

1

00:00:00,458 --> 00:00:17,543

This series presents information based in part on theory and conjecture.

2

00:00:17,543 --> 00:00:22,064

The producer's purpose is to suggest some possible explanations but not necessarily

3

00:00:22,064 --> 00:00:30,867

the only ones to the mysteries we will examine.

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00:00:30,867 --> 00:00:36,529

Sunrise at Mount Sinai. The mountain long thought to be the place where Moses

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00:00:36,529 --> 00:00:43,791

received the Ten Commandments. Thousands of tourists come here each year making

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00:00:43,791 --> 00:00:49,273

the pilgrimage to the site of that great biblical event. Have they all been

7

00:00:49,273 --> 00:00:52,714

coming to the wrong place?

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00:01:04,837 --> 00:01:10,439

The wilderness of Sinai is a land sacred to Jews and Christians all over the

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00:01:10,439 --> 00:01:18,921

world. According to the Bible, Moses received the Ten Commandments somewhere in

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00:01:18,921 --> 00:01:28,124

Sinai more than 3,000 years ago. A barren peninsula, ironically it has long

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00:01:28,124 --> 00:01:34,206

been one of the most strategic spots on earth. The Sinai is the land bridge

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00:01:34,206 --> 00:01:39,448

between Asia and Africa. Alexander the Great crossed it with his army in seven

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00:01:39,448 --> 00:01:46,050

days. Roman Emperor Titus took only five. Modern armor rolls over it in a few

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00:01:46,050 --> 00:01:52,772

hours. It has been fought over more than any other place in history.

15

00:01:56,253 --> 00:02:02,815

The Sinai is the same today as it was in the time of the Bible. Bedouin tribesmen

16

00:02:02,815 --> 00:02:07,536

lead a nomadic existence almost identical to that of the Israelites who

17

00:02:07,536 --> 00:02:13,978

went on the Exodus. How did the Israelites survive that famous passage

18

00:02:14,018 --> 00:02:20,660

through the Sinai? Modern Bedouin have learned that no single area can support

19

00:02:20,660 --> 00:02:26,882

them for long. It seems strange therefore that the Bible says more than two million

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00:02:26,882 --> 00:02:35,704

Israelites were camped at Mount Sinai for ten months. But where is the mountain?

21

00:02:36,385 --> 00:02:40,786

The search must begin with the Old Testament which is where the story of

22

00:02:40,826 --> 00:02:46,067

the Exodus was first told. Moses was born in Egypt to a family of Hebrew slaves.

23

00:02:46,067 --> 00:02:51,749

When he was a teenager he killed an Egyptian slave driver and fled into the

24

00:02:51,749 --> 00:02:57,231

wilderness. For 60 years he lived in the desert and as best we can tell that

25

00:02:57,231 --> 00:03:06,514

desert was the Sinai. Moses spent those years as a shepherd. 60 years of solitude,

26

00:03:06,874 --> 00:03:11,835

60 years during which he was exposed to the elemental forces of the desert.

27

00:03:16,837 --> 00:03:22,118

The Bible itself describes the time when Moses first arrived at Mount Sinai and

28

00:03:22,118 --> 00:03:27,920

Moses led the flock unto the farthest end of the wilderness and came to the

29

00:03:27,920 --> 00:03:35,162

mountain of God. Moses was about to come upon the burning bush. A biblical

30

00:03:35,202 --> 00:03:39,523

legend says that he was looking for a stray from his flock on the holy mountain.

31

00:03:39,523 --> 00:03:45,365

His compassion for the young animal apparently convinced the Lord to speak.

32

00:03:45,365 --> 00:03:52,807

Draw not hither, put off thy shoes from thy feet, where the place whereon thou

33

00:03:52,807 --> 00:04:04,491

standest is holy ground. Moses had come face to face with his destiny. He was to

34

00:04:04,531 --> 00:04:11,053

return to Egypt, the place where he was born. As a humble shepherd he would walk

35

00:04:11,053 --> 00:04:15,694

into the court of the most powerful monarch of his time and tell him on

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00:04:15,694 --> 00:04:24,377

behalf of an invisible God to let my people go. The Pharaoh refused and Egypt

37

00:04:24,377 --> 00:04:31,259

was assailed by ten plagues. The last plague was said to be the slaying of the

38

00:04:31,299 --> 00:04:39,021

firstborn. Pharaoh was a firstborn son. Desperately he went to Moses and told him

39

00:04:39,021 --> 00:04:40,942

to take his people and leave.

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00:04:40,942 --> 00:05:02,748

The Bible tells us that three months later the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai.

41

00:05:03,749 --> 00:05:09,230

Moses was called to the mountain to receive the ten commandments.

42

00:05:09,230 --> 00:05:22,634

Where was Mount Sinai? No organized effort was made. No one tried to find it until

43

00:05:22,634 --> 00:05:30,637

1500 years had passed. By then the earliest Chinese dynasties had been founded.

44

00:05:30,637 --> 00:05:38,999

Rome had risen to power and Christ had lived and died. Soon after his death the

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00:05:38,999 --> 00:05:44,761

era of Christian pilgrimage began. Even though more than a millennium had passed

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00:05:44,761 --> 00:05:50,002

since the time of the Exodus, some of those early pilgrims tried to identify

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00:05:50,002 --> 00:05:56,845

Mount Sinai. One particular mountain in the southern Sinai attracted a great

48

00:05:56,885 --> 00:06:04,607

deal of attention. It was Jebel Musa which is Arabic for the mountain of Moses.

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00:06:04,607 --> 00:06:13,890

300 years after Christ was born the monastery of Santa Catarina was founded

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00:06:13,890 --> 00:06:22,052

on the slopes of Jebel Musa. Early Christian pilgrims believed this was the site of

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00:06:22,092 --> 00:06:27,774

the burning bush. Local legend says it's still growing in the monastery courtyard.

52

00:06:27,774 --> 00:06:35,016

The first structure in Santa Catarina was the Church of Transfiguration. It was

53

00:06:35,016 --> 00:06:39,457

built in the fourth century by Helena, a woman who had devoted her life to

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00:06:39,457 --> 00:06:45,419

identifying locations in the Bible. Helena agreed with Jebel Musa's designation as

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00:06:45,659 --> 00:06:54,662

Mount Sinai. We don't know why. Thus in the earliest centuries of Christian history a

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00:06:55,062 --> 00:07:06,225

speculative theory was accepted as an established fact. The Emperor Justinian also

57

00:07:06,225 --> 00:07:12,547

believed that Jebel Musa was Mount Sinai. In the sixth century he added the monastery

58

00:07:12,667 --> 00:07:18,829

walls to protect the monks from invading Turks and Muslims. Until just a few years ago these

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00:07:18,829 --> 00:07:24,791

lifts were the only way in or out. They were raised and lowered from inside the monastery.

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00:07:32,793 --> 00:07:39,515

Santa Catarina's Greek Orthodox monks have survived here for 16 centuries. Each monk prepares

61

00:07:39,555 --> 00:07:44,397

his own meals and is bound only by the daily schedule of eight hours of prayer.

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00:07:58,601 --> 00:08:03,562

The spiritual lives that are led in Santa Catarina end in the House of Bones.

63

00:08:10,324 --> 00:08:16,086

Every monk who ever died at Santa Catarina is here, presided over by St. Stephen.

64

00:08:17,607 --> 00:08:24,329

Stephen was found in this position 1500 years ago at the top of the steps of repentance near

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00:08:24,329 --> 00:08:31,851

Jebel Musa's summit. He spent his life listening to visitors' confessions before they climbed to

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00:08:31,851 --> 00:08:39,053

the top of the mountain. Jebel Musa looks down on a valley called Erecha.

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00:08:39,853 --> 00:08:48,016

Which means the resting place. If Jebel Musa is Mount Sinai then the Israelites waited here while

68

00:08:48,016 --> 00:08:55,378

Moses climbed the mountain. The Bible says that Moses spent 40 days atop Mount Sinai.

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00:08:56,338 --> 00:09:02,500

When he didn't return quickly enough the Israelites below began to worship the golden calf.

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00:09:02,740 --> 00:09:10,022

Building a false god so soon after the miracles of the Exodus was a terrible breach of faith.

71

00:09:11,863 --> 00:09:17,144

The monks of Santa Catarina believe the spot is marked with this natural form in the granite.

72

00:09:22,426 --> 00:09:27,067

The fact that the monks believe Jebel Musa is Mount Sinai doesn't make it so.

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00:09:27,948 --> 00:09:35,070

Legend no matter how old is not proof. What exactly happened 1600 years ago

74

00:09:35,070 --> 00:09:41,312

that caused Jebel Musa to be called Mount Sinai? The first time we are hearing about

75

00:09:41,952 --> 00:09:47,073

Jebel Musa as Mount Sinai is in the Byzantine period. It means in the fourth century, the

76

00:09:47,073 --> 00:09:53,635

beginning of this period, while quite a lot of monks, hermits, came to the area of St. Catherine,

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00:09:53,635 --> 00:10:02,278

but is now St. Catherine and they begin to live there. For almost 10 years Avnegorin was in charge

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00:10:02,278 --> 00:10:08,840

of all archaeological sites in the Sinai. From the archaeological point of view the difficulty

79

00:10:08,840 --> 00:10:17,402

in located Mount Sinai is the fact that the children of Israel who left Egypt over 3000 years ago

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00:10:18,363 --> 00:10:27,165

were nomads and like the Bedouin in Sinai in recent times and the nomads left almost no remains

81

00:10:27,165 --> 00:10:35,408

behind them. Gorin is pointing out a basic problem. So far no physical evidence of the Exodus has been

82

00:10:35,408 --> 00:10:44,050

found. What the Hebrew nomads left behind has probably vanished. It means that even if a Mount

83

00:10:44,130 --> 00:10:52,853

Moses or any other mountain was Mount Sinai, we will not discover any remains around it and as

84

00:10:52,853 --> 00:11:02,376

archaeologists we will never be able to say where was this mountain. It is possible that Jebel Musa

85

00:11:02,376 --> 00:11:09,898

is Mount Sinai. It is also possible that Mount Sinai is any one of a thousand other peaks in the

86

00:11:09,898 --> 00:11:19,661

peninsula. There is simply no proof to support Jebel Musa's claim as the Holy Mountain. Remains of

87

00:11:19,661 --> 00:11:26,143

the earliest Hebrews have been found 60 miles northwest of Santa Catarina in a place that was

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00:11:26,143 --> 00:11:34,706

already called the Land of God at the time of the Exodus. Could this be the place where Moses received

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00:11:34,706 --> 00:11:47,029

the Ten Commandments? Jericho was the first city the Israelites reached after they entered the

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00:11:47,029 --> 00:11:55,752

Promised Land. Its archaeological remains are as old as the Exodus. The Israelites left no such

91

00:11:55,752 --> 00:12:01,834

remains when they crossed the Sinai. That makes retracing their steps extremely difficult.

92

00:12:02,154 --> 00:12:09,116

A common misconception holds that the Israelites spent 40 years wandering through the wilderness.

93

00:12:09,996 --> 00:12:16,958

But the Bible tells us they wandered in the Sinai for only two years. The other 38 years were spent

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00:12:16,958 --> 00:12:23,680

at an oasis not far from the Promised Land. If we knew the route the Israelites followed,

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00:12:23,680 --> 00:12:27,361

we would be much closer to locating Mount Sinai itself.

96

00:12:28,322 --> 00:12:35,444

There are different theories for the route of the Exodus, but they all share the same starting

97

00:12:35,444 --> 00:12:42,486

point. The northeastern section of the Nile Delta, what the Bible called the Land of Goshen.

98

00:12:46,567 --> 00:12:53,209

The Hebrews had migrated to Egypt during a time of famine in their homeland. They prospered until

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00:12:53,209 --> 00:12:59,531

they came to power, a Pharaoh who enslaved them to help rebuild Egypt after a devastating foreign

100

00:12:59,531 --> 00:13:08,013

occupation. One of the cities the Hebrews slaves built was the starting point of the Exodus.

101

00:13:09,774 --> 00:13:17,536

The city of Ramseys was a bustling metropolis more than 3,000 years ago. If the generally

102

00:13:17,536 --> 00:13:23,378

accepted theory about the date of the Exodus is correct, the Pharaoh confronted by Moses would have been

103

00:13:24,338 --> 00:13:25,539

Ramseys II.

104

00:13:37,222 --> 00:13:41,383

Ramseys built more cities and monuments than any other Egyptian monarch.

105

00:13:41,864 --> 00:13:47,785

As the third ruler of the 19th dynasty, he was the beneficiary of the Pharaohs before him,

106

00:13:47,785 --> 00:13:52,427

who had brought Egyptian culture to a peak of vibrancy and power.

107

00:13:55,308 --> 00:14:02,030

The Hebrew revolt must have come as a severe blow.

108

00:14:02,430 --> 00:14:12,673

By the time the Hebrew slaves left Egypt, they had undoubtedly absorbed a certain amount of Egyptian religion.

109

00:14:16,434 --> 00:14:22,676

The mountain in Sinai, where they went to receive the Ten Commandments, might have been an Egyptian place of worship,

110

00:14:23,316 --> 00:14:26,277

a mountain in the desert that was already sacred.

111

00:14:26,997 --> 00:14:32,119

There is such a place in the southern Sinai. In 1762, a Danish traveler named Carsten Niebuhr

112

00:14:32,919 --> 00:14:38,040

came to the southwestern Sinai and discovered what the Bedouin had always known.

113

00:14:39,401 --> 00:14:46,523

An Egyptian temple almost 4,000 years old was on a plateau called Serabit El-Kadem.

114

00:14:47,243 --> 00:14:55,486

In the Bible, the nickname, the second name for Mount Sinai is Mount of God.

115

00:14:56,526 --> 00:15:04,208

And in the Egyptian inscriptions in Serabit El-Kadem, the name of the Temple was mentioned.

116

00:15:04,928 --> 00:15:10,930

The second name for Mount Sinai is Mount of God.

117

00:15:12,931 --> 00:15:20,933

And in the Egyptian inscriptions in Serabit and also in other places in Egypt,

118

00:15:20,933 --> 00:15:25,735

the name of the same place is Land of God.

119

00:15:27,015 --> 00:15:30,936

Svi Ilan is a geographical historian at Tel Aviv University.

120

00:15:31,496 --> 00:15:36,778

He has just published a proposal which puts Mount Sinai at Serabit El-Kadem.

121

00:15:37,578 --> 00:15:48,061

This was, as we can imagine, the place of the holy Mount that the Israelites, especially Moses,

122

00:15:48,061 --> 00:15:54,303

knew before, religious center to the shepherds in the Sinai.

123

00:15:55,984 --> 00:16:00,625

Serabit El-Kadem is the only Egyptian temple in the entire Sinai.

124

00:16:01,505 --> 00:16:07,107

If the Hebrew slaves wanted to receive the Ten Commandments at a site already sacred,

125

00:16:07,107 --> 00:16:11,108

then Serabit El-Kadem would have been the ideal location.

126

00:16:14,389 --> 00:16:17,430

The area has been a gathering point throughout the centuries.

127

00:16:24,072 --> 00:16:30,714

The desert floor below Serabit El-Kadem is still used for an annual festival for Bedouin tribes.

128

00:16:30,954 --> 00:16:37,596

From all parts of the Sinai. That means the Bedouin know this as an area that will support life.

129

00:16:38,396 --> 00:16:44,798

The Israelites may have known it too. The Bible says they were camped at Mount Sinai for 10 months.

130

00:16:46,719 --> 00:16:52,080

According to the figures, there must have been at least two million Israelites on the Exodus.

131

00:16:53,761 --> 00:16:57,682

Like the Bedouin, they would have known that they could survive here.

132

00:17:00,963 --> 00:17:11,846

The Egyptian temple at Serabit El-Kadem was begun approximately 700 years before the Exodus took place.

133

00:17:13,927 --> 00:17:19,929

The first part of the temple was the cave of HaTor, who was an important Egyptian deity.

134

00:17:23,370 --> 00:17:26,491

HaTor may have been the inspiration for the Golden Calf.

135

00:17:26,571 --> 00:17:34,573

Although she often appears as a human, that is not her most common form.

136

00:17:37,934 --> 00:17:45,296

In some places in Egypt, you can see HaTor as a golden cow.

137

00:17:46,177 --> 00:17:53,219

For many generations, people thought that the origin of it is Egypt.

138

00:17:53,779 --> 00:18:04,822

Maybe it is a bull apis. But now, if I am right in suggesting Serabit as Mount Sinai,

139

00:18:05,702 --> 00:18:18,186

maybe I can point something more realistic for the Golden Calf. I mean HaTor itself.

140

00:18:19,146 --> 00:18:27,149

While scholarly discussions centers on HaTor, the fundamental question is, were the Israelites here at all?

141

00:18:36,992 --> 00:18:42,193

Temple carvings show Semitic figures on foot, with Egyptians mounted on donkeys.

142

00:18:42,994 --> 00:18:50,196

The Semites in these carvings could have been the Hebrew slaves, since they are obviously subservient to the Egyptians.

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00:18:53,557 --> 00:18:59,638

Still, there is far more startling evidence. It can be found about a mile from the temple.

144

00:19:02,519 --> 00:19:11,162

The entrance to the cave is inconspicuous, easy to miss. In fact, it was only discovered in the last part of the 19th century.

145

00:19:13,163 --> 00:19:20,205

Thousands of years ago, someone carved the first letters in history into the walls of this cave.

146

00:19:23,406 --> 00:19:27,007

These carvings are called the Proto-Synitic inscriptions.

147

00:19:28,127 --> 00:19:31,168

Most of the inscriptions ask for blessings from HaTor.

148

00:19:32,288 --> 00:19:40,051

They represent a landmark in human history because they were carved in characters that are the

earliest forerunners of our own alphabet.

149

00:19:42,291 --> 00:19:47,893

What startled archeologists was a second inscription in a cave nearby.

150

00:19:48,853 --> 00:19:54,455

It implied that religious Hebrews stood on this spot thousands of years ago.

151

00:19:56,135 --> 00:20:02,457

Inscribed on the wall with the characters for the word El, which is the name of the Hebrew God.

152

00:20:02,697 --> 00:20:08,699

The man who carved the name of the Hebrew God at Serabit El-Kadem lived approximately at the time of Moses.

153

00:20:09,659 --> 00:20:13,100

The inscriptions he left behind raised some intriguing questions.

154

00:20:14,221 --> 00:20:19,662

Were some of the inscriptions at Serabit El-Kadem made by the Israelites of the Exodus?

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00:20:20,623 --> 00:20:26,624

And if so, what are the inscriptions that the Israelites carved in the walls of the cave?

156

00:20:26,945 --> 00:20:31,506

Are the inscriptions made by Serabit El-Kadem made by the Israelites of the Exodus?

157

00:20:32,546 --> 00:20:37,268

And if so, are the inscriptions on Mount Sinai itself?

158

00:20:40,229 --> 00:20:46,230

One of the last verses in the Old Testament tells us that no man knows where Moses is buried.

159

00:20:47,351 --> 00:20:49,351

The same thing has held true for Mount Sinai.

160

00:20:50,071 --> 00:20:56,794

Now there is hope that we may soon identify the mountain where Moses changed the course of history.

161

00:21:02,555 --> 00:21:08,637

The Sinai has been the battleground for more than 50 invading armies since the beginning of recorded history.

162

00:21:09,357 --> 00:21:14,799

It has absorbed the ruins of ancient and modern chariots and the ghosts of countless soldiers.

163

00:21:15,279 --> 00:21:23,281

It has been an eye-yielding witness to the fleeting struggles of man and a silent guardian of his oldest religious mysteries.

164

00:21:24,082 --> 00:21:32,244

Soon it may surrender one of his greatest secrets, the true location of Mount Sinai.

165

00:21:32,244 --> 00:21:47,529

Coming up next, agents go hunting for a kidnapper on FBI, the Untold Stories.

166

00:21:48,089 --> 00:21:53,370

Then on History's Crimes and Trials, the story of convicted spies Ethel and Julius Rosenberg

167

00:21:53,370 --> 00:21:58,972

and their controversial execution. And later tonight, History's Mysteries reveals what turned

168

00:21:58,972 --> 00:22:11,056

the Hatfields and McCoys into America's most notorious feuding families at eight.