

# History of Judaism

## *The Exodus and Mosaic Judaism*

Dr Joshua Esler



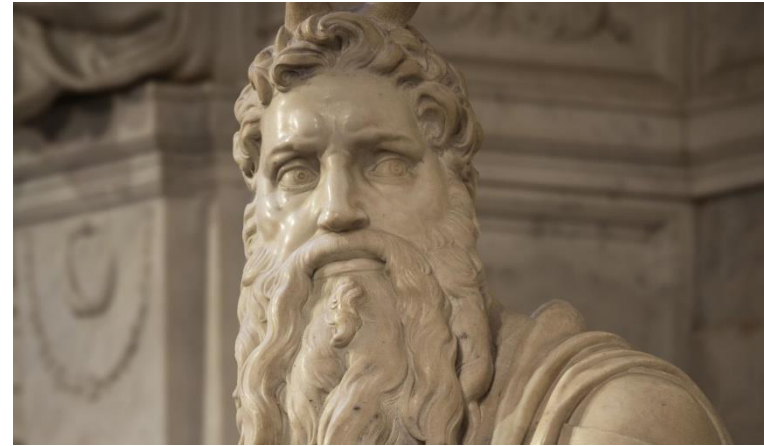
**SHERIDAN**  
INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION



# Mosaic Period

- Centrality of Moses

- Oracular, legislative, executive, and military functions
- Founder of main institutions: priesthood, tabernacle, covenant, administration
- Prominence of YHWH following revelation: *ehye asher ehye* – ‘I am/shall be what I am/shall be’
- Liberation of Hebrews from Egypt – obligation for exclusive loyalty to YHWH
  - Other gods and their cults abandoned



# Origin of the name YHWH

This is my Name – יהוה and אהיה

Exodus 3:14

אהיה אשר אהיה

"ehyeh asher ehyeh"

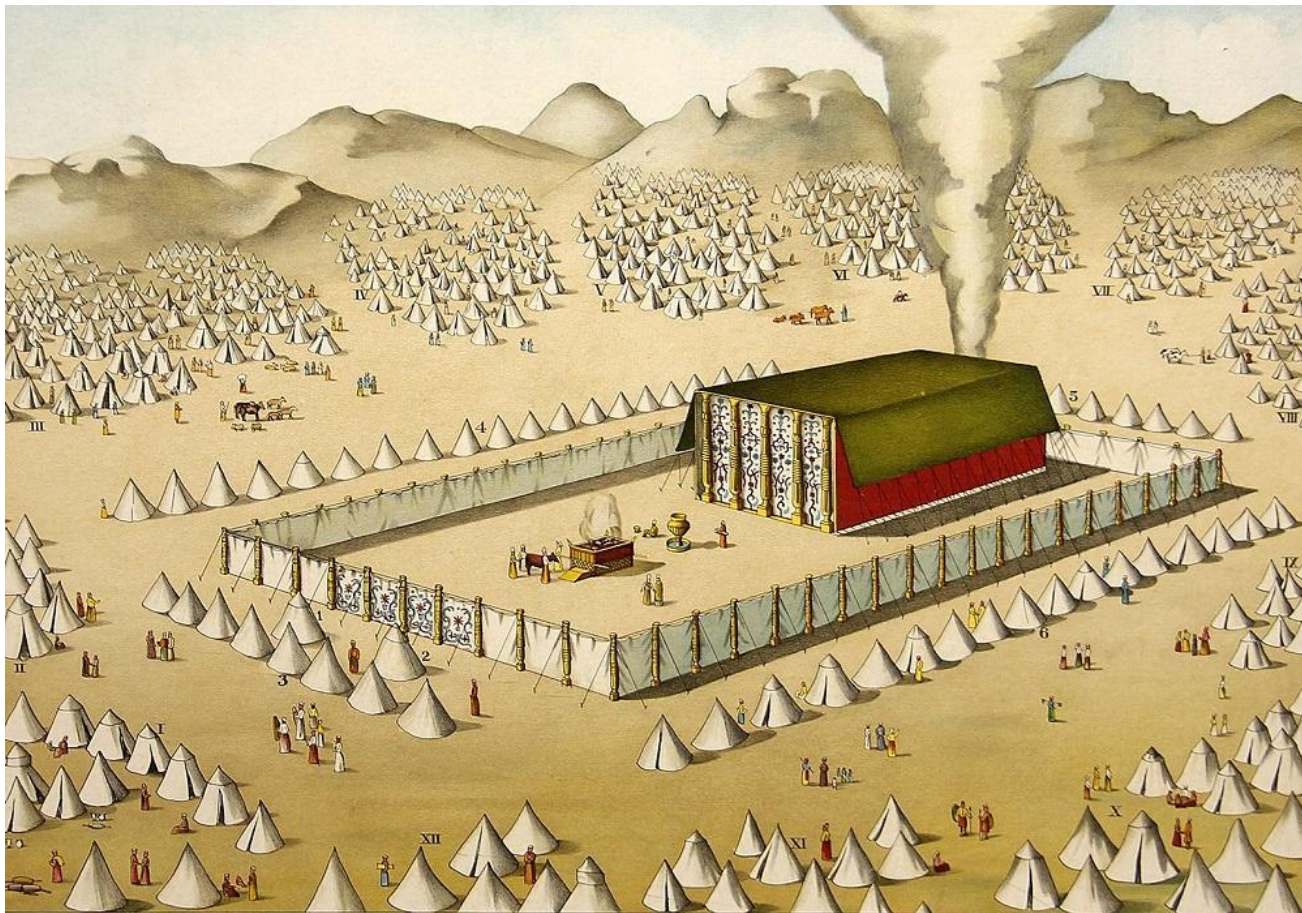
Ancient Hebrew Research Center

# Mosaic Period

- Social implications of Mosaic covenant
  - Involuntary perpetual slavery abolished and 7 year limit set; greater protection of slave rights
  - Murder punishable by death; ‘eye for an eye’ in regards to deliberate and severe bodily harm
  - Theft and property damage punished through monetary penalties
  - Creation of institutions to assist the poor and disadvantaged (e.g. sabbatical)
  - Military solidarity
    - Centred around the Tabernacle and Covenant Tablets
    - God accompanied Israelites in war; spoils of war shared among priesthood



# The Tabernacle



# Moses the Historical Figure: Views

- Conservative view
  - Moses the author of the Torah
- Literary critique
  - German scholar Martin Noth: two separate groups experienced the Exodus and Sinai episodes
  - An editor wove the two together around the figure of Moses, who was actually from Moab
- Historical view
  - W.F. Albright – between these two extremes
  - Essence of biblical narrative correct, but acquired accretions
  - Literary critique correct that sources reconstructed but sources seen as different versions of the same events



# Moses the Historical Figure: Dates

- **Biblical account**
  - Tribe of Levi, of the Hebrews (derivative from *Habiru*, from *Hapiru* (*Apiru*) in Egypt
  - Name of Pharaoh not given; date of Exodus difficult to determine
    - Conservative view: 1 Kings 6:1 – 490 years before Solomon's Temple, i.e. around 1440 BCE
- **Archaeological evidence**
  - Thutmose III had capital at Thebes in the south of Egypt, not north in delta region as implied in biblical account (Hebrews lived in Goshen in north and constructed storage cities of Pithom and Rameses)
  - Edom, Moab, and small kingdoms of Transjordan not yet established at this time
  - Destruction of cities captured by Hebrews occurred 1250 not 1400
  - Compromise between biblical account and archaeology:
    - Reference of 480 years based on 12 generations between Moses and Solomon – allows 40 years for each generation; actual generation closer to 25 years – date of Exodus thus around 1290 BCE
    - Date of 1290 BCE matches biblical description of oppressive pharaoh in Exodus 1:2-2:23 with Seti I and tyrant pharaoh during Exodus as Ramses II
    - These dates place Moses in late 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE



# Ramses II

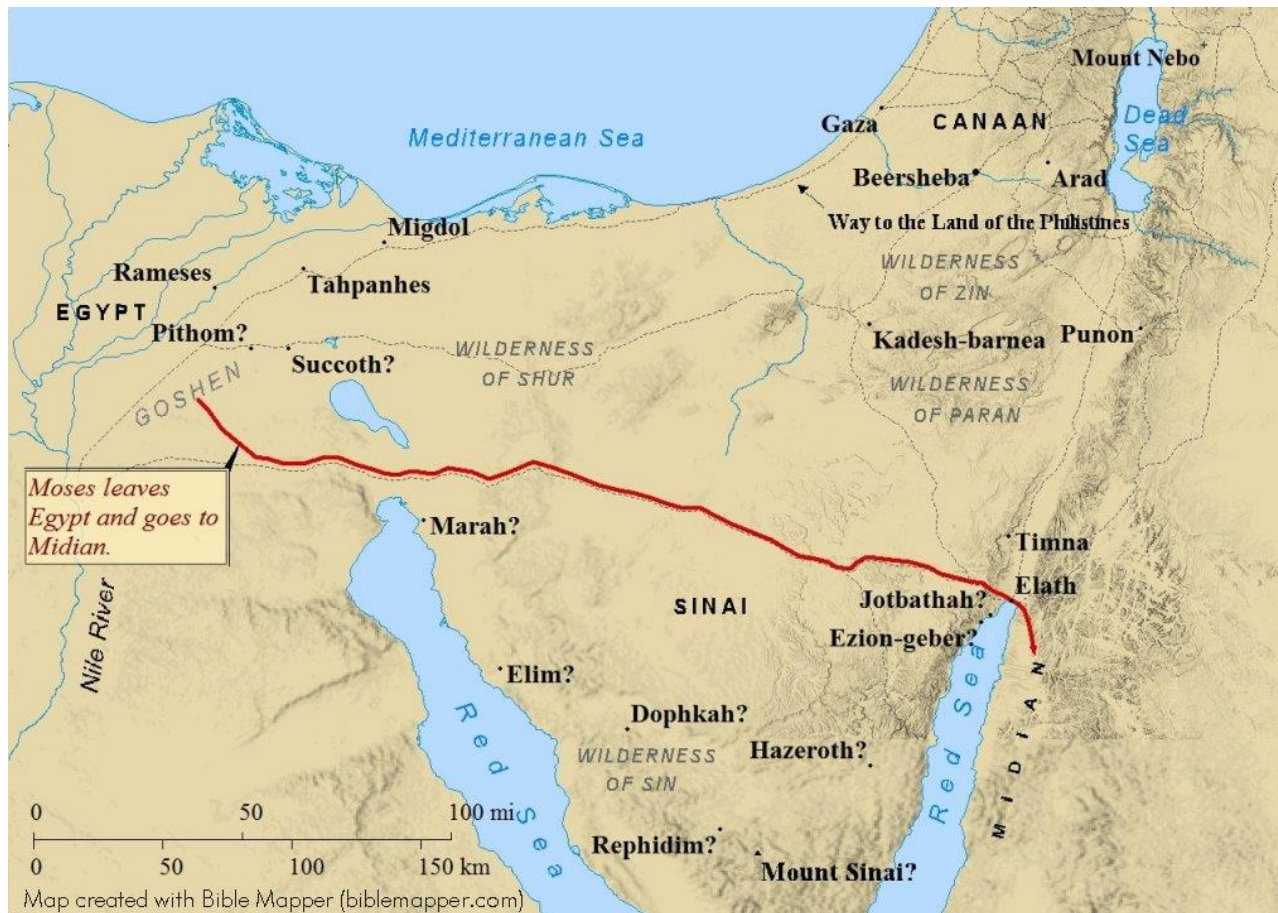




# Moses: the Narrative in Historical Context

- Moses' name
  - Possibly of Egyptian origin, from mose ('is born'), appears in Thutmose ([The God] Thou is Born) – perhaps indicates adoption by Egyptian royalty
- Upbringing in Egyptian court
  - Later religious, civil, and military accomplishments evident of court education
  - Knowledgeable of Canaan, Syria and other nations in Fertile Crescent
- Sojourn in Midian
  - Northwest Arabia – fled here after killing an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave
  - Likely 25 years of age – returns to confront Pharaoh at 80 years of age

# Midian



# Moses: the Narrative in Historical Context

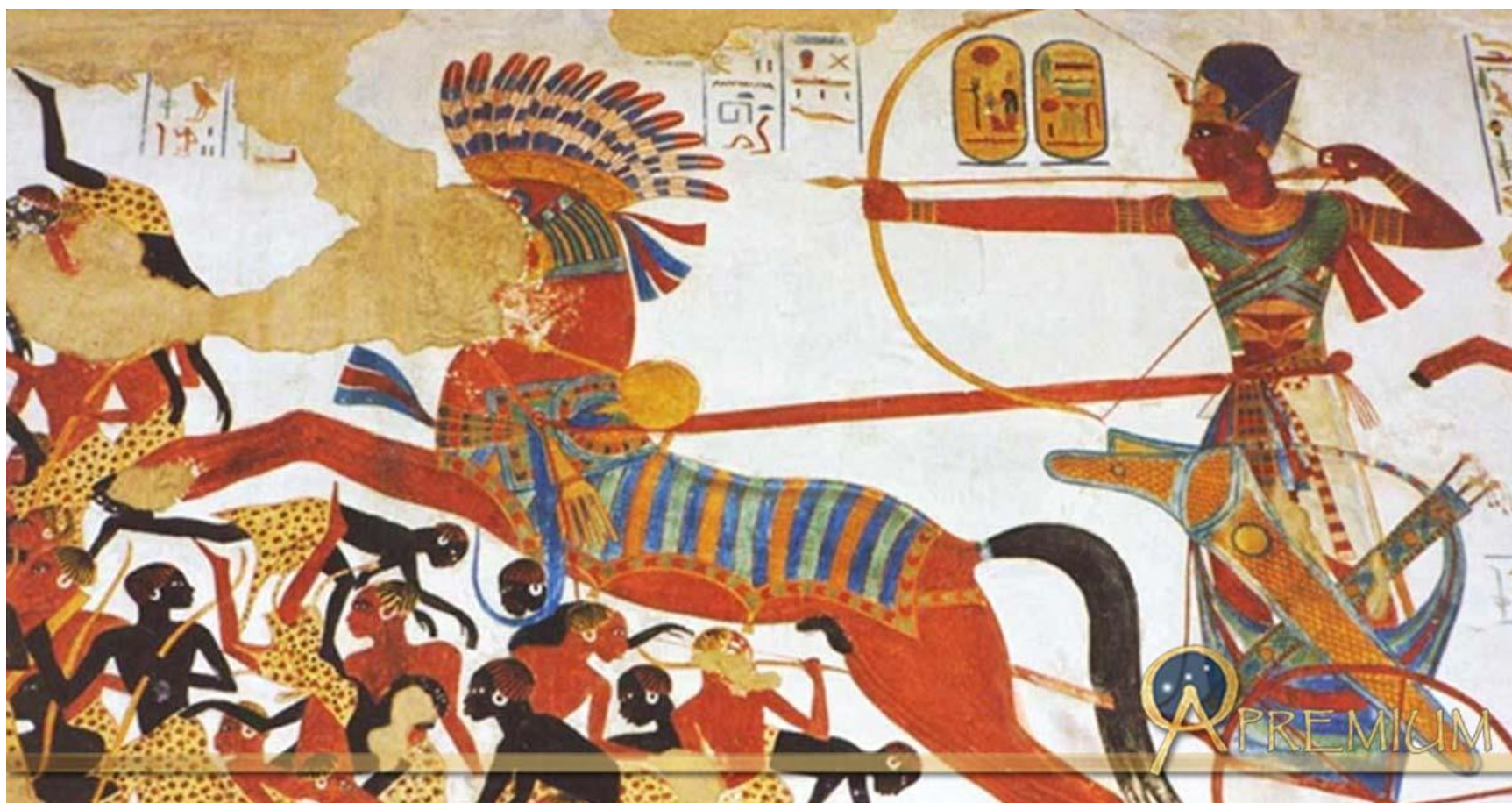
- Moses in Midian
  - Moses' escape to Midian similar to story of Sinuhe, an Egyptian court official who fled around 1960 BCE – had to navigate forts at eastern border
  - Midian east of Gulf of Aqaba, in northern Hejaz (Arabia), but Midian tribes also settled in Sinai
  - Moses remained in Midian and married Zipporah
  - The burning bush
    - Moses' reluctance to confront Pharaoh consistent with the figures of Seti I and Ramses II
    - God identifies himself as YHWH in place of El 'Elyon and El Shaddai – identifies YHWH as Lord of nature and all nations

# Moses: the Narrative in Historical Context

- Ramses II
  - Aspirations of empire expansion, to defeat of Hittites and control of all of Syria; defeated by Hittites at Kadesh
    - Defeat propagandized as victory by Ramses; followed by massive building projects
    - Moses and Aaron confront Ramses a few years after Kadesh; Ramses' arrogant response consistent with his ego
    - Plagues sent by YHWH – recent school of research suggests some historical core
      - One interpretation: basic cause of all plagues the high flooding of the Nile
        - Heavy summer rains in Ethiopia carried red soil from hills, picked up red algae in Lake Tana region and flowed to the Mediterranean – set in motion other plagues to follow, lasting from August to following March



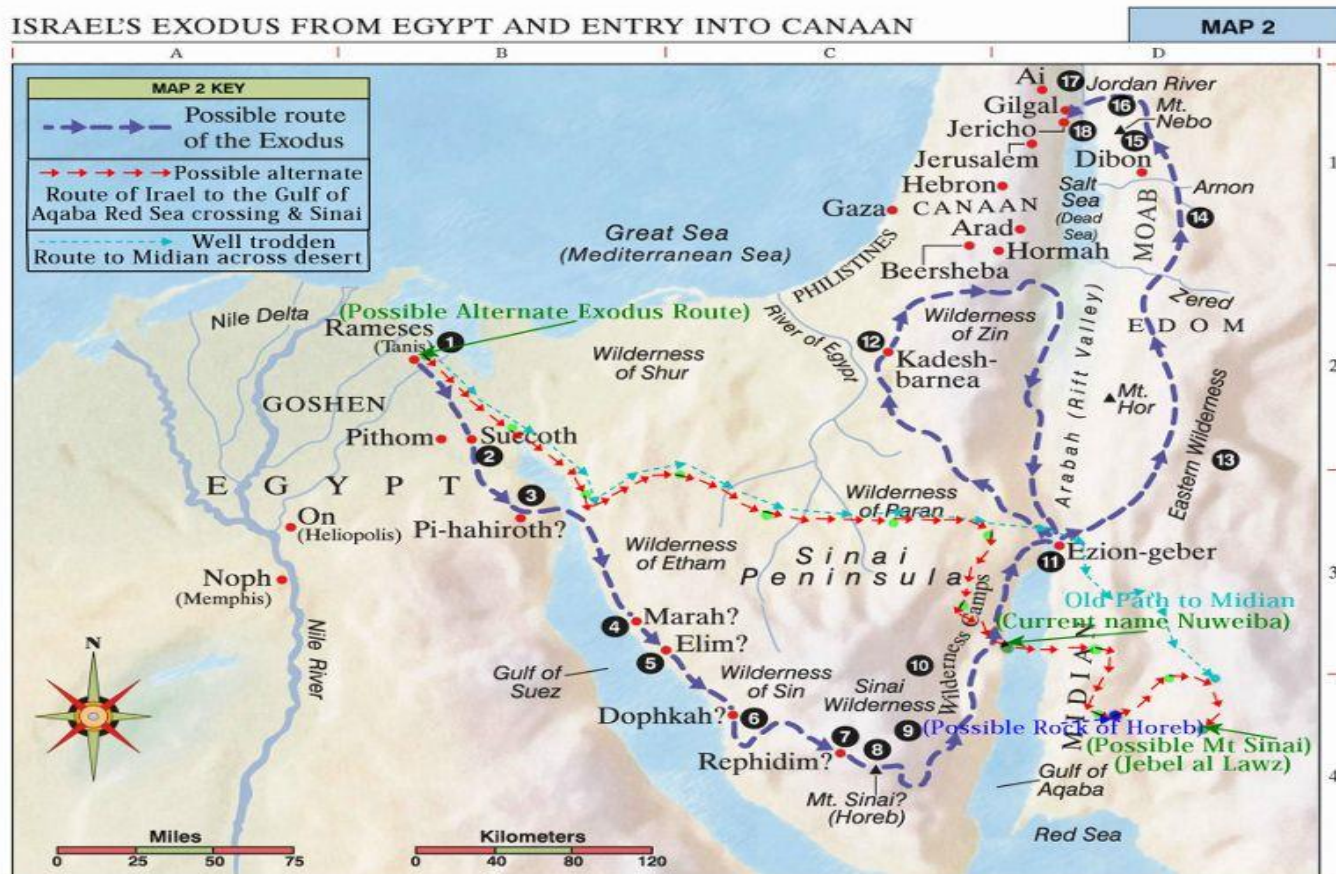
# Battle at Kadesh



# Moses: the Narrative in Historical Context

- The Exodus
  - Tradition: 2,000,000 Hebrews left Egypt; critical methods – around 15,000
  - Sea crossing – Sea of Reeds interpreted by later Jewish tradition as Red Sea; other scholars interpret as lake in northeastern Egypt
    - Poetry sung by Miriam upon defeat of Egyptians following crossing similar to 14<sup>th</sup> century Canaanite literature
  - Most likely route from Sea of Reeds – to Jabal Musa (Mt Sinai) in southern tip of Sinai Peninsula

# Possible Exodus Routes of Israelites



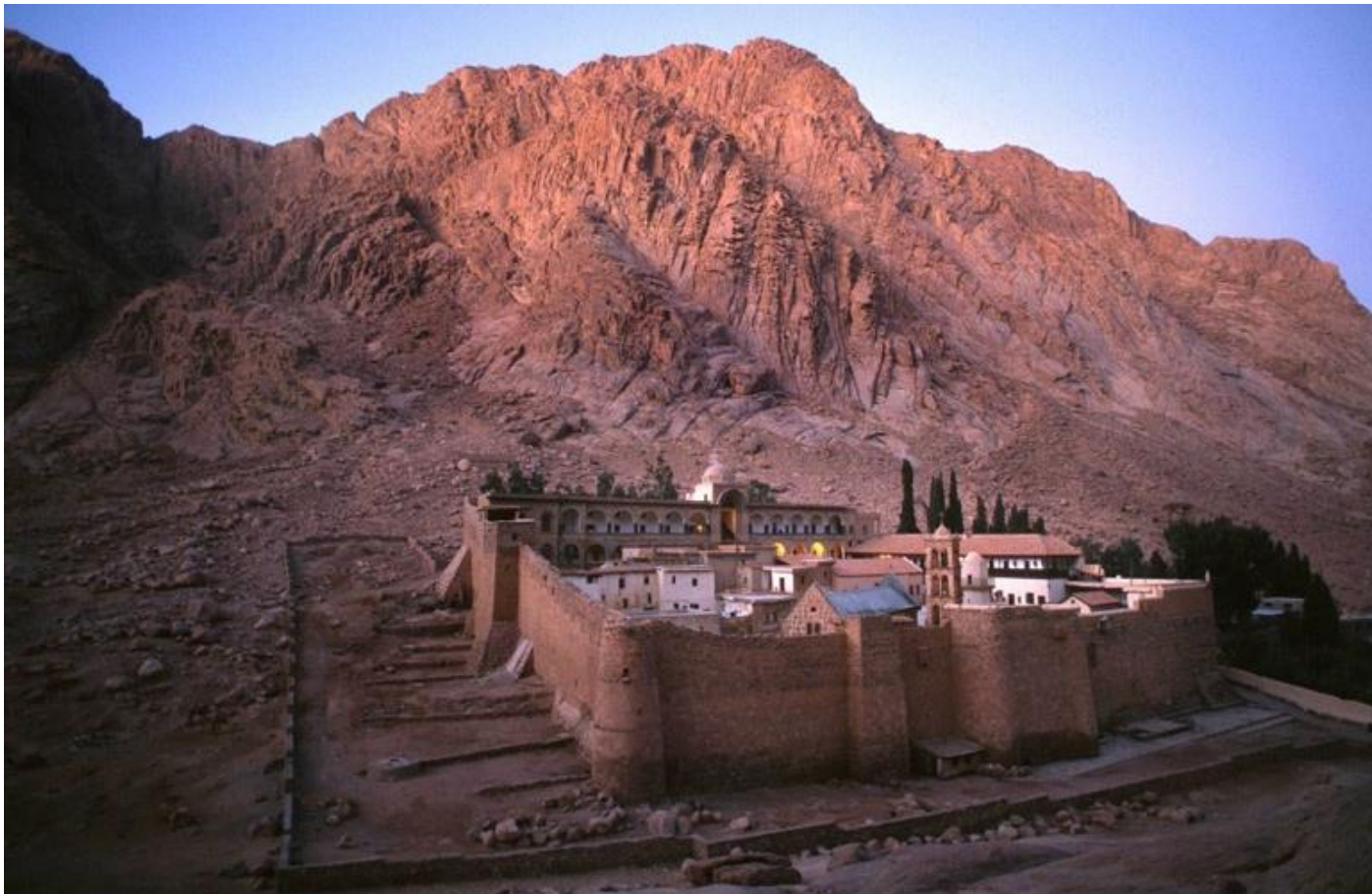


# Moses: the Narrative in Historical Context

- The Sinai Covenant
  - Some scholars – Sinai Covenant instituted by Moses based on his observations of 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE Hittite ‘covenants’ with vassal states
  - Foundations of Hebrew religion established at Sinai:
    - First commandment – to worship no other gods but YHWH; debate over whether this was the true beginning of monotheism or not
    - Forbidding the making of all representations of any god including YHWH revolutionary in this period
    - Keeping of covenant an emulation of God: YHWH’s protection of helpless Hebrews in Egypt required reciprocation in defending the disadvantaged and the implementation of just laws
    - Breach of covenant required atoning sacrifices
    - Judges and hearings instituted through Jethro
    - 12 tribes may have been instituted at this time



# Mt Sinai?



# Moses: the Narrative in Historical Context

- Sinai to Transjordan
  - Moses encounters resistance from vassal states of Midianites: Edom and Moab
    - Moses avoids these states, moving east and then north to conquer king of the Amorites – Sihon, and king of Bashan – Og
    - Moses permits some Israelite tribes to settle in Transjordan, leading to conflict with Moabites and overlord Midianites – defeated by Moses in his latter years
  - Renewal of Sinai Covenant
    - Reinstatement of the importance of the Covenant before his death

# Edom, Moab, Ammon, Bashan



