

**The Land of the Promise: History is His-Story Joshua 1:1-5 FBC Canton Sunday
am September 25, 2022**

Introduction: The only way history helps us is by learning from history.

**“Those who fail to
learn from history
are doomed to repeat it”**

- Winston Churchill



True then, true now

Genesis: God created all, from all he called a man to follow him.

Exodus: The man had a family they went down into the bondage of Egypt, and they came out a nation only after the blood was applied.

Leviticus: The new nation learned about how to fellowship and worship the One True God.

Numbers: The new nation was led the land of the promise as test of their new faith, they failed that test and wandered for 40 years.

Psalm 95

Today, if you will hear His voice: ⁸“Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, As *in* the day of trial in the wilderness, ⁹When your fathers tested Me; They tried Me, though they saw My work. ¹⁰For forty years I was grieved with *that* generation, And said, ‘It is a people who go astray in their hearts, And they do not know My ways.’ ¹¹So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’

Hebrews 3:12-19

¹²Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; ¹³but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, ¹⁵while it is said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” ¹⁶For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, *was it* not all who came out of Egypt, *led* by Moses? ¹⁷Now with whom was He angry forty years? *Was it* not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? ¹⁹So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Deuteronomy: the leader of the nation leaves but the walk of faith continues.

God has always changed his great leaders, but he has never changed what the great leaders pursued; the promises. Matthew 28:16-20

Joshua: the nation is tested again and wins!

What can we learn from their history that will change our present?

- I. **God's children are always on a journey of faith to attain the promises. v. 1-2, Romans 1:16-17**¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "*The just shall live by faith.*"
 - a. **Past defeats do not stop present victories...if our hearts are changed. Numbers 14:20-25**
 - i. 20 Then the LORD said: "I have pardoned, according to your word; 21 but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD — 22 because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, 23 they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it. 24 But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it. 25 Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valley; tomorrow turn and move out into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea.
 - b. **Only unbelief keeps them from attaining His promises. Hebrews 11:1,6.** No one would be able to stand before them!!! v. 4
 - 1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. 4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. 6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.
- II. **God's children were always meant to be in the land of the promise. It was never an 'if' it was always a 'when.'** v. 3-4
 - a. **God's gifts always need to be received to be actualized in our lives. Romans 6:23**
 - i. every place that the sole of their feet would tread, would be theirs!
 - ii. George Wilson Refuses Pardon from Death Penalty: Today, Good Friday, the day we commemorate the death of Christ on the cross, our pastor shared the story of George Wilson. He was charged

with “robbing the mail and putting the life of the carrier in jeopardy.” (United States v. Wilson, 7 pet. 150 1833) And was sentenced to hang. But fortunately for George there was a saving grace. The U.S. President pardoned him. Strangely though, George Wilson refused the pardon. Chief Justice John Marshall had to decide the case and found: “A pardon is a deed, to the validity of which delivery is essential, and delivery is not complete without acceptance. It may then be rejected by the person to whom it is tendered; and if it be rejected, we have discovered no power in a court to force it on him.” (United States v. Wilson, 7 pet. 150 1833) George Wilson, against the President’s will, was hanged. You, and I, and every other living person on the planet find ourselves in the same position as George Wilson. God’s standard is perfection. If you have any doubt of that just read Christ’s teaching from the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew Ch 5) With that unattainable standard in place, every one of us falls short, every one of us is found guilty. But, fortunately, like the case of George Wilson, there’s a saving grace. Yes you and I are guilty, yes you and I are sentenced to hell for it, but, God has pardoned us. He’s provided the sacrifice of His Son in your place, and in my place, and in the place of every person on earth, to provide for us a pardon from our guilt. You have only to accept it. You can go to hell, God says. But if you do, you’ll have to do it over My dead body — over the dead body of Jesus Christ. Rejecting His sacrifice on your behalf is like Wilson’s rejection of the President’s pardon. Accept His pardon. There’s just no reason to hang back.

Conclusion: The land of the promise was never a destination it was always meant to be hub. Jonah...not leave you or forsake you. v. 5

Chuck Smith: Sermon Notes for Joshua 1

"POSSESSING OUR POSSESSIONS"

I. MOSES MY SERVANT IS DEAD: NOW THEREFORE ARISE, GO OVER THIS JORDAN.

A. Moses' name synonymous with law.

1. Not allowed to lead Israel into promise.

B. Man's best unaided efforts cannot lead to life of blessing.

II. THE PROMISE OF POSSESSION.

A. Land legally theirs.

1. Promise to Abraham [Gen. 15:18](#). "Unto thy seed have I given the Land."

2. Promise not "I will give."

3. Theirs the moment promise made.

4. Many blessings legally ours by gift.

a. Must be appropriated.

III. THE PREPARATION FOR POSSESSION.

A. Nations to be conquered strong.

B. Joshua must be prepared.

1. Divine side.

a. Assurance of Divine Enduement. vs. 5a.

b. Promise of Divine presence vs. 5b.

c. Affirmation of Divine faithfulness vs. 5c.

2. Human Side.

a. Told to be strong and of good courage vs. 6.

1. Courage must be in God.

"Be strong implied that he felt weak."

"Be of good courage implied that he felt afraid."

"Be not dismayed implied he was dismayed."

b. Commanded to meditate on Word. vs. 8,9.

"Whatsoever a man soweth."

C. Preparation for people.

1. Change of diet v. 11.

IV. PRINCIPLES OF POSSESSION.

A. Dispossession [Num. 33:53](#).

1. Failure would bring defeat 33:55.

2. Wicked nations in heart - Pride, jealousy, impurity, dishonesty, ill temper.

3. "I've tried but I can't do it." God can. [Ex. 33](#) "And the Lord said "I will drive out the Canaanite, the Ammonite, the Hittite."

a. Let Him do it.

B. Appropriation.

1. "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you." vs. 3.

2. Many unclaimed blessings.

C. Progression (not required to possess whole at once.) [Deut. 7:22](#).

V. THE PERILS OF POSSESSION.

A. Partial Possession.

1. Event of time of David.

B. Non-Possession - Reuben, Gad, half of Manasseh.

1. First to fall.

2. Source of trouble for Israel.

a. Two separate nations.

3. Their descendants the Gaderenes.

"THE MAN GOD USES"

Intro: We all desire to be used by God, to be an instrument in His hand, to be called upon by God for some special task. Wrong concept - talented men.

I. FIRST QUALIFICATION-FAITHFULNESS VS. 1.

(Minister)

A. He was Moses' "minister."

1. Word minister - servant.

2. He was content to play second fiddle to Moses.

a. Most people are too big for God to use.

- b. Too full of their own schemes.
 - c. They have their own way of doing things.
- B. He was a long time in training.
 - 1. 40 yrs. in Egyptian bondage.
 - 2. One of the spies; Endured wilderness, led in defeat of Amelekites.
 - 3. After eighty years of faithful behind the scenes service God said "Moses my servant is dead" vs.2.
 - 4. Who can know what God is preparing you for?
 - a. We often complain over our present service.
 - b. We think we are capable of more & bigger things.
 - 5. This time of training is essential.
 - a. We must serve before we can reign.
 - b. We must descend before we can ascend.
 - c. God's will never comes through big things. If we will be faithful in the smallest tasks. Hallow them.
 - 6. Jesus an excellent example.
 - a. Thirty years in obscurity.
 - 1. Worked in carpenter's shop.
 - 2. Attended church every Sabbath. (dead)
 - b. One day He stepped forth & was baptized, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am WELL PLEASED."

II. THE SECOND - A DISTINCT CALL VS. 5 - 6.

- A. Joshua knew perils ahead of them.
 - 1. A man who is called is invincible.
- B. The supreme question for your fulfilling any office or place of service:
 - 1. Not are you qualified.
 - 2. Are you called?
- C. Are you seeking a place of power & prominence?
 - 1. You better get right with God. (Simon)
 - 2. We need men broken in Spirit whose only desire is to serve for the glory of God.
- D. If God will give us humble men broken in spirit but assured of their call.
 - 1. Rivers in front of us, God will dry them up.
 - 2. High wall cities, God will bring down the walls.
 - 3. Giants, God will drive them out before us.
- E. Christ was certain of His call.
 - 1. I came not to do my own will, etc.
 - 2. "I delight to do They will O God."
 - 3. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me.

III. THIRD - THE INDWELLING OF THE WORD OF GOD VS. 8.

- A. Thou shalt meditate therein day & night (no shortcut to holiness).
 - 1. No leader is more effective than when he is alone with God on his knees.
 - 2. More is accomplished behind closed doors than out in open. (more victories won in closet than on the battlefield...)
- B. Jesus manifested rich knowledge of Word.
 - 1. His life permeated with God's Word.
 - a. Used it to prove arguments.
 - b. To resist temptations.
 - c. To guide the conduct of life.
 - d. To illustrate truth.

Do you desire God to use your life? Be faithful, fill yourself with the Word & when He is ready, you will hear a call.

GOD'S COMMISSION TO JOSHUA

A. Introduction: A survey of the history of Israel from Egypt to Canaan.

1. Israel was delivered from Egypt's degrading bondage.

- a. These were historical events, but they were not only historical. God speaks through history to give an example of our deliverance from the degrading bondage of sin (as Paul makes clear in [1 Corinthians 10:6](#) and [10:11](#)).
- b. The central act of redemption in the New Testament is the work of Jesus on the cross. The central act of redemption in the Old Testament is the deliverance of Israel from Egypt.

2. Israel, led by Moses, wandered in the Sinai wilderness.

- a. During that time, Israel experienced supernatural providence such as the supply of manna, water from rocks, the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, and so forth.
- b. During that time, they also received Divine revelation — the Mosaic Law. God communicated to them His holy standard.

3. The land of Canaan represents the destination of God's people after they have been set free from degrading bondage.

- a. This is not our ultimate destination, as some well-known hymns would have it. Those hymns suggest that Canaan represents heaven.

- i. As the lines to [Swing Low, Sweet Chariot](#) go:

I looked over Jordan, and what did I see

Comin' for to carry me home?

A band of angels, coming after me

Comin' for to carry me home.

- b. Biblically, the land over the Jordan — the Promised Land — does not speak of heaven. [Hebrews 3-4](#) shows Canaan as a picture of the rest and victory that can be enjoyed by every believer.

- i. In this sense, F. B. Meyer connects the book of Joshua with the book of Ephesians. Both describe a spiritual walk of promise, wealth, and victory that is ours with Jesus.

- c. This also shows that the deliverance from Egypt was only in preparation for the enjoyment of Canaan. In our Christian life, we are brought out of sin so that we might be brought in to abundant life. The wilderness is never God's intended destination for us.

d. Even as an entire generation of Israel died in the wilderness, so many Christians die in the desert dryness of spiritual experience, never walking in the fullness of what God has for them.

4. The leader: Joshua as a type of Jesus.

a. Remember that the Greek name **Jesus** simply translates the Hebrew name **Joshua**. Their names are identical. Whatever Israel received in the Promised Land, they received through the hand of Joshua; whatever we receive from God we receive through Jesus Christ, our Joshua.

B. God commissions Joshua's work.

1. (**Joshua 1:1**) **Moses is dead, and God speaks to Joshua.**

After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying:

- a. **After the death of Moses**: Moses (who exemplified the law of God) could not lead Israel into the land of promise and rest. This all happens **after the death of Moses**.
- b. **The Lord spoke to Joshua**: Joshua — who was not a young man at this time — had spent his entire career previously as the **assistant** of Moses. Joshua found that now it was his time to lead, but only after God had prepared him.
- c. **Moses' assistant**: Joshua was prepared by faithful service in small things, in being Moses' assistant. Redpath tells of a motto over a kitchen sink: "Divine service is conducted here three times daily." The motto is true, and great men and women are prepared by faithfulness in the small things.

2. (**Joshua 1:2-3**) **Am giving and have given.**

"Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them; the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses."

- a. **Your foot...I have given you**: Entrance into the land of Canaan was entrusted to a representative. Joshua was the trustee of the land for the people. In the same way, our representative Jesus goes before us and what we have in God we possess in Him.
- b. **I have given you**: The whole land was given, but they could only possess that which they claimed (**every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you**). What they took must be fought for against determined opposition.

i. God certainly could have simply eliminated all their enemies with a mere thought, but He called Israel into partnership with Himself to see His will done.

ii. Because taking the land took **effort**, the challenge ahead was not for those content with Egypt, but for those who would press ahead for what God had called them to.

3. (Joshua 1:4-5) The promise: victory is assured because Joshua is called by God. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. No man shall **be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, **so** I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.**

- a. **From the wilderness...as far as the great river**: The precise territory of the land is described. This was no “pie in the sky” promise. It described real land with real boundaries.
- b. **I will be with you**: Victory is assured not because Joshua is a great leader, or because Israel is a great nation, but because God is a great God, and He says to Joshua, **I will be with you**. This is enough for any man seeking to do God’s will.

4. (Joshua 1:6-9) The conditions of the promise of victory. Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God **is with you wherever you go.**

- a. **Be strong and of good courage**: Joshua is called to boldness in God. This exposes Joshua’s weakness; there was a **need** for such a command because even a great leader like Joshua needed such encouragement.

i. This bold courage would not be in Joshua himself, but in God. We can be full of self-confidence that will take us to ruin, but we should instead be full of a genuine God-confidence.

- b. **That you may observe to do according to all the law**: Joshua must take great care to observe the law. God’s word and Joshua’s commitment to it would be the pillars supporting his success.
- c. **To all the law**: Joshua did not only need to read God’s word. It had to be on his **lips** (**shall not depart from your mouth**), in his **mind** (**meditate in it day and night**), and he had to **do** it (**observe to do according to all that is written**).
- d. **For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success**: God’s word so lived is a guarantee of Christian success. Not that it promises a life without

problems, but it does ensure a life able to deal with anything because it takes full advantage of God's presence and promises.

i. And **Christian** success is not measured by the same standards as the world's success. Even if the world accounts us as **sheep for the slaughter**, we are actually **more than conquerors through Him who loved us** (**Romans 8:36-37**).

e. **For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go**: The final encouragement, repeated from **Joshua 1:5**, reminds us that Joshua's success did not depend solely on his ability to keep God's word. It depended even more on God's presence with him.

C. Preparations to cross the Jordan.

1. (**Joshua 1:10-11**) Command to the officers.

Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, "Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess.'"

a. **For within three days**: The waiting for God is often the most difficult part for us, but days of waiting are always days of preparation in God's work. There is no **wasted** time with God.

2. (**Joshua 1:12-15**) Reminder to the eastern tribes.

And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh Joshua spoke, saying, "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, 'The Lord your God is giving you rest and is giving you this land.' Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan. But you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them, until the Lord has given your brethren rest, as He **gave you, and they also have taken possession of the land which the Lord your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and enjoy it, which Moses the Lord's servant gave you on this side of the Jordan toward the sunrise."**

a. **And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh Joshua spoke**: These tribes which decided to settle on the east side of the Jordan river (land that Israel had already conquered) had promised to cross over and help the rest of the nation take the land on the west side of the Jordan River (**Numbers 32:16-32**).

b. **But you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them**: This same principle operates in the Body of Christ. When one member has a need, it is the common need of the body (**1 Corinthians 12:25-26**). We should never refuse to help a brother in need because **our** own state is settled.

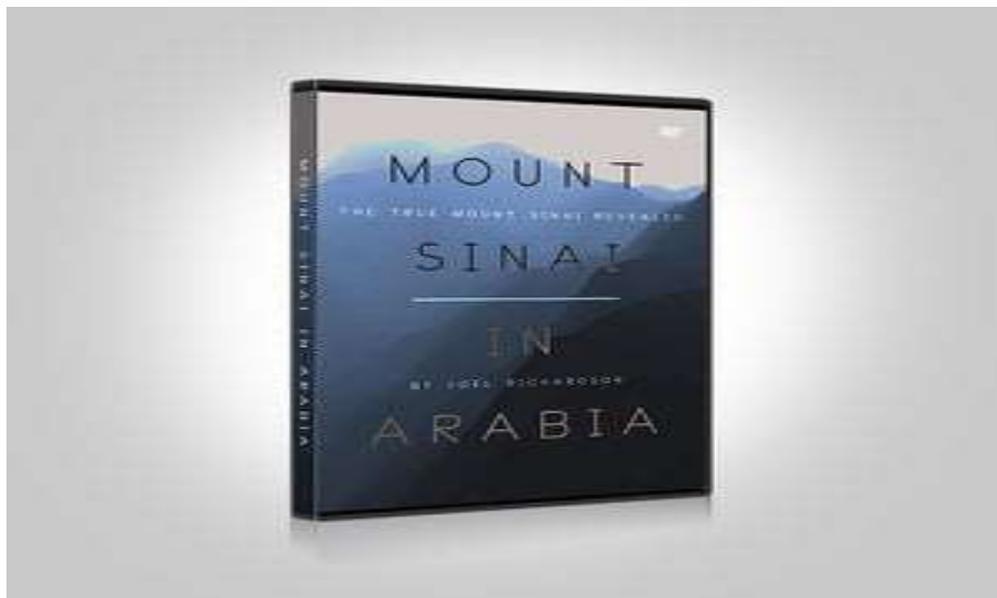
3. (**Joshua 1:16-18**) The eastern tribes promise their allegiance to Joshua.

So they answered Joshua, saying, “All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only the Lord your God be with you, as He was with Moses. Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage.”

- a. **All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go**: Here we see Israel in the kind of unity as a nation that was essential to fulfill God’s calling and promise for them. They overcame the temptation to see the eastern tribes as separate from the rest of Israel.
- b. **Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you**: The willingness of the people to receive Joshua as their leader, replacing Moses, was a confirmation of the Lord’s words to Joshua previously in the chapter.
- c. **Only be strong and of good courage**: The representatives from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh say the same thing to Joshua that he heard from the Lord in [Joshua 1:6](#). This must have been a confirmation of God’s word to Joshua when they said it. God loves to [confirm](#) His word to us.

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MOUNT SINAI IN ARABIA

• **\$34.95**

Mount Sinai in Arabia presents a clear case in laymen’s terms for the true location of Mount Sinai.

In 2018, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Muhammad Bin Salman announced plans to build a futuristic “city-state” called, “Neom.” It is slated to become an international city 33 times larger than New York City that will encompass a large quadrant of northwest Saudi Arabia. In the center of this futuristic city is an ancient mountain range called Jebel al-Lawz (“The Mountain of Almonds”). Ever since the 1980’s when the biblical explorer Ron Wyatt identified this mountain as the real Mount Sinai, students of the Bible have been fascinated by this mountain. Now, with the city Neom being built, the world will soon have access to one of the greatest archeological sites in all of biblical history. In 2018, Joel Richardson traveled to Saudi Arabia to thoroughly investigate the site as well as regional developments. In this fascinating 9 session class, Joel carefully explores the most up to date scholarship and explains the abundance of historical, biblical, traditional, geographical, and archeological reasons that support the view that this mountain is indeed the true Mount Sanai. This is a powerful class that you will not want to miss.

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Did 600,000 Men Leave Egypt with Moses?

Is the Bible’s account of the Exodus possible and consistent with archaeological evidence?

by [Liz Abrams](#) and [Troy Lacey](#) on September 20, 2022

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Modern scholars generally follow the assumption of naturalism—that is, events need to be explainable without resorting to [God](#) or miracles. It is no surprise that the Exodus narrative, one of the places God intervenes in history most spectacularly to deliver Israel, is under consistent attack. One detail is the number of people who are said to leave Egypt with Moses. Six hundred thousand men of fighting age are counted in Exodus, and when the elderly, women, and children are counted with that number, the population of Israel rises to easily two million. How could Israel go from a family of 70 to a nation of millions within the span of several generations and a few hundred years? There are several data points we have to nail down in order to properly defend the [Bible](#)’s assertion that 600,000 men left Egypt with Moses in the Exodus. First, we need to estimate the population that went down to Egypt with Jacob, the amount of time and generations that elapsed between then and the Exodus, and any relevant data points that would explain the growth of the population. Once we do that, some fairly simple math will show that not only is the account possible, but plausible. And as a “cherry on top,” we’ll look at a recent archaeological find that adds credibility to the argument.

How Many People Went Down to Egypt with Jacob?

At first glance, the question of how many people went to Egypt with Jacob is simple. Genesis says, “All the persons of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were seventy” ([Genesis 46:27](#)). However, this total specifically does *not* include the wives of all the sons. The men who had sons had at least one wife each. If any brought more than one wife, that increases the total even more. The text also mentions Jacob’s daughters—plural—even though Dinah is the only one mentioned explicitly, and granddaughters, even though only Asher’s daughter Serah is explicitly named. Unless Jacob’s family was in some way very genetically exceptional, statistically there would have been *many* more girls who were not named.

There is another group of people that the text does not address but who must have been there—the servants and members of the wider household. Abraham had a great household which Isaac inherited and added more servants to ([Genesis 26:14](#)) and which ultimately would have passed to Jacob. These servants were circumcised from the time of Abraham and were also considered part of the covenant community. Jacob’s great wealth he accumulated while living with Laban would have also included servants (Genesis 32:5). Easily hundreds of people would have come along with the family to survive the famine. Jacob’s male descendants might have seen the daughters of these servants as more suitable wives than the pagans surrounding them.

So the caravan that went to Egypt was at least hundreds of people, importantly including a possible population to produce non-related wives for Jacob’s male descendants. This is only a snapshot of Jacob’s family tree *at that moment*, however, and doesn’t include new descendants born in Egypt. For instance, we know that Jochebed, Moses’ mother, was Levi’s daughter born after he migrated to Egypt.

How Long Was Israel in Egypt?

In fact, Jochebed is an important linchpin for the chronology of how long Israel was in Egypt, because Exodus says specifically that she was born to Levi after he came to Egypt. It is also difficult to argue that she was merely a female descendant and not his actual daughter, because in Exodus 6 she is specifically said to be the sister of Kohath, Amram’s father, who was one of the 70 who came to Egypt.

To put the chronology together, we have to go back to chronological statements made earlier in Genesis. Jacob fled to Laban and had 11 of his 12 sons in the 13 years between marrying his wives and leaving Laban's household (Genesis 31:38). Levi was born third, and Joseph eleventh. Joseph rose to power when he was 30, and Jacob came to Egypt at 130 years old after 7 years of plenty and 2 years of famine—so Joseph was 39. We can then deduce that Joseph was born when Jacob was 91, and Levi could be, at most, about 10 years older, so Levi would have been about 50 years old when he migrated to Egypt. Ussher's chronology also states that Levi would have been 50 when he migrated to Egypt.

[Exodus 6:16](#) tells us that Levi lived to 137, meaning that he was in Egypt for just under 90 years. Jochebed could have been born any time during that span because men's fertility is not as age-dependent as women's. But even if Jochebed were born the year Levi died and had her children relatively late in her life for a woman (not unprecedented in the Israelite lineage, particularly for children who would become significant in biblical events), Moses barely fits within a short-sojourn timeline, let alone a long-sojourn timeline.¹

Short vs. long sojourn is *not* the topic of this article, but this article does seek to take the “worst case scenario” arising from a plain reading of the text and defend that. If Jochebed was a female descendant of Levi and not his direct daughter and there were a few hundred years of missing genealogical data, that would make the population growth easier. So if one solves the problem for the short sojourn with less time, that solution works just as well for the long sojourn where there is more time for possible generations. For more information, see “[How Long Were the Israelites in Egypt?](#)”

So, can a population grow from hundreds of people to millions within a couple hundred years? It turns out that with favorable conditions, the answer is yes.

How to Grow a Nation

The biblical account indicates that the extraordinary growth of the nation of Israel was from God's blessing (Exodus 1), so we would not be constrained to solely naturalistic explanations. If Israel had a better rate of infant survival and women's fertility, it is not hard to imagine that alone making up a large part of the explanation. Israel was multiplying so rapidly that Pharaoh oppressed the people and ordered the midwives to kill the boys when that didn't work.

The biblical account indicates that the extraordinary growth of the nation of Israel was from God's blessing (Exodus 1), so we would not be constrained to solely naturalistic explanations.

But killing the boys and leaving the girls alive might have had a minimal effect on the growth of the nation. A baby was counted as an Israelite as long as the *father* was a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and some men likely took multiple wives and concubines if they could support them. Ephraim and Manasseh were just as Israelite as their cousins, even though their mother was Egyptian. Shelah, the son of a Canaanite woman, was the father of many Judahites. If polygamy were practiced by even a significant minority of the population, that would affect the growth of the population because men can father many more children with multiple mothers. If there were fewer males for a while due to the genocide, the extra women could be “absorbed” into families by becoming part of polygamous marriages or concubines, both practices being described in Israel before and after this point in history. According to a population growth model presented by Carter and Hardy,² it is possible to achieve the necessary population growth within 215 years given favorable conditions. Under God's blessing, the Israelite nation could have certainly experienced these favorable conditions. But if the Israelites were in Egypt for 430 years, it is much easier to achieve that size population.

A model is one tool to help us calculate probabilities, but does the Bible give us more concrete data to allow us to do our own calculations? Genesis 50:22–23 says, “So Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his father's house. Joseph lived 110 years. And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation.” We know that Joseph rose to power when he was 30 and his two sons were born during the seven years of plenty, meaning that the oldest was born when Joseph was 31–36 years old. Ephraim's great-grandchildren were born by the time Ephraim was 80 years old and likely several years earlier. This gives us an average generation time of 20 years or a little less.

We also have data that some marriages must have happened much later. Moses is only Levi's great-grandson via his father, Amram, and grandson via his mother, Jochebed. Kohath was included in the list of people who went down to Egypt, meaning that the next generation was fathered at an average age of 60 years. This is not unheard of even in modern times, as the tenth US president, John Tyler, born in 1790, still has an elderly living grandson in 2022.

The number of children the patriarchs had also varied. Benjamin had 10 sons included in Genesis 46, while Dan only had 1 son. It is important to note that these are only the sons they had at the time, and we know that Levi at least had

Jochebed after moving to Egypt, and Joseph had other sons who were included under the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim (Genesis 48:6). But we see that the 12 patriarchs had 51 listed sons, and that gives us an average of 4.25 children per son. If Israel kept reproducing at that rate, they would hit 600,000 male descendants in the seventh generation, which happens to fit with the generation timespans we can calculate from the data Scripture provides.

Wouldn't Such a Large Population Leave Archaeological Evidence?

Even if such population growth was *possible*, skeptics point to the lack of evidence that *any* nation had such large populations. The ruins of ancient towns indicate much smaller populations at that point in history, they claim. But an archaeological find has shown that even large, established, sophisticated groups of people may leave little evidence if they are nomadic and thus do not leave the remains of cities.

Archaeologists were surprised when an ancient mine in Timna, rich with evidence of sophisticated tools and imported goods, was dated not to earlier Egyptian activity but to around the time of David and Solomon, long after the Egyptians left.³ That date makes it likely that the mine was Edomite. But most archaeologists believed that Edom was made up by the biblical authors because of the lack of evidence for Edomites in the archaeological record—until now.

The Timna copper mine was operated by a sophisticated group of people who conducted international trading (based on items found that would have come from far away). But there were no towns, palaces, temples, or other archaeological sites we would expect such a people group to leave. The archaeologist Erez Ben-Yosef formulated a theory: the Edomites were real, and they were nomadic. But despite their lack of permanent structures, they were nevertheless advanced.

In turn, if the Edomites could be overlooked by archaeology because they were largely nomadic, the same could be true for Israelites during the same time period. In fact, this aligns with the biblical narrative.

Biblical skeptics point out that there are no significant structures corresponding to the time in question. But one plausible explanation could be that most Israelites lived in tents, because they were a nation of nomads. In fact, that is how the Bible describes them—as a tribal alliance moving out of the desert and into the land of Canaan, settling

down only over time. (This is sometimes obscured in Bible translations. In the Book of Kings, for example, after the Israelites celebrated Solomon’s dedication of the Jerusalem Temple, some English versions record that they “went to their homes, joyful and glad.” What the Hebrew actually says is that they went to their “tents.”) These Israelites could have been wealthy, organized, and semi-nomadic, like the “invisible” Edomites. Finding nothing, in other words, didn’t mean there *was* nothing. Archaeology was simply not going to be able to find out.⁴

Putting the Pieces Together

So, when we look at all the evidence together, we get a good idea of how plausible the Bible’s account is. The people who went down to Egypt could have multiplied into millions of people during the sojourn in Egypt even without the divine blessing the text indicates they had. And if they were nomadic, as the Bible indicates they were, they wouldn’t leave the sort of archaeological evidence that skeptics often demand. Israelites were mentioned as still living in tents from just after they entered the Promised Land, through the time of the monarchy, and even after the exile ([Joshua 22:1–5](#); [2 Samuel 20:1](#); [1 Kings 12:16](#);p [Malachi 2:12](#)).

Anyone who knows the Bible’s track record of proven accuracy when it comes to matters of ancient history will not be surprised that the Bible’s account of the Egyptian sojourn and Exodus is plausible.

Anyone who knows the Bible’s track record of proven accuracy when it comes to matters of ancient history will not be surprised that the Bible’s account of the Egyptian sojourn and Exodus is plausible. Skeptics, however, often simply proceed to the next supposed difficulty in the text after receiving an answer. In these instances we, as Christians, have an excellent opportunity to “go on the offensive” with the [gospel](#).

You May Also L

Matthew Henry :: Commentary on Joshua 1

An Exposition, With Practical Observations, of The Book of Joshua Chapter 1

The book begins with the history, not of Joshua's life (many remarkable passages of that we had before in the books of Moses) but of his reign and government. In this chapter,

- I. God appoints him to the government in the stead of Moses, gives him an ample commission, full instructions, and great encouragements ([v. 1-9](#)).

- II. He accepts the government, and addresses himself immediately to the business of it, giving orders to the officers of the people in general (v. 10, 11) and particularly to the two tribes and a half (v. 12-15).
- III. The people agree to it, and take an oath of fealty to him (v. 16-18). A reign which thus began with God could not but be honourable to the prince and comfortable to the subject. The last words of Moses are still verified, "Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people?" Deu. 33:29.