

# Creation Science Fellowship of New Mexico

Supplement to Book Review: "Discovering the City of Sodom"

## "Sodom & Gomorrah: Archaeological evidence that God punishes Sin"

*By Nate Wilson*

*Compiled for and reviewed by Dr. Milton Fisher, Archaeology Professor, Sangre de Cristo Seminary*

Note: There were, originally, various maps and photos along with this treatise. The links to them are broken or non-existent and are not included here.

### Introduction

I decided on this topic for two reasons, one, that I had seen a presentation by Ron Wyatt on Sodom & Gomorrah and, aware of the controversy over him, wanted to do some investigation myself. The second reason I chose this topic was as a personal reminder to myself of the wrath of God against sin—I wanted this story to become more real to me so that I would not take God's mercy for granted. I will follow this study by first examining the Biblical record, then giving an overview of the archaeological record, and ending with a comparative critique of the positions.

### The Biblical Record

The first step is to establish what the Bible says about Sodom and Gomorrah. We get the story of the original cities in the book of Genesis, then, throughout the rest of the Bible, these cities are referred back to no less than twenty times as an example of how God punishes sin. At the end of the Bible (II Peter 2:6, Jude 7), Sodom and Gomorrah is the epitome of God's wrath against sin. What was the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah? The Jude passage mentioned earlier cites "fornication" and "going after strange flesh." The Genesis passages (chap. 18 & 19) mention the citizens wanting to molest visitors, then turning on Lot who was keeping the visitors safe. Jeremiah also seems to mention sexual sin (23:14) along with lying and "strengthen[ing] the hands of evil doers." The most detailed list of Sodom's sin is found in Ezekiel 16:49 (if indeed it is not speaking figuratively of another city); "pride" and "prosperous ease" head the list, followed by the converse of Jeremiah's complaint, they "do not strengthen the hand of the poor and needy," and finally, stating that they were "haughty" and "committed abomination before God." The magnitude of Sodom's sin is also mentioned throughout the Bible as "great and grievous" (Gen. 18:20), so pervasive that Abraham doubted that there were even 20 righteous people in it (Gen. 18:32), and that they acted without shame, openly displaying their sin, not hiding it (Isa. 3:9).

For the greatness of Sodom and Gomorrah's sin, God determined to punish them by wiping them out. He states His intentions on a visit to Abraham, and then sends two angels to accomplish the destructive act (Gen. 18-19).

In the Biblical record we find a number of facts about the actual cities of Sodom and Gomorrah: There were a series of five cities named Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and

Belar/Zoar (Gen. 10:19, 14:2, 14:8, Deut. 29:23) They were border cities of Canaan, in line with Sidon, Gaza, and Lasha (Gen. 10:19, 13:12) They were visible to the East of where Abraham lived (Gen. 13:10, 18:16, 19:28), but not so close that a military threat to them would threaten Abraham (Gen. 14). They were in the area of the Plain of the Jordan (Genesis 13:10-12) They were well-watered, and contained lush greenery desirable to a shepherd (Gen. 13:10) Sodom was large enough that 50 people would be a small percentage of its population (Gen. 18:26), but small enough that its army, when combined with that of the neighboring 4 cities, was inferior to Abraham's army of 318 men (Gen. 14). Commerce, agriculture—including wine-making—and building were carried out in Sodom (Luke 17:28, Deut. 32:32) Sodom had a city gate (Gen. 19:1), and Lot's house had a solid door (Gen. 19:6-11) The battleground of choice for the allied armies of these five cities was "the Valley of Siddim, which is the Salt Sea." When they were defeated, they fled to "the mountain" leaving their villages to be plundered. They regrouped at the Vale of Shaveh (The King's Vale) which was apparently near modern Jerusalem, and welcomed a triumphant Abraham (Gen. 14). The cities were destroyed by God quickly, in the space of a morning (Gen. 19:13-29, Lam 4:6, Amos 4:1, Luke 17:29) The entire plain was destroyed with brimstone and fire from heaven. Smoke went up from it "like a furnace," and it was turned to ashes (Gen. 19:24, 27, II Pet. 2:6) The last city, Zoar, was a small city (Gen. 19:20), was closer to Sodom than "the mountain," (Gen. 19:19-20), and was not destroyed (Gen. 19:21&29) There were no survivors to the other cities (Gen. 19:25, Isa. 1:9, Isa. 13:19-20, Jer. 49:18, Jer. 50:40, Zeph. 2:9) Sodom was later identified with the city of Jerusalem (Isa. 1:10, Ez. 16:55, Rev. 11:8), possibly because of the parallels of their sinfulness. Sodomy was a constant problem in Jerusalem (I Kings. 14:24, 15:12, 22:46, II Ki. 23:7). The ruined cities and the unoccupied wasteland around them could be seen by the Jews throughout Bible times: in Moses' day (Deut. 29:23), during the period of the Kings (Isaiah 13:19ff, Zeph. 2:9), and during the Exile (Jeremiah 50:39ff).

### **The Archaeological Record**

First some observations from archaeology which coincide with the Biblical account:

**BRONZE AGE DOORS:** "When Kyle and Albright excavated the site of Tel Beit Mirsim... they found evidence in the level of the Middle Bronze Age (2200-1600 BC) of strong walls and great doors. On the other hand, in the level of Early Iron II (900-600 BC)... inhabitants used only archways or curtains..." (Free p.62). Lot lived around 2000 BC and had a door on his house that was sufficient to keep out the mob at Sodom. The Bible account fits the Archaeological record even in this little point! (See picture of a door from this era in Boyd p. 84.)

**TRAVEL:** Travels of great distances were possible in Abraham's day. People regularly traveled the whole length of the "fertile crescent." Legal documents for the rental of carts in Babylon have been found containing the stipulation that the renter not take the cart all the way into Canaan! Thus a thirty mile (as the crow flies) distance between Abraham and Lot would be no great distance, and it was entirely possible for Abraham's army to pursue Lot's capturers for 150 miles to the Damascus area (Fisher).

**SALT, SULPHUR, AND ASPHALT:** Geologists (including Fredrick Clapp) confirm huge quantities of salt, sulphur and bituminous material, also known as brimstone or asphalt, around the areas associated with Sodom and Gomorrah (Boyd p.51, 86, Wilson p. 67-68, Wood).

**A CONFLAGRATION:** It is generally agreed that there was a subterranean lake of oil beneath these cities. The area is located on a fault line, and natural gas would have poured out of fissures in a seismic disturbance. "A tremendous explosion took place, which carried burning sulphur, oil, and asphalt into the air above the cities. Mingled with salt, this brimstone and fire rained down upon the whole plain" (Boyd 51, 86). Dense smoke suggests smoke from a petroleum-based fire. (cf. Wilson p.67, Kitchen p.47, Pfeiffer p.543, Library of Congress, Wood, Sanders II).

**PILLARS OF SALT:** A strata of salt 150 feet thick is to be found in the area, including a veritable mountain of salt called Jebel Usdum (or translated from Arabic to English, "Mount Sodom.") Pillars of salt can be found all around the Dead Sea. That there are pillars of salt is indisputable, but could a human be turned into salt? Excavations in the Italian city of Pompeii demonstrate evidence that a volcano can indeed quickly cover human victims and preserve them. According to Boyd (p. 85), the bodies in Pompeii actually turned into salts during the process of the volcanic cataclysm. The Bible phrase concerning Mrs. Lot being "back from behind" indicates she was rather far behind the rest of her family and was covered by the fallout whereas her husband and daughters were not. (Boyd. p. 86, Wilson p. 69, Unger p. 1206, NIV Study Bible)

**CHANGES IN CIVILIZATION:** "In the Middle Bronze IIa period (1900-1750 BC), Bethel, Shechem, and Dothan and other cities associated with the Patriarchs flourished. At Jericho, tombs show that desert nomads at this time reoccupied cities that had been allowed to fall into ruins, but the main area of occupation was the hilly districts of Palestine and the Southern desert (Negev) which Glueck's survey proved to have been once thickly populated. Similar surveys show that Moab and Ammon were also inhabited c.2000 BC, but at the time of the destruction of Sodom, Gomorrah, and Zoar...the population hurriedly abandoned adjacent sites and returned to their semi-nomadic life. Sedentary occupation of the country east of Jordan is not found again until the 13th Century" (Wiseman) (cf. Sanders II) In other words, archaeology confirms the movement of shepherds like Lot into cities during Abraham's time period, then suddenly leaving the area uninhabited for several hundred years. This matches the biblical record!

**REMAINS OF CITIES DESTROYED BY FIRE:** The site of Bab-edh-Dhra was discovered by Melvn Kyle in 1924 on the Lisan Peninsula in the southern Half of the Dead Sea. It has been excavated by others, including Wm. Albright. All the evidence points to a Cannanitish city dating from the time of Abraham which was burned and left uninhabited for several hundred years (Pfeiffer p. 543). Several ancient historians also mention having seen the ruins: Tacitus History 5.7. Josephus Wars 4.4 (Unger's p. 1201), and Strabo (Wilson p. 66). The Ebla tablets also mention the names of the five cities, naming one of their kings as "Birsha," matching the Bible account (Wyatt).

**ZOAR:** According to the Biblical record, one would expect Zoar not to have been wiped out as were its sister cities, since Lot escaped to this town. Sure enough, historical evidence for a city named Zoar is to be found where only legend and speculation exist for her sister cities. "Josephus says that the Dead Sea extended from Jericho as far as Zoar (B.J., IV. Viii.4); and the Christian historian Eusebius, of the fourth century, confirms that statement and adds that a Roman garrison was there. Also the mosaic map found in a Greek church of Medeba, dated from the fifth or sixth century, places Zoar at the Southeast corner of the sea... In 1924...Drs. Albright and Kyle, explored the territory at the south end of the Dead Sea... they found the

ruins of a Zoar of the Byzantine and Arabic periods, but believed that the site of the earlier Zoar had been submerged..." (NIV Study Bible). This site is also associated with Rast and Schaub's "Sufi" site (Shank P.36) (cf. Sanders I)

I have found at least five theories as to the location of the cities:

## **1. MYTHOLOGY**

There may have never been a town called Sodom or Gomorrah. This position is summed up by a quote from Archaeology Contributing Editor Neil Asher Silberman: "The real challenge for biblical archaeologists today is not to search for long-lost cities, but to understand why the ancient Israelites formulated these powerful myths." (Slayman) The assumption is that the Bible is a collection of myths, not speaking of real events in history; therefore it is pointless to find actual sites which never existed to begin with.

Reasons cited in its favor:

Higher criticism states that the O.T. was compiled in the Post-exilic age of Israel

The sites of Sodom and Gomorrah have not been conclusively identified

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah makes a powerful moral statement,

## **2. UNDER THE DEAD SEA**

Sodom and Gomorrah and their accompanying cities are now flooded under the Southern end of the Dead Sea. This is the generally-accepted position, found in most books. (Free 63, Wilson p. 5, 66, NIV Study Bible, Kitchen p. 47, Pfeiffer p. 543, Unger p. 1205, Library of Congress, Hammond Map)

Reasons cited in its favor:

Local tradition holds that Sodom and Gomorrah are to be found here, and there is even a 5-mile-long mountain made of salt in the area called "Mt. Sodom" by the natives. (NIV Study bible, Pfeiffer p. 543)

Archaeological explorations in the general area show a break in civilization at 2000 BC (Bab-edh-Dhra, Nelson Glueck in Transjordan, Free p. 63)

The water level of the Dead Sea has seen increases. An island visible in 1892 was found to be covered by several feet of water in 1924. (Wiseman, Free p. 63) Gomorrah means "Submerge" (Unger p. 492) There are 5 streams at the S. end of the Dead Sea, possibly corresponding to five "well-watered" cities. (Wilson p. 66, Unger p. 1206)

There is a Roman road coming in and going out of the southern end of the Dead Sea, indicating there may have been a populated city now under the water. (Wilson p. 66)

Bab-edh-Dhrah, located above the Dead Sea where these five towns would have been, matches the description of a "high place" or place of worship and burial which could have been frequented by the people of the five cities. Bab-edh-Dhrah has a huge graveyard containing perhaps half a million bodies, so it could have been a common burial ground for

several cities. Excavations show that this “high place” was abandoned right about the time the Bible gives for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. (Wyatt, quoting Albright)

A large amount of smoke from this area could easily been seen from where Abraham lived, thus a possible reason for the mention of Abraham seeing “smoke” but no mention of him seeing fire or destruction. (Wilson p. 70)

### **3. SE OF DEAD SEA**

Sodom and Gomorrah, along with their accompanying cities of the plain were actually located above the valley of the Dead Sea in five elevated spots, each corresponding to a river/wadi. Walter Rast and Thomas Schaub have found five such cities dating back to the Middle Bronze Age, and claim that these are the five cities of the Plain—Bab-edh-Dhra being Sodom, and Numeira being Gomorrah (Shanks p. 28).

Reasons cited in its favor:

Five cities have actually been found, all dating to the right time period (Wilson p. 69) and all destroyed at about the same time—around 2000 BC. (Wood).

It was the pattern for city-states to have a small walled city surrounded by miles of agricultural land inhabited by the citizens of the city (who were not necessarily residents within the walls). Thus a large number of people could be associated with a small walled city, under the rulership of its king. This could fit the pattern of Bab-edh-Dhra with its two acres of walled city and its cemetery for half a million people (Fisher).

City gates were found in Bab-edh-Dhra (Wilson p. 69) as well as a wine-making industry at Numeira (Shanks p. 29) including whole grapes (Wyatt), matching the Biblical accounts.

Evidence of extensive burning has been found at the Bab-edh-Dhra site (Wilson p. 69). The destruction debris was about three feet thick, and the fire started on the roof (Wood). The Numeira site also shows signs of “fiery destruction” (Shanks P. 29).

A large amount of smoke from this area could also easily been seen from where Abraham lived, thus a possible reason for the mention of Abraham seeing “smoke” but no mention of him seeing fire or destruction. (Wilson p. 70)

### **4. MIRROR CITIES**

Large cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were located down in the valley now covered by the Dead Sea, but when God destroyed the cities, survivors ran up to higher ground and built smaller “mirror” cities where they buried all the people who were killed by God’s wrath. This theory includes a significant readjustment to chronology, putting the Exodus around 2300 BC and putting 1,800 years between the destruction of the original Sodom and Gomorrah and the end dates of the mirror towns of Sodom and Gomorrah built by the survivors (Sanders I & II).

Points in favor:

Five sites have been excavated by Rast and Schaub, dating to the Middle Bronze Age (See documentation for #3).

These five sites are rather small, and the land could not have supported a large population, but huge burial areas with as many as 1.5 MILLION bodies have been found next to these cities (Sanders II)! These shaft tombs have many people buried in each chamber, bones mixed together (Shank), and were made before the towns were built—in fact, some of the tombs date many hundreds of years older than the end date of the cities (Sanders I & II). This could indicate a mass burial followed by inhabitation by survivors.

These five sites have some evidence of fire damage, but are not totally turned to ash (Wyatt).

## **5. NW of DEAD SEA**

Sodom and Gomorrah are located along the Northwest side of the Dead Sea. According to Unger (p. 1205), this used to be a position held by scholars, although now, it would probably be considered the least scholarly opinion today. Undaunted, Ron Wyatt believes that he has spotted the ashen ruins of cities against the mountains while driving through the wilderness of Judea. The evidence he offers is as follows: (All the following has its sole source from the Wyatt article.)

Identification of walls, gates, streets, temples, and even a sphinx in these ruins All of the ruins are pure ash

Unnatural layering of strata characteristic of high-temperature fires.

These areas have a greater visibility from the region of Bethel than sites on the south end of the Dead Sea. "...what can there be seen is the northern end of the Dead Sea, the Jordan Valley, and the river running like a blue thread through the green plain" (Henry Harper, Palestine Exploration fund Society, 1891)

It fits the pattern of the Genesis 10 account of cities marking the border of Canaan. It seems logical that the cities would be located at least some distance from each other to all be included in the Biblical description of the borders of Canaan. Canaan is also considered to generally be West of the Dead Sea, not East of it.

This would also fit the I Sam. 13:16 description of the Valley of Zeboiim being to the north.

Numerous yellow balls of sulphur were discovered imbedded in the ash, with black and red rings suggesting it had rained down at high temperatures. "...we picked up pure sulfur, fit pieces as big as the end of my thumb. It is mixed with the marl of the mountains on the west side of the sea and now is to be found scattered along the shore of the sea even on the east side, some four or five miles distance from the ledge that contains the stratum. It was somehow scattered far and wide over this plain. ("Explorations at Sodom" by Dr. Melvin Kyle, 1928) This indicates that the rain of fire and brimstone occurred on the West side of the Dead Sea.

Bitumen was a valuable commodity mentioned in one of the Ebla tablets and was being used extensively all over the ancient world. This commodity could be found in "slime pits." This abundant supply of a precious commodity nearby would offer a plausible commercial reason why the people of Sodom are described in Ezekiel as rich and lazy and a plausible economic reason for the Northern kings to want to take over these cities.

## **A Comparative Critique**

Although the orthodox Biblical scholar and even the serious archaeologist might dismiss the Mythology theory, it is nevertheless significant. This theory contains a theological position that God does not punish sin and that the Bible is not true. Such theologians may accept sodomy as normative human behavior, as evidenced by some denominations accepting homosexuals into the clergy and performing same-sex weddings. When I did research on the Internet for this paper, I found that several individuals had advertisements for pornographic websites which were titled "Sodom & Gomorrah," indicating that they wished to follow in the ways of those cities with no expectation of reprisal from a righteous God. I have to utterly reject this position because of my faith as a Bible-believing Christian. I have a personal relationship with God and I know Him to be righteous and just in punishing unrighteousness. To this knowledge of God can be added the fact of the tremendous scientific evidence in favor of the historical and cultural accuracy of the Bible. There is no reason why a morality story would include so many details like Lot's door, points of the compass, names of locations, and even the names of neighboring kings; such details point to an actual historical account, not a myth. Account after account in the Bible checks out to the last detail when archaeological and historical evidence is brought to bear upon them. The fact that the famous archaeologist, William Albright, was thoroughly schooled in Wellhausen's higher criticism and yet reversed his position to have a strong appreciation for the historical accuracy of the whole Bible, is all the more reassuring" (Fisher).

The claim that the cities are under a Rising Dead Sea assumes that the Dead Sea is rising. It certainly has risen in the past, but Dr. Cliff Wilson admits in his book that now "the level of water in the Dead Sea is lowering" (Wilson p.5). A second problem has arisen more recently in that as the waters have lowered, researchers have searched the seabed and found nothing (Shanks P.28)! It's possible that they haven't searched thoroughly enough, but the fact remains that nothing has been found. This theory also assumes that the cities of the Plain were located in the valley of the sea, but, as I read the Biblical account, the valley of the sea was chosen as a battleground, but was not necessarily where the cities were located. Further, Dr. Rast, who has been working on digs in the area, says that many Early Bronze cities have been excavated, and they all were located on high areas, not in valleys (Shanks p.33). Additionally, this location has some geographical problems with the Bible account. According to the Bible, the valley was full of tar pits—not like the Garden of God which would be attractive to a shepherd, and even if it was a green valley floor, it wouldn't have been clearly visible from Mamre. Finally, locations for the cities of Admah and Zeboiim are not offered, but in this scenario, Lot would have had to run PAST Gomorrah for 10-20 miles to Zoar, but the Bible account seems to indicate that Zoar was not so far away.

Similarly, there are problems with the theory that the 5 cities have been found up at the higher sites. For one thing, they weren't all turned to ash, as II Pet. states, for bones and foodstuffs have been found preserved in these sites. For another, they are located above the plain, not "on" the Plain, as the Bible states. The comparatively small size of these cities excavated could also be a problem. Also in this scenario, Lot would have had to run PAST Gomorrah for 10-20 miles to Zoar. Additionally, Sanders claims that he interviewed the primary excavators of these sites, Rast and Schaub, who claimed that a lot of their material was misrepresented by Shanks in his article about the Rim Cities being Sodom and Gomorrah. (This was the only source article for this position which I was able to find, so I wish I had more current information!)

The theory of the mirror cities seems to me to be totally out of the question because the Bible speaks of the total destruction of the inhabitants of the city. The concept of a bunch of survivors dragging dead bodies up the hills and carrying on a civilization for hundreds of years after that just does not match the Biblical record.

Ron Wyatt has his problems, too. First is a personal character issue: On other finds, he claims to have lost a lot of key evidences of his discoveries, and the artifacts he does have weren't sent to reputable museums. In addition, the sheer number and magnitude of the discoveries he has claimed to make in a relatively short time stretches the limits of believability: In addition to Sodom and Gomorrah, Wyatt claims to have found the REAL Mount Sinai, Pharaoh's chariot wheels in the Red Sea, Noah's Ark, Abraham & Sarah's burial cave, the REAL location of Jesus' crucifixion, the Ark of the Covenant, etc. Wyatt has taken a lot of heat especially for his "discovery" of what he believes is Noah's ark in a valley in Turkey and not backing down when evidence to the contrary has been brought up to him. Geologists have proven that Wyatt's "Ark" a natural phenomenon, and archaeologists have found no evidence to support his claim (Price). According to another source, none of the people interviewed on Wyatt's own video about Noah's ark (including Bill Crouse, president of Christian Information Ministries, Andrew Snelling of Creation Magazine, and Lorence Gene Collins of CA State University, Northridge) believe his theory to be true. Many consider him to be a fraud (Tentmaker). Because of these character issues we are obliged to be cautious in accepting his material on Sodom and Gomorrah. Some people familiar with the area believe he is just imagining shapes of cities in the mountains – one has to wonder why no one else has noticed them in such a prominent place before (Price). Wyatt's critique that the cities excavated near the Dead Sea are too small doesn't take into account the city-state model which could support a large population outside the walled city. And, what do we do with the obvious fact that there was a large civilization on the East side of the Dead Sea during Abraham and Lot's time, as evidenced by the excavations of Kyle & Albright, Rast & Schaub? I also cannot accept Wyatt's premise that Zoar was destroyed along with the rest of the cities; his location for Zoar is also a bit off from all the historical evidence of where Zoar actually is.

Making a decision in this controversy is very difficult, not only because we are dealing with an event hidden in the mist of great antiquity, but also because I am not experienced in archaeology or in Palestinian geography. To be honest, I lean toward Ron Wyatt's theory of the cities being on the Western side because that is what I understand the Bible to be saying when I read it. However, I do not believe that Wyatt has enough documented evidence for his position. At the same time, I do not want to discredit the fine archaeologists' work on the Bab-edh-Dhra digs—I'd place the Rim City theory as the second best explanation, followed by the Dead Sea Submersion theory as the third. It is my opinion that we don't have enough evidence for a conclusive decision. The most significant thing, however, is that there is enough evidence today that world generally recognizes the historicity of the Biblical account of Sodom and Gomorrah (Wilson p.7, Sanders II). It is an inescapable fact of archaeology that there was some sort of fiery catastrophe in that area of the world. This leads us to the spiritual truth of the Bible that God will punish sin, and Jude tells us that this foreshadows an even greater event of destruction to come at the end of the world. God showed His judgement upon sin on a small scale with the cities of the Plain four thousand years ago, and this is well-attested by archaeological science. Are we prepared for the large-scale fiery judgment against sin which God will bring upon the entire world when He comes in the last day? Are we safely within a covenant relationship with God as Abraham was, who was not touched by God's retribution in his day?



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## **APPENDIX: Responses to Nate's Article**

On Fri, 7 Aug 1998 Mike.Sanders@BibleMysteries.com (Mike Sanders) writes: Dear Mr. Wilson:

I have just had a chance to briefly review the piece you did quoting my theory of the "Mirror Cities".

I would kindly refer you to the latest satellite imagery which we have posted on the site showing 5 separate anomalies under the Dead Sea.

I would only say that you either misquoted or misunderstood the survival theory. You must know that a considerable proportion of a cities "inhabitants" in ancient times did NOT live in the city itself, but in the surrounding areas as herdsmen, farmers etc. I accept the Biblical account that ALL the INHABITANTS of the cities were destroyed, that still leaves their relatives who were out of the cities at the time of the great catastrophe.

You do have to account for the vast numbers of bodies found in the charnel houses of the three cemeteries BEFORE Bab edh Dhara, Numeira etc. were built.

<http://www.BibleMysteries.com>

Comments from Dr. Milton Fisher, Nate's class professor:

"Thorough research/bibliography, and thoughtful judgments."

In favor of the Rim Cities, the Bible doesn't actually say the cities were "on" the plain, but "of" the plain/valley/circle. "...these settlements at the headwaters (springs) would CONTROL irrigation of the fertile plain."

Concerning Lot running toward Gomorrah and past it for 20 miles: "Under the circumstances, why NOT? A few years ago, some of our diggers did hike from Kh. Nisya to Jericho (18 mi.) in one day, along rough wadi terrain."