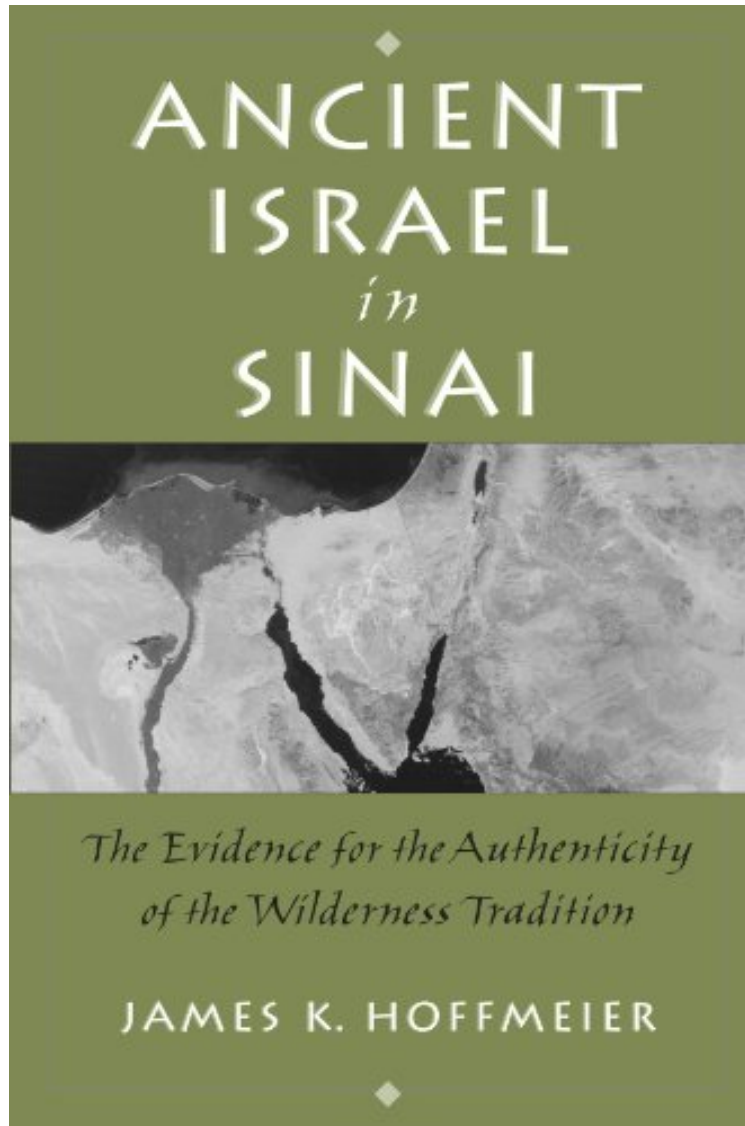


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## Ancient Israel in Sinai: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Tradition

*James Hoffmeier*

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before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ancient Israel in Sinai: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Tradition:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Understanding the Exodus By S. E. Moore As one reviewer on the

back cover has stated, this book should be the standard academic source for the study of Exodus. James Hoffmeier is neither an evangelist trying to convert anyone, nor is he an Indiana Jones wannabe trying to promote his own agenda. He is a serious scholar whose knowledge of ancient Egypt and experience in the field of Egyptian archaeology give him a much deeper understanding of the Exodus than evangelists and adventure seekers. Other scholars have tried to marginalize the biblical account of Israel's Exodus from Egypt by claiming it was based upon mythological stories from surrounding cultures and was written in Judea or Babylon long after the Exodus was supposed to have occurred. Hoffmeier offers a serious challenge to these assumptions by taking a scholarly approach in authenticating the biblical account. Hoffmeier clearly demonstrates that the Exodus narratives are based on first hand accounts that go back to Egypt and Sinai in the second millennium BC. Hoffmeier doesn't go off on flights of fancy by trying to explain the miraculous sea crossing or the theophany on Mount Sinai. He leaves that up to the reader's personal faith. However, by using the Bible as his primary guide, he is able to tell us where these events were most likely to have occurred by backing up the biblical narrative with historical and archaeological data. Hoffmeier reveals how the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant, as described in the Bible, have earlier prototypes in ancient Egypt and that portable shrines of this type were used by Egyptian priests. He also reveals how certain items and implements associated with the Tabernacle and the garments worn by the Levitical priests are named in the Bible with words having an Egyptian etymology. Many of the names of significant individuals recorded in the Torah, particularly from the tribe of Levi, such as Moses, Aaron, Miriam, and Phinehas, are derived from Egyptian names. In addition, Israel's covenant is structured along the same lines as covenants and treaties recorded in ancient Egypt. Hoffmeier clearly demonstrates that the Egyptian influence on Israel would hardly make sense if Israel had never spent a considerable amount of time in Egypt. This is further elaborated in his earlier book, *Israel In Egypt*. In the process of verifying the biblical authenticity of the Exodus account, Hoffmeier debunks the popular and sensational claims regarding Jebel Al Lawz being the real Mount Sinai and the corresponding theory that the sea crossing occurred from the Straits of Tiran into Saudi Arabia. Hoffmeier claims with certainty that if the Bible is to be used as a guide in locating the sea crossing and Mount Sinai, they could not be at the Straits of Tiran and Jebel Al Lawz. Hoffmeier, who knows a lot more about ancient Egyptian history than the people who promote the Jebel Al Lawz theory, demonstrates how ancient Egypt's eastern frontier was in the Bitter Lakes region where they built fortresses and canals to defend against marauding Canaanite tribes from the east and that the Sinai Peninsula was never considered part of ancient Egypt. In addition, the geological history of that region indicates that the Bitter Lakes were at one time substantial bodies of water. The Bible describes the location of the sea crossing with the terms Migdol, Pi-Hahiroth, and Baal Zephon. The exact locations described by these terms have been lost over time but Hoffmeier explains their meanings. Migdol refers to a fortress, Pi-Hahiroth refers to an area where a canal empties into a larger body of water, and Baal Zephon refers to a Canaanite deity. There is archaeological evidence of ancient fortresses and canals in the Bitter Lakes region which can't be found at the Straits of Tiran. In addition, Canaanites tried to invade Egypt in the Bitter Lakes region. There is no evidence of Canaanite presence near the Straits of Tiran. Hoffmeier also points out that the Israelites' travel itinerary in the Book of Numbers from the sea crossing to Mount Sinai roughly corresponds to the distance between the Bitter Lakes and the traditional Mount Sinai (Jebel Musa). Hoffmeier does not claim to know the exact location of the real Mount Sinai but that the Bible clearly points to the southern Sinai Peninsula as its location. He expresses doubts about Jebel Musa due to the lack of an adjacent plain suitable to encamp a multitude of people for any length of time. However, he identifies two adjacent peaks which are possible candidates. For anyone having a serious intellectual interest in understanding the Exodus as it is recorded in the Bible, this is the source.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great scholarship with real archeology  
By Peterson  
Great scholarship with real archeology, yet not on a quest to tear down the Bible. Just honest assessment of the recent discoveries.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. excellent review of evidence for the Exodus  
By Roland Ludlam  
This is an excellent sequel to Hoffmeier's book on Israel in Egypt. I especially appreciated the more recent evidence that he presents regarding everything from the geography of the exodus journey to the name of God in the desert tradition. I highly recommend both books for a student of Torah and the Exodus.

In his pathbreaking *Israel in Egypt* James K. Hoffmeier sought to refute the claims of scholars who doubt the historical accuracy of the biblical account of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt. Analyzing a wealth of textual, archaeological, and geographical evidence, he put forth a thorough defense of the biblical tradition. Hoffmeier now turns his attention to the Wilderness narratives of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. As director of the North Sinai Archaeological Project, Hoffmeier has led several excavations that have uncovered important new evidence supporting the Wilderness narratives, including a major New Kingdom fort at Tell el-Borg that was occupied during the Israelite exodus. Hoffmeier employs these archaeological findings to shed new light on the route of the exodus from Egypt. He also investigates the location of Mount Sinai, and offers a rebuttal to those who have sought to locate it in northern Arabia and not in the Sinai peninsula as traditionally thought. Hoffmeier addresses how and when the Israelites could have lived in Sinai, as well as whether it would have been possible for Moses to write down the law received at Mount Sinai. Building on the new evidence for the Israelite sojourn in Egypt, Hoffmeier explores the Egyptian influence on

the Wilderness tradition. For example, he finds Egyptian elements in Israelite religious practices, including the use of the tabernacle, and points to a significant number of Egyptian personal names among the generation of the exodus. The origin of Israel is a subject of much debate and the wilderness tradition has been marginalized by those who challenge its credibility. In *Ancient Israel in Sinai*, Hoffmeier brings the Wilderness tradition to the forefront and makes a case for its authenticity based on solid evidence and intelligent analysis.

"Egyptologist and ancient Near Eastern scholar, James K. Hoffmeier, has produced an important work for the ongoing study of Israel's wilderness traditions. It is an excellent example of the integration of archaeology, philology, religion, history and biblical studies by a scholar who has demonstrated over the years his outstanding abilities in all these matters. While it gives an up-to-date accounting of what is known about Israel's wilderness traditions, it makes important contributions to the study of the toponymy and history of ancient Egypt's eastern frontier, as well as that of ancient Sinai. There can be no doubt that this volume will become the standard work in these areas for years to come." --K. Lawson Younger, Jr., co-editor of *Mesopotamia and the Bible: Comparative Explorations*"Biblical Scholarship and Egyptology are brought together with uncommon skill in this important study. The book contains a wealth of evidence which is as fascinating as it is well-researched." --Richard H. Wilkinson, Professor and Director, Egyptian Expedition, The University of Arizona"As the director of numerous archaeological surveys in North Sinai and current excavations at Tell el-Borg, James Hoffmeier is one of the world's foremost authorities on Egypt's northern border defenses during the New Kingdom (c. 1550-1069 B.C.). Any new work of his will be read with interest by Egyptologists and biblical scholars alike." -- Ellen F. Morris, Department of Classics, Ancient History, and Egyptology, University of Wales Swansea"Hoffmeier furnishes a sophisticated fresh approach to the Biblical Exodus traditions filled with detailed Egyptological background, and utterly indispensable because of its basis in recent, and in many cases as yet unpublished, archaeological data. This is a virtual encyclopedia of the Exodus." -- Baruch Halpern, Chaiken Family Chair in Jewish Studies, Penn State>About the AuthorProfessor of Old Testament and Near Eastern Archaeology, Trinity International University. He is the author of *Israel in Egypt* (OUP 1997).