

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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Twenty-Four Courses for Temple Service

To King David was accorded the privilege of assembling the materials for the Temple. To his son, Solomon, was accorded the privilege of construction, dedication and ordering of the Temple and its services. One of David's last executive acts was to assemble the Levites and designate their appointment for the Temple services. The record begins in 1 Chronicles 23. This is the principle means by which David transferred the kingdom to Solomon, and we find this transfer reaffirmed in 1 Chronicles 28-29; note especially 1 Chronicles 29:22, 23.

This appointment of the Levites is not without precedent. In Numbers 3:12, God took the Levites in place of the first-borns leaving Egypt. Forty-eight cities were assigned to them, six of which were to be cities of refuge (Numbers 35:1-8). In this ordering we can see the divine arrangement and providence by which natural and spiritual Israel are served, instructed and sanctified. We may also see in this something of the privilege and responsibility for all those who serve the Almighty's sanctuary.

These various courses are set out in 1 Chronicles 23-27. These chapters are devoted to the details pertaining to the Temple services, and service of the king. It was in their courses of service to the Lord that the priests could behold the divine order and enquire in his Temple. As best we can determine, the 24 family heads were appointed from Levi's family tree as charted (see diagram on following page), including some deduction in Merari's family. These were by no means the only descendants of Levi. However, they are those fathers who had sufficient generations for the Temple service.

1 Chronicles 23 opens with a count of 38,000 Levites divided into 24,000 and some lesser numbered groups. Verse 3 notes the Mosaic ordinance of 30 years of age for the Levitical service according to Numbers chapter 4. However, in Numbers 8:23-26, Moses also accommodated those from 25 years of age, perhaps as assistants in training for 5 years. Here in 1 Chronicles 23:24, 27, the last words of David are to lower the age to 20 for those to enter some level of service. However, we may at least regard the 24,000 as full age overseers and administrators for the work in Solomon's temple.

All the Levites were organized into 24 courses of service. Yet the Priests were not included in these groups, but were grouped separately into 24 other courses from the sons of Amram. The respective 16 and 8 grandsons of Aaron formed the 24 family lines of the priesthood.

The main divisions of the service for the larger group of Levites are assigned as: "24,000 were to oversee the work of the house of the LORD; and 6,000 were officers and judges, and 4,000 were gatekeepers, and 4,000 were praising the LORD with the instruments which David made for giving praise" (1 Chronicles 23:4-5, NAS). In chapter 27 are detailed at least another 24,000 members of a royal army from these Levites.

GENERAL DUTIES OF LEVITES

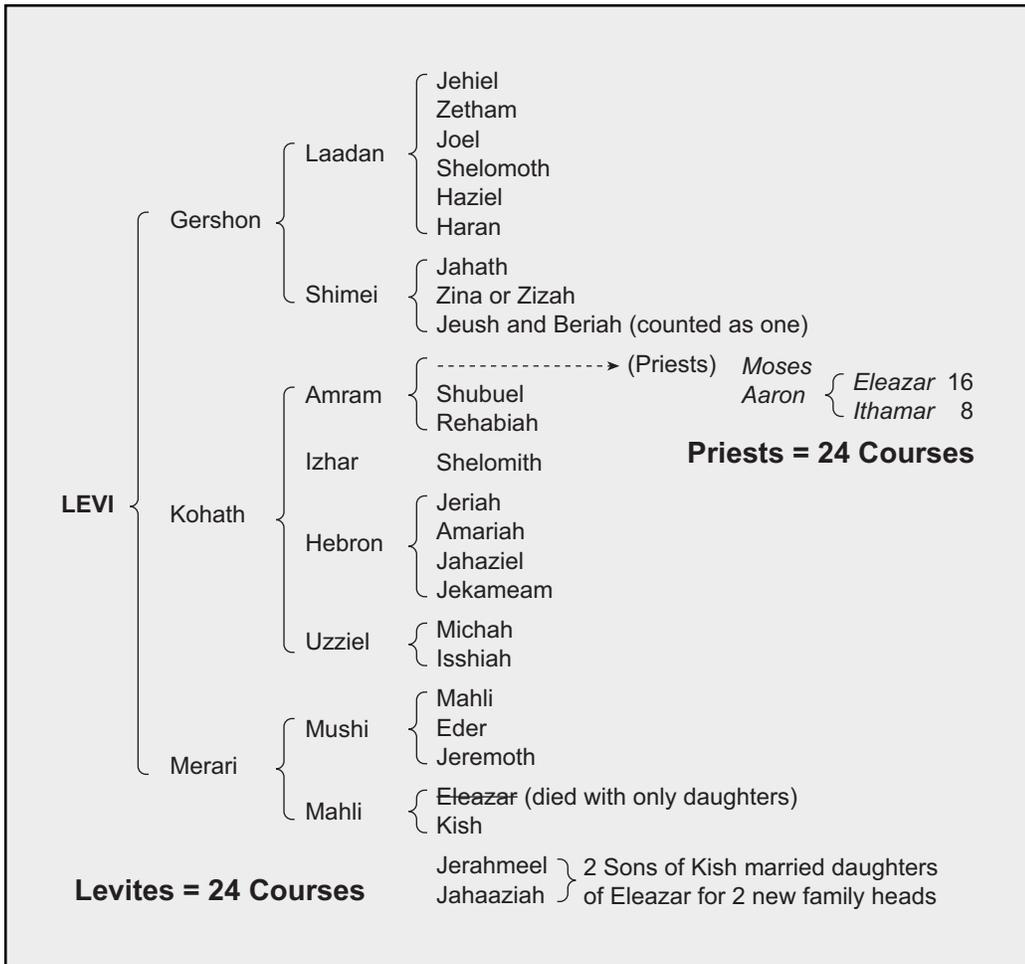
The general duties of these Levites are recorded in 1 Chronicles 23:28-32 where we learn that their office was to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the LORD, in the courts, and in the chambers, and in the purifying of all holy things, and the work of the service of the house of God. The services of the first group of 24,000 are detailed as follows:

- (1) In the outer and inner courts.
- (2) In both priest's chambers and treasure chambers.
- (3) In the purification of holy things.
- (4) In the service of the house of God for the shewbread, meal offerings and unleavened cakes of all kinds.

IN THIS ISSUE

<i>Twenty-Four Courses</i>	1
<i>Mt. Musa, Jabal al-Lawz</i>	4
<i>A Divine Ladder</i>	7
<i>Thanksgiving in our Hearts</i>	8

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24 Courses of Levites and Priests

(5) In the morning and evening to offer thanks and praise to the Lord.

(6) In the sacrifices for the Sabbaths, new moons and feast days.

(7) In keeping the charge of the Lord's house, the holy place, and of the sons of Aaron in the house of the Lord.

All had their particular function and responsibility as priests in the Lord's house. It is a peculiar feature of this ordinance that the various services and the term or season of their service were appointed by lot. Notice in 1 Chronicles 24:5-19 the lot was for the governors of the sanctuary, 1 Chronicles 25:8-31 for the singers, 1 Chronicles 26:13-14 for the porters or keepers of the gates. Scripture makes it clear that in casting of lots, divine sovereignty and decision was evidenced. "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD" (Proverbs 16:33 and Leviticus 16:8-10).

24 COURSES OF PRIESTS — 1 CHRON. 24

We are not told the numbers of these under priests, only that 24 courses served throughout the year. Likely each course served for only two weeks or two courses each month. We have 24 lots cast for heads of Aaron's house, the priestly house of the tribe of Levi, who were the governors of God's house (1 Chronicles 24:5, 19). They performed the daily

services in accepting and offering sacrifices of the people. Luke 1:5 makes an interesting mention that John the Baptist's father was a priest after the course of Abijah mentioned here in verse 10.

It is God's choice where, when and how his redeemed will serve in his Temple. The casting of lots would remove all jealousy, fears of favoritism or deceit. It would recognize the choice of the Lord as to service. The priesthood was a functioning body and each member worked to fulfill the service to the Lord and the Israel of God. So it is in the body of Christ. God sets in the body the members, gifts, ministries and functions as it pleases him (1 Corinthians 12:18).

24 COURSES OF THE SINGERS AND MUSICIANS — 1 CHRONICLES 25

In this chapter David outlines the 24 courses of

the 4,000 musicians. The ministry of music and song played a very important part in the Temple services. Asaph is the first mentioned as the heads of the musical families. He was the composer of a number of Psalms. The sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthan were separated to the service of music and song. The names of these fathers carry these appropriate meanings:

- (1) Asaph (gatherer), four sons (verse 2).
- (2) Jeduthan (praising), six sons (verse 3).
- (3) Heman (faithful), fourteen sons (verses 4, 5).

We have 24 sons from these fathers to head the appointments of praise. All were under the hands of their fathers for song and music in the house of the Lord. Notice the nature of their service. They sang and prophesied with instruments (verses 1-3). These students were first instructed in the melodies of the Temple, then they could become teachers of the heavenly aria (verses 7-8).

Song and music played an important part throughout Israel's history. The song of Moses is the first recorded song in the Bible after the deliverance from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 15). The song of Deborah also arose out of victory over Israel's enemies (Judges 5). The songs of David cover a wide range of subjects as seen in the Psalms. It is those who

stand with the Lamb on mount Zion who sing the new song of Moses and the Lamb (Revelation 14:1-3, 15:3). And no others can learn that song.

24 COURSES OF THE PORTERS — 1 CHRONICLES 26

There were numerous gates into the Temple, but all were guarded. There were 4,000 Levites set aside to be porters over the gates of the Temple and those who were over the treasure chambers. These were of Gershon, Kohath and Merari (1 Chronicles 26:1, 10, 21). The house of Obededom was one of these (1 Chronicles 26:4-8). This house was also blessed because of his faithful care for the Ark of the Covenant, after it was defiled by Uzzah (2 Samuel 6:1-12).

All were “mighty men of valor” for service in the house of God. Such would be needed to guard the Temple and court gates. The gatekeepers were also assigned by lot. We have 24 watching the gates on the north, south, east and west (1 Chronicles 26:10-19). It would seem these were responsible for the division of 4,000 porters, superintending the Temple watches both day and night. The charge laid on these porters was similar to that of the Levites by Moses for the service of the Tabernacle (Numbers 3). They were to watch at the gates of the house of the Lord, those outer and inner gates of the court, and at the doors of the Temple (2 Chronicles 35:15). They were to watch that no unqualified person would enter these gates, so that no one unclean would defile the Lord’s habitation (2 Chronicles 23:19). They were to resist any disrespectful act such as King Uzziah when he presumed to enter the house of the Lord to burn incense, instead of the priests (2 Chronicles 26:16-18).

The porters were like watchman in their places of responsibility. Their service included guarding the treasures and spoils of war (1 Chronicles 26:20-28). A portion of these were appointed for the outward business of Israel, the business of the king, including guarding the wealth of the land and administering taxes and tithes (1 Chronicles 26:29-32).

The lesson here is that God’s people require wise overseers and visionaries to judge, counsel and direct his people in every age. They were consecrated to this ministry (Nehemiah 13:22). So members of the body of Christ today dedicate themselves to the Lord for his service and the treasures of his house and word. There are those who are the Lord’s watchmen (Ezekiel 3:17, 33:7, Isaiah 21:11-12). The porter opens the door to the good shepherd. John 10:3, “To him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.” In the gates and foundations of the New Jerusalem there are the names of the 12 tribes of Israel and also the 12 apostles of the Lamb, 24 names in all (Revelation 21:12-14).

12 COURSES OF OFFICERS, JUDGES AND CAPTAINS — 1 CHRONICLES 27

Finally in chapter 27, David sets 12 captains or princes of Israel who serve for 12 months of the year in their particular course. Each prince had a course of 24,000 men. These



King Solomon and his Temple Servants

were the standing army of Israel, enlisted in the king’s service. Possibly there were 24 regiments of 1,000, or 12 regiments of 2,000, for a total of 24,000 in the legion, the largest division of the king’s service. In any case there were 12 legions according to the number of the 12 tribes who served their term of service throughout each year. Each legion of 24,000 men served each month by rotation, stationed at Jerusalem or other places appointed by the king. We cannot be sure if it was a single legion of 24,000 with 12 rotating officers through the year or 24 legions for a standing army of 288,000, a double of 144,000. So also in the spiritual temple, there are those who are standing ready to defend the cause of the King with the sword of the spirit.

When in Gethsemane, one of two swords carried by the apostles (Luke 22:38) was used by Peter. Jesus placed this defensive gesture in perspective when he replied in Matthew 26:53-54, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” Only the king could command such servants from among the Levites. With those few words, Jesus declared himself to be a king greater than Solomon, who could command the hosts of heaven, and would minister to all those who would become his royal priesthood as well as other antitypical Levites.

The Temple consists of more than the gold, silver and pillars. It is made up of the entire 24 courses of the priesthood, the 24 courses of attendant servants and the 12 courses of the Levitical army. Jesus would have more than these at his command from the heavenly hosts. So it is also with the spiritual Temple. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? ... For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” 1 Peter 2:5, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

When all spiritual Levites have served their courses for the spiritual Temple, then Jesus’ prayer will be answered and the scriptures fulfilled. There will be more than 12 legions of angels, some serving in and others before the throne.

—Jerry Leslie

Mt. Musa, Jabal al-Lawz

The Search for the Real Mt. Sinai

TESTIMONY OF ADVENTURERS AND SCHOLARS ON MOUNT SINAI

For centuries now, Bible scholars have been puzzled as to where the real Mt. Sinai is located. Most people are unaware that little evidence supports that what is called “Mt. Sinai” in the Sinai Peninsula — where the monastery of St. Catharine sits — is indeed the famed mountain of Exodus. Biblical scholars have suggested several proposed alternate sites for Mt. Sinai, but neither is there a body of compelling archaeological evidence to support these claims.

Several recent popularizations on the subject have challenged the traditional Sinai Peninsula location suggesting an alternate site of Jabal al-Lawz, or Mt. Musa (Moses) in Saudi Arabia.^{1,2,3} In turn, these popular books have spawned TV documentaries such as “The Search for the Real Mt. Sinai” which aired in 2002 on the Discovery channel. The advocacy position of these offerings often runs roughshod over the patient scholarly inquiry that might be hoped for on so important a topic. Jabal al-Lawz is the site upheld as the mountain of God by local Arab tradition, and it is needful to point out that Islam holds high respect for Moses as one of God’s prophets. The Koran attempts to accurately convey the sense of Moses’ warnings and promises to Israel, all of this a part of the complex interplay between the children of Israel and the children of Midian that dates back to the Exodus.

“Bear in mind the words of Moses to his people, ‘Remember, my people, the favors which Allah has bestowed upon you. He raised up prophets among you, made you kings, and given that which He has given to no other nation. Enter, my people, the holy land which has been assigned for you. Do not turn back, or you shall be ruined.’ ”⁴

To be impartial and objective, the claims made in the books advocating the Jabal al-Lawz site for Mt. Sinai do not meet the high standards for careful fieldwork that is the hallmark of professional archeologists. Indeed, the authors make a case that the archeology at the most promising alternate sites has been made impossible by the Saudi government. The Saudis have fenced in the entire area around Jabal al-Lawz as a military reservation and the trespasses reported in these books were furtive and high-risk adventures. The most remarkable claim, again unsubstantiated, goes so far as to suggest that using Chinese technology, the military reservation about Mt. Musa was under development as a missile and radar site for operations against Israel.

Leaving aside the claims of the adventurers, the scholarly community has also weighed in, recognizing that the alternative site in Saudi Arabia deserves consideration. Most notable is the eminent 20th century Orientalist Professor James B. Pritchard in his final book. While retaining the traditional site of Mount Sinai as his first choice, he holds open the possibility of the “less likely” alternate site in Arabia.

“The location of Mt. Sinai (or Mt. Horeb as it is known in some texts) is a particular problem and over a dozen sites have been proposed for it. Much of the evidence used in the discussion is insufficiently precise for the purpose (*e.g.* volcanic features in Exodus 19 may belong to the later elaboration of Sinai events and need not imply [Editor’s note: This challenge to accurate transmission of scripture, and suggestion that embellishment takes place over time if NOT true, as indeed we believe, strongly implies] that Mt. Sinai was actually a volcano and therefore located in north-west Arabia) and some of it perhaps relates to a distinct “mountain of God” (Exodus 3:1, 4:27, 18:5) rather than to Sinai. The clearest evidence is found in Deuteronomy 1:2. It is eleven days journey from Horeb by way of Mt. Seir to Kadesh-Barnea. This points to the South of the Sinai Peninsula ... *or less likely to a mountain east of the gulf of Aqaba.*”⁵

Again from the scholarly community, Hershel Shanks, editor of the *Biblical Archaeology Review* says, “Jabal al-Lawz is the most likely site for Mount Sinai, but we need a serious archeological investigation.”⁶

However, in an effort to be consistent with scriptural testimony, and assuming that there is at least some merit to the evidence presented in the works of the adventurers and the scholarly community, we find support for the startling conclusion that the real Mt. Sinai, the mountain of God, may indeed be in Saudi Arabia, the ancient land of Midian at a location called Jabal al-Lawz, or Mount Musa (Moses).

WHERE IS “ARABIA”?

Recognizing this uncertainty as to the site, we wish to understand precisely what the Apostle Paul meant when he said in Galatians 4:25, “Now this Hagar is Mt. Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.” While scripture upholds that Mt. Sinai is in “Arabia,” this is ambiguous as to location when we learn that in the Apostle’s day, the entire Roman frontier with the Nabateans would have been considered to be “Arabia.”⁷ This would have included most of the Sinai Peninsula away from the coastal territories that constituted the way of the Philistines. We recall that divine providence purposely had the children of Israel avoid this route and its inevitable warfare (Exodus 13:17). Arabia would of course extend all the way to present day Saudi Arabia. Recognizing this, both of the leading sites for Mt. Sinai qualify as “Arabia.”

MOSES IN MIDIAN

But if “Arabia” is a broad term, “Midian” is much more delimiting. During his forty years of exile, Moses fled to Midian and there kept the flocks of Jethro his father-in-law, which would mean a wide ranging over the land of Midian. There he helped Jethro’s daughters water the sheep in Midian (Exodus 2:16-19). Moses was married to Zipporah and lived in Midian; and Hobab, Moses’ brother-in-law, also lived in Midian. As we read in Exodus 3:1, Moses was shepherding the flock of Jethro — his father-in-law the priest of Midian — “so he led forth his flock behind the desert” and God called Moses at the Burning Bush, presumably in Midian.

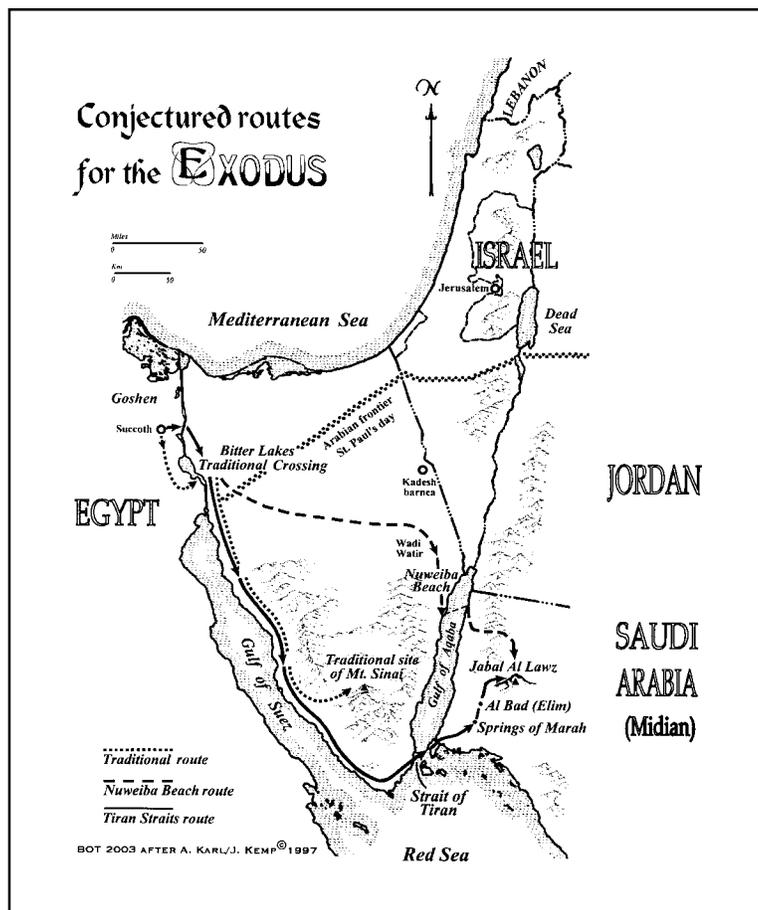
But we need to observe that according to Exodus 18:5, 27, Jethro of Midian met with Moses in the wilderness at the mount of God, then “went the way (returned) into his own land (Midian).” Hence, there must have been at least some separation between Jethro’s principal residence and the Mount of the Law, so that he could be accounted as returning to his own country. (See also Numbers 10:29-30, 33, for the mount being distinct from Midian.)

Most scholars, including Prof. Pritchard’s work already cited, agree that Midian is in the area of north-west Saudi Arabia, and even part of southern Jordan. The proponents of Jabal al-Lawz often point to the interview of Prof. Frank Moore Cross of Harvard University in *Bible Review* as their authority on this point.⁸ However, Gordon Franz, of the Associates for Biblical Research — one of the thoughtful and literate opponents of the Jabal al-Lawz site — claims to have a letter from Prof. Cross which states his rejection of the evidence of the proponents of Jabal al-Lawz even though he still believes Mt. Sinai is in Midian.⁹ Clearly this debate is energetic, and far from settled.

Those who challenge the traditional site for the Mount of the Law claim that the area around Mt. Sinai does not possess sufficient room for a camp and herds. But a few days distant there is need for battleground to fight the battle with the Amalekites at Rephidim chronicled in Exodus 17:8. By other estimations, this is a dubious challenge to the traditional site when we recognize that the territories near St. Catherine’s monastery holds a very large alluvial plain extending out several miles beyond the mount and thus able to accommodate masses of people, encampments, and animals. The area accommodates tourist facilities and even hosts an airport once managed by Israel, now in the hands of Egypt. The traditional site encompasses the wadi and oasis Faran and indicates ancient water sources. However, the accommodations are clearly less spacious around the traditional site than at Jabal al-Lawz, where there is considerable room around the mount on the far side in what, in today’s climate, is a vast desert.

THE RED SEA

The Gulf of Aqaba is also called “The Red Sea.” We read in 1 Kings 9:26, “King Solomon also built a fleet of ships in Ezion-geber, which is near Eloth [Eilat], on the shore of the Red Sea in the land of Edom.” Notice that scripture states that the Red Sea is the Gulf of Aqaba. The Bitter Lakes region, or the shallow “Sea of Reeds,” is suggested as the traditional Red Sea crossing site. But it may be argued that the Bitter Lakes region is too marshy and shallow. We read in Isaiah 51:10, “Was it not Thou who dried up the sea, The waters of the great deep; Who made the depths of the sea a pathway for the redeemed to cross over?” Since the Bitter Lakes, or Sea of Reeds, does not constitute a “great deep,” the argument favors the Red Sea which indeed is a “great



deep.” We have other scriptures to illustrate that the Israelites crossed in deep waters, for example, Exodus 15:5, “The deeps cover them; they went down to the depths like a stone.” The Gulf of Aqaba is also consistent with Exodus 13:18. “Hence God led the people around by the way of the wilderness to the Red Sea; and the sons of Israel went up in martial array from the land of Egypt.” That is to say, Israel went through the wilderness first before they came to the Red Sea.

At this point, a key question suggests itself. How long did Pharaoh grieve for his firstborn before pursuing the Israelites? Certainly it was more than just a few days but probably less than three weeks. Clearly he did not wait for the embalming of the prince, which would take forty days and constituted part of a mourning period of seventy days. To be consistent with Exodus 14:4-9, the Israelites had time to travel much further than the Bitter Lakes region. We do have a limit on the time to the Red Sea crossing based on Exodus 16:1. “Then they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin ... on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt.” Hence Elim, several days journey on the other side of the Red Sea crossing, was the stop thirty days after leaving Egypt.

If the Israelites crossed the Gulf of Aqaba, is there an underwater land bridge? There is indeed. In fact two such land bridges exist. The map above shows the proposed cross-

ings at both of these sites and both of these have been the object of undersea investigations. The thought of an underwater land bridge was already suggested in Reprint 5641:1 long before this evidence emerged “... the whole nation by divine power was miraculously delivered by the Lord and led by a sand bar across the channel of the Red Sea.”

What is exciting are claims for the undersea discovery of a four-spoke chariot wheel; four-spoke gold chariot wheel, eight-spoke wheel and chariot cabs. All these claimed discoveries were found in the upper third of the Gulf of Aqaba in 1978. If proven, these underwater finds support the view that the Israelites crossed at the Nuweiba beach on the Gulf of Aqaba.

But before going further, a reflective pause is in order. The internet in our day has become what the bazaar was in past times, goods of every description and quality from the four corners of the earth are available and as always the only safe rule is “*caveat emptor*” or “buyer beware.” Hence, internet references are presented to the readers of *Beauties of the Truth* with trepidation, but in the hopes that they will leave the readers better informed about the debate going on regarding the route of the Exodus. With this word of warning, some internet sites with pictures of these finds from Nuweiba beach may be viewed by accessing the website references.^{10,11}

BOUNDARY MARKERS

Other evidence also suggests that Jabal al-Lawz, rather than the traditional Mt. Sinai, is consistent with the Biblical account. These include a plausible Saudi Arabian location for the “Bitter Springs of Marah,” the “Seventy Palms and Twelve Springs of Elim,” favored by the southernmost crossing at the Straits of Tiran. Additionally, within a modest journey from Jabal al-Lawz, Arab tradition identifies the “Caves of Moses.” These caves are mentioned in the Bible in 1 Kings 19:8, 13, “So he (Elijah) arose ... and went ... to Horeb the mountain of God ... and stood in the entrance of the cave.” Elijah knew where Mt. Sinai was. There are caves on Mt. Musa in the land of Midian. Though topographical features that might be considered “caves” can be found also at the traditional Mt. Sinai, they are a more pronounced feature at Jabal al-Lawz.

Jabal al-Lawz has twelve stone piles that could be the “Boundary Markers” of Exodus 19:23. These markers are large boulders equidistantly placed around the mountain which could well mark the “no trespassing” zone of Exodus 18:12. Other remains are pointed to that would also be consistent with Exodus 24:4. “And [Moses] built an altar at the foot of the mountain with 12 pillars for the 12 tribes of Israel.”

PETROGLYPHS

There is evidence of the petroglyph of an Egyptian Bull that has been found carved in the sides of Jabal al-Lawz near a huge boulder-type altar. Possibly this is where Aaron built an altar before the golden calf of Exodus 32:5. Petroglyph images of bulls were not a part of the worship by native

Midianites, but the bull was a very prevalent symbol of strength in Babylon and Egypt. As a counterargument, it must be noted that the petroglyphs are not exclusive to Jabal al-Lawz. They exist in abundance in the immediate region of Sinai as well as at the Egyptian outpost at Timna (north of the Gulf of Aqaba). Indeed, the far-ranging Egyptian influence throughout the Sinai during this period as evidenced by this outpost in Timna are considered strong arguments for why Moses would have to flee as far as Midian to escape Pharaoh. Although the petroglyphs may possibly be evidence of Nabatean civilizations occupying the entire region, their presence at Jabal al-Lawz on cave walls has been presented as evidence that the mixed company of Egyptians who came with Israel to Midian created the drawings.

SPLIT ROCK

In order to qualify to be the true Mt. Sinai, we have to have a split rock and a water basin to contain the water as recorded in Exodus 17:6. “I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.” A split rock at Mt. Musa, of immense dimensions, measuring 57 feet in height, leads to a gigantic basin. Hence, Mt. Musa is consistent with all the scriptural record on its geography. At the same time, this is not to say the same phenomenon of water flowing from a major rock crevice may not also have existed at the traditional Mt. Sinai site.

BLACKENED PEAK

Additionally, evidence is presented suggesting the peak of Mt. Musa has charred granite, not volcanic stone or ash, and further that this charring is of divine origin. Here however, the well-known geological phenomenon of “desert varnish” — an oxidizing of the outer layer of rock that darkens it — could easily be mistaken for charring by an untrained eye. Hence, this point has been challenged and at present should be considered a highly speculative argument.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Clearly the Mount of God is one of the most sacred and hallowed spots on earth. Why then the confusion and uncertainty regarding its location? Here, a site far into the hostile territory of present day Saudi Arabia could certainly explain the loss of memory as to the precise location. But wherever the exciting work on this issue may lead, our Savior’s words when asked about worship on another mountain are well to remember. “A time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this Mountain [of Samaria] nor in Jerusalem ... God is a spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:21-24).

— Erwin Kalinski and Richard Doctor

(1) Williams, Larry R., *The Mountain of Moses: The Discovery of Mount Sinai*, Wynwood Press (1990).

(2) Blum, Howard, *The Gold of Exodus*, Pocket Books (1998).

(3) Cornuke, Robert and David Halbrook, *In Search of the Mountain of God: The Discovery of the Real Mt. Sinai*, Broadman & Holman Publishers (2000).

(4) Dawood, N.J., translator, *The Koran, Sura: The table 5:21*, Penguin Classics (1974), p.389.

(5) Pritchard, J.B., *Atlas of the Bible*, Harper Collins (1987) pp. 56-57

(6) Shanks, H., "Religion: On the Trail of the Real Mount Sinai," *Newsweek*, February 23, 1998, p. 56.

(7) McEvedy, C., *Atlas of Ancient History*, Penguin (1979) p. 79

(8) Shanks, H., "Frank Moore Cross — An Interview," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 8/4: (1992) pp. 20-33, 61-63.

(9) Cross, F.M. to Gordon Franz, Private communication, May 21, 2001. The Gordon Franz criticism is found at: "Mt. Sinai is NOT at Jebel al-Lawz in Saudi Arabia," Associates for Biblical Research, www.christiananswers.net/abr/sinai_not_arabia.html

(10) Support for crossing the Exodus crossing at the Gulf of Aqaba
a. "The Red Sea Crossing," Voice of Truth, Inc., Tennessee, USA www.arkdiscovery.com/red_sea_crossing.html

b. "The Red Sea Crossing Site," Copyright 1998, Maranatha Church, Inc., www.versebyverse.org/doctrine/redsea.html

c. "Wyatt Archaeological Research, Red Sea Crossing," Ron Wyatt, Covenant Keepers, www.exchangedlife.com/wyatt/redsea.html

(11) Several other references in support of Jabal al-Lawz may be found at:

www.bibleplus.org/discoveries/redsea.htm

www.bibleplus.org/discoveries/mtsina.html

www.baseinstitute.org/faqs/egyptcontrol.pdf

A Divine Ladder — Which End is Up?

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Romans 8:29, 30).

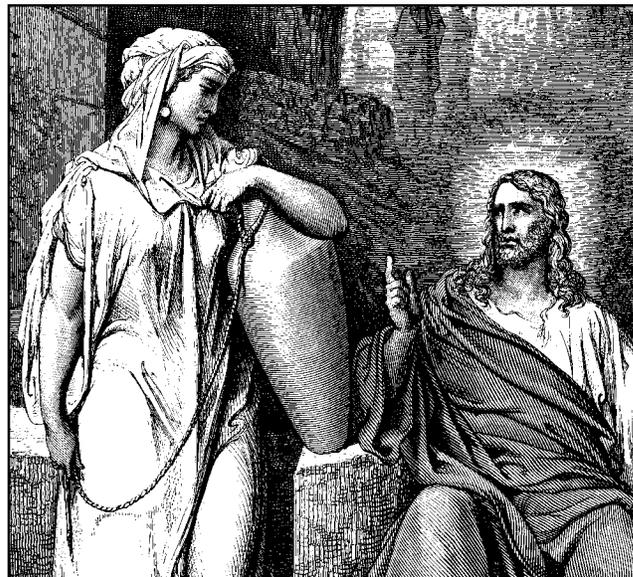
Most students of the Bible concur that these verses show the steps a Christian must take to ascend from earth to heaven — a sort of divine ladder. But there is not a general agreement as to which end is up, whether the steps lead upward or are viewed from the end looking back on the journey. We might paraphrase the two thoughts concerning verse 30 in this manner:

(1) "Moreover whom [as many as] he did predestinate, them he also had previously called; and whom he called he had previously justified, and whom he justified he had previously glorified."

(2) "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and them he called he then justified, and whom he justified, he then glorified."

The position of this author is that of the first paraphrase. This is the same position suggested by Pastor Russell on page 182 of *The New Creation*, Studies in the Scriptures, Volume Six.

If the sense of the Greek is truly that of "as many as," the matter is simple of interpretation since it is obvious that for



A Call to Discipleship

each progressive step upward, there are those who drop out of the race and do not take the next step.

However the sense is somewhat ambiguous for readers who think in English. The verbs in this verse are in the Greek Aorist tense and the Indicative mood. One Greek grammar¹ describes this tense this way. "The aorist tense is characterized by its emphasis on punctiliar action [Editor's note: that is to say, action that takes place at a point in time, *puncta*, Latin]; that is, the concept of the verb is considered without regard for past, present, or future time. There is no direct or clear English equivalent for this tense, though it is generally rendered as a simple past tense in most translations." This could yield support for the steps being viewed as ascending a ladder. Such activity meets the "punctiliar" action demanded by the Aorist. Acknowledging this challenge to our thinking, let us proceed to discuss the goal and the three outlined steps to attain it.

PREDESTINATION

Romans 8:29 uses two similar, yet distinct, terms to describe God's dealings with the church class — foreknowledge and predestination. The relationship between these two terms might be well described by the modern illustration of an entrepreneur submitting a business plan to potential investors in order to obtain venture capital. In his plan he describes the various types of employees he needs to operate the company. He then proceeds to give a job description for each of the positions that will be required for the operation to succeed. The first of these steps, planning for the various positions, corresponds to the foreknowledge of our text; while the second, of outlining the job descriptions, matches the thought of predestination.

Both the foreknowledge and the predestination relate to the classes of people needed and not to the specific individuals who will eventually fill them. Thus predestination relates to the *ultimate requirements* of those whom God knows

will be needed for his plan to achieve the greatest success. It is the objective of those who will be eventually put to his employ.

CALLED

The calling, in our modern illustration, corresponds to the businessman offering the job to the one who meets the predetermined qualifications. No man can be employed who is not invited to accept a position in a firm. So, scripturally, we read in Hebrews 5:4, “And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”

Using the illustration of the Tabernacle, this calling is identified with the consecration needed to proceed from the court into the holy compartment and proceed there with the priestly work.

JUSTIFIED

These, however, must be previously justified. The Apostle Paul speaks of two types of justification in Romans 4 and 5 — justification by faith and justification by blood. The first was the type of justification available in Old Testament times. For instance, Abraham was justified by his faith (Romans 4:1-3). It is this justification that enabled him to be called “the friend of God” (James 2:23). Similarly, the apostles were called “friends” even before the spirit descended on them at Pentecost (John 15:13-15).

However, when the Apostle mentions blood justification he precedes it with the phrase, “Much more then,” and goes on to say, “being **now** justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Romans 5:9). Similarly, in Romans 5:2, after describing how we are justified by faith, he says “By whom **also** by faith we have access into this grace wherein we stand.” The word “also” implies that our present standing is in addition to that obtained by the justification of faith.

Using the Tabernacle picture again, this is the condition that those in the court have obtained as a result of their faith in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus. It is to acknowledge this that baptismal candidates affirmatively answer the question, “Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal savior?”

GLORIFIED

The Greek word *doxadzo* [Strong's 1392], translated “glorified,” is used 123 times in the New Testament. The word is most frequently used of men glorifying or praising God. While it is used of the glorification of both Jesus and the church to their heavenly reward, it often refers to honors received here on earth. The word simply means to praise or honor. The following examples will suffice to show its usage of honors bestowed while on the earth.

“And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all” (Luke 4:15). “When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby” (John 11:4).

In light of this breadth of meaning, we suggest that the thought of the word in our text is the honor bestowed on one

with whom God is dealing by bringing them in contact with his drawing influences. This concept is well phrased in the aforementioned quotation from *The New Creation*, page 182: “And these justified ones must previously, before their justification, have been honored [not “glorified” as in the common version] — honored by God in having sent to them a knowledge of himself and of his dear Son — the Way, the Truth and the Life. It is more of an honor than many have supposed, even to hear of the grace of God in the present time.” In the Tabernacle illustration, the steps of one approaching the gate of the court show this.

SUMMARY

In summary, there are two well-defined and organized opinions on this verse. We suggest that there is compelling logic to say that the step of the predestinated ones being called is the topmost one in the ladder of our theme verse.

— Carl Hagensick

(1) The Hebrew/Greek morphology tool in On-Line Bible.

Thanksgiving in our Hearts

Is there a method for cultivating mindfulness?

The one we may choose is gratefulness, which can be practiced, cultivated, learned. And as we grow in gratefulness, we grow in mindfulness. With our waking thoughts and prayers, as our eyes greet the morning, we may remind ourselves that we have eyes to see while millions of our human brothers and sisters are blind in their literal sight — and billions in their spiritual sight. When we then open our eyes with this thought, chances are that we will be more grateful for the gift of sight and more alert to the needs of those who lack that gift.

Before turning off the light in the evening, we may jot down one thing for which we never before have given grateful thanksgiving. One of the Lord's dear ones has done this for years, and testifies that the supply still seems inexhaustible. Gratefulness brings joy to life. Once we stop “taking for granted,” there is no end to the surprises and delight we may find. A grateful attitude is a creative one, and a giving one, because, in the final analysis, opportunity is the gift within the gift of every moment — the opportunity to see and hear and smell and touch and taste with pleasure. Everything is a gift. Grateful living is a celebration of these gifts. There is no more joyful bond than the one that gratefulness celebrates, the bond between our Heavenly Father, the giver, and we, the thanksgivers.

St. Paul assured his beloved brethren in Corinth that thanksgiving leads to liberality and sharing of God's gifts, concluding his thoughts with: “Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:15).

— Adapted, David Steindl-Rast, “Before Turning out the Lights”