

Exodus:

The Redemption of God's People,
a Covenant with God's People,
the Renewal of the Covenant for God's people,
and the Worship Center of God's People.

"For whatever as written in earlier times was written for
our encouragement that through perseverance and the encouragement
of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

IV. Comment on the Writing

A. The Redemption of God's People, 1:1-18:27

1. The situation in Egypt, 1:1-22
2. The deliverer of Israel from Egypt, 2:1-4:31
3. The Struggle of Moses with Pharaoh in Egypt, 5:1-13:16
4. The Deliverance of Israel from Egypt, 13:17-18:27
 - a. The beginning of the exodus, 13:17-22

This short section marks the beginning of the journey of the Israelites toward the sea and Sinai. The emphasis here is on the leading of the Lord. Although a primary application of such a passage would be difficult, the general principle is clear: God, by his clear revelation, leads his people to the fulfillment of the promise.

Leaving Ramses, they journeyed south to Succoth and turned north presumably to follow the Mediterranean route, the most direct passage to the Promised Land. These directionally erratic movements entice pharaoh to think they are confused, weak, and easy prey. The shortest exit route was near the sea, but the Lord led them into the wilderness, away from Egyptian fortifications that guarded the land. This was providential (v. 17).

Further, the Lord led that by the cloud and the pillar of fire (vv. 21-22). Some conservative scholars believe the pillar/cloud was a single entity with a dark and light side (at Sinai the mount was on fire yet covered by a dark cloud [Deut. 4:11, 5:22]). God had already

appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and so here again is revelation with fire. Whatever the exact nature of these things, they enshrined direct, visible revelations from God, who was guiding the people in a clear and unambiguous way. Both clouds and fire would again and again represent the presence of God in his power and majesty, guiding and protecting his people, by judging their enemies.

It must be admitted that the location of the places, including the site of the crossing of Red or Reed Sea, listed in the sojourn itinerary, are unknown to us except for Kadesh Barnea. The reference to a crossing of the Red Sea, today the Gulf of Suez, is rooted in the Septuagint translation of the third century BC. The Hebrew phrase is "Sea of Reeds." The Israelites were opposite Baal Zephon (Ex.14:2), identified as Tel Dafanneh, just west of Lake Menzaleh, a southern bay of the Mediterranean Sea.

b. The crossing of the Sea of Reeds, 14:1-31

The parting of the Red Sea or Sea of Reeds is one of the most rehearsed miracles in the Bible. After the miracle of redeeming blood, sparing them from death, the nation is delivered from bondage through another miracle. It was the provision of God and a divine ruse to destroy the Egyptian army.

1) The challenge of Pharaoh, vv. 1-9

a) The journey southern and then northward, vv. 1-4

The direction of the initial escape from Egypt appears to have been from Goshen to the east-southeast, but they were commanded by God to turn to the north toward the Mediterranean Sea.

b. The pursuit by Pharaoh, vv. 5-9

The change of direction led pharaoh to think the Israel's were confused and vulnerable, causing him to harden his heart once again. As they moved northward, they had moved closer to the clutches of pharaoh and his formidable war-machine (600 select chariots among others [v. 7]).

2) The fearful cry at the approach of the Egyptian army, vv. 10-18

a) The fearful murmurings of God's people. Vv. 10-12

Though the people had reason to greatly fear with the approach of Egyptian chariots (vv. 6, 9), their complaint to

Moses demonstrates a lack of faith and understanding (vv. 11-12). They cried out to God (v. 10) and complained to Moses charging him with endangering them with false hopes (vv. 11-12) by bringing them out of Egypt to die. Moses announced liberation, yet servitude was better than what is now happening to them, in their view.

b) The faith of Moses, vv. 13-14

c) The instructions to Moses, vv. 15-18

Though appearing to be trapped between the sea and the advancing Egyptians, Moses is instructed to move the people toward the sea; with his staff, the water would part, and the Egyptians subsequently destroyed!

3) The deliverance of God's people and the crushing defeat of the Egyptians, vv. 19-31

a) The divine provision of separation, vv. 19-20

The "angel of the Lord," a divine epiphany of the pre-incarnate Christ (Paul states [I Cor. 10:5] that the guiding hand was Christ in the wilderness), caused a separation from the Egyptians (light for the Israelites and darkness for the Egyptians immobilizing them).

b) The parting of the sea, vv. 21-22

The lifting of Moses' hands demonstrated that this was no chance natural phenomena, but an act of God (the use of means is not the issue; it is timing and magnitude).

For such a large group to pass it is estimated that the gap in the water had to be over a half mile wide!

c) The destruction of the Egyptian Army, vv. 23-29

(1) The pursuit of the Israelites, vv. 23-25

(2) The end of the Egyptians, vv. 26-28

"Water" judgment of the Lord's enemies links this event with the flood judgment (Gen. 6-8). The Israelites walk on dry land in the riverbed herding the livestock; the Egyptians cross in mud!

d) The deliverance of the Israelites, vv. 29-31

(1) The fact, vv. 29-30

(2) The consequences, v. 31

The subsequent action of unbelief and grumbling (v. 24) in the wilderness at Marah three days later (15:22) raises the interesting issue of what it means that they “feared the Lord” and “believed” in Him, does it not?

c. The triumphant songs of Moses and Miriam, 15:1-21

The Exodus was one of the foundational events of Israel’s religion. It marked the liberation from Egyptian slavery, which in turn made possible the formation of a relationship of covenant between Israel and God. And nowhere is the Exodus given more powerful expression than in the “Song of the Sea,” a great victory hymn celebrating God’s triumph over Egypt at the sea. To this day, the ancient hymn continues to be employed in the synagogue worship of Judaism. Its continued use reflects the centrality of its theme, that of God’s control over the forces of both nature and history in the redemption of his people.

1) The Song of Moses, vv. 1-19

At the end of Moses’ life, God instructed him to compose another song (Deut. 32).

a) Praise for God’s great deliverance: the recognition, vv. 1-3

b) Praise for God’s great deliverance: the evidence, vv. 4-10

c) Praise for God’s confirmation: the past and the future, vv. 11-17

(1) Praise for God’s person, vv. 11-13

(2) Praise for deliverance, vv. 14-17

(a) The immediate past, vv. 14-16

(b) The assured future, v. 17

The tense of the verb changes (“will”); Moses turns to the future fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise.

d) Concluding praise, vv. 18-19

2) The Song of Miriam, vv. 20-21

This is the first and only mention of Miriam by name in the book. Her leadership is confirmed by Micah 6:4. The refrain of Moses’ song is sung by Miriam and the women of Israel.

d. The journey from the sea to Sinai, 15:22-18:27

It took three months for the Israelites to travel after the Exodus to Mount Sinai (19:1). Thereafter, the remainder of the book concerns events there (19-40).

1) The murmurings at Marah, 15:22-27

Only three days from one of the greatest miracles of the Bible, the people, in want, grumbled (v. 24) once again. In the wilderness sojourn, there were five tests (fear, thirst, hunger, danger, and passion). Israel failed every test. It is astounding that a wonderful deliverance could be forgotten in three days. Yet, the miracle of the Red Sea was so soon forgotten. It is, also, interesting that Moses had asked pharaoh to allow the people go into the wilderness on a three-day journey to worship. However, when they had traveled three days all they did was grumble.

Leaving the lakes region, the Israelites entered the Desert of Shur in the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula. The desert is also called the Desert of Etham (Num. 33:8).

“Marah” means bitterness. Just as the labor in Egypt is described as “bitter” and “bitter herbs” were eaten in the Passover meal, they encountered “bitter” water. However, God can turn bitterness into sweetness!

The tree that the Lord showed Moses was likely an aromatic shrub. Moses showed the depth of his spirituality by turning to the Lord before confronting the people.

V. 26 anticipates the giving of the Law. Without regulations the people would not know how to talk in God’s ways. Disobedience to God brings judgment, as the Egyptians experienced in the plagues, but obedience brings blessing. The path to blessing is obedience!

Elim, with its twelve springs and seventy palms, must have been refreshing and should have been reassuring (v. 27). After many a Marah experience, God brings us Elims!

2) The complaints about food, 16:1-36

In the wilderness, the people grumble for bread and God, in His grace, provides quail (v. 13) and manna (v. 31), the latter being a daily provision except for the Sabbath, the day of rest.

That the complaint leading up to the manna is unjustified can be seen from the record itself. They left Egypt with flocks and herds and very many cattle, and about 60 days later they are complaining that they are without food. Moses reminded them later that they lacked nothing (Deut. 3:7). Moreover, the complaint is absurd because the food of work-gangs in Egypt was far more meager than they recalled. The complaint was really against Moses. They crave the eating of meat and of bread and so God will meet that need; he will send bread from heaven and quail as well.

a) The complaint of the Israelites, vv. 1-3

It seems that the Israelites are now two months to the day from the exodus. The complaint is that Moses made a tragic mistake; it is better to have abundance in Egypt than starvation in the desert.

b) The gift of provisions: announced, vv. 4-8

Bread from heaven they will receive for a daily provision. On Friday they could gather a double portion because they were prohibited from gathering any on Saturday, the sabbath (this is the first hint in Exodus that sabbath keeping was an ordinance.

c) The gift of provisions: detailed, vv. 9-15

These are migratory birds, said to come up in the spring from Arabia flying north and west, and, in the fall, returning. They fly with the wind, and so generally alight in the evening, covering the ground. If this is part of the explanation, the divine provision would have been to alter their flight paths to bring them to the Israelites and in vast numbers.

d) Instructions concerning the gathering of manna, vv. 16-26

The daily provision was an omer (about two quarts) per person (more or less). If they gathered in excess, it would spoil before usage.

e) The disobedience of some Israelites, vv. 27-32

Some Israelites disobeyed and tried to gather manna on the sabbath, the day of rest. God said to them (v. 28), "How long will you refuse to keep My commandments and My instructions?"

f) The memorialization of the provision, vv. 33-36

An omer of manna was to be kept in a jar as a testimony to God's faithfulness. The provision of manna continued until they crossed the Jordan (Josh. 5:12), the day after they observed the first Passover in the land

3. The murmurings for a lack of water, 17:1-7

This is the fourth recorded lack of trust in the exodus generation. The first was on the shore of the Red Sea (14:11-12), the second at Marah (15:22-27), and the third in the context of the manna-provision when some gathered food on the Sabbath (16:27-30).

The enemy of thirst reappears at Rephidim (remember Marah!). The location is dubbed Meribah, a place of contention, strife, or grumbling (this word occurs 8 times in the narrative), and Massah, a place of testing. Moses strikes the rock and outflows abundance. At Marah the water was bitter; here it is not available at all. In Num. 20, the people again contended with Moses over a lack of water, and it is again called Meribah (v.13).

The location of the incident was said to be on the rock at Horeb (v. 6). This affords another name for Mount Sinai, though it appears confusing since the nation had moved from the Wilderness of Sin to Rephidim (v. 1). The term "Horeb" can refer to a region. Rephidim was close to Sinai and the slopes of the mountain reached there.

4) The victory over Amalek, 17:8-16

Unlike the three previous struggles dealing with physical necessities of life (water and food), this one deals with deliverance from military threat. Joshua appears for the first time in the narrative.

The Amalekites, a nomadic people, are descendants of Esau, Amalek being a grandson (Gen. 36:12). They attacked the stragglers, the weak and slow later. They proved a persistent adversary until destroyed by David (I Sam. 30).

The confrontation likely occurred over access to Wadi Fieran, the water at this large oasis.

The holding up of holy hands is likely not an indication of prayer; Moses held up his staff, the symbol of God's intervention for His people (v. 9). It was by holding His staff that God parted the Red Sea (14:6).

The primary function of this section is the demonstration of yet another proof and benefit of God's presence with Israel. The occasion for the demonstration this time is an attack from the outside instead of an internal complaint. The result, however, is once again an undeniable supernatural intervention. Moses commemorated the victory by building an altar which he named "the Lord is My Banner."

In all the crises the Israelites had faced since they left Egypt, God was teaching them to look to Him. This they should do for deliverance from their enemies (at the Red Sea), for health and healing (at Marah), and for food and guidance (in the wilderness of Sin). They should also have done so for water and refreshment (at Massah-Meribah) and for victory over their enemies in battle (at Rephidim). He was teaching them how dependent they were on Him and that they should turn to Him in any and every need. God is present, when the need arises, to fight alongside and even on behalf of his people.

An interesting sidelight is that Exodus 17:14 includes the first mention in the Bible of the writing of official records, though Moses did keep some type of a diary of the sojourn (Num. 33:2). God proved Himself faithful in preserving and protecting His people.

Applications:

1. It is so easy to idealize the past, forgetting that there are no "good old days." The past looks better to the degree that we forget the bad and only remember the good. Israel is a classic example of this tendency in all of us. They plead to

be relieved of the harsh treatment in Egypt that included a concerted attempt at ethnic cleansing and slavery, but they soon complained that Moses was leading them astray and endangering their livelihood. They had a short view of what is best and could not see the hand of God in difficult temporal circumstances. Does that describe people you know?

2. God not only created a nation by delivering a people from bondage through miracles of deliverance and preservation, He gave them symbols of that deliverance as reminders to focus the minds and memories on God's great acts of provision and promise. He gathered them in families to celebrate the first Passover, deliverance from death through death from the land of death. It was a great night to be celebrated. Do you celebrate your deliverance from bondage as an individual and as a family? God is gracious to give us occasions to remember our past deliverances through His grace. What do you need to praise Him for in bringing you help recently?
3. I am constantly struck by the fact that God's people found it so difficult to trust Him. God protected them from the mighty Egyptians and provided for their nourishment, but the cumulating evidence of God's care seemed to have little influence in the next difficulty they encountered. Is this not the story of God's people thru the centuries? God has proven repeatedly faithful, but we find the lesson of the trustworthiness of God hard to learn. Is that true of you also? It seems that the humankind are slow learners and quick forgetters.
4. We are not finished with difficulties when we leave "Egypt." God's people have all experienced a wonderful deliverance from a "land" of bondage. However, the redemption of God's ancient people did not put an end to the difficulties that are attendant with living. "Amalekites" are often encountered that would bring chaos and pain into our lives. God would have us know that redemption only begins a journey that has many challenges; it guarantees the end of it, but not a carefree life as we advance toward our "promised land." Like the ancient people we were delivered from bondage and immediately entered the "promised land;" we, like them, entered a wilderness and we became wanderers. Does this not describe you?
5. There are "Marah's or bitter waters in all our lives. However, God can and does turn the bitter experiences into sweet memories of His mercies toward us. God brings challenges into our lives to strengthen our faith and trust in Him; it is not that He designs to hurt us. Do you react to adversity by complaining to God or friends? Are there instances when you allowed God to

turn your pain to trust? Are their instances of bitterness that you reacted inappropriately? What lessons did you learn for the trial?

6. The point of section is God's miraculous provision for his people. This is a display of sovereign power that differs both in the display of military power, protection, and provision. Once again, the story calls for faith, but here it is faith in God to provide for his people. The provision is also a test to see if they will obey the instructions of God. The point, then, is that God provides for the needs of his people that they may demonstrate their dependence on him by obeying him. The exposition of this passage must also be a correlate to John 6. God's providing manna from heaven to meet the needs of his people takes on new significance in the application that Jesus makes of the subject to himself. There the requirement is the same – will they believe and obey? Will you trust God?
7. The presence of God at the rock from which water flowed enabled Paul to develop a spiritual lesson, an analogical application: Christ was present with Israel to provide water for them in the wilderness. So, this was a Christophany, an appearance of Christ in the Old Testament. But Paul takes it a step further to equate the rock with Christ, for just as it was struck to produce water, so Christ would be struck to produce rivers of living water. The provision of bread to eat and water to drink provided for Paul a ready analogy to the provisions of Christ in the gospel (I Cor. 10:4). Has Christ struck your rock-like heart causing rivers of living waters to flow forth?
8. The message of the Amalek intrusion concerns the power of God to protect his people. The account includes the difficulty, the victory, and the commemoration. The victory must be retained in memory by the commemoration. The lesson is that the people of God must recognize (both for engaging in warfare and for praise afterward) that victory comes only with the power of God. In the NT the issue is even more urgent, because the warfare is spiritual – believers do not wrestle against flesh and blood. So only God's power will bring victory. Do you make it a point to remember and celebrate God's great deliverances for you? Moses built an altar and named it in celebration of God's faithfulness, "The Lord is my banner (17:15). Do you build altars of praise when God answers your prayers?
9. Moses is a wonderful example to us of how to react during difficulties. When his own people criticized him or when the people were threatened, he turned to God in prayer. At Marah, he prayed, and God caused bitterness to turn to sweetness (15:26) as he did at Meribah or Massah 17:4). The lesson seems to

be that when difficulties come it is better to talk to God before talking to critics. Moses had learned that deliverance comes from the mighty hand of God. Have you learned that lesson? Do you turn to God in prayer or is your first inclination is to manipulate your circumstances?