

Parashah 16

B'shallach

בשלה

“After he had let go”

Exodus 13:17 – 17:16

Torah Together



After Pharaoh finally relented and let the Israelites go, Moses probably assumed that the worst was behind them. But we know from past events that Pharaoh had little regard for keeping his word. So yet again, God hardens Pharaoh's heart so that He can show His obvious superiority over Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt by saving the Israelites with His “mighty outstretched arm.”

1. Crossing the Sea - 13:17 - 14:31

a) To travel from Goshen to Canaan, what would have been the most direct route? Why didn't the Israelites go this way? Which way did they go? (See map on page 25 for reference.)

b) How was Genesis 50:25 fulfilled when the Israelites left Egypt?

c) How were the Israelites guided on their travels from Egypt?

d) What reason did God give for hardening Pharaoh's heart yet again? Why do you think this was important to God?

The Way of the Sea

The Latin phrase, *Via Maris*, translates “by way of the sea.” It was the name for the easy route from Egypt to Canaan along the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. However, this route also ran through the land of the Philistines, a people known for their fierce and war-like nature.

Scripture Link:

Genesis 50:25 records Joseph's wishes just before he died. Also, **Joshua 24:32** tells of the burial of Joseph's bones in Israel. The tomb of Joseph is located in Shechem (Nablus today). The existence of this site is astounding confirmation of the truth of Scripture.

Pillars of Cloud and Fire

This is our first encounter with God's guideposts. God continues to use the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night to guide the Israelites for the remainder of the Torah.

“ . . . and the Egyptians will know that I am YHWH.”

Exodus 14:4

Always Complaining

This is the first time we encounter the Israelites complaining, "It would have been better if we had stayed in Egypt." But it won't be the last! It seems the Israelites are fearful and lack trust in God. If you had seen the miracles that the Israelites had recently witnessed, do you think you would have been fearful in these circumstances?

Parting the Red Sea

The miracle described in this passage has been debated (and doubted) for centuries. It is not unusual that there is no other written verification that this event actually occurred. First, there are simply not very many documents dating this far back in history. Second, many cultures of this period (notably the Egyptian) often rewrote the record of historical events in which they suffered defeat.

Songs in Scripture

Although it is appropriate to sing praises to God for His blessings, the songs in Scripture serve another purpose. Because they could be easily memorized, the songs would be passed down from generation to generation and keep their history alive. Other songs of Moses are recorded in **Deuteronomy 32** and **Psalms 90**.

e) What reason did Pharaoh give for pursuing the Israelites? What did the Israelites do when they saw the Egyptians coming? What was Moses' response?

f) Analyze verses 14:15-18. Do you think Moses knew before this exactly how God intended to rescue the Israelites? What lessons can we learn from this?

g) How long did it take for the sea to be divided? How were the Egyptians kept at bay during this period?

h) How many of Pharaoh's army survived? Do you think Pharaoh survived? What was the Israelites' response to their miraculous delivery?

2. The Song of Moses & Miriam - 15:1-21

a) This is the first "song" recorded in the Bible. Who sang this song? What role did Moses' sister Miriam play? What do you find interesting about the song?

b) Do you know of any other "songs" written by Moses? When will we hear this song again? (See Revelation 15:2-3)

3. The Waters of Marah and Elim - 15:22-27

a) How long had the Israelites been traveling when they reached Marah? What did they do when they found the water bitter? What did Moses do?

b) Here God reveals himself to the Israelites as YHWH Rophek (15:26). What does this mean and what was God's promise to the people?

c) Where did the Israelites go after Marah? What was this place like? Can you draw any parallels with your own "wilderness experiences" from this?

4. Manna and Quail - 16:1-36

a) When the Israelites arrived at the Wilderness of Sin, how long had it been since they left Egypt? What was their complaint and to whom did they complain?

b) What did Moses say about their "grumbings"? What did God say He would do? What were his reasons for providing the Israelites bread in this manner? (verse 4)

c) God provided both meat and bread for the people. How did he do it?

d) What does "manna" mean? What were its properties? How did these properties help God accomplish his purposes given in verse 4? What important "mitzvah" (commandment) is reinforced by the properties of manna?

Manna

Some believe that manna occurs naturally in the Arabian desert, perhaps as a secretion from the tamarisk or acacia tree. However, the fact that it appeared on a certain day, ended on a particular day (see **Joshua 5:12**) and that it had very special spoilage properties all point to a supernatural origin. In any case, there are many lessons to be learned from this miraculous food.

Testing in Scripture

There are two sides to testing. When the Israelites complain and grumble, they are testing God's patience. (Would He have performed all the previous miracles just to let the people die in the desert?) But when God doesn't provide for their needs exactly when they expect it, He is testing their faith. **James 1:2-4** explains that the testing of our faith is necessary to become mature believers.

The Amalekites

Genesis 36:12 shows the lineage of Amalek, the father of these fierce nomads who lived by raiding other tribes. Of the two people who held up Moses' hands when his arms became tired, one was Aaron, his brother. According to the historian Josephus, the other man, Hur, was Moses' brother-in-law, Miriam's husband.

e) The book of Deuteronomy is Moses final word to the Israelites before they cross into the promised land. According to **Deuteronomy 8:2-3**, what was the ultimate purpose of the manna? Where else in the Bible was this truth revealed?

5. Water from the Rock - 17:1-7

a) At Rephidim, to whom did the people complain? What was their complaint? In what way was their complaint 'wrong'? How did Moses respond?

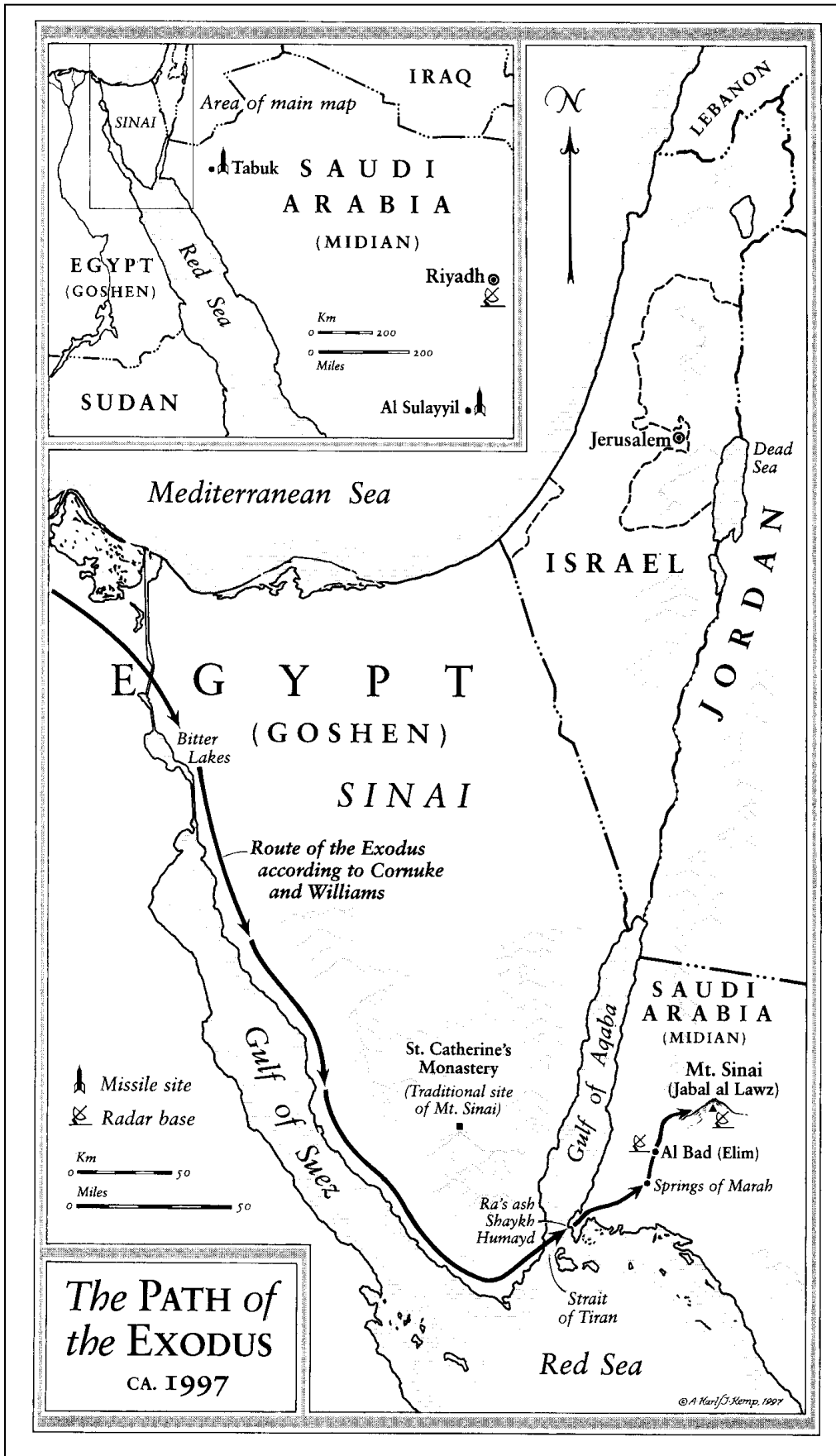
b) How did God answer their complaint? What was the significance of the names given to that place? Can you identify any types and shadows in this passage?

6. The Amalekites Defeated - 17:8-16

a) Who were the Amalekites and where did they come from? What do you know about the man Moses chose to lead the Israelite warriors?

b) What part did Moses play in the battle? Do you know who Hur was? Can you identify any types and shadows in this passage?

c) What does God instruct Moses to do in verse 14? Who specifically did God want to hear it? What is the significance of God's revealing himself as "YHWH Nissi"?



This map is reprinted from the book *The Gold of Exodus*, by Howard Blum. It shows a possible route of the exodus taken by Moses and the Israelites and indicates that Mount Sinai is in Arabia, not the Sinai Peninsula. Locating Mount Sinai in the Sinai Peninsula is based on tradition, dating from the foundation of the Monastery of St. Catherine in the 1400's. However, there is significant justification for locating Mount Sinai in Arabia.

1. Midian is known to be in this part of Arabia and that is where Moses first met his wife, Ziporrah, and her father, Jethro, and where he lived for 40 years. Furthermore, Midian is where he met God in the burning bush Who told him that he would return to "this very mountain" to worship him.
2. There is a natural land bridge about a mile wide just under the surface of the water at the Strait of Tiran. This would have made a natural crossing point for the Israelites, had the water level been lowered by just a few feet.
3. Locating Mount Sinai in Arabia makes the subsequent migrations of the Israelites much more reasonable with respect to Edom, Moab, and the Sons of Ammon.
4. There is a New Testament reference which indicates that Mount Sinai is in Arabia. In **Galatians 4:25**, Paul refers to Mount Sinai in Arabia.

The exact location of Mount Sinai and the route of the Exodus is still a matter of some debate and controversy.

Digging deeper

1. Manna is often considered as a metaphor for the Word of God. See how many parallels you can draw between the properties of God's Word and the properties of Manna.

2. Read **John 6:30-59**. This is a difficult passage for us to understand just as it was for *Yeshua's* audience. What new insights do you gain into this passage from your discussion of this week's *Torah* portion?

Scripture Link:

In **Deuteronomy 8:3**, God tells His people that man "does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD." Thus God compares His Word (*Torah*) to bread. In **John 6:35 & 48**, *Yeshua* calls himself "the bread of life." So *Yeshua* equates himself with the *Torah* – He is the living *Torah*! As believers, if we study God's Word, take it in, absorb it, digest it, and make it a part of our life, then in a sense we are eating and drinking the flesh and blood of *Yeshua*.

For further study, see

Haftarah : Judges 4:4 – 5:31

Brit Hadashah : Luke 2:22-24; John 6:25-35; 19:31-37;
1 Corinthians 10:1-13; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15;
Revelation 15:1-4