

Dear Tim,

I am writing this long letter immediately after having watched, for the first time, the first part of the Red Sea Miracle movie that you sent me the link to.

I spent the entire viewing of ‘Patterns of Evidence: The Red Sea Miracle (Part One)’, shaking my head in astonishment and disbelief as I watched you misrepresent the facts, and leave out so much evidence that counters the so-called ‘Hebrew’ scenario. The very decision you made to label the two versions of the Exodus journey ‘Egyptian’ and ‘Hebrew’ exposes your bias. You know very well that the evangelical community will see that as the ‘Enemy’ versus the ‘Heroes’, and so the enemy also equals secular scholars/academics versus evangelical Christians who favour God’s heroic Israelites. That is propaganda, not truth-seeking.

I list here just a few of the many biblical facts that I am sure you were made aware of but simply ignored to promote your propagandistic movie.

(1) The Midbar Yam Suph – Desert of the Sea of Reeds – lies between Goshen (Raamses) and Succoth ... read your Bible! This desert is never mentioned again after Succoth. Nowhere in your film did anyone place Succoth anywhere other than in the Wadi Tumilat and therefore within the eastern Egyptian border. The Desert of Yam Suph cannot be the desert of the Sinai peninsula! In fact, most scholars see the Midbar Sin (Desert of Sin) – which comes after Elim and long after the Miracle of the Sea – as the etymological basis for modern Sinai (Arabic/Bedouin Sina).

(2) When the Israelites cross the Yam Suph, they are standing in the Desert of Shur (Midbar Shur) ... again, read your Bible! You showed very clearly that the Way of Shur crosses northern Sinai and is described in the Bible as ‘up against’ or ‘adjacent to’ (Hebrew al-paneh) Egypt. This puts the Sea of Reeds between Egypt and the northern Sinai peninsula. You ignore this irrefutable biblical fact.

(3) You did include the point about Etham being on the edge of the desert, but then immediately contradicted that by throwing it 150 miles further into the desert, following Glen Fritz’s ridiculous argument that Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age sites scattered in the desert represent biblical Etham. Surely you are aware that these much earlier sites are scattered all over the Negev as well, making his argument untenable? And then you completely ignored the fact that those sites are not on the ‘edge’ of any desert! The narrative is absolutely clear that Etham stood at the boundary between Egypt and the desert that lay before them in the story. And Fritz’s toponym Wadi Yethem (where did he get that name from?) is actually in Transjordan on the other side of the Arabah/Gulf of Akaba (according to Fritz’s own map, p. 78, Fig. 8.5), not in north-eastern Sinai on the modern Egyptian side of the Akaba gulf. I have travelled that wadi often (and you have too) because it carries the main highway between Akaba and Petra.

(4) When you came to the numbers of Israelites leaving Egypt, you failed to mention any of the biblical texts that make it clear that the early meaning of alef/elef cannot mean 1,000 without making a nonsense of the text. For example, the twenty-seven alef killed when a wall collapsed at the siege of Aphek (1 Kings 30). Do you really think 27,000 soldiers were killed by a falling wall? Or the first attack upon Ai when three aleph of troops were sent up and 36 were killed, causing Joshua to tear his clothes in despair [Joshua 7:4-6]. Wow, 36 killed out of 3,000 (representing 0.83% of the total troops) when attacking a small town that could easily be taken by three alef of men. On the other hand, 36 killed out of three military units or companies would be a serious kill ratio (of around 50%). Then there is the fact that the military term for a commander of troops in the modern Israeli army is ‘Alef’ and in the modern Egyptian army is ‘Alpha’ implying that the word can certainly mean a company of men under a troop captain. Moreover, you were told that the total population of Egypt in the Middle Kingdom (according to anthropological statistical studies) was about three million. So, you seem to think that the Israelite slaves constituted two-thirds of the entire population of Egypt?

(5) You constantly refer to a ‘deep and mighty sea’, whereas the Book of Exodus never says that. Nor does the entire Torah. You actually make the ‘deep sea’ one of your patterns criteria ... but that is your interpretation, not what the biblical text accredited to Moses actually says. That makes your point entirely pointless and thoroughly misleading.

(6) Contrary to what was said by your evangelical interviewee, the route across Sinai from the tip of the Gulf of Suez to Eilat at the tip of the Gulf of Akaba is not an ancient Bronze Age route. It was the camel route for Medieval pilgrims from Muslim Egypt travelling to the Hajj in Mecca, some 2,000 years after Exodus. The two routes that were used in ancient times were the coastal road (Egyptian the ‘Way of Horus’, biblical the ‘Way of the Philistines’) and the Way of Shur (the ‘Way of the Wall’, the wall being the Egyptian border canal and fortress system known as the ‘Walls of the Ruler’). This route starts from just north of Lake Timsah (at Etham) on the modern Suez Canal and heads to Beersheba across northern Sinai. This was the route regularly used by the Patriarchs entering or leaving Egypt.

(7) You also misled with the distances involved for the journey from Goshen to Nuweiba, showing instead the measurement of 150 miles from the tip of the Gulf of Suez (the actual distance on the modern road being 196 miles). That is clearly not the starting point on the day after Passover. The distance from Tell ed-Daba/Avaris to Suez is 40 miles, which you should have added to your travelling distance (totalling 236 miles). You also misled about the distance across the desert between Goshen/Daba and Succoth/Tell el-Maskhuta which, even in its present reduced state due to agricultural expansion, is 18 miles, not 12. You also completely ignored the Jewish chronology, which celebrates the Miracle of the Sea exactly seven days after Passover when the festival of the unleavened bread comes to an end. So, if you wish to argue a seven-day journey from Goshen to Nuweiba, then the daily distance would be $236 \div 7 = 33.7$ miles. Correct facts matter! I might add here that the first three locations – Succoth, Etham, and Pi-ha-Hiroth – do not represent three days. Common sense and the very name Sukkot should tell you that Moses waited for other Israelite slaves to reach him from other parts of Goshen (e.g. Pithom) and elsewhere before setting off from the camp-site at Succoth heading to the edge of the desert at Etham. God did not supply Moses with a cell-phone to ring other Israelites scattered around Egypt to tell them to get to the camp-site at Succoth. He had to send runners ... and all this took time. The Israelites would have spent at least four days waiting for others to join them.

(8) Why did you not mention the clear fact that the basket made for the baby Moses was made of reeds (suph) [Exodus 2:3]? And the fact that Pharaoh’s Daughter picked the basket up out of the reeds (suph) along the Nile [Exodus 2:5]. Both conveniently ignored. The translation ‘Sea of Reeds’ is not in question.

(9) You failed to make clear that the Hebrew word Yam does not just refer to a ‘sea’. It also means ‘lake’. Take for example the Dead Sea (i.e. Sea of Salt = Yam ha-Malah) and the Sea of Galilee (Yam Kinneret) both of which are lakes.

(10) The Israelites did not head onto the Way of the Philistines when turning back. They came close but were separated from the forts of Djaru (Tell el-Hebua I & II) and Migdol by the Pelusiac feed into Shi Hor lagoon and the Sea of Reeds. The Yam being referred to in the line ‘between Migdol and the sea’ is the Mediterranean Sea because immediately afterwards the sea of crossing is called Yam Suph. Why give two names in one sentence to a single body of water? You also make short shrift of the location of Baal-Zephon, whose main temple in Egypt was at Tell Dafana at the edge of the eastern delta. The Hebrew text correctly states that Pi ha-Hiroth was to the east of Baal-Zephon. You quietly skip over the fact that no sites of Migdol or Baal-Zephon have been located at or near Nuweiba or anywhere in southern Sinai! Your geography on these critical points is all over the place. You also ignore Jeremiah 44:1 and Ezekiel 30:5-9, both of which

place Migdol at the northern border of Egypt.

(11) Nothing in the Bible says that the Mountain of God was in Midian. Far from it, the biblical text says it was located to the west of Jethro's home. How could Aaron, coming from Egypt, meet Moses heading to Egypt at the Mountain of God, anywhere other than in the Sinai peninsula?

(12) So far, you have skimmed over the well-recognised route down western Sinai (complete with matching toponyms) and, by implication, all the Hebrew Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions that place the Israelites there and not in Saudi Arabia.

These are just a few of the points I could think of from a first viewing. I am sure there are many more! I have written this with a heavy heart and a final acknowledgement of a home truth that I now have to accept. The sad fact is that I am no longer able to support your project or work with you in any of your future film endeavours. It is my honest opinion that, with this movie, you have clearly shown where you plant your standard – in the fundamentalist, evangelical, unscientific view of biblical history. Your claim that you are using the ‘scientific method’ (which you have paid lip-service to in previous movies) went out of the window this time, in favour of a spectacular fantasy. Your prejudices against real archaeological and historical endeavour, and the very biblical text itself, comes through so clearly in this wholesale misrepresentation of the facts. As a result, you do tremendous dis-service to the Bible, Judaism, and Christianity. You seem to have intentionally misrepresented the biblical narrative in your adherence to the Cecil B. DeMille paradigm, which is your film director’s version of the Book of Exodus, not the one that is described in Scripture. It has been readily apparent to me, pretty much from the start of our relationship that you have been fixated on the Nuweiba crossing and Gebel el-Lawz scenario, cooked up by Ron Wyatt and his successors. I have tried to disavow you of that misguided conviction because it is patently a false narrative. Unfortunately, all my efforts have been to no avail and you continue to promote this fantasy in both words and visuals. Everything about your film favours one misguided side of the debate and, without any real evidence to back it up, you fill gullible Christian minds with Wyatt fakery and comments from evangelical scholars with no real understanding of archaeology and who are driven by their belief in the supernatural nature of God. But the super-natural is just that – a supreme deity using his own creations as the tools of his miracles. Super-natural simply means the extreme forces of nature, exactly as Moses describes them on so many occasions in the Torah. As a result of your aggrandisement of the story through the fantastical lens of the Hollywood epics, you dismantle the Bible’s credibility and set biblical scholarship back two hundred years. So, this is where it ends for me with Patterns of Evidence. There is no point in continuing our relationship when I so totally disapprove of what you are now doing. Sorry, but my conscience will not allow me to ignore what I see and forces me to fight this wrong with every breath.
With genuine love for a good friend and with great sadness,
David.

[Editor’s Notes]

(7) Using the internet tool Distance.to gives 205 miles from Suez to Nuweiba beach through the Mitla pass. Road milage from Tell ed-Daba/Avaris to Nuweiba (going by way of Mitla pass) comes to 303 miles. Road milage from Tell ed-Daba/Avaris to Nuweiba (going by way of Wadi Sedr pass) comes to 355 miles. Most likely Mitla Pass wasn’t built until Roman or later times.
Giving 7 day averages of 43 miles or 51 miles.