they came to Punon (Num. 33:42). The settlement of Punon is *north* of Petra and in the Arabah. It is an area of extensive *copper* mines. (See Keller's *The Bible as History*, p. 143.) Its modern Arabic name is Phenan.

The stop at Punon immediately preceded the stop at Oboth (Num. 33:43). Now compare this with Numbers 21:9 and 10. Notice that at Punon—the stop just before Oboth—Moses made a "serpent of brass"—an alloy of *copper*. Certainly there is no mistaking where Punon is!

The very next encampment is on "the border of Moab" (Num. 33:44).

Not until they reached the northern border of Edom did Israel cut eastward *between Moab and Edom* along the brook Zered (Deut. 2:8, last part, and 13). This was 38 years *after they left Kadesh the first time* (Deut. 2:14).

They had to journey eastward because *Israel had rejected the direct route into Palestine* from the south nearly forty years earlier!

Petra Occupied by Israel

Next, let us skip over to the time Israel under Joshua took the promised land. Remember that Kadesh rightfully belonged to Israel (Deut. 1:19-20).

Observe what Joshua did: "And Joshua smote them from Kadesh-barnea even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon" (Joshua 10:41). Here the easternmost limit of southern Palestine is the city Kadesh-barnea. Compare this with Joshua 15:1-3:

"This then was the lot of the tribe of Judah . . . even to the border of Edom the wilderness of Zin southward. . . . And their south border was from the

shore of the salt sea . . . and passed along to Zin, and *ascended up* on the south side unto Kadesh-barnea."

And again: "So Joshua took all that land . . . *and the Arabah* ['the plain' in King James Version] . . . even unto the mount Halak, that goeth up to *Seir*" (Josh. 11:16-17). "Mount Halak" is not quite a clear translation of the original Hebrew. The word "Halak" means *smooth, bare*. Smith's Bible dictionary indicates it is "the *mountain range* on the east side of the 'Arabah, or one of the bare mountain summits in that range." *Hastings' Bible Dictionary* declares: "The Arabah Valley gradually rises toward the summit level, which it reaches immediately in front of Mount Hor on the borders of *Seir*; and to this line of elevation the term 'smooth' would not be inapplicable, while at the same time it would be on the line of communication between southern Palestine and *Petra*, the capital of *Seir*."

Observe that all these verses point out that Israel occupied the Arabah just west of Mt. Seir even to the barren mountain region of Petra. Yet we found (Joshua 10:41) the *easternmost* border city is Kadesh-barnea.

Surely Petra and Kadesh are the same from these verses!

Years later Judah had to recapture Petra after the Edomites rebelled (II Kings 8:20; 14:7). *Petra belonged to Israel*. The capital of Edom was not Petra, but Bozrah (Amos 1:12; Jer. 49:13, 22). Petra was the gate by which Israel controlled their Edomite enemies.

Consider another important fact. Josephus, Eusebius and Jerome wrote that the Aramaic, Assyrian and Arabic name for Petra was *Rekem* (*Antiquities*, bk. iv, ch. 7, sec. 1). *Rekem* comes from the Arabic word for "ROCK." "But in the Aramaic versions *Rekem* IS THE NAME OF KADESH," according to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*! This authority, under article "Petra," further states: "Sometimes the Aramaic versions give the form *Rekem-Geya* [for Kadesh], which recalls the name of the village El-ji, southeast of Petra."

Here are literally dozens of Scriptures—hidden from the world—which clearly speak of Petra and the route to Petra!

These Scriptures are profitable for our INSTRUCTION. Those events in Old Testament times are *examples for us today* (I Cor. 10:11). Under Moses, Kadesh—Petra—was the station from which the promised land could have been entered. Will it again be the last station today for those who are obedient, before entering the promised eternal Kingdom of God?

We do not absolutely know yet! That is *why* we must *watch* the shaping of future events.