

# OpenTheo

## Exodus 13 - 14



### Exodus - Steve Gregg

Exodus chapters 12-14 continue to describe Jewish rituals such as the dedication of firstborns and the ongoing observance of Passover, which God ordained to remember important events and to keep specific laws in mind. The Israelites followed a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night as they journeyed towards the promised land, and the crossing of the Red Sea, or Sea of Reeds, was a pivotal moment in the story of Exodus as God protected them from the pursuing Egyptian army. The events of the crossing and the drowning of the Egyptian army were seen as a great work of God, leading the Israelites to fear and believe in Him and in Moses as His servant.

### Transcript

For someone who enjoys just the running narrative of this whole story, and it is interesting, it's got lots of interesting features, but it seems like there's parts of chapters 12 and 14 where the story gets bogged down with the special interest that God had and Moses had to communicate certain ritual things relevant to Israel's later life. That is, we're in the middle of kind of the climax of the story. We've had a very fascinating recital of the 10 plagues, and the 10th one being the most dramatic, where Pharaoh himself is broken and his hard heart has been shattered.

And he now lets the people go without any conditions, just lets them go. And so they're going in haste, and we even know that he's going to change his mind again. And so they really got to get out of there fast.

This is the tense moment of the drama. And right at the tensest moment, it's like there's an intermission taken out in chapter 12 to go into detail about how the Passover ceremony is to be observed year by year throughout the future generations of Israel. I mean, it's kind of a logical place to put it, because it's talking about the first actual event of the Passover.

That they commemorate, so it goes into this aside, and this is how they'll do it every year. But even though it's kind of a logical place, it definitely breaks up the cadence of the story. And we're going to see that chapter 13 does that too.

And it's because the firstborn of Israel were spared by this blood on the doors, because if not for the blood that the Israelites would have lost their firstborn, just like the Egyptians did. That is, there was a death sentence on everyone in Egypt who was firstborn, but Israelites firstborn were spared by the application of the blood. And therefore, God claims the firstborn as his rightful do.

The Israelites can owe God their firstborn. And so it would be forever afterwards in Israel that the firstborn child and the firstborn of every animal would be consecrated to the Lord. And so chapter 13 actually goes into that.

So just like chapter 12 had gone into kind of an excursus on the ongoing practices of Israel related to the Passover. Now chapter 13 goes into a similar excursus on the ongoing practice of Israel in that the firstborn will always be dedicated to God in that religion. And the story will pick up again in chapter 17.

But like I say to someone who's just following the story in the drama, these chunks of what we might call Jewish ritual that are explained as they are. It kind of seems like getting bogged down. Slowing the story down to a stop.

At a time when the tension is at its highest in chapter 13, says, Then Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, sanctify to me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and animal. It is mine. Now, whatever opens the womb is a term you'll find from time to time in the law.

It doesn't just mean every child that comes out of the womb, but the first child that a womb produces is the child that opens the womb. The womb is closed until one offspring animal or human is born. That firstborn is the one that opens the womb.

The womb is only opened once, no matter how many other children come afterwards. It is whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel. That's mine, whether man or animal.

And Moses said to the people, Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt out of the house of bondage for by strength of hand, Yahweh brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten on this day. You are going out in the month of a bib.

And so he goes over this again. It shall be when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, which he swore to your fathers to give to you. A land flowing with milk and honey that you should keep this service in this month.

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. And on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the Lord. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days and no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters.

And you shall tell your son in that day saying, This is done because of what Yahweh did for me when I came up from Egypt. It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes that the Lord's law may be in your mouth for with a strong hand. Yahweh has brought you out of Egypt.

You shall therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year. Now, this is just a repeat of what was in chapter 12. The discussion of the firstborn being consecrated Lord comes up next in verse 11 and following.

But I would point out again to you the role that ritual played in childhood education in the Jewish home. I, you know, I'm of it. I'm kind of of a different orientation.

I'm not really. I don't really go for rituals that much. I mean, I'm not very ceremonial.

I'm not saying it's wrong to be ceremonial. In fact, I sometimes think I've got maybe something missing in my personality that rituals and ceremonies don't do anything for me. Whenever I hear of people who are evangelicals who make a shift and go into maybe Eastern Orthodoxy or into Roman Catholicism, it's like I just can't understand it, not because I'm highly critical of those religions, but just because I don't understand what the attraction is.

All that ritual just doesn't do anything for me, but it obviously does for some people, maybe most people. I mean, I'm willing to admit I'm the strange one, but I mean, rituals don't do anything for me, but apparently they were important in God's mind. And perhaps the reason was what he keeps mentioning here for the education of your children.

It's in the nature of a ritual that you're doing acts that don't have any practical value. Their value is symbolic. There's no practical health value in eating no leaven for seven days, especially if you're going to eat leaven all the rest of the year.

You're not going to experience any health value from that. There's not a nutritional advantage. There's nothing practical about it.

It's symbolic. It's a memorial. And so it is with all the ritual of the sacrifices of the holy days of Israel, Sabbath observance of everything, all the rituals.

They are memorials. They are symbolic. And they a number of times we read God says, and when your son asks you about why are we doing this, then you will say this is because God did such and such.

And it seems as though the value of ritual is in its strangeness. In a sense, it is a break from ordinary activity. It is the introduction of behaviors that don't make sense in themselves, apart from what they symbolize.

So that a child, a child doesn't say, Mommy, why do you serve me breakfast every morning? Because I'm hungry in the morning. That's why it doesn't have to ask a question like that. But why are we doing this rigmarole here at the table with this special rituals we're doing? We don't have to do that, do we? Well, we do that because it reminds us of something.

You know, memory experts in the 70s began to write a lot of books about how to memorize every person's name in a room, you know, in one minute, you know, and I read those books when I was younger. I never improved my memory. Actually, the method they suggested didn't work for me and probably for the same reason as this thing in me that doesn't really have that.

There's something missing me that doesn't really have an appreciation for ritual. But but the memory device they always gave was, you know, when you hear someone's name, you try to associate the sound of their name with something about their appearance. And if their name can somehow you might be associated with some kind of convoluted mental image you get of that person, maybe some really strange, the stranger, the better, like imagine that person, some ridiculous circumstance which reminds you of the sound of the words of their name.

And then when you see them, you'll picture that and you'll remember the sound, you'll remember their name. Well, that may work for some people. My mind just doesn't work that way.

But they always said the more ridiculous, the more absurd the mental image, the better. Because absurd and ridiculous things stick in your mind more. It's the weird things that you can't shake from your mind.

Ordinary routine things you may not even notice. And if you do, you hardly commit them to memory. But things that are bizarre out of the ordinary, they stick in your mind.

And so I think that's the value of rituals, that you do things that mean something, but it's not obvious what they mean until it's explained. And it raises curiosity. And then once you see it and associate it, then it reminds you of that thing regularly.

You know, we are who are not Jewish, often have certain rituals associated with other holidays, especially, of course, Christmas or Easter. And there are rituals that don't make any sense. Easter egg hunts, you know, are bringing trees into the house and decorating them.

Just various things, mistletoes, things that have become associated with different holidays. And frankly, we all know now, I think, I think we're enlightened and know that all these things have pagan origins. You know, the early church didn't do these.

These rituals we do at Christmas. These are not things the Bible dictates or that that

have any divine sanction. On the other hand, I don't know that they're evil in themselves.

The fact that the origin of the pagans doesn't mean that they have those pagan associations. They I don't know. I don't care about those things.

All I know is that bringing a tree in the house and decorating it is out of the ordinary. And it speaks to people who are celebrating Christmas as this is a different season. When I walk into the house and smell a pine tree in there, I think, oh, yeah, it's Christmas.

It's really not. I mean, it's really not the time Jesus was born, but it reminds us of the birth of Christ, if that's what it reminds us of. Of course, many people have Christmas trees.

They don't even think about Jesus. But if that's what you're raised to think, then the unusualness of smelling a tree in the house and these kind of things, if nothing else, they just remind you that, oh, yeah, there's something different. About this, we're celebrating something.

There's something unusual that we're supposed to be remembering here. And so these rituals, which actually God ordained for the Jews, were to keep certain things in mind that he didn't want them to forget. And it's interesting, too, in verse nine, where it says it and he means by this, the keeping of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, it should be assigned to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that is, on your forehead now that the Lord's law may be in your mouth.

Now, the observance of these special rituals, which only Israel would do, was something that set them apart. It was like it was something written on their forehead or on their hand. We're familiar with the hand in the forehead being brought up in connection in the book of Revelation with the Mark of the Beast.

The Mark of the Beast requires people to have either his name or his number or his symbol, his sign on their forehead or on their hand. But this idea of having a sign on the forehead or the hand actually comes from the Old Testament and the opposite of the Mark of the Beast, but rather the mark of God, the mark that you belong to God, the mark that Israel is a special people of God, is that they keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread at a later time in Deuteronomy, Chapter six, just the entire keeping of all the law was said to have that kind of a significance to them. In Deuteronomy, Chapter six and verse six and following, it says, In these words which I command you today shall be in your heart, you shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up, you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes again on your forehead.

Now, these commands in the Old Testament were the basis for certain practices developed by the Jews that they still practice, at least the Hasidic devout Jews in Israel do, and that is the practice of having what they call phylacteries. A phylactery is a box or a container, maybe made of leather in which are inserted little scraps of paper that have scriptures on them, and these are bound to the forehead with a strap like a headband around with these little sometimes are cylindrical shaped containers that contain scripture portions. The Jews call those phylacteries or they'll bind them on their hand or their arm, and they do that because of these verses.

God says you should buy my laws on your hand and as frontless between your eyes. So the Jews actually took this quite literally and took scripture portions and bind them to their forehead and to their hand. But I believe they're missing the point, and Jesus didn't seem to have any respect for that practice either.

He made fun of them saying you make broad your phylacteries. He said to the Pharisees, he's talking about their externalism of their religious behavior. You have broad phylacteries that you wear.

You are really big ones. So people know how much of the law you're carrying on your forehead. You know, you don't wear these little factories like the people who aren't as righteous as you.

You are the big black. It's kind of a joke. And yet, I mean, they did it because they were taking this literally.

But obviously, he didn't mean it to be literal. Maybe it's not obvious to everyone, but it should be. To bind it to your hand or to your forehead.

What's that mean? Well, your hand represents your works, the things you do. Your forehead or between your eyes is where your attention is, your mind, your thoughts. But it was right before your eyes.

What's right in front of your head. That's like where your focus is, where your attention is. Your thoughts and your works, your works and your thoughts.

These are the two aspects of your life. When God says, I want you to bind my laws to your hands and bind them before your eyes. The idea is I want you to always have your works and your thoughts completely informed by and governed by my laws.

But more than that, at least in later history, and I don't know how much this was so in Egyptian times. But in later times, many times slaves would bear the brand of their master like a like a cow today has the brand of its owner on it. So that it'll never be mistaken whose it is.

And slaves would be branded on some part of the body that would not be covered with

clothing. Just so that it would not be easy to conceal their brand. It was often on the hand or on the forehead that a slave wore the brand of its master.

And to have the mark of one's master on their forehead or on their hand was simply a way of saying it's obvious who owns them. They clearly belong to this master because the brand of that master is seen clearly upon them. And if you look at Revelation chapter 13, this is what it says, of course, about the mark of the beast.

Now the beast is the satanically inspired governmental system. And in Revelation 13 and verse 16, it says he that that is the second beast causes all both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads. And that no one may buy or sell except one who is the mark or the name of the beast or the number of his name.

Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast. What's the number of a man? His name is six, six, six.

Number is six, six, six. But look at the next verse. Chapter 14, verse one.

Then I looked and behold, a lamb standing on Mount Zion with him. One hundred forty four thousand having his father's name written on their foreheads. I've got two groups of people with different names on their foreheads.

One group has the name of the beast or the number of his name. The identifier of the beast is on their forehead. The other group has God's name on their forehead.

Now, true Christians don't really have God's name written on their forehead. This is symbolic. The whole book of Revelation is written in symbolic way, and this is symbolic of something.

What it's saying is this. In the world, you find two different masters and two different slave groups. There are those who are slaves of God.

There are those who are slaves of the devil system. It is as if these slaves have their master's name tattooed on their forehead. It is as if you can tell at a glance whose servant somebody is in the marketplace in Rome.

If you saw a man who had a tattoo on his forehead or on his hand, you were seeing the brand of his master. You could tell easily whose slave he was just by looking. You didn't have to ask.

Likewise, those who serve God, their lives advertise visually, visibly whose servant they are. If you're God's servant, it shows. People should be able to look at you and say, oh, that must be one of God's people there.

Their lives, their thoughts, their actions are obviously in the service of God. Whereas

others, you see them and say, oh, they clearly are loyal to this, the devil system. Their thoughts and their actions reflect that.

In other words, I don't think the mark of the beast is a literal mark anymore than I think the name of the father written on the foreheads of the 144,000 is a literal name written on their foreheads. This is, I believe, conveying the idea that this mark on their forehead, so to speak, represents the obvious fact that they are servants of the one whose mark they are said to bear. Like a slave, where's the brand of his master? And in a sense, I don't know whether that practice was practiced in Egypt, too, as it was later in the Roman Empire.

But one could easily see Exodus 13, 9 in that light, where it says that when these people keep this feast of unleavened bread, it shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes. That is to say, the fact that Israel keeps these practices, which others do not, will be like the mark of their master on their forehead and on their hand. Their behavior, their thoughts are distinguished from those who are not servants of God.

And the keeping of the unleavened bread serves as does the keeping of the whole law later on in Deuteronomy 6 to be the true mark of God's servants. Now, Exodus 13, 11, and it shall be when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore you, swore to you and your fathers and gives it to you, that you shall set apart to Yahweh all that opens the womb. That is, every firstling that comes from an animal, which you have, the male should be the Lord's.

But every firstling of a donkey you shall redeem with the lamb. And if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck and all the firstborn of man among you, sons, you shall redeem. Now, what's it mean to redeem them? Redeem means to buy back.

The idea here is that if you have livestock or for that matter, children, the firstborn male of every of every animal, the firstborn male of your family, you have to surrender that to God. He has a claim on it. His redemption of Israel through the preserving of their firstborn gives God an innate claim on those firstborn.

And therefore, when that child is born of an animal, you surrender it to the Lord. Now, if it happens to be an animal like a lamb or a goat or a bull, it's easy to know what to do with it. You just sacrifice it to the Lord.

That's how he gets the firstborn. The animal becomes a sacrifice. But a human or an unclean animal like a donkey can't be sacrificed.

You can't sacrifice a donkey to the Lord. It's an unclean animal. You certainly can't sacrifice your children to the Lord.

But they are the Lord's anyway. So instead of sacrificing them, you redeem them with a



lamb. That is, OK, you've got a firstborn donkey.

How are you going to give that to the Lord? Well, you can't sacrifice it, but you can put a lamb in its place and kill the lamb instead. And you do the same thing for your children. Now, in the case of your children, you have only one choice, not two.

You have to redeem it for the lamb. With a donkey, you don't have to. It's possible you've got more than enough donkeys and not enough lambs.

And you'd rather lose the donkey than the lamb. So you go ahead and just kill the donkey. You kill the donkey because you can't sacrifice it to the Lord, but you also can't keep it for yourself.

So it dies. The donkey that's the firstborn either has to die or has to be redeemed. By a lamb.

Now, when we get to Leviticus, there'll be large matter made of clean and unclean animals. And in the New Testament, it seems clear that clean and unclean animals are viewed as a spiritual type of clean and unclean people. That is, people who are acceptable to God, believers, righteous people on the one hand, and people who are not acceptable to God because they're not righteous and they're not believers on the other hand.

That the unclean animals are like the unbelievers and the clean animals like the believers. For example, Paul deals with it that way when he says, do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. What he's referring to is a law in Deuteronomy that says you should not plow with an ox and an ass together.

You don't put a donkey and an ox into the same yoke. Not only for practical reasons, and there may be sufficient practical reasons not to do so, but for symbolic reasons. A donkey is an unclean animal.

An ox is a clean animal. You don't yoke them together. So Paul says you don't yoke yourself, a Christian, together with an unclean unbeliever.

That the imagery of not yoking the unclean animal with the clean animal is an image of not having a Christian and a non-Christian yoked unequally together. When Peter was on the rooftop in Joppa, God gave him a vision of unclean animals and says, arise, Peter, kill and eat. Except these unclean animals.

You've never done it before. And when Peter said, I don't eat unclean things, God said, what I have cleansed, you must not call common or unclean. And he said, what's that about? And then he found out it was about the Gentiles because he considered the Gentiles being clean and he was being called to go to the house of a Gentile, Cornelius, and to accept those Gentiles into the church.

So it's like the Gentiles were like unclean animals as far as the Jews were concerned. The Jews were like clean animals. I mentioned earlier when we talked about Isaiah 11, that the wolf and the lamb lined down together and the ox and the leopard or whatever lined down together.

This was like a picture of Gentiles and Jews. Unclean predatory animals lined down with clean domestic animals in the Bible. It's common.

For animals to represent people and especially unclean animals represent sinful people. And so here's a donkey. It's a sinful person, as it were.

It represents a sinful person. And God has his claim on it. It either has to die or a lamb has to be sacrificed in its place.

And that's a picture, of course, of our own redemption. We are born donkeys, unclean, facing judgment, death, the wages of our sin. But if Jesus is the lamb of God and his substitutionary death stands in for us, then we don't have to have our neck broken.

We can be redeemed. And that's what this image here. You have a first born animal that cannot be sacrificed.

It either has to die or has to be redeemed. Now, your first born child, you can't kill it. You can't break your child's neck.

So redeeming it is the only option you have. You have to offer a lamb for it because that stands in for your child being offered to the Lord. And so it says, verse 14, so it shall be when your son asks you in time to come saying, what is this that you shall say to him by strength of hand? The Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

And it came to pass when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that Yahweh killed the first born in the land of Egypt, both the first born of man and the first born of animal. Therefore, I sacrifice to Yahweh all males that open the womb, but the first born of my sons I redeem. In other words, this becomes a teachable moment again.

You do these rituals and your child says, I don't understand why are we doing this? It doesn't seem to be necessary. It doesn't make an awful lot of sense. What is the purpose of this? And the father says, well, I'm glad you asked.

That's why we do it. We do it so that you would ask. We do it so that I could give you a teachable moment.

You're curious now. You know, it's if you're ever a teacher, you'll find that the best time to teach them is when they're curious. It's like when their curiosity creates a vacuum in their head that you can fill with what you know, what you want to tell them.

If people aren't curious, you can tell the most interesting things and they'll and it won't

stick with them. Much of Jesus' teaching was given in answer to questions the disciples asked. Or sometimes before giving a teaching, he would ask a leading question which they weren't able to understand.

And then now they were curious. He'd give them a teaching. Knowing that there are teachable moments and not so teachable moments.

And the most teachable moment is when there's a curiosity and a desire to know something. So these rituals created those teachable moments. You offer this lamb for this donkey and your son says, why did we do that? Well, we did that so you would ask.

We did that so you'd be curious. We did that so I could tell you what I'm about to tell you. It reminds us of something that God did for us that I want you to know about.

And so with all these rituals, it shall be as a sign on your hand and on the front of your eyes for by strength of hand, Yahweh brought us out of Egypt. Now getting back to the story. Verse 17.

Then it came to pass when Pharaoh had let the people go that God did not leave them by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt. So God led the people around by the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea and the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt.

Now, the land of the Philistines lay on the most direct route to Canaan. If you look at a map and I gave you some maps, you can either look at those maps or most people have maps in the back of their Bibles that show the region. When they came out of northeastern Egypt, you know, from the Nile Delta there, they really weren't very far from Canaan.

If they'd just gone north and skirted along the Mediterranean Sea to the east, they could have hugged the coast and gotten in a fairly short period of time, only a few days easily, into Canaan. And that would have been the shorter way to go. The trouble is they'd have to go through the land of the Philistines.

And not only that, but the Egyptians had their troops stationed in the Philistine areas too. And if God had led them that way, they were probably going to have to do some fighting. Now, God knew that these people were not very strong in their faith yet.

He thought that if they would see war, they'd say, oh, we didn't count on this. This is not what we signed up for. We're going back.

We surrender. We don't want to get killed. After all, they weren't even armed yet.

But not only that, he just felt like they were immature in their faith. They had

demonstrated that well enough. And they will demonstrate it again.

However, the time is going to come when they will fight in wars. God's going to have them go into the land of Canaan and conquer all the city-states that are there. But they have to learn to trust God first.

They are not ready yet. And so he doesn't take them by the shortest route that would have gotten them in a few days. Instead, he takes them by a somewhat more circuitous route.

When they finally enter the land, they're not going to enter it from the south as they would naturally if they would take the shortest route. They're going to enter it from the east. They're actually going to have to cross the Jordan River to get in.

That wouldn't be so if they came in from the south by the shortest route, but they'd have to encounter Philistines and probably Egyptian military. And that just isn't what God is counting on them doing. Remember, it says in 1 Corinthians 10, 13 that God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you're able to endure.

And he knew the limits of their faith. And he thought, well, I think they'll probably turn back to Egypt if I take them that way. It's too early for these people to fight in wars.

They don't have that kind of courage and faith yet. So he takes them a different route toward the Red Sea, which is more directly east and south, which is away from land. But much of the direction they took probably had to be dictated by the regular trade routes, because much of the Sinai Peninsula is mountainous.

When you're traveling with a lot of livestock and little children and stuff like that, women, folk, you don't want to be mountain climbing. I think today with our modern roads and all, we can hardly appreciate the kind of obstacles that mountains used to present to travel. In fact, a mountain in the Bible often simply represented a barrier to travel.

Sometimes in the prophets symbolic passages, a mountain is simply a barrier, something you can't get over. Well, you can get over it, but climbing it was very difficult. These days, we can drive across country over, you know, huge mountain ranges and not reduce our speed, you know, go at least 60 miles an hour over the mountains.

We have paved roads and all that stuff. They didn't have that then. They didn't have, you know, mountain moving equipment and stuff to carve smooth paths through and climbing mountains with little kids, even climbing mountains alone.

Some of you may do that on weekends. You got where it's not paved over the mountain, you climb a mountain in its natural state. You find, well, this gets tiring.

You have sheep and goats and cows and children and women and you're trying to get

over those mountains, that's not really going to work out well. So they had to kind of follow the trade routes where there were already traveled roads. And that meant there were limits how many courses they could take.

In the back of my Bible, actually, there's a map, I don't know if yours has a map like this too of the access from Egypt and I don't necessarily trust the route that is given but it does show where the main trade routes were and that sheet of paper I gave you, I believe the bottom the bottom map on that sheet of paper shows the main trade route, Arabian trade route across the Sinai Peninsula. They had to get across that peninsula and so that meant that they could have gone the way of the Philistines but that's not what God wanted so he took them further away where there's not as much population, not as much hostile nations for them to encounter on the route and he did that because they weren't ready yet for the kind of conflicts that he was going to use them in at a later date once he had trained them more in what it means to trust God. So many of the cities we're going to read about that they went to are of pretty much unknown identity.

This is very ancient history we're reading about and we're talking about a desert region where the fans of time have changed the complexion of the area many many times over the centuries and a lot of the places that are named as encampments of theirs simply cannot be identified with any certainty today and for that reason we can't say for sure what route they took. Obviously in those maps I handed out to you one possibility is they took a rather straight route across the peninsula and then dipped south as they came near the Gulf of Aqaba. That strikes me as a reasonable suggestion.

Many of the maps in our Bible show them going directly south once they're in the peninsula they go along the Gulf of Suez and follow it down but that's because of the traditional site of Mount Sinai being down there in the tip of the peninsula and that would be the way they would get there. If we don't accept the traditional site of Mount Sinai and there are reasons to doubt that it is the correct site then I don't know that there's any reason to have them going down that far south at all. So I'm just going to tell you we're going to read about their route but the markers on their route are not I think not possible certainly not easy probably not possible to identify with certainty and therefore the exact route they took is to some in some measure a matter of conjecture.

And just I'll just give you that as we go into this narrative. Now verse 19 Moses took the bones of Joseph with him for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath saying God will surely visit you and you should carry up my bones here with you. Another indicator in Exodus that the readers were supposed to be from Genesis.

These were the closing this is the closing agreement at the end of Genesis that Joseph made as he was dying. He made his brethren swear that when they go to the promised land they'd take him along even though he was dead. And so they're keeping the oath.

Frank has suggested to me what seems plausible is that when they when they took the

bones of Moses with them wherever it was they were stored they may have been stored in some royal archive somewhere or or in some royal mausoleum but since Pharaoh at this point was very compliant with whatever Moses wanted to do Moses would have access to anything he wanted and he went wherever wherever the bones of Joseph were that it was known and they got them. But Frank has suggested that the various documents that formed the basis of the book of Genesis remember we talked about these Toledotes in Genesis there's these separate documents that appear to have been written separately by perhaps different characters in the book of Genesis that those perhaps were preserved in the same box with the bones of Joseph. They would be this this sacred cache of Israel's relics of the bones of important and it may be that at that time when they picked up the bones of Joseph he also with it received the scrolls of these various Toledotes that became the book of Genesis.

We know that at some point Moses had them in his possession or seems to have I mean that's the best theory. And so Frank may be correct I think about that. It seems to be realistic that those things went with the bones of Joseph.

So they took their journey from Sukkot and camped in Etham. Now by the way Sukkot is not the same Sukkot which means booths that Jacob lived in in the promised land. It's a different Sukkot.

I encamped at Etham at the edge of the wilderness and Yahweh went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them to lead the way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them life so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or night from the people. Now apparently this was a single pillar that was always there and at night it was a glowed with fire.

It may be that it was that there was a fire in the cloud at all times but in the daytime because of the daylight they couldn't see the glow so much they just saw the cloud cover of it. But this this pillar is later referred to as the angel of the Lord. That is God is in this cloud.

The Jews of later generations referred to this as the Shekinah glory and I'm sure you've heard that word before. But you haven't found it in Scripture because the Bible doesn't use the term Shekinah. It's more of a term that has come about from Jewish tradition but there's no reason to object to it.

It is simply the term given to this manifested glory of God which led them as a cloud through the wilderness and a fire at night and which later settled over the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies and filled the tabernacle. This is the Shekinah glory as we sometimes hear it referred to though again that that's a word that doesn't come from Scripture. But this is the first time we read about the cloud and we will read about it more at the end of the book of Exodus.

We're told that the Shekinah filled the tabernacle and later we're going to read that the tabernacle after the tabernacle was constructed the Shekinah would come and it would move and whenever it would move the Israelites were supposed to break camp, tear down the tabernacle, put on carts, and go to the and follow the cloud to the next spot and they would keep moving until the cloud stopped moving the clouds stopped and they said, okay, here's where we set up camp and they'd set up the camp set up the tabernacle and everything at that spot until the cloud moved again and the cloud might move the next day or the next week or it might be there for months. We don't know for the most part how long they spend at each camp. There were apparently 42 different encampments in their traveling through the wilderness that are very different from the listed in the book of numbers and you know they might have spent a single day at some of them or they might have spent a year on average at each of them.

It's hard to say but it was unpredictable. They had to follow the cloud just like we have to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit's not going to tell us in advance what we're going to be doing all the time. He just leaves us the next step and when he moves we're supposed to follow the next instructions he's given us and then camp there until he gives more.

And that's what the Israelites had to do follow God. God was their guide through the wilderness although Moses had experienced in the wilderness to having lived in the wilderness for 40 years before he would make a good wilderness guide himself but God was the one telling them where they're going to camp and where and all that. Now we come to of course the most dramatic part of the story and that's the crossing of the Red Sea.

Chapter 14. Now Yahweh spoke to Moses saying speak to the children of Israel that they turn and can't before pie the high road between Migdal and the sea opposite Veil they found you should camp before it by the sea for Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel they are bewildered by the land and the wilderness has closed them in. Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart so that he will pursue them and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army that the Egyptians may know that I am Yahweh and they did so.

So they went to pie the high road again the exact location is not known and there's very different opinions about this because of course if Mount Sinai the place to which they were journeying is down in the point at the south or near the south of the Sinai Peninsula as the traditional site would have it then they were going one direction but if they were in fact Mount Sinai was over in Midian beyond the Gulf of Aqaba well then their direction would be different they were either going south or they were going east across the Peninsula and therefore obviously their encampments would be in a different place depending on where they were because they is the crossing the Red Sea or as the Hebrew has it the Sea of Reeds. It's not clear if it was the Gulf of Suez or the Gulf of Aqaba that they crossed and the traditional site of Sinai has them crossing the Gulf of

Suez and referring to that as the Red Sea the alternative site which has Mount Sinai over in Midian would have them crossing the Gulf of Aqaba on the other side of the Peninsula which means and I personally at this point not knowing any more than I know but having seen what evidence I've seen I favor the view that Mount Sinai was over in Midian and if that is correct that means that when they got to Pihahiroth they were actually pretty much all the way across the Peninsula and ready to cross the Gulf of Aqaba and how long that took them we don't know we do know they traveled night and day now with women and cattle that would still be a slow march but people who travel only in the day time usually can be assumed to travel as much as 20 or so miles a day if they're traveling around the clock perhaps just driving the animals hard and the children are sleeping in the carts as they're moving all night long maybe they could cover 40 or maybe 50 miles in a day if they're in a big hurry we don't know how many we're not told how many days it took them but it would appear that already when you get to chapter 14 verse 1 you've skipped over most of their travels across the Peninsula either eastward across it or south toward the south of it depending on where Mount Sinai it is well actually I take that back because if they're crossing the Gulf of Suez then of course they haven't gotten very far yet yeah I mean they they haven't really gotten into the Sinai Peninsula yet so there's that much difference of opinion and I don't know if we can settle the matter from all the all the evidence that presented from various sides of the debate though it's at this point in time I lean toward the the median location of Mount Sinai now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled but he should have known that he's the one who told him to go and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people and they said why have we done this that we have let Israel go from serving us that's a very large labor force that all the building projects are going to have to come to a screeching halt because their labor force had just gone and Pharaoh apparently has a short memory and doesn't remember why he left them there and he why have we done this well there were some pretty strong reasons for doing that don't you remember your son died your crops were destroyed everything in your whole country been destroyed that's why you did it but he started thinking well you know if we're going to rebuild this society we need all these slaves to help us rebuild it we need to get them back so he made ready his chariot and took his people with him he also took 600 choice chariots and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them now apparently the king choice chariots were maybe the ones that had the most heavily you know most heavily armored chariots maybe they were the fastest maybe they had the strongest steed pulling them but there are a lot of other chariots too that were not choice chariots the army of pharaoh had a lot of chariots 600 of which probably flanked him as he rode his own chariot he was probably surrounded by his 600 choice chariots as would be the best way to protect him in any battle and then he was apparently ready for for battle. And it says in verse eight and the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel and the children of Israel went out with boldness.



So the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi-Hi-Hi-Roth before Baal-Zaphon. Again, I'm not going to try to identify with certainty these locations. It's not the most important thing, although it would be important if we could identify them, it would certainly tell us the route they took.

It's the inability to certainly identify them that makes the route open to question. And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So there was not only the chariots, but also the cavalry, the infantry of Egypt marching after them.

So they were very afraid and the children of Israel cried out to Yahweh. Then they said to Moses, because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us to bring us up out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt saying, let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? Well, that's not exactly what their sentiments were, but they have a short memory, too. For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.

And Moses said to the people, do not be afraid, stand still and see the salvation of Yahweh, which he will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you'll you shall see them no more forever again. So you've been looking at these Egyptians for 215 years.

Take a good hard look at them. Again, this is the last time you're going to see any of them and no one will ever see them again alive. Yahweh will fight for you and you shall hold your peace.

There's you shut up. Stop complaining. You hold your peace and watch what God's going to do.

And Yahweh said to Moses, why do you cry to me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward, but lift up your rod and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel should go over on dry ground through the midst of the sea. Now, there is some evidence in the narrative that they were in a situation where the sea was the only thing that's the direction they could go because there were mountains on both sides.

Certainly, if one of the routes proposed to Midian is followed, they went mostly directly east across the Sinai Peninsula. And then then they did south, probably because of the route they had taken to the mountains and things like that. And as they went south, they got to a place where they were hemmed in a valley with very steep mountains on both sides.

The Egyptians coming behind and nothing but the Gulf of Aqaba, the sea in front of them. They couldn't go to the side and they couldn't go back because the Egyptians were there. If they're going anywhere, they had to go swimming or walking in the sea.

And that's it was that latter option that God chose. And so they're going to go forward through the water. He says in verse 17, and I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians and they shall follow them.

In other words, no Egyptian would be stupid enough to drive his chariot into the seabed when he sees these walls of water inside. I mean, he's going to know there's a miracle going on here and it's on Israel's side, not theirs. But their hearts have been hardened to make them stupid enough to actually pursue Israel into the sea.

So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots and his horsemen. Then the Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh when I have gained honor for myself over Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen. And the angel of God who went before the camp, that's the pillar of cloud there, moved and went behind them.

They didn't need the pillar to show them where the sea was. They could go forward without the pillar there. Instead, the pillar moved behind them to be a protection to them.

It went from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Now, you see, the Egyptians were camped.

They were pursuing, but apparently it was enough distance that they couldn't just pursue it all in one day. They had to camp. And so there was a camp of the Egyptians and a camp of Israel.

Now, the Egyptians would camp at night as any sensible people would, because there were no lights. It was too dark to travel in any war. You just had to stop fighting, stop pursuing at night time because it was too dark, unless you had a full moon.

But the point is, it was just not thought of you travel at night. So they encamped at night. But Israel was marching night and day.

And so through the night, Israel was able to get away. And the Egyptians didn't know this was happening because they assumed the Israelites were camping, too, because there's an obscuring of their vision by this cloud. So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel.

Thus, it was a cloud and darkness to the one. And it gave light by night to the other so that one did not come near the other all that night. Israel had light from the fire in the cloud, which meant they could travel.

They could they could keep moving. The Egyptians had dark on their side. The cloud made it dark where they were.

The same cloud. This actually has been used as an illustration from very early times by the church fathers of in describing the function of the parables of Jesus, how the parables illuminated the disciples, but obscured the truth from those who are not disciples, like the pillar of cloud that was dark to one group and light to the other. So the same statements of Jesus were a way of his illustrating the kingdom of God to his disciples who were supposed to know the mysteries and yet obscuring them from the crowds who were not given that privilege.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and Yahweh caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night and made the sea into dry land and the waters were divided. Now, what is called the sea here was is sometimes translated the Red Sea traditionally in our Bibles. In Hebrew, Yom Suf and Yom Suf means Sea of Reeds.

And so some scholars have felt that it wasn't really what we call the Red Sea or really any kind of a sea at all, that it was some region, some marshy region that was locally referred to as the Sea of Reeds, a place where your reeds grow in shallow water. They don't grow in the bottom of the ocean. They grow in shallow water.

And so being called the Sea of Reeds, some say it was maybe a shallow marshy area that they crossed instead. And the fact that a strong east wind is said to have parted the waters and dried it up has suggested that, well, you know, there couldn't be much volume of water to be driven by wind like that. After all, a wind that would be stronger to separate the waters of an ocean would be too strong for children of Israel to stand up in.

You know, it'd be blowing them down on their ground and they'd have to be crawling on their bellies to get across because the wind would be too strong. And so it's been argued that this was perhaps a marshy inlet of the Red Sea. And maybe it's low tide.

Maybe there are only a few inches of water and a strong wind was able to kind of make a dry area kind of through there where they could walk through. And this is a fairly common suggestion by those who tend to discount the miraculous. And as you can imagine, immediately, of course, the objection that a believer would have to that is that obviously God drowned the Egyptians in the same water.

And therefore, it's hard to imagine that Egyptians would be so ill-equipped for survival that if they found themselves in ankle deep water, they'd be thrashing around drowning. And actually, when the song was sung about their defeat in chapter 15, it refers to how the Egyptians went gurgling down to the bottom of the sea. It was deep water.

They died. And so although we don't know exactly where it is that the crossing was made, it was deep enough water to be an end to the Egyptians who followed in there.

What's more, as we pointed out earlier, if we're looking at Mount Sinai on the eastern side of the Gulf of Aqaba, that is in Median, what is now Saudi Arabia.

There is a land bridge under the water that has been discovered that has been photographed. Where the sea on either side of this land bridge is like a mile deep, like 5000 feet deep. But this land bridge rises up and I guess about a mile wide from what I understand, and it goes across the Gulf of Aqaba.

Normally it is covered with water, fairly deep water, but not as deep as the water on either side. It's really almost like a very providential topographical feature of that sea bottom that God knew about. And the cloud led the Israelites to that very spot.

And when he's part of the sea, it is possible that the water on that sea bridge was land bridge was not really very deep. But when the waters came back, that it could have washed the Egyptian church into the deeper water to either side of it came in with force. It could have driven sideways, perhaps.

I'm only guessing because, of course, all of our geographical speculations about this are involved speculation. But anyway, they the waters parted and all night long, the Israelites passed through verse 21. Then Moses stretched out his hand of the sea.

OK, the sea went back. Verse 22, the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. Now, the same as the waters were a wall also suggests to us images sort of like you see in Cecil B. DeMille's movie, The Ten Commandments.

I think every one of us has seen that movie when we were young, and therefore we cannot picture this scene without picturing what we saw in the movie, these huge walls of water on either side. And that probably is what is described there. That probably happened just like that.

It has been suggested, though, and it's worthy of consideration, though it doesn't make a lot of difference that it's when it says they were the water was a wall on it. It doesn't necessarily mean it was these these huge walls, because the word a wall in Hebrew literature sometimes just means a protection. God is said to be a wall of protection to his people, and it's possible it's saying that as they cross, they could not be attacked from the sides because the sea was there.

The sea was like a wall of protection on either side. If they're going to be attacked, it had to be from the rear. But I think the idea of this visual image we have from the movie of the Ten Commandments is probably not far from the correct imagery of the waters as a wall on each side.

Verse 23, and the Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea, which strikes me as really a dumb thing to do. And all the pharaoh's horses and his

chariots and horsemen now came to pass in the morning watch that the Lord looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud. So he got his pictures being inside this cloud, looking out down on the Egyptians.

And he troubled the army of the Egyptians. And he took off their chariot wheels so that they drove them with difficult, I guess, so the chariots fall, wheels fall off. It would be kind of difficult for the horses to drag these wheelless carriages with riders in them.

And the Egyptians said, let us flee from the face of Israel for Yahweh fights for them against the Egyptians. That is a little late for them to recognize that. I think they would have recognized that when the waters parted and when they saw the sea had made a way for Israel, but they didn't see it until the chariot wheels fell off.

And then they realized they were in a lot of trouble. After all, if the children of Israel could walk across there, the Egyptians might have thought they have time to get their chariots across, but they're moving faster. But when their chariot wheels fall off, they realize, I think we're stuck here and I think it's I think someone's doing this to us.

I think it's God fighting against the Egyptians. Then Yahweh said to Moses, stretch out your hand over the sea that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians on their chariots and their horsemen. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea.

And when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full strength while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. That's weird. The Egyptians were fleeing into it as the waters came down.

Seems like they'd be fleeing out of it. But apparently there was enough of a long enough column of Egyptians that while some who were in the sea were having their wheels fall off and seeing themselves in trouble wanting to get out, there was still the hinder parts of the column were still entering into the sea. So the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained. It would appear that Pharaoh died, too, although it only says the armies of Pharaoh, it's possible that he sent them in and stayed outside.

We don't have any direct statement about Pharaoh's death, but I think in the absence of statements, the contrary, it would appear that Pharaoh himself died also. But the children of Israel had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. So Yahweh saved Israel that day out of the hand of Egyptians, the Egyptians and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.

That being so, we can see how they could have taken their armor and weapons. These corpses were washed ashore, had their armor on, they had their weapons at their sides,

and therefore Israel could arm themselves for the battles that would follow. Thus, Israel saw the great work which Yahweh had done in Egypt.

So the people feared Yahweh and believed Yahweh and his servant Moses. And we will stop there. Actually, chapter 15, it'd be it's a shame we can't take chapter 15 at this point because it's it's kind of a climax, but we'll just have to wait till next time, because chapter 15 contains more than just the song of Moses.

There's some important events at the end of the chapter that require a lot of comment from yours truly. So I'm going to stop here and we'll come back to chapter 15 next time.