

EXODUS

Lesson 12 - Chapters 13 and 14

Last week we viewed a documentary film that brought together information that has been known for centuries, with newer findings that shoot a lot of holes in the traditional route of the Exodus. We certainly are not going to solve in this class what learned scholars over the ages have been unable to. However, as the Red Sea crossing and the route of the Exodus is one of the most fascinating events in the entire Bible, I also don't want to skip over it. So we will discuss that further today; but first let's continue to with Exodus chapter 13. So, let's re-read the last few verses.

RE-READ EXODUS CHAPTER 13:17 - end

Verse 18 is the beginning of the real controversy surrounding the Exodus. Because it says that instead of taking the more direct, well-marked Way of the Philistines, to the Land of Canaan, God directed them to take a route that headed towards (depending on your version) either says the Red Sea or the Reed Sea. The Hebrew word for this body of water is Yam Suf (or Yam Sup). Yam means Sea, Sup means reeds, or papyrus. In the original Hebrew texts, the wording is "Sea of Reeds". However in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the words are Red Sea. So, this is partly where the controversy comes from.

Further, verse 18 says literally that the people would go on a "round about" way to Canaan, and this route would be "the way of the wilderness". Now, follow me here, because this is the first step in helping to unravel the mystery of the route of the Exodus. Just as there was a north-south 1000-mile long superhighway of trade and travel that followed along the Mediterranean Sea coast (formally called The Way of the Philistines), there was a 200-mile east-west trade route formally called The Way of the Wilderness. The Hebrew word used for "way" in both names, the Way of the Philistines and the The way of the Wilderness is **derek**; and it means road, or path. Why so many translators chose to make, correctly, "The Way of the Philistines" the formal name for a known trade route, but to refused to accept "The Way of the Wilderness" as the formal name for the well-known east-west trade route across the Sinai is a mystery. Why would so many excellent scholars intentionally make the phrase "the way of the wilderness" out to be some kind of general direction rather than the precise name of a long established ancient trade route that it is? Of course, it could be that when we recognize that rather blatant fact that sits here right before our eyes, it destroys the possibility that the traditional Christian Mt. Sinai could be the place where Israel was going, because the Way of the Wilderness goes nowhere near the place Constantine's mother determined, in a vision, was the Mt. of God; something she did in the 4th century A.D. and something which the Jews did not agree.

And in verse 19 we get a very poignant reminder of Israel's past, when it states that the Israelites took with them Joseph's bones. More accurately, they took with them Joseph's mummified body, because Genesis told us he was buried in the Egyptian way that was mummification. But, this also brings a closure to the Israelites' time in Egypt. Joseph was the beginning of that time, and Joseph laid the groundwork for Israel to come to Egypt at first for sheer survival, then to multiply into a large nation. However, in Joseph's handling of the 7 years of abundant crops and then the 7 years of acute food shortage, the foundation would also be laid for the hatred and subjugation of the Hebrew people. Recall that Joseph, in cooperation with the Semitic Pharaoh that ruled Egypt when Joseph was in power, took the Egyptian people's animals and crops, and eventually their land and their independence, away from them in payment for the stored grain necessary to survive those years of great famine. But, Joseph's family, Jacob and all his sons and families, prospered and did quite well during this period of devastation. While the average Egyptian was suffering and losing their wealth and freedom, Israel was multiplying and prosperous. The bitter jealousy of that incident (along with the Exodus from Egypt) has never, even to our day, subsided.

As written down in Gen.50:25 Joseph made his family promise to bring him (meaning his corpse) out of Egypt when they left, because he believed God's promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He believed that Israel would be in Egypt only as sojourners.....not as permanent citizens. He knew it would be a long sojourn.....4 generations equating to about 400 years in the days of the Patriarchs. But, he absolutely trusted that someday, as promised by Yehoveh, they would leave, and he wanted his remains to go with them. Here, it states that is exactly what happened.

We're told that after stopping in Sukkot, where they made and ate unleavened bread, they moved on to a place called Etham.....another location that has not been positively identified NOR is the distance between Sukkot and Etham stated. And we're told that Yehoveh went before them by day in a column of cloud, and at night fire emitted from the cloud to light their path.

Understand: unlike what some movies claim, and is often implied in sermons and Sunday School lessons, the Lord was not so much acting like a tour guide or a scout; He wasn't taking the Israelites towards a place that they had no idea where they were going or how to get there. They knew they were going to Canaan. And, the Lord told them that they couldn't take the Way of the Philistines, instead they were to travel using the Way of the Wilderness; so, the route was generally established for them. Rather, Yehoveh was their armed escort; He was guarding, protecting, defending and running interference before them. He was going to tell them when to move, and when to stop; when to take a bit of detour, and when to get back onto the path. Isn't that a wonderful picture of how the Lord operates in our lives, if we will but follow Him?

But, we're also given another clue we should not overlook that helps a little with the route of the Exodus..... it says that the appearance of the cloud and the fire were for WHAT reason? It was so that they could travel **by day and by night**. When they first left Egypt, they moved both day and night. Why? There were a couple of reasons: first, because they needed to get as far away from Egypt as fast as they could (which also lets us know that they probably went a

pretty good distance before they bumped up against the Red Sea, or Reed Sea.....the Yam Suf). These Hebrew fugitives would never be more energetic or enthusiastic than they were immediately upon leaving Egypt; so this was the best time to put some serious distance between them and Pharaoh. And, second, because it was late spring when they left, the desert wilderness was hot. Anyone who has lived in the desert knows that the best time to travel in the desert is at nighttime, when it's cooler, and to rest in the daytime when it's hotter.

Let's move on to chapter 14.

EXODUS Chapter 14

READ EXODUS 14 all

After watching that video on the Exodus crossing and the Mountain of God, I hope the stage is now well set for moving on into the matters of Chapter 14. I think enough was covered in that video that we don't have to spend too much time going over details that involve, to a degree, speculation anyway.

Chapter 14 opens with Yehoveh giving Moses an instruction: turn back and encamp at a place called Pi ha-Hiroth, which means "mouth of the channel" or, in this current case, "mouth of the gorge". And, this Pi ha-Hiroth was at the edge of the Red Sea.

Now, what the plain language of these opening verses tell us is that the Israelites were heading in one direction, but then God had them turn around and backtrack somewhat and go in a different direction altogether. And, what would result is that the Pharaoh heard that they are wandering aimlessly in the desert wilderness (that is the Sinai Peninsula). First question: how is that Pharaoh would know where it is they were going and where they were at any given time? Undoubtedly Pharaoh had instructed the commanders of the many military outposts Egypt operated throughout the Sinai that they were to follow the Israelites and report back. This would have been an easy task; for you don't hide a hoard of 3 million people and hundreds of thousands of animals walking along dusty trails. Rest assured, they were NOT blazing a new trail; they were taking the well-known route, and even a detour would have been easy to detect.

So, as the Israelites took that same route across the Sinai that Moses used to flee from Egypt to Midian, some 40 years earlier it was a very simple task for Egyptian scouts to follow and report the route of the Israelites back to Pharaoh. And, reporting back to Pharaoh was accomplished via smoke signals, signal fires, and reflecting light off of shiny objects. These systems of sending messages across large distances had been in use for centuries prior to the Exodus. It would not have taken but a very few hours for a scout following the Israelites to have had his message relayed and then put into the hands of Pharaoh.

What we need to understand is that 1) as far as Pharaoh knew, Israel was only going to be gone for three days, in order for the entire nation of Israel to meet together and sacrifice to God; and 2) Pharaoh never trusted that to be the case. In my career in the corporate world I

learned many interesting insights into human behavior, my own included; and one of those is that what a person tends to suspect of others primarily comes from within the framework of what their OWN thoughts and behaviors are. That is, if one is cunning and manipulative, they tend to fear others might be cunning and manipulative of them. If they are by nature people who are not true to their word, their fear is that others will not be true to their word. Pharaoh knew what he would do if he had been in Moses' shoes, asking for his people to leave: so Pharaoh suspected that Moses would say whatever he had to say (such as, "don't worry, we're just going to be gone for 3 days") in order to get what he wanted. In this case, it was to get the people of Israel completely free from Egypt. I don't think Pharaoh ever really believed this was to be a short 3-day holiday, which is why he risked the well being of his nation in an un-winnable battle with the God of Israel. Of course, in the end, he was right, wasn't he?

The other thing we need to know is that the Sinai Peninsula was Egyptian-held territory. Much like Alaska was US territory before it became a State, the Sinai wasn't a part of Egypt proper, but it was controlled by Egypt. Alaska was important to the U.S. for two reasons: as a source of natural resources (oil), and as a strategic military buffer between North America and the Soviet Union. Again, the same for the Sinai; the Sinai was mined by Egypt as a source of copper, and it provided a rather substantial geographic buffer between Egypt and the Middle Eastern nations that were constantly trying to gain the upper hand over one another and Egypt.

So, until Israel had crossed over the Sinai either onto the Arabian Peninsula to the east or the Land of Canaan to the north, they were still on Egyptian territory, which made them vulnerable. This, of course, is why Pharaoh was free to send his soldiers after Israel; for if the Sinai had been controlled by some other nation, the presence of Egyptian soldiers would have meant war with whichever nation claimed control.

In verse 3 the word came back to Pharaoh that Israel seemed to be confused in their route, and now were "closed in by the wilderness". These are not euphemisms; wherever Israel was, they were traveling through a landscape that had them "closed in"; a place that, from a strategic military point of view, had them trapped. What kind of terrain could "trap" the Israelites? Well, certainly not flat and open desert expanses. We saw in the video that this could only be something like a large gorge; a dry waterway that had cut through the rocky hills on the eastern part of the Sinai Peninsula. It had to be a route that had one way in and one way out, with no ability to escape in any other direction. This is NOT speculation. For sure this was the case, because the book of Exodus plainly says so. The speculation only concerns **where** exactly that place was.

Now, we are reminded in vs.. 4 of something that is a constant theme of Exodus; that one of the primary purposes of God striking Egypt in all manner of way was so that HE would be glorified....AND.....that the Egyptians would know that it was Yehoveh who had the power to do such things.

Pharaoh is now informed of what he had suspected all along: Israel was well on its way to permanent relocation. And, of course, this infuriated Pharaoh because he felt duped. Obviously he had held out the barely flickering hope that Israel would return after 3 days. He really didn't want to risk another round with Moses and his God; yet, simply by the amount of time Israel

was gone and their route it was evident they weren't coming back. So, he sent his armies after the Israelites. Was it that Pharaoh meant to destroy Israel? No. Certainly, as retribution and a demonstration of his control, he would have killed thousands of them; but his goal was to get them back into Egypt, back into slavery and servitude to him.

We're told that not only did he send some sort of special division of 600 chariots after the Hebrews, but also other divisions of "every kind" of chariots. Archeology and Egyptology have shown that Egypt used different kinds of chariots in what was very likely the 18th Dynasty period; this was characterized by using a variety of 4 or 6 spoke wheeled chariots. This unusual use of two different types of chariot wheels occurred only in a very narrow slice of history in Egypt, and that was during the generally accepted time of the Exodus, about the 14th century BC. And, we're also told that the Pharaoh himself went with his army.

Let us not overlook a vital ingredient to Pharaoh giving chase to Israel: Yehoveh hardened Pharaoh's heart. We've encountered this before. Why would Yehoveh do this? To draw the Egyptians to destruction, which was His plan. After the Egyptian army is destroyed at the Red Sea, it will be 300 years before we hear of them troubling Israel again. This drawing of Pharaoh to destruction, like a moth to a flame, is a pattern that will repeat at Armageddon. It was utterly senseless for the Pharaoh to take this suicidal action. His own magicians and sorcerers and council begged him to leave Israel alone because their God had proved over and over again that He was just too strong. But, Pharaoh was so blinded with rage and pride and hatred that he went against all wisdom; some of that hatred was caused by Pharaoh's own evil inclination; but some was also caused by the Lord that His purpose would be achieved.

Let's fast-forward to a time that I am reasonably certain is literally just around the corner. I don't know if this time is a month from now, a year, or maybe 10. But, I have little doubt that most of us in this room will live to see the events talked about in Ezekiel 38 and 39, because we are in the midst of watching Ezekiel's prophecy of Ezekiel 36 and 37 occurring as I speak.

READ EZEKIEL 38:1 – 39:8 all

The pattern of the Lord literally baiting those marked for destruction into battle against His people.....a battle in which the Lord BY HIS SUPERNATURAL MIGHT will defeat the enemy..... is repeated here. Just as Pharaoh was so obsessed with Israel that all reason was thrown to the wind, so will all these nations mentioned in these verses of Ezekiel not be able to control themselves; between their own evil thoughts and plans, and the Lord setting their plans like concrete into their minds, destruction is their destiny.

Please see the bittersweet truth in this: the Lord WILL mark some for life and some for death. Some will be a ransom for others. The Lord WILL make distinctions. He will sacrifice those who do NOT belong to Him, for the sake of those who do. While on the one hand it is His will that all be saved, on the other He knows who will be and who won't be. And, those who won't be will be hardened in such a way as to essentially commit mass suicide on an unimaginable scale by going against the Lord God at Armageddon.

Now, consider this: who in the world loves death so much that they would happily die.....happily see their children strap bombs onto their tiny bodies, and their entire nation be decimated..... if it meant destroying God's people, Israel? That's right, Muslims. The core group of those who will lead the unbelieving world into self-destruction has been revealed if we'll just open our eyes: it will be Islam. Oh, certainly, Russia and it's completely godless society, and possibly China also with a society based upon rejection of any spiritual reality will be part of this great battle for their own good reasons. But, it is Islam that has the nearly limitless supply of petrodollars, and of people who are anxious to martyr themselves and their families in suicide bombings and in battle simply to destroy any last vestige of Israel and Judeo-Christianity

Pharaoh knew exactly where to find the Israelites: camped at the very seashore spot that Yehoveh had led them. It must have been just before sunset that the Hebrew watchmen spotted the Egyptian army in the distance, and they flew into hysteria. People being people, naturally the first thing they did was to seek someone to blame: Moses. And, they sarcastically confront him wanting to know if the only reason he brought them out here is because there wasn't a sufficient amount of cemetery space back in Egypt. If Moses didn't know before they left Egypt, he knew now that in the unlikely event they survived Pharaoh's army, this group of people was going to bring him little joy. They were whiners, ungrateful, and of little courage.

Can't you just picture Moses standing in front of the elders of the people, as they point their boney, withered fingers at him, reminding him that THEY never really wanted to leave Egypt in the first place? After all, slavery's not so bad, right? Better to serve Pharaoh and survive than to die a painful death. Translation: better to serve the evil that we are familiar with and live the life we're comfortable with, than to follow God in faith and, what to us, is uncertainty.

Moses is unshaken: he fires back at them "Don't be afraid. Stand fast and see Yehoveh's deliverance of you today." Moses goes to God, and He tells Moses, why do you cry out to me? Is Yehoveh irritated that Moses approached Him with a problem? Of course not. It's as though God fully expected Moses to already know that the first step of this "problem" was to keep moving forward....don't stop. Go forward, God will make a way. Alfred Edersheim says in his tremendous work "The History of the Old Testament": ***"There are times when even prayer seems of itself to represent unbelief, and only to go forward in calm assurance is our duty"***. How true. Balaam kept going back to God hoping for a different answer; one more in line with the one he wanted. We find ourselves in challenging situations that seem to result from doing the very thing that only hours earlier we were so confident was a God ordained action. Suddenly, an unexpected choice confronts us: and now, do we go forward or pause? Of course going to God in prayer cannot ever be a poor choice; but apparently, when our duty before God is already crystal clear, we are to go forward AS we pray. This as opposed to stopping, and rethinking whether or not we should have begun this journey in the first place.

Notice an interesting response by God: in vs. 16 He tells Moses to "hold YOUR staff high, stretch out YOUR hand". Just as back in Egypt, when Moses spoke, he spoke in God's authority. Remember earlier where God told Moses that when Moses spoke, it was as if God spoke? Moses was already empowered with God's power to do what was necessary to carry out God's will. This as contrasted with verse 17, when God says "but **I** will make Pharaoh's heart hard". God empowers us for whatever tasks He gives us: no more and no less than

needed. Of course, we NEVER hold within us more than the tiniest fraction of the infinite power that is Yehoveh. Some things He reserves strictly for Himself. God never asked Moses to do the thing that God and God alone has determined will be His sole doing: **changing a heart for the good or bad**. And, Church, when we are going about the business of spreading the Gospel, we need to keep that in mind: God has never and will never empower us with the ability to change a human heart. We can neither soften a heart nor harden a heart. Our job isn't to convert anybody: our job is to but speak and demonstrate with our lives the truth of the Gospel.

Next, we are told in Vs. 19 that the "messenger of God" changed position from leading Israel, to being stationed BETWEEN Israel and the Egyptian army. Now, in almost every instance in Exodus 14 that our Bibles say the Lord, or God, or Adonai, in fact the original Hebrew is God's personal name, "Yehoveh". Only a couple of times in this entire chapter do we even find a reference to God as anything other than Yehoveh, and here we encounter one of these. The Hebrew that is translated angel of God or messenger of God most of the time is "malach elohim" or "malach Yehoveh". I wish I fully understood the difference between malach elohim and malach Yehoveh: that is "the angel of God" vs. "the angel of Yehoveh". But, there IS a difference. In this verse, the "malach elohim", the "angel of God" is clearly identified as that cloud that was leading Israel. Sometime later, this visible presence of God would rest upon the Holy of Holies in the Wilderness Tabernacle, there it was called the Shekinah, or as we typically called it, the Glory of God.

This is stuff that entire denominations have been built on: what EXACTLY is the Angel of God, as opposed to the Angel of Yehoveh, as opposed to the Shekinah? What is clear enough is that God's word assigns different terms to each of these visible presences. Are these just different names for the same thing? I'm not sure, but I have my doubts. Somehow, I just don't think God fits into all the nice, neat boxes and characterizations that we humans build for Him.

So, what DO we know about this cloud, this presence of God, that had been leading Israel, but now suddenly moves to divide the camps of Israel and Egypt from each other. More precisely, God is being a hedge of protection around Israel. We're told something that should be quite familiar to us by now in vs. 20: that the cloud gave darkness to the Egyptians and light to Israel.

Remember our Hebrew lessons back in Genesis 1, where God created darkness and light? And, that the words chosen really weren't about nighttime and daytime....or about visual light or visual darkness. The Hebrew word for darkness used there was "chosek", a very negative word; it denoted a type of blindness, an evil or obstructing force.....a spiritual darkness. For light, the Hebrew was "owr", which referred to enlightenment, a positive spiritual force; something, which emitted truth and goodness. These terms aim towards something that is far more than merely the presence or absence of visible light, like from a light bulb, or an oil lamp, or even from the star that is at the center of our own solar system, the Sun. We saw those terms again in Exodus, as part of the 9th stroke, or plague, upon Egypt; when Egypt was plunged into a horrifying 3 days of spiritual darkness, while at the same time the Israelites up in the land of Goshen were experiencing "owr", enlightenment, God's light, His goodness, showering down upon them. Well, here we see these same two terms again. Once again God

put “chosek” upon Egypt, that is Pharaoh’s armies, and “owr”, enlightenment upon Israel.

But, what is kind of startling, if we think about it, is that both this spiritual darkness and spiritual light are coming from the same source, simultaneously. From this cloud, this angel of God, this almost impossible to explain presence of God, on the one hand comes darkness for some, and on the other hand light for His people. For those who oppose Him, darkness and death; for those who are His own, light and life. This is NOT an image of God that we are used to; and frankly, many of us aren’t particularly comfortable with it. Some like to say, well yeah, that is the OLD TESTAMENT God, but the NEW TESTAMENT GOD is different. Sorry, but that’s not the case. We are reminded scores of time, in the Old and New Testaments, that God NEVER changes. What we must keep in mind is that Yehoveh has determined what belonging to Him means, and what it does not. And, whether in the past, present, or in the future, what is NOT His will be eternally destroyed. What IS His will be eternally existent and present with Him. There is no in between, no appeasement, no compromise, and no changing His mind.

And, by the way, let’s explore just what “changing” means when referring to God. His “never changing” refers to His attributes and character, as reflected in His principles and His governing dynamics. It is NOT changing if He grants you a healing from a disease, but does not grant that to me. It is not changing that God instructed Joshua to kill or drive out all those who occupied the land He set aside for His people, but does NOT instruct Jesus to drive out or kill the Romans who occupied the Holy Lands. It’s a matter of timing; in fact, at a prescribed time in history Jesus WILL not only drive out and kill all those who have no place in the land of God, He will destroy all those, worldwide, who oppose God (even if only in their hearts) in a great battle that we call Armageddon.

And, now in vs. 21 comes one of, if not the most, dramatic moments in the entire Bible: the parting of the Red Sea. Israel is trapped on an enormous beach; the Yam Suf on the one side, and the Egyptians on the other. They see their destination of refuge on the other side of the impassible waters, but there is no MEANS to get there. Israel braces for the worst and sets about mourning because they know that death for some, and return to slavery for the remainder is at hand. But the Lord will make a way where there is no way. Moses stretches out his hand, and the process of dividing the deep Sea that blocks the Israelites’ path, begins. An east wind begins to blow.....please remember back to our first day together so many months ago, when I told you to watch out for the word “east”. Whenever you see it, underline it. Because you’re going to find that “east” has significant spiritual implications, and often involves the presence of God or a miracle.

All night, the EAST wind blows, and the waters are split. The sea bottom is dried and made firm and passable for the 3 million fugitives sitting trapped on the beach at the edge of the Sea. I am convinced that this great horde was about to pass through the Gulf of Aqaba. Let us now and forever put to rest the liberal and secular notion that IF the Exodus happened at all, the Hebrews crossed a shallow mud flat, back up on the edge of the Land of Goshen; for if that is true, then the Bible is a gross exaggeration at the least, and a liar at worst. We are told in the Torah that walls of water built up on their right and their left. That after the Israelites walked through the dried sea bottom that the Egyptians pursued and the waters returned and drowned every last Egyptian soldier. It must have been that the Israelites crossed in the wee hours of

the morning, well before daybreak, otherwise the Egyptians, even from a distance, would have seen it happening. And, it was a several hour journey for all those people, and a distance of probably around 8 miles to cross. But, once His people were safely on the other side, God suddenly broke His light upon the darkness that had entangled and immobilized Egypt for several hours, and kept them from attacking Israel. As the Egyptians realized what had happened, and they set out in hot pursuit of Israel, something threw a panic into them. They were so terrified that the soldiers determined to flee for their lives, because as it says in vs.. 25, "Yehoveh makes war for them (Israel) against Egypt". Oh, Egypt NOW knew God's glory alright; but none lived to tell about it.

The scene here is a shadow, a type, a model, of what is going to happen in those last moments of this present world when the darkness, this ever deepening shroud of evil that pervades it and rules over it will become darker and darker; then suddenly, when only a few are expecting it, all will be plunged into Heavenly light. Satan, His demons, and all that belong to him, will not be able to stand in the light God's Presence. We've all heard that statement about Satan and demons being unable to stand in the light of Holiness; but perhaps what we haven't quite realized is just what that means, which is this: it is that those in union with darkness will be burned up by the SAME exact light that those who have come OUT of the darkness, into union with Christ, will be saved by.

As an aside, it says that not ONE of Pharaoh's men survived. Did Pharaoh die here, along with his troops? We're not told. Many think he did, and there is some evidence in Egyptian historical documents that during the supposed time period of the Exodus, the Pharaoh died and Egypt also went into a terrible decline that lasted for decades. It is not explained as to just WHY this Pharaoh's death and the sudden collapse of Egypt were tied together. But, if indeed this were referring to the Pharaoh of the Exodus it would explain a lot. Egypt, now without its leader, the rightful heir to the throne having died during Passover night, and ¼ of the population leaving all at once, would have collapsed.

This chapter concludes with the words that Israel saw all that God did, and they held Him in awe. But, it also says that they had a change in heart, and in addition to trusting God, they also trusted Moses. Yeah, well, that was just for a time. Because it wouldn't be but a few more days before they lost faith again, and the whining and doubt resurfaced. God's people haven't changed a whole lot in 3500 years, have we?