

Perspective of the Exodus Author(s)

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Publicity surrounding the historic ecumenical visit to Mount Sinai of Pope John Paul II on February 26, 2000, seldom gave background on the biblical and historical basis of the site. Many of course, even and perhaps chiefly exegetes, dismiss it – sometimes along with the whole Exodus or Pentateuch, as »legendary traditions«; their arguments do not concern us here.

Our aim is rather to set forth what the Bible really »states« about the location of the »Sinai and/or Horeb« of Moses. There are four chief itineraries in Exodus-Deuteronomy and these are only in partial agreement.

Moreover many of the localities mentioned remain completely unknown. Some few of the others are »known« but in archeologically varying places. Of these, some point to a »northern route« toward a Sinai at Kadesh-barnea, and several competent experts admit this as a variant tradition preserved within the Pentateuch itself. But Bible-users far more widely maintain the »now »traditional« southern route toward Jabl Musa or beyond.

1. *Relation of »Perspective« to History and to Ideology*

A) An Ezra-era Pentateuch

1. A serious factor in this research is that even those who still hold the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, as already Jerome around 400 A. D, and Robert Bellarmine before 1600, admit that this Pentateuch received its final form from Ezra. This dating is moreover almost universally basic to the »JEPD« source-dissection which dominated Pentateuch-research for a century; and despite recent »corrections« still serves as a mode of reference.

More recently, it has become widely held that the »historical reality« retrievable from the Bible is proximately that of its final compilation, rather than that of the long-ago events described. But this consensus already implies that there had been a similar »historical reality« of the era of some intermediate or earliest »(re)compilers«. This intermediate background must be taken into account, even though it is less

easily retrievable, and not always helpful in distinguishing fact from mythical insertions.

In this existing situation, the exegete is more or less forced to focus the outlook or background of a compiler in the Persian or Ezra-era after 550 B.C. Thus the search for »historicity« has become proximately a search for the (final) compiler's perspective.

2. The author's *perspective* is not the same thing as the author's *intention*. Authorial intention for a century now has been singled out, usually with approval but sometimes with firm rejection, as a criterion of the real meaning of the text. The *intention* is what the author wishes or decides to convey by the text; the *perspective* is what the text actually conveys.

The Ezra-era compiler's »perspective« *includes* whatever it was his (or her, or their) intention to convey: insofar as can be presumed some conscious awareness of this intention, and adequate authorship-skills. But the »perspective« includes also much more: a conscious or subconscious attitude toward the political regime then holding power, and toward the divergent lay or religious convictions in the milieu or family upbringing.

These latter attitudes, especially the political, may well be called »ideological« if they serve as a real driving-force of the compiler; but they can hardly be totally absent even if subconscious or rather indifferent. It is this »perspective« discoverable in the compiler which we personally find to be prominent or even dominant in many of the detail-researches currently being published on the Exodus and other parts of the Hebrew Bible previously presumed to be simply history if presented as such.

3. If scholars were to admit our tentative audacious claim that »author's perspective« has replaced »focus on historicity«, this might be considered as only the fourth in a series of trends which have dominated the whole long history of exegesis.

A first generally admitted norm, through millennia and well into the Reformation, was »whatever in the Bible looks like history must be interpreted as reliable history«.

Secondly came the Wellhausen century since 1880, historico-critical »Source Criticism« JEPD: today generally flouted, but often adapted by critics even from an E or J which they reject.

What we would like to call »the third trend«, largely of the twentieth century, is the Tradition-History linked with Gunkel and concerned with the *oral* traditions discernible behind the allegedly earliest written texts. Only shortly later a parallel but differentiated technique was boosted as Redaction History. Also in the same exegetical background arose the school which even in English is often called *religions-geschichtlich*, relating the Bible parts to the religious writings of the whole rest of the world. Palestine archeology too in the twentieth century made a valuable contribution, sometimes oversimplified as »his-

torical parts of the Bible are to be accepted except where disproved by excavation«. Despite their quite different specific identities, we may be pardoned for tentatively combining all four of these achievements as a single (post-JEPD) »Third Trend« pointing toward a wholly new outlook on the relation between history and texts.

B) Some trends toward replacing historicity by perspective

1. Our current 4th overarching trend has been called »synchronic« or (doubtless reflecting B. S. Childs's canonical exegesis) »final form«.

For many of the examples and analyses, however, »socioeconomic« seems more adequately descriptive.

Again, it is sometimes called just »literary analysis«. It does rely heavily on parallelism, *inclusio*, chiasmus, and recurrent motifs. Though rhetorical focus is alien to the ideological and political, »Perspective« would seem to embody some aspects of »Rhetorical Exegesis«¹. But again, this term is ambiguously diffused in the Mediterranean world, so that not surprisingly it tends to be avoided in technical exegesis².

2. As an outstanding if not indeed normative example of current innovative exegesis we may take Blum's *Pentateuch*. He in fact explicitly or more often tacitly applies the German *Perspektive* to portions of his analysis³. As has been customary, he locates the Torah's »definite« (not

¹ T. B. Dozeman, Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism (OT), in *AncBD* 5, 1992, 712–715, on J. Muilenburg (*JBL* 88 [1969], 118; *FS* 174) and his »school«; I. M. Kikawada, Some Proposals for the Definition of Rhetorical Criticism, *Semiotics* 5, 1977, 67–91; A. Kennedy, NT Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism, 1984; on which W. Wuellner, Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?, *CBQ* 49 (1987), 447–463. – D. F. Watson (NT)/A. J. Hauser (OT), *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible: A Comprehensive Bibliography with Notes on History and Method: Biblical Interpretation* 4, 1994. (No article in *IDB* or its Supplement.)

² R. Meynet, *Rhetorical Analysis: An Introduction to (his structural/stylistic) Biblical Rhetoric* (adapted from the French 1989; Italian 1992/1996), *JSOT.S* 256, 1998, 37; 172: on p. 20 is noted that his own is more Semitic-oriented than Muilenburg-style »Greek Classical rhetoric« called in America »structural« by J. Culley and J. C. Exum. Meynet claims that his own is precisely the »2d type rhetorical analysis as the first of »New Methods of Literary Criticism« approved in *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, 1993. Meynet informatively details the origins of (his) rhetorical analysis in J. Jebb's 1820 application of J. Bengel's 1742 *Gnomon* to pioneer R. Lowth 1753 (65f.); and in T. Boys' *Psalms* 1824 (92f.)

³ E. Blum, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch*, *BZAW* 189, 1990; ch. 3, »Die Komposition der jüdischen Tora und die persische Politik«, 333–360 (detailed favorably-critical presentation in J. L. Ska, *Un nouveau Wellhausen?*, *Bib.* 72 (1991), 253–263; p. 256, helpful tabulation of sources). Blum's p. 188 twice and p. 224 use the term *Perspektive*, seemingly in our sense; but we must bear in mind (perhaps on p. 203) that the

exactly final or definitive) *Komposition* (K) in the postexilic return to Judah.

But he sees this »K« as a combining of a mostly D-document revised to reflect anticlerical lay-interests, and a P-document betraying the struggle not only in favor of the priesthood but also on the Levites' rightful relation to it. Here anyone can plainly see the Persian-era »perspective« discernible in the compilers.

From Blum we accept that the (K^D + K^P) base-document or tradition was essentially the Exodus, including the whole liberation from Egypt, through Numbers. But the relevant text was augmented, also in both cases, in such a way as would be likeliest to win the support – first of a majority of each, then of both, the two postexilic conflicting returnee-parties within Judah; and thus then of the Persian regime – as a »Constitution« by which the province would be governed (Ezr 7,25–26).

To K^D was prefixed the whole of [J–E] history from Abraham to Gen 50. But to K^P was prefixed the primeval Gen 1 + [J] 2–11, to indicate that God's word was intended not just for Israel but for the whole world. The compromise-document (apart from some still later additions) constitutes for Blum *our* Pentateuch.

The above appreciation owes much to the *religionsgeschichtliche* study of Albertz⁴. He verifiably follows Blum faithfully and is much easier to study – because naturally Blum had to justify all his probative parallelisms, recurrent motifs and similar literary insights by immense footnotes. These document not only the Scripture passages involved, but also many relevant researches going back far beyond Wellhausen, and thus constituting in their way a »history of Exodus scholarship« though of a kind far different from Werner Schmidt's valuable updated volume. Though Albertz like Blum never uses J or E (or really D or P either) as symbol of any literary reality, the outcome of »J or E?« debates is often cited for some point being made.

3. A 1996 Australian doctorate affirms that the Blum (-Rendtorff) method is less sensitive than Martin Noth to pre-text orality, in postu-

same German term may instead mean »prospect« (unlike Italian, where *prospettiva* must serve for both). – In (Blum's own essay) Israël à la montagne de Dieu: Remarques sur Ex 19–29; 32–34 et sur le contexte littéraire et historique de sa composition, tr. P. Nicolet, in: Le Pentateuque en question [cycle 1986–7], ed. A. de Pury, (1989) ²1991, 171–295, on p. 292 Blum is made to say that K^D (also) is »a great *composition sacerdotale*« (for ? *pré-sacerdotale*, since p. 294 refers to K^P as »la« *composition sacerdotale*); on p. 292 Blum notes, to counter the impression a reader of his BZAW 189 may well have gained, that his K^D is *not* a post-DP equivalent of J (+ E).

⁴ R. Albertz, A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period 2. From the Exile to the Maccabees, 1992, tr. J. Bowden, 1994; ch. 5.3, »The struggle over the identity of the community« (pre-priestly/priestly K), 464–493.

lating six separate text-redactional strata (Gen 25,19–33,17) where Noth gets along convincingly with the three J-E-P (simplified from preceding exegetes' excrescences). Admitting merit in both, Wynn-Williams concludes that Rendtorff's type of Tradition-History (with outset in the »smallest recognizable individual and independent units« instead of »the text as a whole«) has not succeeded in displacing J-E-P-D as a still-useful research tool⁵.

Van Seters continues to focus »J« (in relation to P and D and even E), as »an antiquarian historian«, defined as »a preserver of traditions, an editor or redactor who makes sense out of the material he has, and an author who constructs a discursive narrative, often with a great deal of inventiveness ... [and possibly] intended by the author to bear a level of meaning in addition to the reporting of past events [and/or reflecting] the author's own time ... ideological and theological concerns«⁶. Thus in several ways we have here to do with literary »perspective« rather than source-criticism. »The exegete's responsibility is to explain and clarify the picture the author of Exodus aims to give«⁷

4. A »new departure« by Whitelam in 1996 is unusual as focusing the current changing attitudes to the »history of biblical Israel« in close political relation to the rise of Zionist Israel, to the neglect of the long »Palestinian« history⁸. But even the recent history-critics fundamentally favorable to his radical approach point out that »Palestinians« as a con-

⁵ R. Rendtorff, *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch* (BZAW 147, 1977), tr. J. J. Scullion: JSOTS 89, 1990, 23; – D. J. Wynn-Williams, *The State of the Pentateuch: A comparison of the approaches of M. Noth and E. Blum [Gen 25–33]*, BZAW 249, 1997, 242–247.

⁶ J. Van Seters, *The Life of Moses: The Yahwist as Historian in Exodus-Numbers*, 1994, 13. Thus his work cannot be hoped to verify any »historicity« of the Exodus-events; »this is not a historical investigation but a literary study«, p. 3; on the »inventiveness« is cited L. Pearson, *The Greek Historians of the West: Timaeus and his Predecessors: American Philological Association Monograph 35*, 1942.

⁷ C. Houtman, *Exodus I* (1986), Engl. 1993, 190. A similar demand for clarifying the compiler's perspective is given by E. Anati, *Esodo tra mito e storia. Archeologia, esegesi e geografia storica: Studi Camuni 18*, 1997, 9: »How can myth be distinguished from history? First of all it is basic to understand the view (*visione*) of the compilers and of their own times«; 253; »The scraps of collective memory are not all history but are not all myth either«.

⁸ K. W. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History*, 1996; *Between History and Literature: The Social Production of Israel's Traditions of Origin*, JSOT (1991, 2), 60–74. In L. L. Grabbe, *Can a History of Israel be Written?*, JSOTS 245, 1997, twenty »invited specialists« at Dublin 1996 mostly support Whitelam and reject Iain W. Provan, *JBL 114* (1995), 585–606, (683–705, one rejoinder by P. Davies; another by T. L. Thompson, on whom now see his *The Bible in History: How Writers Create the Past*, 1999).

tinuing unit is hardly verifiable through the centuries; and some understandably doubt the adequacy of any Iron Age history based solely on archeology with no use of the biblical text.

Some earlier insights of Whitelam are noted and followed by Brettler, in a volume admitting that »the New History« must force self-criticism of most biblical historians. He shows a reluctant readiness to qualify the »historical truth« of many biblical passages or details. But he strives for a relatively moderate application of more cautious *definitions*, and concludes pleading for a more open-ended research which will often honestly admit that *at present* we cannot have *certitude* that some specific passage gives, or was intended to give, historical reality⁹.

Between fundamentalism and nihilism there is room for Miller-Hayes as a really needed »normal-science type« biblical history, filling in the gaps with plausibilities frankly-admitted as »guesses«, says Reid¹⁰: aiming at justice both to the moderates and to extremists whose motto is »guessing is *no* history«.

5. Croatto, noting that the whole Pentateuch except some 20 chapters takes place *outside of Canaan*, concludes that its »perspective« or implied-readership is not the tiny nucleus of returnees in the Persian province of Judah, but a *diaspora* of Jews at that time spread about the whole known world. To them is held out the still open promise of »the Land« (to which a claim had been laid by burial-properties bought and altars built, though in Egypt the Joseph-clan never built an altar!). Not only was Moses never allowed to enter »the Land«. Moreover (*pace* Gosse, and wondering »what motive in the Persian era could account for this exclusion«) after Num 22,1 the fugitives never took a single step *towards* the still-promised Land (Joshua as part of a »Hexateuch« being just a scholarly myth)¹¹.

In the same volume de Pury maintains that the postexilic P view of Israel's origins in the desert (Moses only as anonymous »mediator«)

⁹ M. Z. Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel*, 1995, 144.

¹⁰ J. M. Miller/J. H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, 1986, not to be confused with Hayes–Miller, *Israelite and Judaeon History*, 1977; see S. B. Reid, Miller–Hayes as »Normal Science«, *JSOT* 39 (1987), 41, amid six moderate but »this is the last; now for the paradigm-change« critiques p. 3–63 from 1986 SBL meeting.

¹¹ J. S. Croatto, *Éxodo 1–15: algunas claves literarias y teológicas para entender el Pentateuco*, *EstB* 52 (1994), 167–194, here: 192f.177. There on p. 289–301, Bernard Gosse, *Le don de la terre dans le livre de la Genèse en rapport aux rédactions deutéronomiste et sacerdotale du Pentateuque: in a D-redaction (Gen 15,18), actual taking possession of the Land was »reserved for the desert generation«; but a further P-redaction extends the actual possession as far back as the Patriarchs (Gen 17,7.19; Ex 6,4). See further Gosse, *Moïse entre l'alliance des Patriarches et celle du Sinaï*, *SJOT* 11 (1997), 3–15.*

is indeed supported by Hos 12,14 and allusions in 9–13; but most of Hos 12 is based on an incompatible Saga of (origins in Canaan of) Jacob, already in written form before 600, at a time when the use of writing is first archeologically attested¹².

6. We could hardly hope for a more global view of current and »literary« Exodus exegesis than in the thirty detail-studies presented by leading scholars at Louvain in 1995. To these the editor Vervenne premises not only a meaty summary of each single one of the thirty, but also an even more informative survey of *all* that has been achieved by Exodus-research anywhere in the past decades¹³. In both these Vervenne-overviews is prominent the genuine historical situation at the (in most cases) postexilic period in which the existing formulation was composed: the »author(s)» perspective«, precisely.

Perhaps in Vervenne's book there does not occur a single time the word »historicity« or the question »whether (or when or where) the Exodus or some one of its particular events really happened«. Nevertheless the very fact that such an imposing international conference was devoted explicitly to the Exodus-event(s) shows respect for a doubtless vague and confused »collective remembrance« of a historic foundational event¹⁴.

¹² A. de Pury, *Las dos leyendas sobre el origen de Israel (Jacob y Moisés) y la elaboración del Pentateuco*, EstB 52 (1994), 93–131, here: 115.97.111 (p. 130 cautiously on Hosea's »El(ohim)« for Jacob-heritage; YHWH's name not revealed before desert-experience); p. 123 admits it is not yet clear to what extent »the figure of Israel in the desert has been conceived as an antimodel of tribal-patriarchal Israel« (p. [133–]165 contains a discreet allusion to the importance of women, only in the pre-dynamic activity of La vocación de Moisés: perspectivas metodológicas by Mercedes Navarro Puerto).

¹³ M. Vervenne (ed.), *Studies in the Book of Exodus. Redaction – Reception – Interpretation* (44th Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense, 22–24 August 1995), 1996, 3–18 introduction; 21–59, *Current Tendencies and Developments in the Study of the Book of Exodus*. His p. 27 acknowledges H. Utzschneider, *Die Renaissance der alttestamentlichen Literaturwissenschaft und das Buch Exodus: Überlegungen zu Hermeneutik und Geschichte der Forschung*, ZAW 106 (1994), 197–223, where p. 201 says »The text is such because it came into being under specific circumstances and in a specific way« (using »Referenzmodell« not for historicity – though vaguely p. 222 – but for dominant influences like existentialism for Bultmann and freedom-slavery for Gurd) and p. 198 »neoliterarisch« smacks of Wellhausen–Smend–Eißfeldt, understandably, since the main currents of exegesis still today presume some adaptation of JEPD! Utzschneider's conclusions of p. 223 stress that still too little attention is paid either to reader-reaction or to the pluralisms of hermeneutic presuppositions.

¹⁴ »Exodus is *in* history but not *as* history« is the formulation of J. I. Durham's commentary (WBC 3, 1987), xv; he adds that historicity is not of primary interest; indeed, the determination of a historical context for any single event is impossible and unimportant. Yet Exodus is really the first book of the Bible, even more than Genesis the foundation event of our faith (p. xix).

It is widely admitted that only a *part* of the Israel tribes had come up from Egypt, and the Asherite, Canaanite, and other tribes joining it took over its history and traditions as their own, in view of civil and religious unity. We might venture to suggest a recent parallel in the fact that US-immigrant families often exhibit a feeling that American history is *their* history; and that their own liberation is due to a rebellion against England that marked the beginning of this history.

II. *The Escape from Egypt*

A) Point of departure as (Raamses-) Succoth

1. Some, as Blum, regard the Egypt sojourn as an inseparable part of the highly-unified Exodus (+ Numbers) narrative. But others have published separate researches on Ex 1–15. Our own effort here will be to clarify what the biblical text really describes, prescinding from whether or to what extent that was a genuine historical fact. We will assume that the actual movement of the Israelite horde »fleeing« northward (or »expelled« southward, as others hold¹⁵) is a suitable starting-point, and we will follow the sequence of the existing narrative.

»The Israelite populace moved from Raamses to Succoth« (Ex 12,37). Not relevant to our inquiry are the untenable two-some million people of that verse or the 430 years sojourn of verse 40. Succoth (*Tjeku, Retaba*) has been considered a twin-site of Pithom (*Per-Tom, Maskhuta*) in the wadi Tumilat, near the inscription find-sites of both¹⁶. Both sites were suitably near to Tanis (120 km). Recent excavations seem to show no sufficiently early occupation (before 600 B.C.?), or at any rate do not warrant firm conclusions of any kind based on these names.

Raamses, with Pithom in Ex 1,11 built by Israelite slave-labor, was presumably the site of all Moses' discussions with the unnamed Pharaoh (Ex 5–11, including the Plagues). It seems to have been localized by Ps 78,12.43 within the area of Tanis (Hebrew *Ṣóʿan*; Arabic *Ṣan al-Hagar*, earlier the Hyksos capital Avaris). Recent experts locating it at Qanṭir

¹⁵ J. Hahn, Exodus, Book of, in: J. H. Hayes (ed.), Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation 1, 1999, 364 (–372) attributes to Tacitus (? Manetho) »flight of some oppressive lepers from Egypt's borders«.

¹⁶ H. Goedicke, Wadi Tumilat, LÄ 6, 1986, 1124–1126; D. B. Redford there 4, 1982, 1056, says Pithom/Maskhuta was not founded before 600; but »the presence of large numbers of Ramesside monuments at the site continues to deceive visitors into presuming a connection with Ramesses II« (so J. S. Holladay, 1979 excavation-report); Carol Ann Redmount, On an Egyptian/Asiatic Frontier: An Archaeological History of the Wadi Tumilat (Chicago Univ. diss. dir. L. Stager 1989); J. Leclant/G. Clerc, Or. 58 (1989), 152 and other annual surveys; T. V. Ferris, Raamses, Succoth and Pithom, in: Date of the Exodus, Memphis (Tennessee) symposium 1990.

some 30 km farther south, in order to reject Alt's proposal combining the two sites into one »palace complex«, are forced to claim that every single one of the immense number of monumental stones (*hagar*) bearing the inscription of Ramesses II and now imposingly standing at Tanis was dragged there from Qantîr¹⁷.

2. It would seem impossible even to begin to describe the journey of the Israelites from Succoth, or from the »sea-barrier« which formed their first challenge, without first determining in which *direction* they were heading – south or north: but in relation to Meribah below (Coats n. 39 and my nearby comments), I will set forth my view that the biblical route, as far as Sinai (?Kadesh) included, serves for both.

Until recently, »south« has been taken completely for granted. Ex 13,17 explicitly prohibits the Philistine route (hardly anachronistic now in view of the likeliest Pentateuch-editing dates), though it was nearer (and led directly to the »Land [? of Promise]«). The »Reed Sea«, *yam sûp*, is uniformly rendered in the Greek as »Red Sea«, of which there was an accessible inlet at Clysma south of today's Suez. *Jabl Musa* is a venerable site, but claimed for Moses only around 1000 A.D., well after it was founded in honor of St. Catherine. The imposing cliff with broad plain at its foot generally shown in biblical atlases is really Ras Safsafa at the west end of the *Jabl Musa* chain. A few miles west near Feiran is Mt. Serbal, preferred as Sinai by Ebers following Jerome.

3. The »northern route« was proposed via the shallow near-Mediterranean Lake Sirbonis (*Manzaleh*) and a small hill near Farâma to which Phoenician sailors had jeeringly applied the name of their towering peak north of Ugarit, »Lord of the North« (*Ba'al Zephon* Ex 14,2).

¹⁷ R. North, State of the Published Proof that Qantîr is Raamses, in: FS B. Hennessy, Trade, Contact, and the Movement of Peoples in the Eastern Mediterranean (ed. S. Bourke/J.-P. Descœudres, Mediterranean Archaeology suppl. 1, 1995, 208–237; map, – M. Bietak, Avaris and Piramesse (1989 = PBA 65 (1979), 225–290); (Qantîr:) Tell ed-Dab'a, LÄ 6, 1985, 321–323 (194–209, »Tanis« by Malte Römer); Bietak, Tell el-Dab'a II, 1975, dealing mostly with hydrography of the area; the excavation itself was to have been published as vol. I by the late Labib Habachi. – Albertz (n. 4) 1, 44, still holds that in the Exodus tradition, »one report is credible, namely that the Egyptians set the (war-prisoner [Helck] or *apiru* slave) group to build the ›store cities Pithom and Raamses« (Ex 1,11) which probably went with the new residence in the eastern Delta constructed by the Ramessids in the middle of the thirteenth century.« But P. Brisaud, »Tanis capitale ›de l'Égypte ancienne‹ (3; ›du Delta‹, 22), Archéologia 243, 1989, 22–38; ill., says on p. 25, »A definitive fate has been meted out [*sort a été fait*] by modern historiography to the notion of a monumental Ramesside Tanis. Nevertheless one may still inquire what may have been there [before the 21st Dynasty; indeed] there are numerous rather poor burials dated toward the end of the Ramesside period«. – A. Alt, Die Deltaresidenz der Ramessiden, in: FS F. Zucker, 1954, 3–13 = KS 3, 1959, 176–185; as H. Kees, Das alte Ägypten, 1955, ³1977 (Engl. Ancient Egypt, 1961, 196–201).

In this proposal, »Sinai« would be at Kadesh-barnea¹⁸. This view convinced top-experts Noth, Cazelles, Albright to the extent of admitting that our Exodus-text does indeed record exactly such a northern route – *but also* (within the Pentateuch but with inadequate editing) a southern route toward a »Sinai« which some even claim to be described as a *volcano*, therefore across Aqaba gulf in Ptolemaeus' »Modiane«¹⁹.

Perhaps also the people or Moses himself did not *know* in what direction they were heading; in view of widespread denial of any Sinai covenant as *continuation* of the Genesis patriarchal covenant, the Land of escape from Egypt promised to the fleeing Israelites would have been a *foreign* land, not one formerly inhabited by Hebrew ancestors²⁰. And in fact in reading the Exodus itinerary narrative we may get the impression that the Israelite horde is zigzagging north and south, left and right, often retracing their steps, not knowing *where* they are going, but confiding in YHWH and (sometimes) Moses.

B) The Sea-Crossing

1. An astonishing facet of modern research into the narrative describing an actual escape from Egyptian territory via the sea-frontier is a claim that the J account (»pre-E«) says nothing whatever about any Israelites *crossing*; the sea is dried up and the land left dry only as part of YHWH's maneuver to drown the pursuers (Ex 14,23–27); and thus is shown that the Israelites themselves were non-violent and peaceful²¹.

¹⁸ O. Eißfeldt, Baal Zaphon, Zeus Casios und der Durchzug der Israeliten durchs Meer, 1932: with Sinai at Kadeshbarnea (or the low hill Farâma as Baal-Zephon, Ex 14,2.9, and the Sirbonis marsh as the Reed Sea): S. Mowinckel, NTT 9 (1942), 1–32; M. Görg, NBL 1, 1989, 225f.

¹⁹ M. Noth, Der Schauplatz des Meereswunders, in: FS O. Eißfeldt, 1947, 181–190; Der Wallfahrtsweg zum Sinai, 4. Mose 33, PJ 36 (1940), 5–24; H. Cazelles, Les localisations de l'Exode et la critique littéraire, RB 62 (1955), 321–364 (= Autour de l'Exode, 1987, 189–229, with added notes 230f., but without his Données géographiques sur l'Exode, RHPR 35 (1955), 51–60); W. F. Albright, Baal-Zephon, FS A. Bertholet, 1950, 1–14; my Exodus Color-Slides⁴, 1971, 20 (Diapositive bibliche, tr. G. Torta 1989 without bibliographies).

²⁰ R. Rendtorff, Problem (n. 5), 85; and his Some Reflections on the Canonical Moses: Moses and Abraham, in: FS G. Coats, A Biblical Itinerary (ed. E. Carpenter), JSOTS 240, 1997, 11–19, here: 18, the Sinai of Ex 19 fulfils »you shall worship God upon this (Midian!) mountain« Ex 3,12; but (p. 14) Ex 2,24 fulfils the promise to Abraham Gen 17,8. Note in this Festschrift also Carpenter on Ex 18, p. 91–108; and J. Blenkinsopp (p. 109–125 on Ex 19,34 as »massive« postexilic insertion p. 110).

²¹ J. Wagenaar, Crossing the Sea of Reeds (Exod 13–14) and the Jordan (Josh 3–4): A Priestly Framework for the Wilderness Wandering, in: Vervenne (n. 13), BETHL 126, 1995/6, 461–470, here: 464; Joshua 3–4(–5!) inverse parallels, p. 461. – B. Couroyer,

The E-account says that the sea-waters were split and formed a wall, so that the Israelites could and did cross on dry land (Ex 14,16.22.29).

Wagenaar also shares a strong tendency in recent research to see the description of the Sea-crossing proximately in terms of the Jordan crossing of Jos 3–5, in which he detects six units in exactly *inverse* parallel to Exodus (3–13 and) 14,21–28. He agrees with Van Seters that the J Ex 14,30 is modeled on the Jos 4,14 Jordan crossing, which in turn was modeled on Assyrian campaign reports. The Joshua-Jordan parallels have also been »understood against the mythological background which Israel inherited from the Canaanite peoples«²².

2. Ska's 1984 dissertation on the style and symbolism of Ex 14 prefers the structure in Auffret to that in Schmitt, who sees in a post-exilic post-P editor a »prophetic current« comprising most of the verses usually attributed to J²³. And Ska cites from Eliade: The function of biblical revelation is »to transfigure history into theophany ... Sacred history takes over and perfects trans-temporal images. ... Is not the supra-temporal permanent value of the Exodus its establishing (*réalise*) something which contributes to the salvation of the universe, because it fulfils (*réalise*) a hope hidden in every human heart, that of escaping death [and thus] expresses the hidden dimension of an event by universal cosmic symbols?« Earth, air (*vent*), fire, water are mentioned at the top of Ska's same page 112 as prominent in Ex 14,15–25. These recall his mention on p. 9 that his goal is a stylistic analysis akin to Anglo-Saxon rhetorical criticism, but also a scrutiny of the symbols and theological language.

L'Exode et la bataille de Qadesh, RB 97 (1990), 321–358, held that the sea-crossing is justly queried in view of the bas-reliefs of Qadesh. Wagenaar's p. 469, apart from again insisting that Exodus-J has no Israelites' crossing, cites with agreement Van Seters, Life of Moses (n. 6, his p. 131), and Joshua's Campaign of Canaan and Near Eastern Historiography [as JSOT 1990, 2, 1–12]. On YHWH doing the warmaking: T. B. Dozeman, God at War: Power in the Exodus Tradition, 1996, 172, »the cultic mythology that supported the various monarchies in ancient Israel«; p. 177: the P tradition was more historical, but its supplements stressed creation instead of conquest. – Susan Niditch, War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence, 1993, 150: in the foundation-myth of Exodus, humans do not fight their enemies.

²² S. E. Loewenstamm, The Evolution of the Exodus Tradition (1968), tr. B. J. Schwartz, 1992, 245.

²³ J. L. Ska, Le passage de la mer. Étude de la construction, du style et de la symbolique d'Ex 14,1–31: AnBib 109 (1986), 38–41, on P. Auffret, Essai sur la structure littéraire d'Ex 14, EstB 41 (1983), 53–82; H.-C. Schmitt, »Priesterliches« und »prophetisches« Geschichtsverständnis in der Meerwundererzählung Ex 13,17–14,31, in: FS E. Würthwein, Textgemäß. Aufsätze und Beiträge zur Hermeneutik des Alten Testaments, 1979, 138–155, here: 150. – Ska's citation on p. 112 is from Mircea Eliade, Images et symboles, 1952, 217.222f.

Citing Ska, Blenkinsopp declares that Ex can be read as a coherent narrative. But he adds that a Redactor has clearly combined P's »wall of water on both sides« with »non-P material« stressing a strong wind pushing aside the water so that the Egyptians perish in the mud; »the Israelites do not have to cross ... it is not even clear that they witnessed the event«²⁴.

3. Further insights on the crossing relate mostly to the »Song of the Sea« ensuing proximately in ch. 15. Mythic elements there are »demythologized« and Jordan parallels soft-pedaled by Martin Brenner, for whom Ex 15 »speaks about the basic events of Exodus and conquest [!] but in such a way that it portrays and explains the [post-Neh 4] situation«; indeed the »building« called *mākôn lešibt'kā* and/or *miqdaš* in Ex 15,17 may mean or imply the Walls of Jerusalem: »the picture portrayed is that the people enter the Holy Land and also enter the sanctuary that God has built ... From the vantage point of the memoirs of Ezra (4,5–23; 1–5) the two rebuildings [Temple/Walls] were really one event ... and the whole Ex 15 Song of the Sea is not a redaction but a composition of the [Asaphite] Levitical singers« *after* overcoming Samaritan-Canaanite opposition recorded in Neh 4f.²⁵

The role of Miriam as the real singer of all Ex 15 is proposed by Janzen in making a literary »analepsis« or postponement to verses 20f. of what really happened in verse 1.²⁶

²⁴ J. Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch. An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible*, AncBRef, 1992, 158; now *El Pentateuco*, tr. José Luis Sicre, 1999, 206f.

²⁵ M. L. Brenner, *The Song of the Sea: Ex 15:1–21*, BZAW 195, 1995, 185.175–188; on *Enuma elish* and Ugaritic KTU, p. 98. With him suggests Fokkelien Van Dijk-Hemmes, *Some Recent Views on the Presentation of the Song of Miriam* (the only phase of *the* Exodus treated), 166–254, in: *A Feminist Companion to the Bible 6. Exodus to Deuteronomy* (ed. Athalya Brenner), 1994, 204: »not a relic from the distant past but ... a recollection put into words centuries later«.

²⁶ J. G. Janzen, *Song of Moses, Song of Miriam: Who is Seconding Whom?*, CBQ 54 (1992), 211–220, citing F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman, *The Song of Moses*, JNES 14 (1955), 237; – Further Rita J. Burns, *Has the Lord Indeed Spoken Only Through Moses? A Study of the Biblical Portrait of Miriam*, SBL.DS 84, 1987; Phyllis Trible, *Bringing Miriam Out of the Shadows*, BiRe 5/1 (1989), 14–25.34, here: 18. – J. N. Sarna, *Exodus, Torah Commentary*, 1991, 78, holds that Ex 15 may be the oldest poetry in the whole Bible, an *extra chorum* view today; but his up-to-date p. 69 favors the Northern Route via the (later called) »Sea of the Philistines; and his p. 105 cites from Nachmanides a tripartite division and other interesting parallels between Mount Sinai itself in Ex 19,12–25 and the Tabernacle in Ex 27.

III. Midian

A) Need of Nomad Guidance

1. The Israelites' complaining unfamiliarity with desert-wandering (Ex 15,22) and their need of local inhabitants' help for such bare necessities as location of water-spots has been noted as an indication that they were not (if indeed they ever had been) a nomadic people²⁷. The Marah (›bitter [water]‹) episode of Ex 15,23 in the terminology of the FOTL series is classified as »not an etiological narrative, just an etiology«²⁸.

All the events between the sea-crossing and Sinai, Ex 15,22–19,2, never happened, at least not in this time-span, but were P's insertion into pre-P materials of narratives created by P out of cited brief hints in Deuteronomy from various later dates. This »perspective« Johnstone foresees and desires as »radical«; it anticipates and with reserves accepts Blum's K^P as re-working of K^D ²⁹.

2. The insertion in this space that »YHWH is their Healer« (Ex 15,26) has been found in a long minute investigation by Lohfink to mean that he is not a physician for sick individuals but a bringer of well-

²⁷ Perhaps relevant here is D. E. Gowan, *Theology in Exodus: Biblical Theology in the Form of a Commentary*, 1994, 170, Ex 15,22–18,27 should be entitled not »murmuring in the wilderness« but »care in the wilderness«; p. 174, »we do not yet have anything like an adequate theology of the covenant«, citing D. J. McCarthy, 1972, Knox, p. 88, »nor has there been much further effort in these twenty years«. But R. J. Sklba, *The Redeemer of Israel*, CBQ 34 (1972), suggests that the Covenant is entirely based on parent-child analogy (p. 175).

²⁸ G. W. Coats, *Exodus 1–18*, FOTL 2A, 1999, 124. On p. 153 is noted FOTL's abandonment of the use of »tale« (as more intended to entertain) instead of »story«. – »Water pollution« is treated by Alice L. Laffey, *The Pentateuch: A Liberation-Critical Reading*, 1998, 81–131, in her chapters on »Sin« (patriarchy; hierarchy) p. 126f. on Ex 7,14–19 (and subsequent Plagues similarly, her only Exodus-materials).

²⁹ W. Johnstone, *From the Sea to the Mountain. Exodus 15.22–19.2: A Case Study in Editorial Techniques*, in: Vervenne, *Studies in the Book of Exodus*, BEThL 126, 1996, (n. 13), 145–263, see his *Chronicles and Exodus: An Analogy and its Application: ISOTS 275*, 1998, 242–261, here: 243.260. The relevance of *Chronicles* in the title of this volume of adapted reprints lies in applying to Exodus-sections the Chronicler's aim (p. 164 > ZAW 99 [1987], 16–37) not of recording any historical facts at any stages of their formulation, but of »casting into quasi-historical narrative of shared commonplace [religious] institutions [D: covenant; P: holiness; even ›the figure of Moses as a necessarily literary creation (though not necessarily purely fictional)‹ p. 162]. ... If institutional [i. e. instituted, customary] practices do lie at the base of the material, it may be a fundamental error [of which my n. 14 above and following text is guilty] to assume that their tradition will include an external scaffolding of historical events; institutions are the bearers of their own inner history«.

being to Israel as a whole; and moreover is an interpolation from a time well after the completion of the Pentateuch-redaction³⁰.

3. An optimistic but not quite successful metaphor sees the wilderness as »Israel's adolescence ... as children of God. Coping with ›teenagers‹ is no easy task«; and the complaining cannot with Childs be divided into Pattern I, »justified« (Ex 15,22–25; 17,1–7), and II »unjustified« (Num 11,1–3; 21,4–9)³¹.

B) Where the »March« Actually Started

1. »The actual inauguration of the march«, presumably after the (Sinai) organizing of the tabernacle, is the subtitle given to Num 10,11–36 (sans itinerary), »usually thought to be a much older narrative tradition than the material in the preceding chapters«, because of Moses seeking as guide his Midianite father-in-law (*hobāb* Reuel, Num 10,29 as Jud 4,11 for Jethro?)³².

In any case it seems agreed that a wandering of sedentaries through the desert east of Egypt would have been impossible without the helpful contact of some nomad group familiar with water-spots and other desert conditions. Varying mention of Midianites from Ex 2,15 to Num 10,29 makes likely Hebrew dependence upon some local branch of that far-flung tribe.

C) Moses and the Midianites – or Qenites?

1. »Moses' own ›Midianite connection‹ generally receives an ethno-historical and *religionsgeschichtlich* evaluation, as confirming the (also in other passages) persuasive origin of the ›pre-biblical‹ God YHWH in SE-Palestine-NW Arabia«. This seems to mean we have here a genuinely ›historical‹ fragment (Zenger's perspective on accessibility

³⁰ N. Lohfink, »Ich bin Jahwe, dein Arzt« (Ex 15,26), in: Ich will euer Gott werden. Beispiele biblischen Redens von Gott, SBS 100, 1981, 11–73.

³¹ T. E. Fretheim, Exodus: Interpretation Commentary, 1991, 172; B. S. Childs, The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary, OTL, 1974, 258.

³² D. T. Olson, Numbers: Interpretation Commentary, 1996, 55. With fleeting mention of Taberah Num 11,4 and Kibroth-Hattavah and Hazeroth 11,35, the marchers go to Paran (12,16 = Kadesh 13,26; there the people remain, coming from Zin 20,1). Their next recorded stop is Mt. Hor, Num 20,29; then via Hormah 21,3 to ʿAqaba/Eilat (Sea of Reeds 21,4); only in 21,10–20 occurs a real itinerary of nine East-Jordan toponyms ending at Nebo (this earlier Numbers itinerary is somewhat summarized in Dtn 1f., but focusing Mt. Seir near Hormah, *between* Horeb and Kadesh-Barnea). But suddenly in Num 33,5 begins the itinerary from Raamses-Succoth, with 30 toponyms (including Hazeroth) akin to those of Exodus, as far as Eilat, and only after that to Kadesh, then Mt. Hor (33,38).

to us of ›facts of history‹, not of their presumed date of occurrence but only of their composition, *Entstehung*) from before the (JEPD!) Num 23,6–18.31 and its origins not earlier than 800 when the portrayal of Midianites had begun to be sharply negative³³.

Cazelles offers a vastly more detailed and JEPD-dependent survey, in which the features and evaluation of (Qenite) Midian have to be delved out of numerous far-flung hiding places³⁴. In E (p. 365f., but called »the [post-J] prophetic Moses«) the Decalogue-mount is near Midian and is called Horeb; Moses encounters Jethro there (Ex 18,20); the Hur who with Levite Aaron upheld Moses' arms in Ex 17,12 and »judged« at the mount-base was a Midianite (Cazelles cites only Num 31,8, but that Hur was one of several [later hatred-era] Midianite kings killed by an attack under Moses); after their penitence in Ex 33,2 the itinerary is accompanied not by YHWH but by his »Angel« as already at the sea-crossing in Ex 14,19 and promised in Ex 23,20.23³⁵. In »pre-

³³ E. Zenger, *Mose I. Altes Testament*, LThK³ 1998, 486–488, here: 486. The opening words of his article, on the obstacles to scholarly detection of the real Moses figure, are: »Firstly, the generally valid acknowledgment that biblical texts have *no historiographic interest* [italics his] in the modern sense and normally can serve as historical backing only for the period and outlooks of their *Entstehung*«. This really means their »formulation«; he does not say »definitive or final« or »as we have it«, and would doubtless leave open some limited confidence in a prior [JEPD] »version of the facts«, though he adds »such was usually as separate individual short-stories; from their subsequent oral accretions and their gathering together the original form can no longer be reconstructed«. Tests prove that the reliability of oral reformulation lasts at most 150 years, says Patricia J. Kirkpatrick, *The Old Testament and Folklore Study*: JSOTS 62, 1988, 103.109.114: accepting perhaps overhastily the limited data of R. M. Dorson, *Oral Tradition and Written History. The Case for the United States*, JFLI 1 (1964), 220–230, here: 230.

³⁴ H. Cazelles, *La figure théologique de Moïse dans les traditions bibliques* (French of his German »Mošeh«, ThWAT 5, 1984, 17–48) in his *Autour de l'Exode*, SBi, 1987, 354–370. Among the twenty important reprints in this volume, note here especially *Alliance du Sinaï, alliance de l'Horeb et renouvellement de l'alliance*, 299–309. As for the »Itinerary« itself, his RB 62 (n. 20) is an indispensable thesaurus of everything that has ever been written on the subject, chiefly since the unduly overlooked 50 pages of C. Küthmann's 1911 *Die Ostgrenze Ägyptens*, leading through a series of dichotomies to Cazelles' conclusion that our Bible has preserved the records of *two* incompatible routes: in the narrative southward, but in the toponyms (somewhat generously accepted from archeology) northward. There is question also of a flight/expulsion dichotomy; and see de Vaux, *Sur l'origine kénite ou madianite du Yahvisme*, ErIs 9 (1969), *28–*32.

³⁵ The Hebrew term *mal'āk*, usually rendered as in LXX *ángelos*, »messenger«, from an examination of all its occurrences, turns out to mean *either* (God's own) »Presence« or (his) »representative«: R. North, *Separated Spiritual Substances in the Old Testament*, in: FS L. Hartman, CBQ 29 (1967), 419–449. – On metallurgy, Israeliteness, and Cainsonship: I. Kalimi, *Three Assumptions about the Kenites*, ZAW 100 (1988), 386–393.

prophetic« J, p. 362f. we have Sinai, and the Hebrews can eventually enter Judah without Moses but only with the help of his »Qenite« father-in-law (Jud 1,16).

2. The highly informative survey of all recent scholarly views on Moses by Werner Schmidt, though strenuous and successful in not taking sides amid various conflicting proposals, seems nevertheless to allow some glimmer of a certain favor for the closeness of Moses' relation to the Midianites³⁶. From (a branch of) them, Moses received the name YHWH for the God whom his Hebrew clan had previously worshiped under other names (Ex 6,3).

More specifically we should say that YHWH was God of the Qenites (Cain's »sign of YHWH« in Gen 4,15), who were either a wider or more probably smaller division of the Midianites. In turn the »Kushite« wife of Moses (Num 12,1) was from the Kushan (YHWH-worshipping Qenite) group of Midianites (Hab 3,7; not Kush = Ethiopia).

The need of these specifications arises from the fact that in later biblical books the Hebrews are always on good terms with the Qenites (Jud 4,11; and needed their help to move southward into Judah, Jud 1,16), whereas almost from the start »The Midianites« (basically from the volcanic area SE of Aqaba named *Modiane* in the geographer Ptolemaeus) appear as bitter enemies (Num 22,7; Jud 6,2; 8,12).

3. A further point in favor of a »Midianite« connection (Schmidt, 124; already adumbrated at the outset p. 3) is that our Exodus seems to develop the role of Moses according to two basically independent traditions: at times the irreducible kernel is »YHWH of Sinai«, at times »Moses in Egypt«. This dichotomy must be reckoned with »if from all the weighing of the Exodus pros and cons we strive finally to formulate a minimal historical assurance.« Though Noth saw the East-Jordan *Landnahme* as a base-theme differing from but uniting the others, Schmidt holds the Midianite narratives more suited to this function.

And yet it is apparently YHWH who in Egypt liberated the Hebrews. To this dilemma, Schmidt finds the Midianites on three points helpful. (1) An individual (Ex 2,13) or group (Ex 14,5) could not survive in the desert east of Egypt without help of the nomads installed there. (2) There is no single conflicting »Midianite tradition or *Schicht*« (Ex 18; Ex 2–4). (3) To the query »how could the name of (the Midianites') YHWH have been known inside Egypt?«, an answer is Gen 37,28.36: one of the apparently frequent Midianite caravans brought Joseph well into Egypt, to Pharaoh.

4. »The most important focus for looking back on Midianite relevance is doubtless Ex 18« (Schmidt, Mose, 115). The Elohist text

³⁶ W. H. Schmidt, Exodus, Sinai und Mose, EdF, ³1995, 3.110–130.

18,1.5.12 falls into YHWH in verses 1b.8–11. Though verses 1–5 speak of Jethro as coming to bring Moses' wife and children to meet him »at the mountain of Elohim«, nothing is said about the family reunion. Moses tells of all the fine things YHWH had done, and in verse 11 Jethro says that *now* he knows that YHWH is greater than all *hā-'lohîm*; but in verse 12 Jethro sacrifices to Elohim, and Aaron and the elders joined to eat bread before Elohim. In spite of these inconcinnities, we seem to be adequately informed that Moses and his group joined with Jethro in a sacrifice to YHWH whose cultus they shared despite their divergent backgrounds.

The rest of Ex 18 describes a better way for Moses to handle inquiries about Elohim's decrees (*ḥuqqîm*) and Torah. Though neither Sinai nor Horeb is mentioned in this chapter (it was doubtless the nearby »mountain of Elohim« of v. 5), some critics hold that this episode unwarrantably anticipates the conferring upon Moses of lawgiver's functions at Sinai.

IV. Sinai – Horeb – Mountain of God

A) The Major Problem no Longer North or South

1. The problem of Sinai today is no longer whether it is at Jabl Musa if not even farther south at a volcano near Modiane in Arabia, or at a northern Horeb (Kadesh-barnea). Current scholarship asks rather whether the figure of Moses in primitive tradition was identified with Sinai, the YHWH-name, and lawgiving; or alternatively with Egypt and liberation. As we saw, these two alternatives are so irreducible for Werner Schmidt that they can best be harmonized by a third: Midian for him, the East-Jordan occupation for Martin Noth.

This approach may seem to be a very sophisticated one to those of us – most of us! – accustomed to following the thread fairly securely in our Bibles. Of course there are various ways of combining the relevant factors into a coherent pattern with only a few loose ends to account for. And both Schmidt and Noth are deeply concerned with solving problems of the JEPD strands to which they are so firmly committed: ultimately therefore with »what really happened«.

2. A rather different and perhaps more modern »perspective« is suggested to Blenkinsopp (Pentateuch, 184) chiefly by poor old octogenarian Moses' repeated futile climb up the mountain (even if not the 3750 steps up Jabl Musa): »There is an overall pattern the principal features of which are the making, breaking, and remaking of the covenant. ... the passage from guilt and sin to forgiveness and acceptance [but encoding] a theological interpretation of the history of Israel viewed from the other side of political disaster. We are therefore invited to think

of the extinction of the two kingdoms, Israel in the eighth century and Judah in the sixth, the deportations that followed, and the hope for a new beginning«.

Clearly the exegetes who are guided by insights like this, and they are increasingly numerous, are on the one hand not much concerned about »what really happened«; and on the other hand are equally far from falling into the extreme of those, also increasingly numerous, who claim »*nothing* of this really happened« but is all just a story made up out of the whole cloth only for amusement or for more sinister manipulative agendas. The present-day focus on »perspective«, though with some justice claiming that the real historicity of the narrative is that of the context of the final compiler, may tacitly acknowledge that something very big and momentous and politico-religiously unifying did indeed happen (ftn. 14).

B) Some Surviving Localization Preferences

1. Though some nearby Nabatean graffiti and the localization of Sinai at Jabl Musa date only from the last of the three-some millennia since the event (and St. Catherine's Monastery was founded there for the entirely different cultus which its name implies), still the Safsafa crag dominating the plain is immensely imposing and is not particularly impugned by the many who still seek the biblical Sinai within the currently-so-named Sinai peninsula. But neither do they argumentatively oppose putting the (E, D) Horeb at Kadesh-barnea on the northern route.

2. Some thought must be given to the long-noticed fact that Ex 19,18, seems to be describing the eruption of a volcano. Some few experts have drawn the further conclusion that the biblical Sinai was a real volcano. They saw this confirmed in the fact that the nearest volcano was Tadra Halat al-Badr in Arabia south of Aqaba, which is in the general area where the geographer Ptolemaeus localizes *Modiane* (Midian).

The majority, however, take this verse as having been inserted by a compiler who himself or herself really had experience of a volcanic eruption, presumably at Tadra. This then would be a classic example of the compiler's »perspective«: describing the available traditional data in terms familiar from personal experience.

In any case, the volcano question plays a minor role in the Exodus geography, and still less in the current perspective on the *significance* of the Sinai *theophany*.

3. More attention is really paid to the problems raised by the Sinai *covenant* of Ex 24. It is claimed by Nicholson to be »a tradition of great antiquity, [perhaps] the most ancient in the Sinai pericope«; yet Ruprecht holds »the exilic narrator aims to show his hearers that Israel's

earliest worship on Sinai was at least just as splendid as the Babylonian cultic feasts³⁷.

In Ex 24,1 »he« (YHWH) says to Moses that he, now with the huge number of 70 elders (and *also* by name Aaron, Nadab, Abihu) are to mount (*aleb*) to YHWH »and you (all) shall worship from far off«. But then (immediately, after verses 2–8 which are an insertion about the acceptance of the law; verse 8 »the blood of the covenant«) in verse 9 »Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel mounted (verse 10) and they saw the *Elohim* of Israel ... (verse 11) and »upon the *ašîl* (chiefs)« of the sons of Israel he (presumably Elohim) did not stretch his hand; and they beheld (*wayyehezû*) Elohim and they ate and drank«. Some claim that Moses in this passage is no more than a name without a function; at any rate the situation here is preoccupyingly different from the rest of the theophany in which only Moses is allowed to approach and to act.

It is not said that the »eating and drinking« of the elders was a ceremonial of Covenant ratification or of any other kind. The Covenant itself is mentioned only in the Ex 24,3–8 »later (deuteronomic: Ruprecht, 164) insertion«. V. 7 uses the expression »Book of the Covenant« read by Moses which has given its name to Ex 21–23; and in v. 8 Moses calls the blood which he had splashed on the »people« Blood of the Covenant.

C) Sinai Covenant and Legal Codes

1. Though the Decalogue has intervened (Ex 20,1–17, to which there may be an allusion in Ex 24,3.4), it forms part of the long block of legal corpora (Ex 20 to Num 10) which interrupts the Exodus itself. In the Golden Calf episode of Ex 32–34, there is again, more even than before, stress on the Covenant in Ex 34,10.27. In the debate as to whether the Covenant is in the »(Hittite-) Treaty pattern«, and what exactly its importance and function are, McCarthy is the internationally-recognized principal authority³⁸. But Covenant no longer has the unique pride of place as center of Old Testament theology which Walther Eichrodt conferred on it for half a century.

2. The Golden Calf episode of Ex 32–34 forms no part of Schmidt's *Erträge*, and Ruprecht p. 162 holds it was not in the Sinai-

³⁷ E. W. Nicholson, *Exodus and Sinai in History and Tradition: Growing Points of Theology* 23, 1975, 81; *God and his People*, 1986, 132: »ate and drank« means only »stayed alive« (in spite of a tradition »fatal to see God«). – E. Ruprecht, *Exodus 24,9–11 als Beispiel lebendiger Erzähltradition zur Zeit des babylonischen Exils*, in: FS C. Westermann, *Werden und Wirken des Alten Testaments*, 1980, 138–173, here: 150.

³⁸ D. J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, *AnBib* 21A, 1978.

narrative to which the exilic redactor added the older »communal meal« fragment as a suitable termination to the then cult-commemoration (surpassing Marduk's).

V. *From Sinai (and?) Kadesh to Nebo*

A) Meribah can be Adjacent to *either* Jabl Musa or Kadesh

1. We noted above, in relation to the fleeing Hebrews' need of Midianite help (n. 32), Olson's claim that the only real itinerary is Num 21,10–20 (nine East-Jordan toponyms). He mentions only three unlocalized names (Taberah, Kibroth, Hazereth: Num 11,3.34.35) from the unnamed place where the tabernacle was made (Num 7,1–10,35) to Kadesh, so that that place may well have been quite adjacent to Kadesh itself (the »Northern Route«, though the name »Sinai« without localization is mentioned in Num 1,1; 3,1). However, Num 32,5 abruptly starts a new Exodus-type itinerary from Succoth to Hor (near Nebo; »traditionally« Petra).

2. Coats has essayed a total itinerary with 26 stations included³⁹. The first 10 of these take us up to Rephidim. This is the site called Meribah just before »Sinai mountain« in Ex 17,7; 19,2. But in Num 20,13 the same Meribah event is at Kadesh = Paran Num 13,26 (= Zin Num 20,1). Since the previous stations are ill-localizable, the itinerary may serve for either a »Southern Route« or a »Northern Route«. The next station after Kadesh is Hor on the border of Edom (Num 20,23), then via a Hormah in relation to Arad (Num 21,3) to Aqaba (the Red Sea, Num 21,6, with mention of the fiery serpents II Reg 18,4, but not of Punon Num 33,42; and Num 33,36 seems to require a return-detour from Aqaba to Kadesh). The final names of Coats' list come from Num 22,10–20.

B) The Three or Four Alternative Itineraries

1. Somewhat later Walsh proposed to distinguish three separate »chains« or alternative routes: I. drawn from Ex 12–19, Num 10,12; 12,16; 21; II. from Ex 13–19; Num 10; 20; III. Num 11; [? Num 33]⁴⁰.

³⁹ G. W. Coats, *The Wilderness Itinerary*, CBQ 34 (1972), 135–152; p. 142, tabular list of the 26 stops. – G. I. Davies, *The Wilderness Itineraries and the Composition of the Pentateuch*, VT 33 (1983), 1–13, gives J and P attributions; he regards Num 33 as basic.

⁴⁰ J. T. Walsh, *From Egypt to Moab: A Source-Critical Analysis of the Wilderness Itinerary*, CBQ 39 (1977), 20–33. The »source-criticism« of his title is not that linked with the strands JEPD, none of which he cites. Neither Walsh nor Coats makes even a fleeting mention of the Num 33,5–49 itinerary.

2. Here is my own analysis: four separate and unrelated itineraries: Route A is interspersed through Ex 13,20; 14,2.9; 15,22.27; and 17,1. Suez engineers tried to localize the earlier sites near the canal on the doomed assumption that the fleeing Hebrews would have headed straight for the nearest Egyptian army post⁴¹. (Equally futile have been efforts to put the biblical route in any relation to the Egyptian turquoise mines near Serabî al-Ḥadim in the center of the peninsula defended with a strong army garrison.) Mara and Elim are commonly recognized as the two oases at suitable distances (south!) from the sea-crossing.

Rephidim with its Meribah and Amalek episodes (Ex 17,7.8) is pointed out to pilgrims at Feiran, where there is a convenient rest-house of the Sinai monks' community. Feiran may well preserve the name Paran, used sometimes as a generalized term for the area of the Sinai revelation (Hab 3,3 in parallel with Teiman/Arabia; Gen 20,21; Gen 14,6 near Mt. Seir and thus fringing Edom, Jud 5,4).

But in Num 13,26 Paran is explicitly identified with Kadesh (in Zin, Num 20,1⁴²) and near Meribah (Num 20,13; not opposed are unknown Dophkah and Alush Num 33,13). Thus the whole route culminating in Meribah (despite the quite different analysis of Johnstone n. 29, his p. 245; but see Nicholson n. 37, his p. 50) could just as well have been North as South. – There is no further itinerary after Sinai, from Ex 19,6 through Leviticus to Num 10,2.

Route B, stressing the orderly march by tribes (Num 10,14–28) and the guidance of Jethro (Reuel Num 10,29.32) is also interspersed through Num 11,3.24; 12,16 with the Judah espionage to 13,26; 14,45; 20,22. This much leaves us pretty well where we start, at Kadesh (or at Mt. Hor, wherever that may be). Since Edom had refused transit (Num 20,20), Num 21,4, after again mentioning Hormah of 14,45, indicates passage from »Mt. Hor« to the Re(e)d Sea (inlet, presumably 'Aqaba). The next stop, with the fiery serpent episode Num 21,6, is taken to be Punon, though a Zalmona also precedes Oboth in Num 33,42. Num 21,10–42 from Oboth to Zered (Dibon) and Pisgah (Nebo) corresponds quite well to Num 33,44–47.

Route C, Num 33,5–49, is the most complete, though the most unexpectedly out of place. It resumes in 15 stops the journey from the very

⁴¹ C. Bourdon, Note sur l'Isthme de Suez, RB 37 (1928), 232–256 (p. 251 on Pihahiroth); his La route de l'Exode de la *Terre de Gessé* à Mara, RB 41 (1932), 370–392, is largely on the identifications pointed out to earliest pilgrims.

⁴² So RSV gives Num 33,36 as »they encamped in the wilderness of Zin (that is, Kadesh)« where only LXX equates Kadesh with Paran, *ek tēs erēmou Sein ... eis tēn érēmon Pharân, auté estin* (Zin, *Šin*, with *šade*, Greek *Sein*: indistinguishable in LXX transliteration from Sin with *samech* = *Sein* of Ex 16,1; 17,1): J. L. Mihelic, IDB, 1962, 3,657; 4,276.

beginning at Raamses and Succoth as in Route A, adding only an unnamed encampment by the Re(e)d Sea, and the above-noted Dophka-Alush before Rephidim(-Sinai). It also mentions (ignoring Taberah) the Kibroth and Hazeroth of Num 11,35, where however we are perhaps to understand stops after the (northern Rephidim-)Meribah of Num 20,13. But from Num 33,19 Rithma to 33,35 Abronah are no less than seventeen absolutely new and unknown stops before 'Aqaba. In the 12 stops which follow, there is mention of 'Aqaba (Ezion-geber on the Red Sea inlet, Num 33,36) only once, just before Kadesh, and Mount Hor comes after; then a rough equivalent of Route B, adding five names beside Punon. Dibon(-Gad) may be equated with the (chasm!) Arnon (Num 21,13; Zered there is perhaps Wadi Haṣa). Nebo is mentioned as near Abarim, and the encampments in Moab Jordan plain opposite Jericho are called Beth-jesimoth and Abel-shittim Num 33,49.

Route D is really only the farewell speech of Moses opening Deuteronomy, but it must be included for some noteworthy variations or distances in the itinerary. Deut 1,1 contains »in the 'Araba (Jordan valley and its continuation south to 'Aqaba)« after Paran five names, unknown except that Di-zahab is doubtfully equated by Southern Route partisans with the prosperous Arab settlement Dahab on the Red Sea east inlet. But v. 2 says »from Horeb to Kadesh via Seir takes 11 days«.

This throws light, or rather confusion, on northern/southern route theories. If Horeb is not identical with Kadesh, and especially if it is at Sinai Jabl Musa directly south, why would one make a long detour through (off limits) Edom, or any other area commonly called »Seir«? then v. 19 without mention of any Seir says that the Horeb-Kadesh journey was in the Amorite hills (possibly Moab; rather not Judah, because v. 24 recalls that it had not yet been »spied«).

Deut 1,44 seems to locate the Amorites north of »Seir and« Hormah; Deut 2,1 adds that in heading for the Red Sea (east inlet?) »we« had to wander many days around Mt. Seir, inhabited by our Esau-cousins (the Edomites). But then (without mentioning the Edomite refusal of transit or bread for payment as Num 20,20) in Deut 2,8 abruptly »we« crossed (*wa-na'abar*, RSV »went on, away«) from them, from the road of the 'Arabah, from Eilat and Ezion-geber, and journeyed via Moab to Zered (Arnon, Dibon Deut 2,14), »and in going from Kadesh-barnea to Zered we spent 38 years, an entire generation« (rather than spending most of the 38 years in sedentary fashion at Kadesh itself).

3. From my above analysis, the main really new conclusion to be drawn is that the widely-accepted Cazelles-Noth thesis of a *double* set of biblical data, south corresponding to Jabl Musa and north fitting Kadesh as Sinai, is superfluous. All the named toponyms before (Rephidim-) Meribah are sufficiently unknown to fit the northern route just as well.

Cazelles' and other localizations given for them have inevitably been influenced by long-prevailing southern-route convictions, for example the existence of oases at suitable distances for Mara and Elim. Even sites linked to Baal-zephon («Lord of the North», Ex 14,2) have been fitted into this procrustean southern toponymy.

Thus also superfluous is Eissfeldt's acclaimed proposal to draw them northward toward a Kadesh-Sinai by the too-ingenious supposition that to low hills around Pelusium was applied in derision by Phoenician sailors the name of the towering peak north of Ugarit which was the real Baal-zephon as noticed above.

C) Compiler-perspective Related to Exodus Itineraries

Our conclusion would be that the *whole* of our Exodus-itinerary toponymy, ill-identifiable as it is, fits in its entirety not only a Northern Route and a Southern Route, but also the prolongation of a southern route *past* Jabl Musa all the way to Modiane (noted above).

A second and not so new general conclusion from our analysis is that the only real inconsistency in the itineraries is the portion given in Route B as Kadesh-Hor(Horma)-^ʿAqaba; in Route C as ^ʿAqaba-Kadesh-Hor (Edom); and in Route D as Kadesh – (near) Edom – (near)^ʿAqaba. (In an abbreviated account, Jud 11,28 shows the Moses itinerary as only from Kadesh, without mention of ^ʿAqaba, to the east of both Edom and Moab⁴³).

The question is whether (none or) only one of these sequences is the compiler's perspective as to »what the traditions indicate as having really happened«; whether in the final march itself there was a detour from Hor to ^ʿAqaba and back; and whether account is being taken of the fact that during the long (38 year?) stay at Kadesh there were perhaps several excursions to the sea.

We can only say that it must be the (final or intermediate) compiler's »perspective« which determined his choice and order among these almost wholly unknown and relatively unimportant toponyms.

The compilers of Exodus and the other biblical books work from their own »perspective«. It includes not only their intention and often quite personal insights, but also the then current historico-political pressures and economic, religious, and family background. Also at earlier stages of the tradition (including JEPD insofar as they existed), each narrator had his own then-time-bound perspective. Popular old stories about wandering from (Ur or)

⁴³ P. A. Kaswaller, La disputa diplomatica di Iefte (Gdc 11,12–28). La ricerca archeologica in Giordania e il problema della conquista, SBF Analecta 29, 1990, ch. 3 on Num 21,21–31; Deut 2,24–37.

Harran through Aram, or about Egyptian power-enslavement-flight, may have been favored by (returned) Babylonian exiles or even by families of wholly inside-Canaan origins, as something altogether basic to their own life (as conversely US-immigrants come to feel that their own liberation is due to a onetime rebellion against England). The tradition may have been vague, parts of it not retrievably »historical«, but seen with pervasive religiosity as some wonderful deeds of the past which alone could account for their present unity and well-being.