

Exodus 14-17 Podcast Notes

Exodus 14: The Crossing of the Sea

1. The Lord commands Israel to shift course, “turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth” – Ex. 14.14.
 - a. Pi-hahiroth – Ex. 14.2. This may be a Hebraized form of the Egyptian Pr-Hthr, “the house of the God Hathor.” Some scholars have found a connection between Hathor and Mount Sinai.¹
 - b. Migdol is a Semitic word meaning “watchtower” or “fortress.”
 - c. Baal-zephon – Ex. 14.2. This is the name of the holy mountain of Baal in Ugaritic texts.
2. The Egyptians give chase – Ex. 14.5-9.
 - a. He “went out with high hand” – Ex. 14.8, (בְּיַד רְמָה) literally “with upraised hand,” a metaphor probably drawn from the depiction of Ancient Near Eastern gods who brandished weapons with upraised hands.
3. The Israelite reaction and Moses’ response – Ex. 14.10-14.
 - a. Ex. 14.12 is not contained in the repudiations of Moses in Ex. 5.21 or 6.9. This statement is nowhere found in the Hebrew Bible, but the tradition of the rebellious nature of the Israelites is preserved in Ps. 106.6-7.²
 - b. Moses’ response is to “fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord!” – Ex. 14.13.
4. God responds to the crisis – Ex. 14.15-20.
 - a. “Lift up thy rod!” – Ex. 14.16.
 - b. “Divide the sea!” – Ex. 14.16.
 - c. “the children of Israel shall go on dry ground” – Ex. 14.16.³

¹ Scott Roberts and John Ward make the identification of Serabit el Khadim as a possible location for Mount Sinai. They write, “Atop this mountain (Serabit el Khadim) lay the ruins of the **Temple Sanctuary of Hathor, the cow goddess of Egypt, bringer of joy and motherly love**. Sir Flinders Petrie was a British Egyptologist and pioneer of systematic methodology in archaeology and the preservation of historical artifacts. He was also the first chair of Egyptology in Great Britain, and personally excavated and catalogued many of the most important archaeological sites in Egypt. It was **his contention that Serabit el Khadim was the Holy Mountain of God mentioned throughout the biblical Exodus account. But he encountered resistance** when he suggested that Moses went there to visit the priests who lived there rather than encounter the presence of God. **So Serabit el Khadim was scratched off the list as a candidate** for the biblical Mt. Sinai by many late-19th- and early-20th-century archaeologists and historians. The long escarpment atop Serabit el Khadim, (was) where the processional route would lead to the outer gate of the Temple of Hathor seen in the distance... Though John and I bring differing views of who Moses was and when the events of the Exodus took place, **we both agree that lonely, desolate, remote mountaintop was the place where Moses climbed to visit the priests of Hathor, and ritually cleansed himself as he had done here at other times in his former life as a Prince of Egypt**. It was here on this mountaintop that he carved the small stele of the tablets of the Law and carried them back down to the waiting horde of Hebrews camped in the basin and wadis below, who had built a representation of the god who had just a week earlier delivered them from the hands of the Egyptian soldiers—**Hathor, the Egyptian god of joy, feminine love, and motherhood**. Here in this mountainous region of the Sinai desert wilderness, surrounded by copper and turquoise mines, she was also known as Patron God of Miners. See: Scott Alan Roberts and John Richard Ward, *The Exodus Reality: Unearthing the Real History of Moses, Identifying the pharaohs, and examining the exodus from Egypt*, New Page Books, 2014, 179/234, electronic version.

² Sarna, p. 72.

³ וַיֵּבְאוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבֵּשָׁה – “And the children of Israel will go in the midst of the sea upon **dry ground**.” The noun dry ground, *yabāšā* יַבֵּשָׁה, is the same Hebrew term that is used in the flood and creation stories of the

- d. "I will strengthen the hearts of the Egyptians!" – Ex. 14.17.⁴
 - e. The angel of God went before the camp of Israel – Ex. 14.19.
 - f. The cloud was placed between the Egyptians and Israel – Ex. 14.20.
5. The parting of the Sea – Ex. 14.21-31.
 - a. Israel went through the midst of the sea – Ex. 14.22.
 - b. The Lord overthrew the Egyptians – Ex. 14.27.
 - c. It was a night crossing – Ex. 14.24, 27. Compare to John 6.15-21. Jesus is inviting us to the "New Exodus," or the crossing over from the world into a way of life with him.
 - d. The Lord saved Israel – Ex. 14.30.

Exodus 15.1-22: The Song of the Sea

1. The celebration of God's triumph over the Egyptians – Ex. 15.1-10.
2. Who is like God among the gods? – Ex. 15.11-13.
3. The surrounding nations are amazed at God's power – Ex. 15.14-16.
4. A glorious future awaits Israel – Ex. 15.17-18.
5. The Song of Miriam the prophetess – Ex. 15.20-21.⁵
 - a. In the podcast, the contention is made that Miriam is the leader of the Song of the Sea. For more information regarding Miriam, see "[Miriam as Portrayed in the Hebrew Bible.](#)"

Exodus 15.23-17.16: The Crisis in the Wilderness

1. Crisis #1: A lack of adequate drinking water – Ex. Ex. 15.22b-25a.
 - a. The waters of Marah – Ex. 15.23. Marah means "bitter." Desert springs are frequently bitter.
 - b. The Lord showed him a tree, which made the waters sweet – Ex. 15.25.⁶
2. Crisis #2: A lack of food to sustain the tribes – Ex. 16.1-36.⁷

Priestly author (Gen. 1.9,10; 8.14). The term used for "dry ground" that the Yahwist (J) is using in this Exodus narrative is *ḥārābā* חֲרָבָה, the same word that is used in the J account of the flood narrative. See Exodus 14.12, and Genesis 7.22. See also: Friedman, *Sources*, p. 143.

⁴ הַנְּגִי מִחֲזֶק אֶת־לֵב מִצְרַיִם – this statement: "I will strengthen the heart of the Egyptians" helps connect this sequence to P.

⁵ A Midrash states that Miriam and the women recite the entire song. These verses affirm the custom, chronicled in Judges 11.34 and 1 Samuel 11.34, of women going forth with music and dance to hail the returning victorious hero, although in the present instance, it is God and not man who is the victor... the other women with whom she shares this designation are **Deborah, Huldah, and Noadiah**. Rabbinic tradition adds another three to this list: **Hannah, Abigail, and Esther**, for a total of **seven prophetesses active** in biblical times. Sarna, p. 82-83.

⁶ וַיִּצְעַק אֶל־יְהוָה וַיִּזְרְהוּ יְהוָה עָץ – And he cried to Yahweh, and he (Yahweh) showed him a **tree** ('ēš, a "tree," or "wood," or a "staff.") I see a connection between the "tree" or "staff" and the word for counsel in Hebrew, 'ēšā - עֵצָה, a word that can be seen as connected to the temple, trees, making plans, and the Divine Council. See Psalm 33.10-11. Nahum Sarna suggests that the water, which was bitter, passed through the porous wood, which filtered out enough of the impurities to make the water drinkable. [The Mekhilta](#) turns the entire incident into a metaphor. The living, life-sustaining water symbolizes the Torah; to be deprived of its spiritual sustenance for three days is life-threatening. (Hence, the Torah is read publicly each Sabbath, Monday, and Thursday.) The parable is reinforced by the Hebrew verb *va-, yorehu*, "He showed him," which comes from the same stem as Torah, and by 'ets, "a tree log," which is a symbol of Torah described in Proverbs 3.18 as "a tree of life to those who grasp her." The verse succeeding this Exodus passage further enhances the homily. N. Sarna, p. 84.

⁷ Exodus 16 is P with the exception of Exodus 16.4-5, which consist of J. Friedman, p. *Sources*, 147.

- a. The second month, 15th day – Ex. 16.1. It is now roughly six weeks since the beginning of their journey.
- b. “Would to God we had died!” – Ex. 16.3. We see similar arguments in [1 Ne. 16.34-37](#).⁸
- c. Jehovah’s response, “I will rain bread from heaven for you!” – Ex. 16.4-5.
- d. Quail cover the camp – Ex. 16.13.⁹
 - i. Orson Hyde related a similar experience for some of those who left Nauvoo during the Nauvoo War.¹⁰
- e. Manna arrives – Ex. 16.14-36.
 - i. “A small round thing” – Ex. 16.14.¹¹
 - ii. “What is it?” – Ex. 16.15. **מַן הוּא**, *man hu* is a folk explanation for the term by which the Israelites knew and described the substance.¹²

⁸ “We have wandered much in the wilderness, and we have suffered much affliction, hunger, thirst, and fatigue; and after all these sufferings we must perish in the wilderness with hunger. And thus they did murmur against my father, and also against me; and they were desirous to return again to Jerusalem. And Laman said unto Lemuel and also unto the sons of Ishmael: Behold, let us slay our father, and also our brother Nephi, who has taken it upon him to be our ruler and our teacher, who are his elder brethren” ([1 Nephi 16.35-37](#)).

⁹ The tender meat of quail is regarded as a great delicacy. It requires no oil for cooking and is speedily prepared over a hot flame. Sarna, p. 88.

¹⁰ I recollect when we were forced away from Nauvoo, at the point of the bayonet, and when we crossed the river to the Iowa side there were hundreds of our people camped along the shore, and what had they to eat, or to make themselves comfortable with, in the scorching sun and burning with fevers? Nothing. We wanted meat and other comforts, but we had not the means to procure them, and the Lord in mercy sent clouds of quails right into camp. They came into the tents, flew into the wagons, rested on the wagon wheels, ox yokes and wagon tongues, and our little children could catch them, and there was an abundant supply of meat for the time being... It was (from) the mercy and generosity of kind Providence. Orson Hyde, *Journal of Discourses*, 17:7.

¹¹ **מַן הוּא** – Literal trans: “A small flake-like small as a covering upon the earth.” Sarna offers the following commentary on this description: To the description “fine and flaky, as fine as frost” must be added the specification in Numbers 11.7 that the manna was like coriander seed, of the color of [bdellium](#), and it tasted like rich cream when prepared. **No natural phenomenon in the Sinai region entirely matches these details.** The closest is a **white honeylike substance excreted from the tamarisk bush and called manna to this day by the Bedouin who collect it and eat it.** This sap, rich in carbohydrates, is sucked by insects, which excrete the surplus onto the twigs. These form tiny globules that crystalize and fall to the ground. However, no naturalistic explanation can do justice to the manna tradition as it is presented in biblical literature. Here the substance possesses a numinous quality. Its bestowal is distinguished by certain wondrous features. However much one gathered, it amounted to only one omer; on Fridays the amount doubled; it did not fall on the Sabbath; any surplus beyond the allotted amount became rancid on weekdays but not on the Sabbath. What’s more, although the manna collected by Bedouins in the Sinai is seasonal and of limited quantity, the biblical manna nourished the entire Israelite population throughout the forty years of the wilderness wanderings. Sarna, p. 89.

¹² Sarna, p. 89. In the JPS translation of Exodus 16:15, the phrase *man hu* is understood to be a question: ‘What is it?’ Many commentators affirm that the Israelites who said man instead of mah must not have been speaking typical Hebrew at that time... According to E.A. Wallis Budge in his *Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary*, one of the words for the interrogative “what” in ancient Egyptian was in fact *ma*, just as in Hebrew. **Modern scholars accept that the word man derives from a foreign source**, though from ancient Semitic rather than Egyptian. S.D. Luzzatto in his commentary on Exodus explains that the word is **derived from the Syrian word mana, meaning “what.”** (Shemuel David Luzzatto, *S. D. Luzzatto’s Commentary to the Pentateuch* (Jerusalem: Horev, 1993) p. 297.) Umberto Cassuto gives a similar explanation, and writes that in **ancient Canaanite languages the word for “what” is man.** (Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1987) p. 135) In Ugaritic it is *mn* and in the Canaanite of the El Amarna letters it is *mannu*. The Israelites, then, were, according to N. Sarna, using an “ancient dialectic variant.”

- iii. Manna is described as coriander seed in size and white in color – Ex. 16.31. The text of Numbers 11.7-9 tells us that it was ground and made into cakes, which were baked.
 - iv. Strict rules were associated with the collection of manna – Ex. 16.16-30.¹³
 - v. The children of Israel did eat manna forty years – Ex. 16.35.
 - vi. At the conclusion of the journey, the manna ceases – Joshua 5.12.
 - vii. The manna invites us to consider the words of Jesus Christ, the “Bread of Life” that came from heaven – John 6.
3. Crisis #3: A further lack of water – Ex. 17.1-7.¹⁴
 - a. The Moving Rock in the Wilderness, as carried in Jewish tradition.¹⁵
 - b. These texts invite “midrash” or commentary. Joseph Smith gives us permission to think about these texts and find interpretations that work.
 4. Crisis #4: An attack from the Amalekite armies – Ex. 17.8-16.¹⁶

¹³ Emphasizing obedience, Elder F. Enzio Busche stated, “Perhaps we may have permitted small bad habits or attitudes to enter into our lives; or perhaps we have even lost to some degree an understanding of the importance of keeping a covenant with exactness. If so, we are in a dangerous state. We must become aware of it. We cannot afford to ignore the situation.” *Ensign*, May 1989, 72.

¹⁴ Friedman notes that the first account of the lack of water (Ex. 15.22b-25a) comes from J, and the second account of the lack of water (Ex. 17.1-7) comes from E. See Richard E. Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, p. 146-149.

¹⁵ The *Midrash* on Numbers (Midrash Numbers *Bemidbar Rabbah* 1.2) records: “How was the well constructed? It was **rock-shaped like a kind of bee-hive, and wherever they journeyed it rolled along and came with them.** When the standards [under which the tribes journeyed] halted and the tabernacle was set up, that same rock would come and settle down in the court of the Tent of Meeting and the princes would come and stand upon it and say, Rise up, O well, and it would rise.”

Other variants of this legend describe a fragment of rock fifteen feet high that followed the people and gushed out water. The Jewish legend developed because of Numbers 21.17 which tells us that when Israel came to Beer (“well”), there Moses gathered the people to receive the water, “Then Israel sang this song, ‘Spring up, O well! Sing to it!’” Jewish legend relates that water came **from the same rock** that Moses had struck in Exodus 17, because it had followed the people to Beer (Num. 21.16). The Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, *Ta’anith 9a; Shabbath 35a*. Cf. Mishnah, *Aboth*, 5.6; Midrash Numbers, 19.26) cites rabbis from the 2nd century as knowing the moving well legend, and it would seem that Paul was quite familiar with these stories as well!

Peter Enns, author of *The Bible Tells Me So*, shares an experience when he first learned of the “movable rock” narrative in the Pentateuch. Enns writes: “One day in class, my professor James Kugel was lecturing on the creative ways that Second Temple Jewish interpreters handled episodes like “water from a rock.” The curious detail in the Old Testament is that the incident happened twice: once at the *beginning* of the wilderness period (Exodus 17) and again toward the *end* of the 40-year period (Numbers 20). **This curious fact led some Jewish interpreters to conclude that the “two” rocks were actually one and the same, hence, one rock accompanied the Israelites on their 40-year journey.**” He goes on to explain how Jewish interpreters explained this tradition, and that the apostle Paul also continued this idea when he wrote “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock **that followed them**: and that Rock was Christ.” (1 Corinthians 10:1-4, emphasis added) See: Mike Day, *The Moving Rock in the Wilderness: Exodus 17 & Numbers 20*, 12.20.2017.

¹⁶ This account of the Amalekite attack is from the northern tradition of E. See: Friedman, p. 149. It is also noteworthy that Joshua, a hero of the northern tribes, is mentioned eleven times in E but never in J. This is

- a. When Moses held his hands up, Israel prevailed – Ex. 17.11.
- b. Moses' hands were "heavy" – Ex. 17.12. Aaron and Hur hold up Moses' hands to assure the victory.
- c. "The Lord will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven" – Ex. 17.15-16.¹⁷

consistent with the idea that the E text is connected to the northern tribes and the kingdom of Israel and J is concerned with the southern kingdom of Judah.

¹⁷ Who were the Amalekites? N. Sarna offers the following: A somewhat more expansive account of this incident is given in Deuteronomy 25.17-19, which reports that the Amalekites made a surprise rear attack on the famished and exhausted Israelites not long after the escape from Egypt. They ruthlessly cut down the stragglers—the elderly, the weak, and the infirm. Israel was forced to fight its first defensive war for survival. **Who were they? The name itself is non-Semitic; its origin is obscure.** We first encounter Amalek as the thirteenth descendant of Esau-Edom in the lists in Genesis 36. **He was born of Timna, a concubine of Esau's first-born son, Eliphaz.** She is said to have been a "Horite," which means that she belonged to the people who were indigenous to Mount Seir. The Edomites displaced them and largely wiped them out. Translating the genealogical shorthand of Genesis 36 into terms of historical reality, **we may reconstruct the following situation:** The tribe of Amalek had been a late and subordinate adherent to the twelve-tribe Edomite confederation. Forced out of its habitat, it pursued a nomadic existence in the Negeb and Sinai Peninsula. The Amalekites interpreted the sudden appearance of the Israelites in this region as a menacing encroachment upon their territory and as a threat to their control of the oases and trading routes. The Amalekites thereupon savagely attacked the Israelites. Sarna, p. 95.