

Is Mount Sinai In Saudi Arabia?

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Two treasure hunters stood on the top of Jebel al-Lawz thinking it was the real Mt. Sinai, the "Mountain of God." One was struck with fear because he thought he was trespassing on the "holiest place on earth." As he gulped down Gatorade and munched on M & Ms, a sense of guilt overcame him because he had forged a letter from the king of Saudi Arabia in order to obtain a visa into the Kingdom (Cornuke and Halbrook 2000: 10, 11, 74, 77, 79; Blum 1998a: 206). Should he have felt guilty for this deceit? Yes, what he did was illegal, and offended the honor of the Saudi Arabian people. Should he have been afraid because he was on the holy mountain of God (Ex 19:12)? No, because he was standing on the wrong mountain. MT. SINAI IS NOT IN SAUDI ARABIA!

This article will examine four aspects of the question regarding whether or not Mt. Sinai is located in Saudi Arabia. First, the credibility of the claims will be questioned. Second, the false assumptions by the proponents of Jebel al-Lawz will be disputed. Third, the Biblical evidence will be discussed. Fourth, the archaeological evidence will be examined.

Mount Sinai was the destination of Moses and the children of Israel after the Lord miraculously delivered them from the bondage of Egypt (Ex 18:5). It was from this mountain that the Lord gave the Ten Commandments to Moses and the people of Israel (Ex 19:1-3, 11, 18; 20:1-17). Here, too, the prophet Elijah found himself after his escape from wicked Queen Jezebel (1 Kgs 19).

Pilgrims, scholars and tourists have visited the traditional site, Jebel Musa (Arabic for the Mountain of Moses) for more than 1, 600 years. In the early fourth century AD Eusebius of Caesarea placed Mt. Sinai in the southern Sinai Peninsula. When Egeria made a pilgrimage to the East between AD 381 and 384, she visited Jebel Musa as Mt. Sinai (Wilkinson 1981: 1, 18, 91-100). This impressive mountain located in the southern Sinai Peninsula is situated behind the Byzantine monastery of St. Catherine built by Emperor Justinian in the middle of the sixth century AD (Tsafirir 1978: 219).

It may come as a surprise to most people, but scholars have identified 13 different sites as the "real" Mount Sinai (Har-El 1983: 2). I would agree with the proponents of the Jebel al-Lawz hypothesis that Jebel Musa, the traditional Mt. Sinai, or any other site in the southern Sinai Peninsula, cannot ...

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