

Week # 11

This Week: Numbers 5 – 22, Mark 13:1 – 15:47

Next Week: Numbers 23-36, Mark 16, Luke 1-2:52

1. How do you rationalize Gen 15:13 400 years and Gen 15:16 4th generation

Let me begin by saying that this is an issue that has troubled Bible Students for a long time. Let me explain the issue. Many, perhaps most scholars teach that a biblical generation is typically 40 years. So, 4 generations would only be 160 years and not 400 years. There are three prominent solutions to this issue.

A – a true Biblical Generation is actually 100 years, problem solved.

The definition of a "Biblical generation" varies significantly depending on which section of the text or historical context is being cited. Because the Bible covers thousands of years of history, the length of a generation shifts to reflect the themes of specific eras.

The four most common timeframes mentioned or inferred are:

1. The 40-Year Generation

This is the most widely recognized figure, largely based on the Israelites' wandering in the wilderness.

- **Context:** Numbers 32:13 describes God making the Israelites wander until the entire generation that had done evil was "consumed."
- **Usage:** It is often used in a symbolic sense to represent the time it takes for a new lineage of adults to replace the previous one.

2. The 70 to 80-Year Generation

This aligns more closely with a full human lifespan rather than the time between a parent and child.

- **Context:** Psalm 90:10 states, "The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty."

- **Usage:** This is frequently cited in modern prophetic interpretations or when discussing the "total" life of a generation.

3. The 100-Year Generation

In earlier foundational texts, a generation is sometimes treated as a full century.

- **Context:** In Genesis 15:13–16, God tells Abraham his descendants will be enslaved for **400 years**, but will return in the "**fourth generation.**"
- **Calculation:** This implies one generation equals roughly 100 years.

4. The Patriarchal Generation (Varies)

In the earliest chapters of Genesis (the genealogies of Adam and Noah), "generations" involve much longer lifespans, often spanning hundreds of years. However, these are generally viewed as unique to that specific era rather than a standard unit of measurement for the rest of the Bible.

So, we could use almost any number of years for a Biblical Generation.

Some scholars argue that there is a difference between the time references. I think this solution is the weakest as it requires us to think that the author changes system within a few verses.

A more recent solution suggests that these numbers are symbolic rather than literal. I do not accept this solution.

I would argue that the solution is to reject the 40 year generation as a Biblical constant. As we discovered generations is not a precise time period and appears to not be presented in scripture as a constant.

2. Numbers 5:8-21 especially verse 21, why is the man that committed the adultery with the woman not punished the way the woman is?

The asymmetry identified in this passage reflects a fundamental feature of the [Numbers 5](#) ordeal: it functions as a mechanism to resolve cases where a husband suspects his wife of adultery but lacks the two witnesses required for

conviction in civil court. The ritual was designed to address a specific legal gap—one that centered on the wife’s fidelity, not the man’s conduct. In ancient Israel’s legal framework, where polygamy was permitted, sexual relations between a married man and an unmarried woman constituted fornication rather than adultery. This distinction is crucial: adultery was defined as violation of a woman’s marital bond, not a man’s. The offense harmed the husband’s honor and property rights—his exclusive claim to his wife’s sexuality and reproductive capacity.

The ordeal itself operates within this framework. The ritual satisfies the husband’s suspicions, clears his name, and removes the stigma from his family, while protecting the woman from immediate and excessive retribution and giving her a way to regain her honor. The man who committed adultery with the woman isn’t addressed because the legal injury—from the perspective of Mosaic law—was to the husband’s conjugal rights, not to some abstract standard of sexual morality binding equally on both sexes.

That said, by the Law of Moses, both the man and the woman who had committed adultery were punished with death when the offense was witnessed. The [Numbers 5](#) ordeal represents a different scenario: suspected but unwitnessed infidelity. In that context, the law provides a mechanism to test the woman’s guilt while leaving the man’s involvement unprovable and thus legally unaddressable—a reflection of ancient Near Eastern legal priorities rather than modern notions of equal culpability.

3. Evidence and Theories of the Hebrew Exodus from Egypt

In Biblical Archeology the Exodus is one of the most debated topics. Many scholars, particularly those who do not accept the Biblical Record deny there is any evidence for the Exodus. There is also a debate concerning the date of the Exodus. Many non-Christian Biblical archeologists have held to a later date of the exodus that does not fit within the Biblical narrative. This was based primarily on an error in the dating of some artifacts. I should point out that this error is being recognized and corrected. The range of dates that Biblical Archeologists assign to the Exodus range from about 1446 to 1225 BC. 1225 BC does not fit within the Biblical Context, 1446 BC does. So, this Bible

student operates from the perspective that the exodus from Egypt occurred in 1446 BC.

Within the above range archaeologists have discovered several pieces of evidence. While none of these pieces of evidence is conclusive proof of the exodus or the time of the exodus, collectively they form a significant body that supports the reality of the exodus.

Here is a breakdown of the primary archaeological and textual evidence used to support the Exodus within that window:

A. The Semitic Settlement at Avaris (Tell el-Dab'a)

Located in the eastern Nile Delta (the biblical "Land of Goshen"), Avaris was a major hub for West-Semitic people.

- **The Evidence:** Excavations led by Manfred Bietak revealed a massive Semitic population that grew significantly during the Middle Kingdom and 18th Dynasty.
- **The "Hasty Abandonment":** In the mid-15th century BCE (consistent with the 1446 BCE date), certain sectors of the city show signs of a rapid, non-violent departure—tools and household goods were left behind, which some interpret as consistent with a sudden mass exit.
- **The "Four-Room House":** Early versions of the "four-room house"—a layout later unique to Israelite settlements in Canaan—have been identified at Tell el-Dab'a.

B. The Ipuwer Papyrus (Papyrus Leiden 344)

This Egyptian poem describes a time of extreme chaos, which some scholars believe is an eyewitness account of the Ten Plagues.

- **The Evidence:** The text mentions the river turning to **blood**, widespread famine, the "servants" fleeing, and the death of the children of nobles.
- **Interpretation:** While some date it to the end of the Middle Kingdom (c. 1650 BCE), others argue it reflects the 18th Dynasty collapse or that the

"Middle Kingdom" dates should be adjusted to align with the 15th-century Exodus.

C. The Merneptah Stele (c. 1208 BCE)

This is the **earliest undisputed mention of "Israel"** in the archaeological record.

- **The Evidence:** Pharaoh Merneptah boasts of a military campaign in Canaan, stating, *"Israel is laid waste, its seed is not."*
- **Significance:** The hieroglyphs use a specific marker (a "determinative") that identifies Israel as a **people group** rather than a city-state. This proves that by 1208 BCE, Israel was already a significant and established nation in Canaan, which requires them to have left Egypt at least 40 years (a generation) prior.

D. The Amarna Letters (14th Century BCE)

These are clay tablets found in Egypt containing correspondence between Canaanite kings and the Pharaoh (Amenhotep III and Akhenaten).

- **The Evidence:** Local rulers plead for Egyptian help against a group called the "**Habiru**" (or *'Apiru*) who are conquering cities.
- **Connection:** While "Habiru" was a broad social term for outcasts or nomads, the timing (c. 1360 BCE) and the locations they were attacking (Shechem, Jerusalem, Lachish) align closely with the biblical account of the Conquest of Canaan following a 1446 BCE Exodus.

E. Brickmaking and Slavery Records

- **Tomb of Rekhmire (c. 1450 BCE):** Wall paintings clearly depict Semitic and Nubian slaves making mud bricks. The inscriptions mention taskmasters with rods and strict quotas, mirroring **Exodus 5**.
- **The Berlin Statue Pedestal:** A fragment in the Berlin Museum contains a name-ring that some Egyptologists (like Peter van der Veen) believe reads "Israel," potentially dating to 1400 BCE—even earlier than the Merneptah Stele.

This evidence provides a significant and strong indication that the Exodus did occur. Below is a view of the evidence for the dating of the exodus.

The evidence for the dating of the Exodus is generally divided into two main schools of thought: the **Early Date (c. 1446 BCE)** and the **Late Date (c. 1250–1225 BCE)**. Each relies on a different combination of biblical interpretation and archaeological synchronisms.

A. The Early Date (1446 BCE)

This date is derived from a literal calculation of biblical timelines.

- **1 Kings 6:1:** This is the primary anchor. It states that Solomon began building the Temple in the 4th year of his reign, which was **480 years** after the Israelites left Egypt. Since Solomon's 4th year is widely accepted as **966/967 BCE**, adding 480 years points directly to **1446 BCE**.
- **Judges 11:26:** Jephthah (living around 1100 BCE) mentions that Israel had already been living in Heshbon and the surrounding areas for **300 years**. This places the entry into Canaan around 1400 BCE, which aligns with a 1446 BCE Exodus followed by 40 years in the desert.
- **Thutmosid Dynasty Context:** This timeframe places the Exodus during the 18th Dynasty (likely under Thutmose III or Amenhotep II). Proponents point to the **Amarna Letters** (14th century BCE), which describe a group called the "*Habiru*" conquering Canaanite cities, as potential evidence of the Israelite conquest.

B. The Late Date (1250–1225 BCE)

This date is favored by many who prioritize specific archaeological markers over the 480-year figure in 1 Kings.

- **The City of Rameses (Exodus 1:11):** The Bible says the Israelites built the store-city of **Raamses**. Archaeologically, the city of Pi-Ramesses was not built until the reign of **Ramesses II** (c. 1279–1213 BCE). Proponents argue it is unlikely the city would be named "Rameses" before his reign.
- **The Merneptah Stele (c. 1208 BCE):** This Egyptian monument provides the earliest mention of "Israel" in Canaan. Because it refers to Israel as an

established people group, many scholars argue they must have arrived in Canaan recently enough to still be a "nomadic" threat, fitting a mid-13th century departure.

- **Destruction Layers:** Excavations in Canaanite cities like Hazor and Lachish show significant destruction layers in the late 13th century, which some associate with Joshua's military campaigns.

C. Alternative Chronologies

Some researchers suggest the traditional Egyptian timeline itself is flawed.

- **The "New Chronology":** Scholars like David Rohl suggest shifting the Egyptian dates by several centuries. This would place the Exodus in the **13th Dynasty** (c. 1650 BCE), aligning the "Ten Plagues" with the collapse of Egypt's Middle Kingdom and the arrival of the Hyksos.

I would argue this is too late to fit into the Biblical Timeline.

The route of the Exodus and the location of the "Red Sea" (Hebrew: *Yam Suph*, or "Sea of Reeds") remain some of the most explored yet elusive mysteries in biblical archaeology. Because the desert leaves few permanent footprints, evidence is primarily found in matching ancient place names (toponyms) with modern geography.

There are three primary theories regarding the route and the crossing site:

1. The Northern Route (The Way of the Philistines)

This theory suggests the Israelites traveled along the Mediterranean coast through the lagoon systems of the Nile Delta.

- **The Crossing:** Proponents suggest the *Yam Suph* refers to the **Lake Menzaleh** or the **Bardawil Sandbar**.
- **Evidence:** This was the most direct path to Canaan. Ancient Egyptian records describe "The Ways of Horus," a series of forts along this route. However, the Bible explicitly states God led them *away* from this path to avoid early conflict with Egyptian garrisons (Exodus 13:17).

2. The Central/Traditional Route (Mt. Sinai at Jebel Musa)

This is the traditional view held since the early Byzantine period.

- **The Crossing:** It suggests the crossing happened at the **Bitter Lakes** or the northern tip of the **Gulf of Suez**.
- **Evidence:** In the 19th and 20th centuries, researchers identified several sites in the Suez region that match the biblical "Migdol" (watchtower) and "Pi-Hahiroth."
- **Toponymy:** This route leads the Israelites into the southern Sinai Peninsula to **Jebel Musa**, where St. Catherine's Monastery stands today. While pilgrims have visited this site for 1,500 years, there is very little 15th-century BCE archaeological evidence (pottery or campsites) found at the base of the mountain.

3. The Eastern Route (The Nuweiba/Gulf of Aqaba Theory)

A more recent and controversial theory suggests the Israelites crossed the Sinai Peninsula via the "Way of the Wilderness" and crossed into modern-day Saudi Arabia.

- **The Crossing:** The **Nuweiba Beach** on the Gulf of Aqaba.
- **Evidence:** * **The Underwater Land Bridge:** Nuweiba Beach is a massive natural delta that leads to an underwater ridge stretching across the Gulf to Saudi Arabia.
 - **The "Pillar" Claims:** In the late 20th century, researchers identified Phoenician-style columns on both the Egyptian and Saudi sides, which some believe were erected by King Solomon to commemorate the crossing.
 - **Jebel al-Lawz:** This theory identifies **Jebel al-Lawz** in Saudi Arabia as the true Mt. Sinai, citing charred peaks and rock carvings of bovines (possibly the Golden Calf) as supporting evidence.

Key Archaeological Markers (Toponyms)

To determine the route, scholars look for the "Stations of the Exodus" mentioned in Numbers 33:

- **Rameses/Avaris:** The starting point in the Delta (Tell el-Dab'a).
- **Succoth:** Identified by some as **Tjeku** in Egyptian records, a region in the Wadi Tumilat.
- **Etham:** Believed to be near the "shur" or the edge of the Egyptian border fortifications.
- **Elim:** Noted for its 12 springs and 70 palm trees; candidates include **Wadi Gharandal** in the western Sinai.

The "Sea of Reeds" Translation

A major piece of linguistic evidence is the term **Yam Suph**.

- **Red Sea:** The Greek Septuagint translated this as *Erythra Thalassa* (Red Sea).
- **Sea of Reeds:** The literal Hebrew translates to "Sea of Reeds." This has led many scholars to look for freshwater or brackish lakes in the Nile Delta (like the Bitter Lakes) where papyrus reeds actually grow, as they do not typically grow in the salty Red Sea.

The term **Yam Suph** (יָם-סוּפִּי) is used to refer to multiple distinct geographical locations in the Old Testament. While traditionally translated as "Red Sea," the term literally means "Sea of Reeds," and its usage across different books suggests it was a broad designation for several bodies of water bordering the Sinai Peninsula.

Scholars generally identify at least three specific locations referred to by this name:

A. The Eastern Nile Delta Lakes (The Exodus Crossing)

In the context of the initial escape from Egypt (Exodus 13–15), many scholars believe *Yam Suph* refers to the marshy freshwater or brackish lakes in the eastern Nile Delta.

- **Evidence:** The Hebrew word *suph* (reeds/rushes) specifically describes freshwater plants like papyrus (the same word used for the reeds where Moses' basket was hidden in Exodus 2:3).
- **Candidates:** Lake Manzala, Lake Timsah, or the Bitter Lakes.

B. The Gulf of Suez

In the "Wilderness Itinerary" in the book of Numbers, the Israelites are described as camping by the *Yam Suph* **after** they had already crossed the sea and traveled for some time.

- **Context:** Numbers 33:10–11 states, "They set out from Elim and encamped by the Red Sea [Yam Suph]. They set out from the Red Sea and encamped in the Wilderness of Sin."
- **Interpretation:** Since they had already crossed "the sea" to enter the wilderness, this second mention likely refers to the western arm of the Red Sea, known today as the Gulf of Suez.

C. The Gulf of Aqaba (Eilat/Ezion-Geber)

The most geographically certain use of *Yam Suph* refers to the eastern arm of the Red Sea, near modern-day Eilat.

- **Context:** 1 Kings 9:26 explicitly states: "King Solomon also built a fleet of ships at Ezion-Geber, which is near Eloth on the shore of the Red Sea [Yam Suph], in the land of Edom."
- **Usage:** It is also used in this sense to define the southeastern border of the Promised Land (Exodus 23:31) and the route taken around the land of Edom (Numbers 21:4; Deuteronomy 2:1).

So, linguistically we cannot define the specific location based only on linguistic data. That leaves us the need to determine the route based on other evidence.

The theory that the Exodus crossing occurred at **Nuweiba Beach** (on the Gulf of Aqaba) and that **Jebel al-Lawz** in Saudi Arabia is the true Mount Sinai has gained significant attention in recent decades. While this "Eastern Route" is contested by many traditional archaeologists, proponents point to several specific physical and geographical markers as evidence.

A. The Nuweiba Beach Crossing

Nuweiba is a massive natural land delta on the eastern coast of the Sinai Peninsula. Proponents of this theory, such as the late Ron Wyatt and more recently Dr. Lennart Möller and the Doubting Thomas Research Foundation, cite the following:

- **The "Land Bridge":** Hydrographic charts of the Gulf of Aqaba show that while the gulf is extremely deep (up to 6,000 feet), a unique underwater ridge or "land bridge" exists at Nuweiba. It slopes at a relatively gentle gradient compared to the rest of the gulf, which proponents argue would have allowed a mass migration to cross if the waters were parted.
- **The Columns:** Two Phoenician-style granite columns were discovered—one on the Egyptian shore at Nuweiba and a matching one (found by Wyatt) on the Saudi Arabian side. The Saudi column reportedly had inscriptions (now eroded or removed) mentioning "Pharaoh," "Mizraim" (Egypt), "Moses," and "Yahweh." Proponents believe King Solomon erected these to commemorate the crossing.
- **Coral Formations:** Divers have photographed coral formations in the area that resemble 18th-Dynasty Egyptian chariot wheels, axles, and cabs. While critics argue these are simply natural coral growths, proponents point to the distinct 4, 6, and 8-spoke shapes that match chariot designs from the era of Thutmose III and Ramesses II.

B. Jebel al-Lawz as Mount Sinai

If the crossing happened at Nuweiba, the Israelites would have emerged in the ancient land of Midian (modern-day Saudi Arabia). Jebel al-Lawz is the tallest peak in this region. Evidence cited includes:

- **The Blackened Peak:** The summit of Jebel al-Lawz is noticeably darker than the surrounding mountains. Proponents argue this is not volcanic but the result of the "fire and smoke" described in Exodus 19:18, suggesting the rock was literally scorched from above.
- **The Altar and the Golden Calf:** At the base of the mountain, there is a large pile of massive boulders covered in petroglyphs of **bovines** (bulls and cows). This style of rock art is not typical for this region of Midian but is

common in ancient Egypt, leading some to identify this as the altar for the Golden Calf.

- **Split Rock of Horeb:** Located at Rephidim (near the mountain) is a massive, five-story tall boulder that is split down the middle. At the base of the rock, there are signs of water erosion in a region that receives almost no rainfall, which some identify as the rock Moses struck to provide water (Exodus 17:6).
- **The Cave of Elijah:** Higher up the mountain is a natural cave that overlooks the plain below, fitting the description of the cave where Elijah sought shelter (1 Kings 19:8–9).
- **Boundary Markers:** Researchers have found remnants of small stone structures around the base of the mountain that they believe represent the "bounds" Moses was commanded to set so the people would not approach the holy ground.

C. Geographical Alignment

Proponents argue this route fits the biblical text better than the traditional Sinai Peninsula route for several reasons:

- **Midian:** The Bible states that Moses fled to Midian after killing the Egyptian taskmaster and encountered the burning bush at the "mountain of God." Historically, Midian is located in Northwest Arabia, not the Sinai Peninsula.
- **Galatians 4:25:** The Apostle Paul explicitly states, "*Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia.*" In the Roman era, "Arabia" typically referred to the Arabian Peninsula (Arabia Deserta), separate from the Sinai Peninsula (which was often considered part of Egypt).

While the Jebel al-Lawz (specifically its peak, **Jabal Maqla**) theory is popular in some documentaries, mainstream archaeologists and geologists have raised several significant technical and historical objections.

Here is the primary evidence used to argue against Jebel al-Lawz being the "true" Mount Sinai:

A. Geological Evidence vs. "Supernatural" Scorching

Proponents often point to the **blackened peak** as evidence of God descending in fire. However, geologists have provided a natural explanation:

- **Natural Rock Composition:** Geological surveys (including those by the Saudi Geological Survey) identify the dark rock as **metamorphic basalt** (specifically hornfels and andesite) that naturally caps the lighter **granite** below.
- **No Heat Damage:** Dr. John Morris and other geologists who have examined samples note that the rock is typical for the volcanic activity of the Arabian-Nubian Shield. It does not show signs of "flash burning" or the chemical changes that would occur from a supernatural fire; rather, it is a standard geological "roof pendant" formed millions of years ago.

B. Dating of the Bovine Petroglyphs

The "Golden Calf" altar is a cornerstone of the Jebel al-Lawz theory, but the timing is highly disputed:

- **Neolithic Origin:** Saudi archaeologists who have surveyed the site (such as Dr. Majeed Khan) state that these bovine carvings date to the **Neolithic period** (approx. 8,000–5,000 BCE). This would make them thousands of years older than the Exodus (c. 1446 or 1250 BCE).
- **Common Motif:** Bovine rock art is found throughout the Arabian Peninsula and was a common subject for ancient hunter-gatherer and pastoralist groups in the region, not unique to a "Golden Calf" event.

3. The Definition of "Arabia" (Galatians 4:25)

A major pillar of the theory is Paul's statement that "Mount Sinai is in Arabia."

- **First-Century Geography:** Critics argue that in the 1st century AD, the Roman province of **Arabia Petraea** actually included the **Sinai Peninsula**. Therefore, Paul saying Sinai was in "Arabia" wouldn't necessarily mean it was in modern-day Saudi Arabia; it could just as easily refer to the traditional Sinai Peninsula.

4. Travel Logistics and Distance

The Bible provides specific timing for the Israelites' journey that some scholars say makes Jebel al-Lawz an impossible destination.

- **The 11-Day Journey:** Deuteronomy 1:2 states it is an **eleven-day journey** from Horeb (Sinai) to Kadesh Barnea.
- **The Distance Problem:** Jebel al-Lawz is significantly farther from Kadesh Barnea than the traditional sites in the Sinai Peninsula. Critics argue that a massive group with livestock and children could not have covered the roughly 150–200 miles from the Gulf of Aqaba to Kadesh Barnea in just 11 days.

5. Lack of Late Bronze Age Occupation

Standard archaeological practice looks for "trash" (pottery shards, hearths, organic waste) left by large groups of people.

- **The "Silent" Plain:** While there are stone structures and circles near Jebel al-Lawz, surveys have not found the high volume of **Late Bronze Age pottery** that would be expected from a camp of hundreds of thousands of people staying for a year. Many of the stone structures found in the area have been identified by archaeologists as Nabataean (c. 1st century BC) or even older burial cairns.



The bottom line is there is insufficient evidence to conclusively prove the true location of Mt Sinai which then precludes the knowledge of the route to Mt Sinai.