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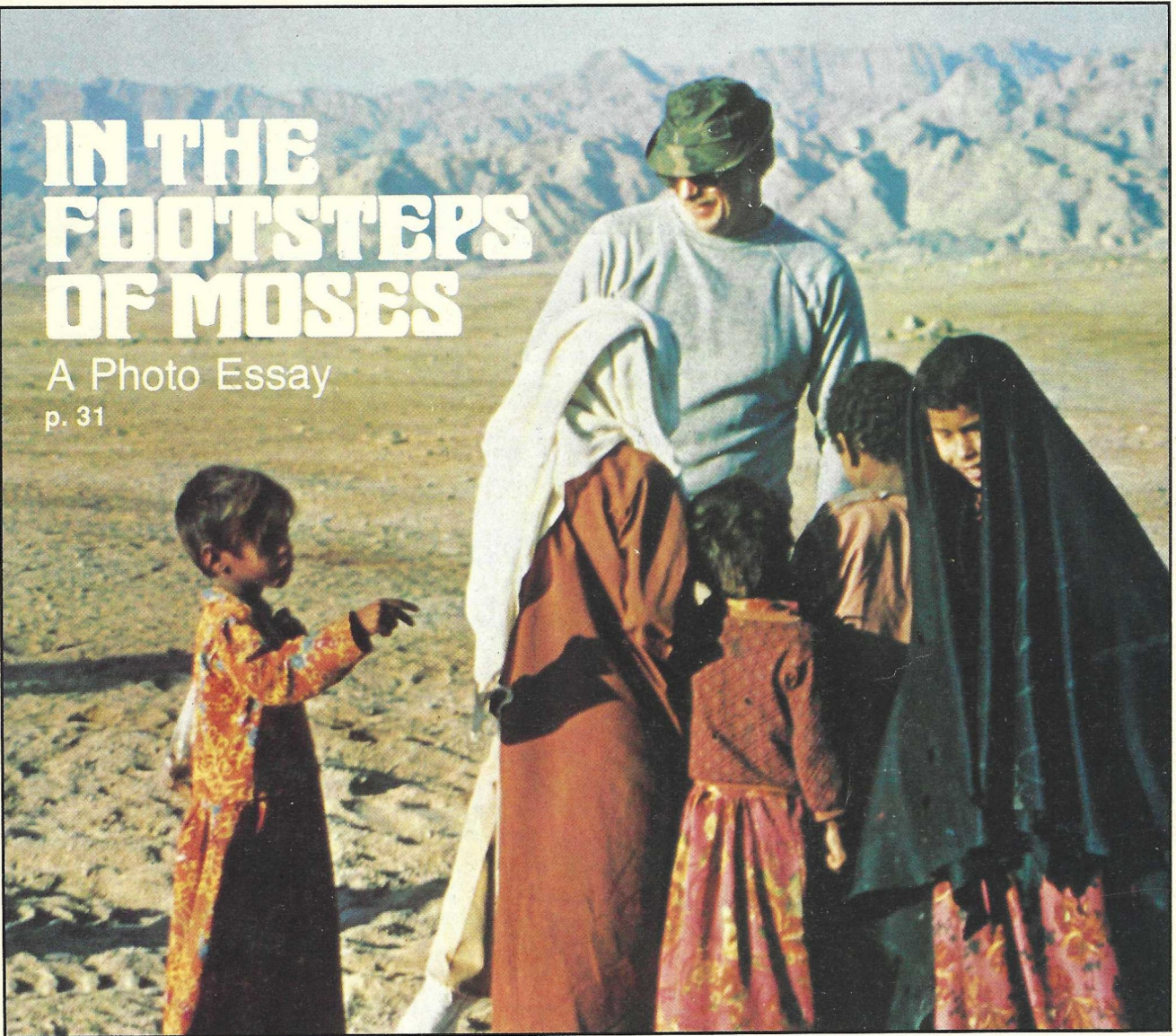
LOGOS

journal

A
chapter
from
Catherine
Marshall's
new book —
THE HELPER

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MOSES

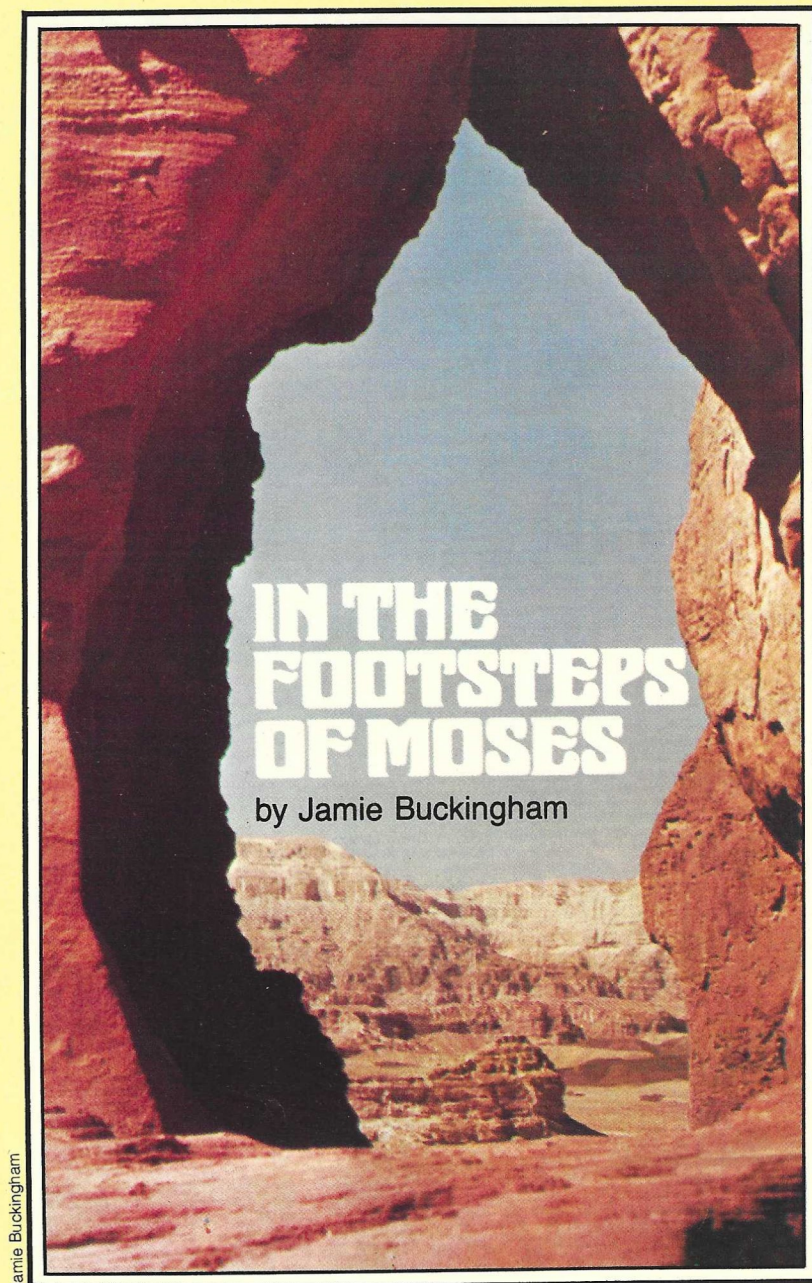
A Photo Essay
p. 31



Harald Bredeesen — Why You Should Pray in Tongues

Vance Havner — Is Preaching Obsolete?

Women's Aglow: It Brightens Lives



Rose-red sandstone forms a natural archway, beckoning the northern Sinai traveler to explore Solomon's copper mines in the distance.

Few places on earth are as remote, yet as evocative, as Sinai. The very name stirs childhood memories of stories from that holy place.

From the dawn of civilization it has been a place of conflict. Caravans of merchants demanded free passage on the "way of the Philistines" as they crossed its barren sands in the north. The Egyptians claimed its turquoise. The Amalekites defied its invaders. Moslem bandits roamed its wilds. Even today, the United Nations patrols its disputed borders between Israel and Egypt.

It was not the history of ancient

kings, nor the intrigue of boundary settlements, which brought me to this barren triangle of rock and sand in November 1977.

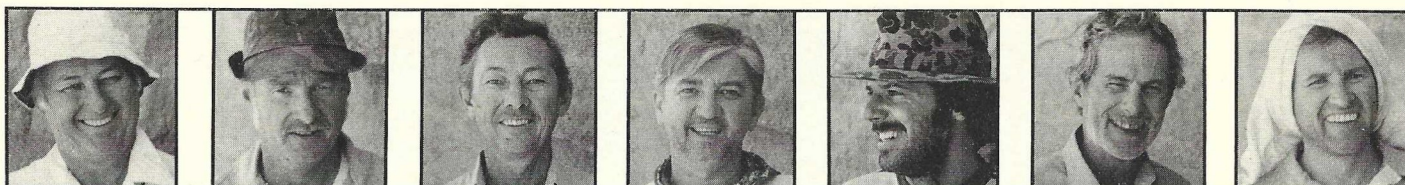
This was my second trip to the Sinai. I knew, when I left the year before, that something was drawing me back. Perhaps it was the awful stillness. Perhaps it was the knowledge that this is one of the few places on earth which has escaped the vulgar invasion of tourism. Perhaps it was the mysterious sense that, somehow, I was at the place of my spiritual origins. Or maybe it was simply that I was weary of the crowded rush of life, and

wanted to turn aside and hear God at my own burning bush.

This time I took twelve men with me, all spiritually mature, all seeking a deeper relationship with their Creator. Our guide, a Baptist missionary in Israel, made most of the arrangements and brought with him a small cadre of helpers—a driver, a cook, and two other guides.

We left Jerusalem in the chilly pre-dawn darkness, huddled in the back of a lumbering, four-wheel drive truck which was to be our major means of transportation for the next ten days.

please turn page



Dallas Albritton

Jamie Buckingham

Bob Crumley

Derrel Emmerson

Mike Evans

Gib Jones

Norm Lytle



Hugh Wheelchel

Bill Nelson

Angus Sargeant, M.D.

George Sowerby

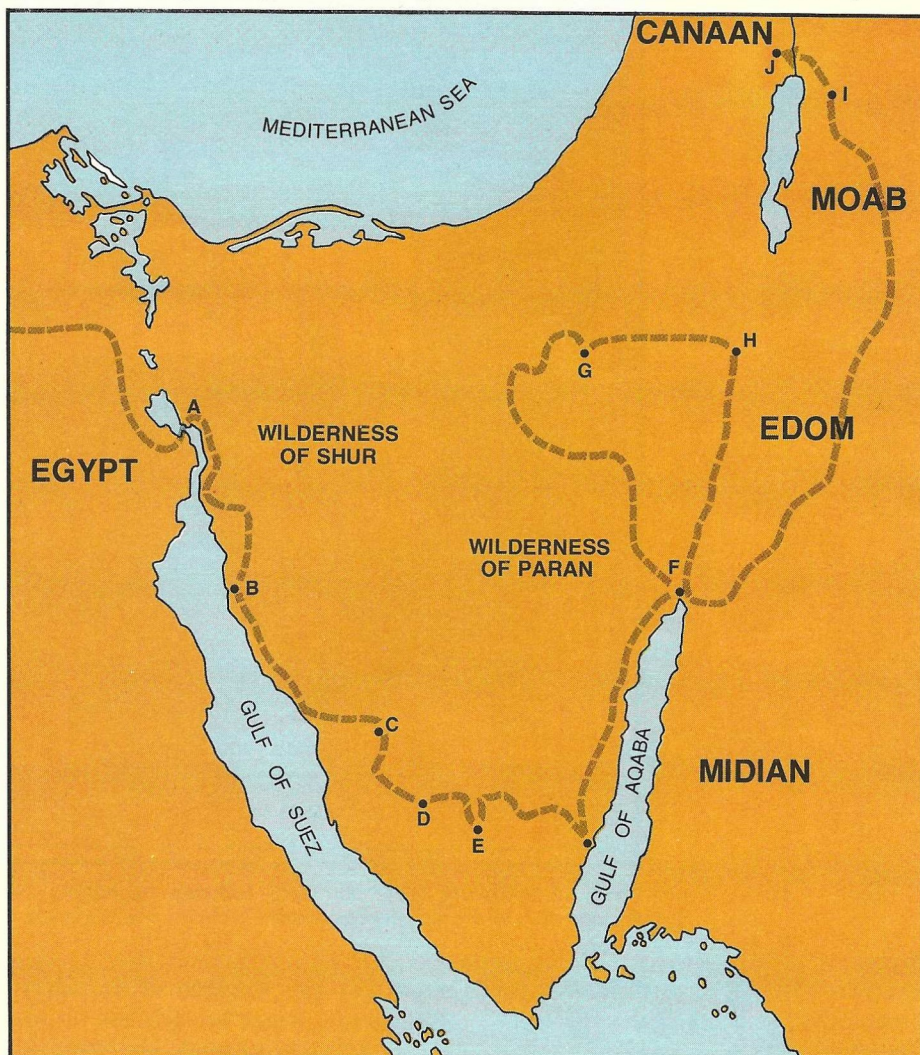
Frank Whigham

Bob Wright

John Zentmeyer

ROUTE OF THE EXODUS THROUGH SINAI

- A. Israelites crossed the "Red" (actually *Yam Suph* in Hebrew meaning "Reed Sea") probably at this isthmus which separates the Gulf of Suez from the Bitter Lakes.
- B. Marah, the springs of bitter water.
- C. Serabit el Khadim, where Egyptian turquoise mines and the remains of an Egyptian temple can still be seen, is the probable location of the biblical Dophkah.
- D. Near the Oasis of Feiran (which many scholars think is biblical Elim) is Mt. Tahuneh. Here Moses stood, his hands supported by Aaron and Hur, while the battle with the Amalekites raged below.
- E. Mt. Sinai (Jebel Musa) 7497 feet, where Moses heard God from the burning bush and later received the Ten Commandments.
- F. Modern Elat at the end of the Gulf of Aqaba.
- G. Kadesh-barnea, the spot where Moses sent the spies into Canaan. This was probably the main camp for the Israelites for 38 of their 40 years of wandering.
- H. When the King of Edom refused Moses passage, the Israelites turned south, then skirted Edom to the east.
- I. From the lofty peak of Mt. Nebo in what is now Jordan, Moses viewed the Promised Land. Then, at age 120, the great prophet and law-giver died.
- J. Under the new leadership of Joshua, the Israelites crossed the Jordan River when God held back the waters. They immediately captured Jericho and established themselves as the rightful owners of the land.



We rumbled down the steep Jericho Road to the Dead Sea, 1300 feet below sea level. Then we headed south along the western shore, as the sun came up over the ancient Hills of Moab in the land of Jordan. Suddenly it was day, and with the sun came the heat—sweeping in from the Negev Desert to our right. We passed the new Israeli city of Elat on the Gulf of Aqaba and traveled along the deep (6000 feet) finger of water separating the Sinai from Saudi Arabia, heading

south toward the main body of the Red Sea.

On top of the truck we carried all the necessary food and camping gear for our ten-day stay. On the back of the truck were two huge water tanks, enough to sustain us until we reached the desert wells. Our goal was a place on the Gulf of Suez where we would begin our pilgrimage—picking up the footsteps of Moses where he and the children of Israel emerged from their Red Sea crossing, heading for Mt.

Sinai. By the time we finished our trip at the border of the Promised Land, we would cover almost 1400 miles. It took the children of Israel forty years to make the trek. We would do it in less than ten days.

Like Moses, we would live simply. We would cook our meals on the sand, draw water from the wells, sleep under the most incredible canopy of stars in the world, know the intestinal misery which comes from drinking the "bitter" water, and hope to hear from

the same God who spoke to Moses almost 3200 years ago.

No man in history towers taller than that man. Called *Moshe* in Hebrew, *Mosa* in Arabic, and *Moses* in English (by way of the Greek), his footsteps still go before us in our own exodus from the bondage of traditionalism to the liberty and freedom of life in the Spirit.

The history of Moses is familiar to Moslem, Jew and Christian alike. Found in the reeds of the Nile perhaps 350 years after the death of Joseph, he was raised by the daughter of Ramses. Reaching manhood, he killed an Egyptian for beating an Israelite slave, and, fearing for his own life, fled to the desert land of Midian—now Saudi Arabia and the Sinai. Here he married Zipporah, daughter of the Midianite sheikh, Jethro. For forty years he shepherded Jethro's flocks in the burning sands of the desert—much of the time spent in the wilderness of Sinai. At the base of Mt. Sinai, he heard God speak from a burning bush, commanding him to return to Egypt and lead the Israelites out of bondage.

Reluctantly, he confronted Pharaoh and led the Israelites out of Egypt. According to Exodus 12:37 there were 600,000 adult males and their families, plus the priestly tribe of Levites and the various camp followers, including a number of Egyptian riffraff who fled the nation once the doors were open. This would amount to more than two and a half million persons making the journey, far more than reason allows.

I personally believe the Hebrew word *eleph*, which translates as "thousand" in most versions, instead means "family." Thus, contrary to traditional opinion, the Israelites may have numbered only 600 *families*, plus the miscellaneous followers, bringing the actual number to fewer than 15,000 in all. After having traveled through the Sinai, this smaller figure is much more believable. Nor is it unthinkable to believe that some Israelites left Egypt at a later date, perhaps taking the northern route along the Mediterranean Sea, thus accounting for some of the seeming discrepancies in the biblical account.

However, regardless of size or the routes taken, the fact of Moses' lead-



Glib Jones

THE MOUNT OF GOD—"At the end of the traditional Pilgrim's Path we emerged onto a great plain and there, rising before us, was the magnificent three-columned granite apex of the Mountain of God. Catching the setting sun with hues of pink and purple, Mt. Sinai soared to the height of 7497 feet above sea level. Here, God spoke to Moses from the burning bush. Later, He called him back to receive the Ten Commandments. Here, Elijah huddled in its craggy bosom, hearing the still small voice of God. And here we stood, in awesome silence, wondering if God would speak to us also." That evening the group ate a quiet supper at the foot of the mount, anticipating the morning when they would stand to praise Jehovah God on Sinai's summit.

ership remains indisputable.

The first crisis in his leadership came at the edge of the Reed Sea. (The "Red Sea" of Exodus 13:18 is an incorrect translation of the Hebrew *Yam-Suf* which means, literally, "Sea of Reeds.") This is probably located in the vicinity of the Bitter Lakes just north of the Gulf of Suez, an area about five miles wide and between ten and fifteen feet deep. Even today, one can imagine the force of a great eastern wind driving back the water. When the wind died, the resulting tidal wave would inundate all in the sea bed, including Pharaoh's soldiers.

Three days later, after trekking through the scorching sands of the Wilderness of Shur and Etham, the Israelites came against the problem which faces all desert travelers—lack of water. Arriving at Marah, they found the water too bitter to drink. Such water still exists along the Gulf of Suez, water contaminated by heavy deposits of zinc and magnesium—the very thing today's pharmacists use (in

limited and controlled quantities) to make laxatives. Even one spoonful of this water will cause untold misery in the bowels for days to come. (A fact to which I can painfully attest.)

At Marah, Moses shared his knowledge of desert ways, gained from forty years' experience. God directed him to a certain bush which he threw into the springs to make the water potable. From here, the people moved south and finally turned inland, trudging through the deep wadis (dried riverbeds), climbing the sun-baked, windblown *seres*, and seeking relief from the howling *sharav* (hot wind). In their exodus they were learning they had to live together—or perish.

At this juncture, near the Wadi Muttalla, our group picked up the footsteps of Moses. To get to this point we had to travel along a heavily guarded road, lined with barbed wire and mine fields, jointly owned by Israelis and Egyptians and controlled by UN troops. Offshore oil wells

pumped their black gold to huge refineries, some of which still bore bullet holes from past wars.

Moses, however, encountered no such opposition. He led his people down paths familiar to him—through Wadi Seikh, past Serabit el Khadem, where Israelite slaves once mined turquoise for the Pharaohs, up the deep gorges of Wadi Mukkateb, climbing high into the majestic mountains until they came to a place of “twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees.” The actual location of this

place, called Elim by Moses, is debatable. However, most scholars agree the place still exists as one of the most beautiful oases in the Middle East, the Oasis of Feiran.

We spent the night near the oasis, sleeping under the stars. There is no need for shelter from rain, or even dew, in the Sinai. The average rainfall is less than one inch a year. However, the Sinai may go for seven years without any rain, only to have all seven inches fall in one night. Since the water does not soak in, it runs off in

tremendous torrents through the wadis to the sea, forming giant deltas and alluvial plains on the shore.

It could well have been in the Wadi Feiran that Moses struck the rock with his staff and water poured forth. Without taking away from the miracle, I cannot help but believe this was an action Moses had used before—an action still used by the Bedouin in search of hidden water.

At some points in the Sinai, where igneous and sedimentary rocks come together in the sides of the mountain, there are hidden reservoirs of water. This water, trapped during some flood in the past, seeps from the rocks. Calcium deposits sometimes form around the opening. Eventually, the water is sealed off in the rock. In an action called a *tmile*, the desert-wise traveler may take his heavy staff, and by striking the rock at exactly the right point, break loose the blockage, allowing the water to gush forth.

Early in the morning, our group arrived at the base of Gebel Tahuneh, which towers over the oasis at Rephidim. Here the Israelites were attacked by a desert tribe called the Amalekites. Moses, Aaron and Hur climbed to the top of Tahuneh to oversee the battle, which raged below. As long as Moses stood on the mountain with his staff outstretched, the battle went in favor of the Israelites—led by a young lieutenant named Joshua. When Moses' arms grew weary and fell, the Amalekites advanced. To assure victory, Aaron and Hur held up Moses' arms.

After a breakfast of dates and juice, we started up the side of the mountain. The path was not marked and very shortly we were spread out over the precipitous face of the mountain like a flock of scattered mountain goats.

At one point I found myself in the middle of an ancient rock slide. I had no choice but to keep going, despite the cries from others to turn back. Half way up the steep ascent the slide began to move. Every place I put my feet, every place I put my hands, the rocks moved under me. It was an eerie feeling and I was grateful for the shouts of encouragement from my friends, above and below, as I inched my way to safety and finally made it to the top.

On the summit we took a few minutes to rest and then re-enacted Moses' stance with the staff. George Sowerby, one of the men, had brought a hickory staff from the States. We passed it around, each man having an opportunity to hold it out over the valley *a la* Moshe.

The next day we left the truck and walked the traditional Pilgrim's Path—the Naqb el Hawwa—to Er Rakha, a distance of about twelve miles. At the end of the path we emerged onto a great plain and there, rising before us, was the magnificent three-columned granite apex of the Mountain of God. Catching the setting sun with hues of pink and purple, Mt. Sinai soared to the height of 7497 feet. Here, God spoke to Moses from the burning bush. Later, he called him back to receive the Ten Commandments. Here, Elijah huddled in its craggy bosom, hearing the still small voice of God.

None of us talked much that night as we finished supper. Four of the men shouldered their back packs and departed at dusk, guided by a Bedouin boy, determined to climb the mountain and spend the night on the summit. The rest of us bedded down in our



Gib Jones

ON SINAI'S SUMMIT, the author surveys the eastern valley below. Four of the fourteen men slept overnight on Mt. Sinai; Buckingham and the others rose at 3:00 a.m. to make the ascent, "one of the deepest spiritual experiences of (our) lives," Buckingham says.

sleeping bags.

No place on earth is as silent as the Sinai. That night, although the temperature dropped into the high 30s, I lay on my back with my hands folded and stared at the stars. I remembered something an old monk had written, hundreds of years before, of his first experience in the Sinai. "It is the silence that speaks the loudest," he wrote.

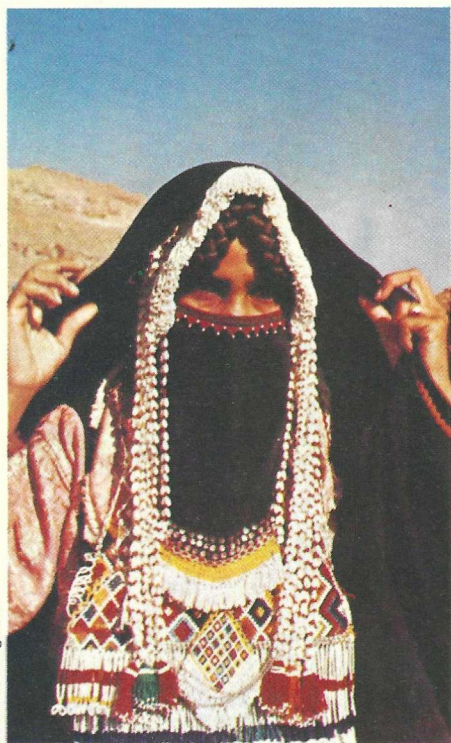
Looking up into the magnificent display of God's creation in the heavens, a cosmorama that defied description, I, too, experienced the silence of Moses and Elijah—an outer silence which only accented the noise within . . . the moans of things left behind . . . the clatter of anxiety for things to come . . . the sigh of guilt . . . the rumble of fears . . . the rasp of memories . . . the pain of homesickness. That night, at the base of the holy mountain, I understood why God had to keep Moses on the mountain forty days and forty nights before Moses could hear him speak. For God speaks in silence, and silence is hard to come by. When Moses returned to the mount, after having destroyed the golden calf and smashed the covenant stones, he had to wait

another forty days and nights—to get quiet enough to once again hear God. For the inner man is filled with noise.

Mt. Sinai, known as Gebel Musa, is a gaunt, wind-tortured peak, shouldered roughly by two other peaks, both similarly wild in aspect. These other two peaks, Gebel Katarina and Gebel Hor, give the mountain an awesome splendor. Venerated as a spiritual pole of the universe, it forms the place where man and God have met, talked and come to terms with each other.

In order to reach the summit by dawn, we began our climb at 3:00 a.m. It took about ten minutes for our eyes to become accustomed to the darkness as we stumbled up the rocky path, panting for breath, the muscles in our legs already aching. Our guide was an 11-year-old Bedouin boy who agreed to lead us up this seldom climbed back side of the mountain. When our eyes had adjusted, we switched off our flashlights and climbed silently by starlight, scattered along the narrow trail, each man climbing alone—yet not alone. Each man later testified that this was one of the deepest spiritual experiences in his life.

The final ascent to the peak is an



Jamie Buckingham

BEDOUIN MAIDEN, dressed in her wedding garments. Such a young girl, Zipporah—daughter of the Midianite priest Jethro—became the wife of Moses and bore him two sons: Gershom and Eliezer.

extremely steep precipice, step-by-step up some 3000 steps carved from the rock. Each breath of the thin mountain air sent shivers of pain into our lungs. Each step was torturous, with muscles screaming for rest.

Then we were at the summit, just as the sun burst upon us in awesome splendor. After standing in silence for a few moments, we realized we were not alone. Not only had we rendezvoused with the other four men from our group who had spent the night there, but other pilgrims were joining us: a small group from Holland, an airline pilot and his bride from Australia, some older women from Switzerland, and a group of black Aborigines from Papua New Guinea, who had been converted by missionaries and had traveled halfway around the world to reach Mt. Sinai.

Our group withdrew behind the tiny chapel which adorns the topmost crag, and burst into spontaneous praise. There was no way to remain silent. The wellsprings of our hearts seemed to burst open as the sun crested the surrounding mountain peaks. From the innermost being poured forth praise. A few of the other pilgrims joined us as we stood in our circle, totally uninhibited, hands held high, singing in the Spirit. "Let all the earth keep silent. Let everything that hath breath, praise ye the Lord.!"

The Israelites never returned to Mt. Sinai. God told Moses he was not contained in shrines; he went before his people. The tent of meeting replaced the mountain as the rendezvous between God and man. The tabernacle became the central and binding force in their march through history, centered around the ark of the covenant made from the thorny acacia tree of the desert.

Although Mt. Sinai ceased to hold importance to the Israelites, it afforded a welcome and relatively safe retreat for early Christians. At first, these lonely ascetics lived in isolated silence in caves and tiny stone huts. As time went by, however, they formed into communities and built monasteries.

The oldest and most famous is the monastery of St. Catherine at the base of Mt. Sinai. Our first glimpse came as



4-WHEEL-DRIVE TRUCK transported the fourteen men, a driver, cook and two guides over the 1400-mile journey in ten days.

we descended the face of Mt. Sinai and saw it, like a walled jewel, sparkling in the valley far below. The monastery was built by the Roman Emperor Justinian in the fifth century, so, as the ancient writer Procopius stated, "the monks might conclude their lives in prayer and sacrifice." Still occupied by Greek Orthodox priests, its famous library houses some of the oldest scrolls, Scripture manuscripts and icons known to man.

From Mt. Sinai, the footsteps of Moses led eastward, to the sea. The trip was tedious as the Israelites made their way north along the Gulf of Aqaba and then inland to the oasis of Kadesh-barnea near the southern border of Canaan. Here, Moses sent spies into the land. With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, they reported it was

impossible to conquer the land. Angry at their disobedience, God threatened to destroy them and start again with Moses. Moses interceded and God agreed to withhold his wrath, but none of the disobedient ones would ever enter the Promised Land.

There followed thirty-eight years of biblical wanderings, probably in the vicinity of Kadesh-barnea. When the old generation had died, and a new, youthful group was ready, the cloud which had guided them by day once again moved; eastward toward Moab and up the eastern side of the Dead Sea to Mt. Nebo where Moses got his first—and final—look at the Promised Land.

In order to reach Mt. Nebo, our group had to make a roundabout trip of our own, returning to Jerusalem,

thence to Jericho and crossing the Jordan River at the Allenby Bridge, the only legal crossing point between Israel and Jordan.

From there, we drove south over the semi-arid hills of Moab to Mt. Nebo where the grand old prophet had been allowed to see, but not enter, the Promised Land. The vista from this lonely sight is across the northern end of the Dead Sea where the green valley of the Jordan still beckons the weary Palestinian homeward.

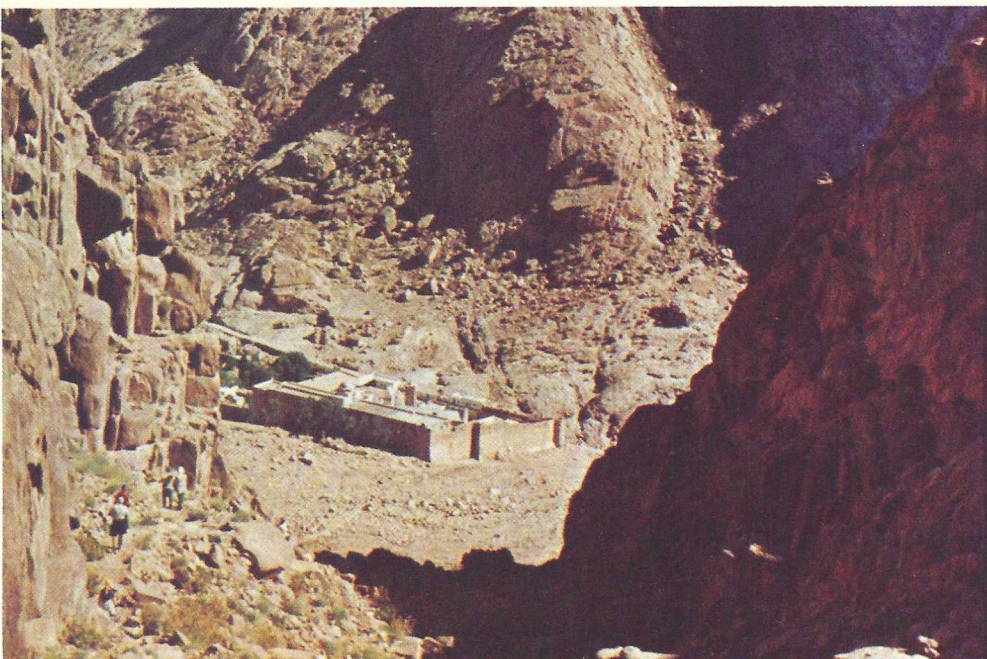
Some place near here, on Nebo's lonely peak, God once again spoke to his old servant Moses. And while Joshua returned to the valley to lead the well-trained young lions of Israel into the conquest of Canaan, Moses turned his face upward. Laying aside that weathered staff, he leaned his head on the bosom of God.

This, too, was the end of our journey. That night, in Amman, Jordan, after returning from Mt. Nebo, I attended a church meeting. The room was packed with Arab Christians. Many of them had been born in old Palestine but now, like those early children of Israel, were wanderers in a foreign land. Former Metropolitan Opera singer Calvin Marsh was singing. The people were not able to understand the words, but they had been deeply touched by his magnificent voice.

But I felt a sense of fear when he announced his last number, "The Holy City." The political situation was tense. That morning, the Amman newspaper had carried a dateline, "Occupied Jerusalem." It bristled with hostility. Forty-five per cent of the people in Jordan are displaced Palestinians who were forced to flee their native land after the war. How would they react to the words, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, lift up your voice and sing!"?

Yet as Calvin sang, a strange thing happened. I watched the expressions on the brown, Arab faces around me. Many of the people were mouthing the words in Arabic. Nearly all eyes were filled with tears. That door, opened by Moses—*Moshe* or *Musa*—3200 years before, had never been closed. Jerusalem was their city also. Not politically, but spiritually. The cry for a Promised Land lingers on.

ST. CATHERINE'S MONASTERY, as seen on the descent from Mt. Sinai. The spot is revered as the place where God spoke to Moses from the burning bush.



A CRY FOR HELP

Angus Sargeant, M.D.

Thirteen of us in a desert vehicle had just arrived at a small Bedouin camp in the Wadi Seikh. We had been three days on the road, traveling almost 800 miles since we had left Jerusalem in an open truck. Our immediate goal was to push on to the base of Mt. Serabit so we could begin our climb in the early morning to the abandoned turquoise mines. But we needed to pause at this Bedouin camp so our guide could make a courtesy stop. It was customary in the desert.

An old Bedouin father approached our truck. His dark skin contrasted with the white *kaffiyah* neatly wrapped around his head. His black eyes searched the faces of the men in the back of the vehicle. The guide had told him we had a doctor in the group.

After I identified myself, the old man spoke through our young Israeli interpreter. "The child has been sick for some time. Will you help?"

Climbing out of the truck, I trailed the old man as he led me into a small mud and tin house. There, after some difficulty, I was able to understand enough to give a few aspirin to a young veiled woman who had a headache. Then I followed the man back outside, squinting as I went out into the blazing sunlight. There, standing barefoot in the sand, was another veiled Bedouin woman, clutching a 3-year-old child.

A horrible wound, probably the result of a scald, disfigured the child's forehead. Healed scars could be seen in front of her ears and above her eyes, but the worst part were the large, hard scabs that still covered her entire forehead, and the top of her head where hair was matted in the scabs. These were third degree burn areas which had not healed in several months.

I felt the area tenderly. The scab was hard, but without any pus underneath. Although the child looked generally sick, she did not seem to have any fever. Had I been back in my office in High Point, North Carolina, I would have immediately referred her to a surgeon for the removal of the scab. I would have then treated the open skin with soaks and proper medication. But here? What could I do here? Nothing was available. There was only enough water for drinking purposes, and it was impure.

I fished a tube of antibiotic ointment

from the first aid kit we carried on the truck. With the help of the interpreter, I demonstrated to the mother, how to use constant soaks of warm water—at least two hours a day—to loosen the scabs. Only then should she apply the ointment.

But it seemed so hopeless. Where would she get enough water for the soaks? The flies would bring new infection. She couldn't understand me. She might even try to feed the ointment to the child. A hundred thoughts raced through my head. I glanced up at the other men in our group whose faces reflected my own concern.

"Why are we standing here like this when we could be praying for this child?"

I looked over my shoulder. It was Mike Evans, a tall, intense Messianic Jew from Long Island. I had already thought of praying for the child. I knew God could heal. But this was different. The father was Muslim. To gather around and lay on hands would be a horrible offense.

"No Mike," I hesitated. "We can't. Not here. Maybe in the truck after we leave. . . ."

But suddenly I wasn't in control any more. Mike was speaking to our Israeli interpreter. "Ask the father if we can pray for the child."

We waited as the strange language flowed back and forth.

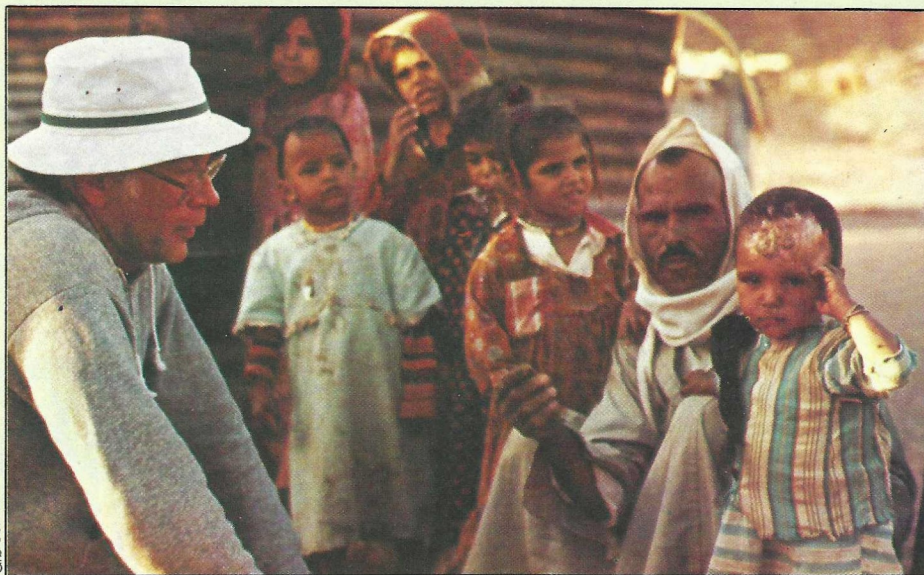
The interpreter turned and shrugged. "He says 'holy men' have come through who pray for them sometimes. It is all right. You may pray."

I watched as Mike's large hands practically enveloped the small head of the child. The other men stepped in close, reaching out with their hands. I felt tears stinging my eyes as I reached out also, touching in prayer the head I had just examined.

Mike was praying. Loud. With authority. His voice seemed to echo off the barren mountains of that remote place where Moses once cried out to God. I could feel the beat of Mike's heart and knew he was convinced that this child, sick and covered with flies, was loved by our Heavenly Father just as much as his own child, who was clean and secure in his Long Island home.

We then left, driving up the wadi to the base of Mt. Serabit where we made camp for the night.

The next day we had a change of plans. A spring on the truck had broken, meaning that we had to backtrack to pick up a less bumpy trail through the mountains. That afternoon, tired from our climb to the top of Serabit and the exploration of an Egyptian temple and the turquoise mines, we again passed the Bedouin camp and made a brief



BEDOUIN CHILD, her forehead disfigured by an ugly sore, becomes the object of perplexing concentration for Dr. Sargeant. Other Bedouin children look on with the father, unaware that within twenty-four hours the child will be almost totally healed.

stop. The old father saw me standing apart from the group and motioned to a tent about 100 yards away.

There are certain courtesies among the Bedouin. One of these is the method of approaching a tent. As one side is completely open and exposes the interior, you always approach from the backside. However, in order to give the occupants warning, you are supposed to make a lot of noise so they will know you are coming.

I don't know what I expected to find in the tent, which was made of goat skins and burlap, and characterized by flies. Inside, the mother of the sick child squatted beside her small fire and the hot coffee pot. Two small children, their noses running and their faces covered with flies, huddled behind her. She had heard us coming and pulled a small mat near the fire for us to sit on. This was the sole "furniture" in the tent except for a wooden box in the far corner.

In amazement, I looked at the "sick" child. The scab which had covered her entire forehead was gone. The area where it had been was covered with healthy, pink flesh. It was almost impossible to believe. It should have taken weeks, and that only with the best of care. But here she was, the next day—obviously healing, almost healed. There was nothing I needed to do, but praise God. And my heart was already overflowing with that.

I chased the flies off the child's head—a futile gesture for they immediately returned—and gave her some candy. I was ready to tell the mother goodbye but the woman motioned for me to wait. Reaching behind her, she grasped a small glass, the edges chipped, the inside as filthy as the

outside. It was stained brown by dark coffee.

Holding it in her left hand, she dipped the index finger of her right hand in a small pan of water, and slowly wiped it around the inside of the glass to clean it. It was the same hand she had been using to feel the baby's head, and to push the goats out of the tent. Brushing away the flies, she poured a few spoonfuls of water from the little pan into the glass, swished it around and emptied it on the sand. It was her way of saying I was special, for only on such an occasion would she have considered wasting precious water for the Western custom of cleaning. Then she took the smoked, brass coffee pot from the coals and filled the glass with her black, sweet coffee.

I knew what was happening. I also knew we were right against the outside limit of the laws of sanitation. But when she handed me the glass of coffee, her eyes moist with gratitude, I knew it was a gift from God. As He had touched her child in love, she was now touching me. I did not hesitate. I forgot for the moment I was a medical doctor, trained in hygiene and committed to sterility. I was only an instrument of God, privileged above all men for that moment. As if it were sacrificial wine, I took the filthy glass and drank the contents—to the glory of God.

I am sure the rest of the men in the group all had their personal encounters with God on that trip. Some during the stillness of the desert night, some on top of Mt. Sinai itself. But my mountaintop experience came in that humble Bedouin tent, squatting beside a fire, face to face with the still present power of God.