

What is the Wilderness of Sin?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Wilderness-of-Sin.html>

The Wilderness of Sin is a dry, sandy, wasteland in the southwestern part of the Sinai Peninsula—assuming that’s where Mount Sinai is located. The people of Israel entered the Wilderness of Sin not long after leaving Egypt on their journey to the Promised Land (Exodus 16:1).

The Wilderness of Sin is one of six wildernesses through which the Israelites traveled on their way to Canaan. The wildernesses include Shur, Etham, Sin, Sinai, Paran, and Zin. The Wilderness of Sin is sometimes confused with the Wilderness of Zin, a region on the northwestern side of the Sinai Peninsula. The Israelites traversed the Wilderness of Sin at the beginning of the exodus, arriving at the Wilderness of Sin “on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt” (Exodus 16:1). They did not enter the Wilderness of Zin until a year later.

Located between the oasis of Elim and Mount Sinai, the Wilderness of Sin is mentioned only four times in the Bible, all in connection with the exodus from Egypt. Immediately upon arrival in the desolate Wilderness of Sin, the whole community of Israelites began to grumble and complain to Moses and Aaron about the lack of food: “If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death” (Exodus 16:3).

God heard their murmurings, for it was in the Wilderness of Sin that He first provided “bread from heaven” in the form of manna. The manna appeared each morning after the dew dried as “thin flakes like frost on the ground” (Exodus 16:14). It was white, the color

of coriander seed, and it tasted “like wafers made with honey” (verse 31). Each person was to gather just what he or she needed for that day and a double portion on the day before the Sabbath (verses 16, 22). The manna could be baked into cakes or boiled in pots (verse 23). God also sent the Israelites quail in the Wilderness of Sin (verses 12-13).

In Exodus 17:1, the people of Israel set out from the Wilderness of Sin in stages, arriving next in Rephidim, where there was no water to drink. The people complained again, and God brought water from the rock (verses 2-7). The only other mention of the Wilderness of Sin is in the book of Numbers as part of the journal Moses kept detailing the Israelite journey from Egypt to their campsite in Moab (Numbers 33:11-12).

The Wilderness of Sin is also called the Desert of Sin. The name Sin has no relation to the English word sin. It is merely the name of the region, although its similarity to the name Sinai and its proximity to Sinai suggest a possible connection. The area may have derived its name from the ancient moon god Sin who was worshiped by desert dwellers.