

that the names of some of the generations from Levi to Moses are not named here, because Levi's descendants numbered 22,000 just after the exodus (and the descendants of Kohath, Levi's son, alone numbered 8600 [Numbers 3:27].) Four generations cannot have produced that many descendants, especially since Levi himself had only three sons (Kohath, Gershon, Merari). Therefore, this genealogical listing does not argue against the four hundred and thirty-year sojourn in Egypt.

13. Finally, there is the argument from the population growth of the Israelites. When they came into Egypt, they numbered only seventy. When they left, there were over six hundred thousand men. Such a multiplication would require longer than two hundred fifteen years. Keil and Delitzsch report that the six hundred thousand population total could be obtained if every married couple among the Israelites produced three sons and three daughters for six generations, and then two sons and two daughters in the last four (making ten total) generations.<sup>4</sup> Such a population increase would have been possible in four hundred and thirty years, but extremely unlikely in two hundred and fifteen years.

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THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**13** And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (2) Sancitfy unto me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Is-ra-el, both of man and of beast: it is mine.

(3) And Mo-ses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from E-gypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand Je-ho-vah brought you out from this

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<sup>4</sup>*Op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 30.

place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten. (4) This day ye go forth in the month A-bib. (5) And it shall be, when Je-ho-vah shall bring thee into the land of the Ca-naan-ite, and the Hit-tite, and the Am-or-ite, and the Hi-vite, and the Jeb-u-site, which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month. (6) Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to Je-ho-vah. (7) Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee, in all thy borders. (8) And thou shalt tell thy son in that day, saying, It is because of that which Je-ho-vah did for me when I came forth out of E-gypt. (9) And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thy hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the law of Je-ho-vah may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath Je-ho-vah brought thee out of E-gypt. (10) Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year.

(11) And it shall be, when Je-ho-vah shall bring thee into the land of the Ca-naan-ite, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee, (12) that thou shalt set apart unto Je-ho-vah all that openeth the womb, and every firstling which thou hast that cometh of a beast; the males shall be Je-ho-vah's. (13) And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break its neck: and all the first-born of man among thy sons shalt thou redeem. (14) And it shall be, when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand Je-ho-vah brought us out from E-gypt, from the house of bondage: (15) and it came to pass, when Pha-raoh would hardly let us go, that Je-ho-vah slew all the first-born in the land of E-gypt, both the first-born of man, and the first-born of beast: therefore I sacrifice to Je-ho-vah all that openeth the womb, being males; but all the first-born of my sons I redeem. (16) And it shall be for a sign upon thy hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand Je-ho-vah brought us forth out of E-gypt.

(17) And it came to pass, when Pha-raoh had let the people go, that God led them not by the way of the land of the Phi-lis-tines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to E-gypt: (18) but God led the people about, by the way of the wilderness by the Red Sea: and the children of Is-ra-el went up armed out of the land of E-gypt. (19) And Mo-ses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Is-ra-el, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you. (20) And they took their journey from Suc-coth, and encamped in E-tham, in the edge of the wilderness. (21) And Je-ho-vah went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; that they might go by day and by night; (22) the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, departed not from before the people.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTEEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading propose a brief topic or theme for the chapter.
2. What group of the Israelites was sanctified (or consecrated) unto the Lord? (13:1-2)
3. What day was Israel to remember? (13:3)
4. Name the month when Israel left Egypt. (13:4)
5. What was to be done and what not to be done during the feast of Unleavened Bread? (13:6-7)
6. What were the people to tell their sons? (13:8)
7. On what places were "signs" to be affixed? (13:9, 16)
8. What was to be done with firstborn men and animals? (13:12)
9. What was to be done with firstborn asses (donkeys)? (13:13)
10. Why were the firstborn male animals sacrificed to the Lord? (13:15)

DEMANDS AND DIRECTION TO THE REDEEMED 13:1-22

11. By what route did God NOT lead Israel out of Egypt? (13:17)
  12. By what route did God lead Israel out of Egypt? (13:18)
  13. Whose bones were carried up out of Egypt? (13:19; Gen. 50:24-25)
  14. What two places did Israel pass through after leaving Rameses? (13:20)
  15. What led the Israelites in their journeys? (13:22)
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EXODUS THIRTEEN: DEMANDS AND DIRECTION  
TO THE REDEEMED

- I. God's demands; 13:1-16.
  1. Consecrate the firstborn; 13:1-2, 11-16.
  2. Keep the feast; 13:3-10.
- II. God's direction; 13:17-22.
  1. Safe direction; 13:17.
    - a. Physically safe; 13:17.
    - b. Spiritually safe; 13:17.
  2. Rigorous direction; 13:18.
  3. Visible direction; 13:21.
  4. Constant direction; 13:22.

GOD'S CLAIMS ON MAN'S FIRSTBORN:  
"It is mine!" (13:2)

1. The firstborn must be set apart; 13:12.
2. The firstborn must be redeemed; 13:13.
3. Every generation must be taught this truth; 13:14.  
God claims man's first and best!

## UNLEAVENED BREAD! (13:3-10)

1. A memorial; 13:3, 9.
2. A time for purging out leaven; 13:7.
3. A means for placing God's law in men's mouths; 13:9.
4. A regular annual observance; 13:10.
5. A type of purging out of sin; I Cor. 5:6-8.

## JOSEPH'S BONES! (13:19)

1. A fulfillment of past prophecies; Gen. 50:25.
2. A forecast of future victories; Heb. 11:22.

## GOD'S DIRECTION OF HIS PEOPLE (13:17-18)

1. Directs to a place of rest; (13:5; Deut. 8:8-10).
2. Directs around dangers (Philistines); (13:17).
3. Directs by circuitous routes; (13:18).
4. Directs into hard paths ("wilderness"); (13:18).
5. Directs into places of testing; (16:4; Deut. 8:2).
6. Directs into spiritual growth; (Deut. 8:3-6).

## THE CLOUD - AN ILLUSTRATION OF GOD'S LEADING (13:21-22)

1. Visible obvious leadership; (13:21; 40:38).
2. Light-giving leadership; (13:21; Neh. 9:12; Ps. 105:39).
3. Constant leadership; (13:22; Num. 9:19; Neh. 9:19).
4. A protecting (covering) leadership; (14:19-20; Ps. 105:39; Isa. 4:5; Ex. 40:34; Num. 9:15).
5. A glory-bearing leadership; (Ex. 40:34-35; 16:10).
6. A directing leadership; (Ex. 40:36-37; Num. 9:17-23; 10:11-12, 34; Neh. 9:12, 19; Ps. 78:14).
7. God spoke from the cloud; (Ex. 33:9; Ps. 99:7; Num. 12:5).
8. A leadership to become universal; (Isa. 4:5; Rev. 21:23).

## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. *What is in Exodus thirteen?*

The theme-title DEMANDS AND DIRECTIONS TO THE REDEEMED sums up most of the chapter. God's redeemed people have obligations to Him, as well as direction from Him.

The chapter opens with God's command to Moses to sanctify (or consecrate) all the firstborn of Israel, both of men and beasts (13:1-2)

The chapter continues with Moses' speech to the people (13:3-16). This speech dealt with two matters: (1) the observance of the feast of unleavened bread (13:3-10); (2) the consecration or redemption of their firstborn (13:11-16).

The chapter closes with information as to how God wondrously led the Israelites as they left Egypt (13:17-22).

The words of God to Moses (13:1-2) and Moses' words to the people (13:3-16) seem to have been given at Succoth, Israel's first encampment after leaving their homes in Egypt. We are not told how Moses managed to get the great horde of people all grouped together so he could give them the messages. Perhaps he relayed the messages through their elders. Moses spoke of their coming into Canaan (13:5), and how they would there keep the feast of unleavened bread and set apart their firstborn in that land (13:11-12). These confident assertions by Moses gave Israel courage and purpose in their journeys. The fulfillment of Moses' predictions in later years gave proof that Moses' words had come from God.

2. *What was to be done with the firstborn of Israel? (13:1-2)*

God commanded that all the firstborn be sanctified unto him. They were to be regarded as holy, and kept for holy use.

It seems that the firstborn referred to were the firstborn of males only. See 13:12. Daughters and female animals were apparently not affected by this regulation.

To *sanctify* is explained in 13:15 as being the act of sacrificing the animal (an act permissible only in the case of clean

animals), or by redeeming it by offering another animal as a sacrifice in place of it.

The act of sanctifying the firstborn was a positive act as well as a negative one. They were separated **TO** the Lord at the same time they were separated **FROM** any worldly use.

God's ground for claiming the firstborn as **HIS** lay in the fact that He had spared them in Egypt on the day when He struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. See Num. 3:13; 8:17.

A major purpose for sanctifying the firstborn was to perpetuate the memory of their deliverance in the mind of the nation. Israel tended to forget divine blessings very quickly.

The command about sanctifying the firstborn has an application to Christians, because Christians are described as the *firstborn ones* in Heb. 12:23. Thus, the type suggests that all Christians, as God's firstborn, are the **LORD's**. Some Christians may resent the idea that their children or they themselves should be dedicated to be preachers, missionaries, etc. They do not like religious duties to make demands upon their property or pleasures. They want a cheap religion. But in truth all of us who claim God as our father are the firstborn ones, and dedicated to the **LORD**.

3. *Where and when did Moses speak to the people about sanctifying the firstborn?* (13:3-4)

Moses spoke to the people on the first day of their departure. Literally, Ex. 13:4 says, "You *are going forth*. . . ." Presumably this was at Succoth. The Passover had been the night before. Probably Moses spoke at their first stop on the way. We suspect that he spoke to their elders, who relayed the word back to their clans and families. (Compare 12:21.)

How smooth and naturally this chapter develops! First God commanded Moses concerning the sanctifying of their firstborn. Then Moses spoke the words to the people, telling them about the two matters God had spoken to him about: (1) About the feast of unleavened bread (13:3-10); (2) About sanctifying their firstborn to the **LORD** (13:11-16).

Some critics (e.g. Driver) ascribe 13:1-2, 20 to a fifth century B.C. priestly author, and 13:3-16, 21-22 to a tenth century author called the Jehovist. Martin Noth attributes the whole chapter to J, but thinks it has numerous later insertions in 13:1-16 by unknown Deuteronomistic (D) writers, and by an E writer in 13:17-19. There is no proof of such speculations. The disagreements among those who hold such ideas demonstrate their flimsy basis. These suggested multiple sources break up the natural progress in the story as it is given to us.

4. *What were the Israelites to remember? (13:3)*

Remember this day! Compare 12:14.

It was their day of coming out! Note that Egypt is called a "slave house" (literally "house of bondmen"). Israel was free! Certainly they faced hardships and conflicts. But their new freedom was worth more than all the security (?) of Egypt's prison life.

The words "from this place" could only have been uttered at the very time when they were emancipated, but yet on Egyptian soil. No authors after Moses' time could thus have written (assuming that they were honest).

This remembering was to be demonstrated by ACTS, such as abstaining from unleavened bread for the week. Mere mental memory is cheap. Real remembering regulates our resources and routine.

5. *In what month did Israel depart? (13:4)*

In the month *Abib*. See 12:12. This is near the end of March. After the Babylonian captivity this month was called Nisan (Neh. 2:1).

The term *Abib* means *sprouting*. As the name of a month it is found in Ex. 13:4; 23:15; 34:18; Deut. 16:1. In Ex. 9:31 the same word refers to the *ear* (or head of grain): "the barley was in the *ear*." In Lev. 2:14 it refers to the "green *ears* of corn," that is, the fresh grain.

Much as Israel went forth in the month *Abib* ("sprouting forth," "springing up"), we also accept Christ in a time of springing up to new growth and life.



6. *What observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was to be kept in Canaan?* (13:5)

They were to observe the feast every year in that month!

In their future prosperity and ease ("milk and honey"), they were to keep the ordinances faithfully.

Only five of the seven "nations" in the land of Canaan are named here. The Greek O.T. adds the names of the Gergashites and Perizzites. Concerning these seven "nations," see Ex. 3:8. Compare Gen. 15:19-21 and Ex. 23:23-28.

These people in Canaan (all of whom were collectively called Canaanites) were not actually separate sovereign nations. They were racial groups. Canaan was controlled at that time by small city-states, all of which were nominally under the authority of Egypt, but were independent of one another.

Regarding God's oath to give the land of Canaan to the "fathers" (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), see Gen. 12:7; 15:18; 26:3; 35:12.

Concerning the land "flowing with milk and honey," see Ex. 3:17.

Note that keeping the feast of unleavened bread was a "service." They were to "Serve this service." The Hebrew word for *serve* emphasizes the feature of work and labor.

7. *What was the major feature of the feast of unleavened bread?* (13:6-7)

The eating of unleavened bread for a week was its major feature. No leaven was permitted within the Israelites' property during that time. On the seventh day of this period there was a feast to Jehovah. See Ex. 12:15-20 for more about the feast of unleavened bread. It had a profound meaning.

8. *What were the Israelites to tell their children about the unleavened bread?* (13:8, 10).

They were to tell them the reason for eating the unleavened bread that week. They were to say, "It is because of that which Jehovah did for me when I came forth out of Egypt."

The instruction of Israelite children during the feasts is referred to in 10:2 and 12:26-27. See notes on these verses.

The command to keep the ordinance about the Unleavened bread is given several times and is very strong. See 12:24-25; 13:5, 10.

9. *How were the people to show their devotion to the Lord for bringing them up out of Egypt?* (13:9, 16)

They were to make a *sign*, which would keep their deliverance ever in their minds.

Of course, the *sign* referred to was not some lettered placard or billboard. Their deliverance itself was the sign and memorial. But in some way their deliverance was to be made unforgettable to them throughout future generations. ("Unto thee" in 13:9 means unto Israel as a collective body.)

The purpose of the sign and memorial was that the law of Jehovah might be "in thy mouth." The Israelites, both individually and collectively, were to speak about their deliverance through all future times.

The exact form of the sign which God had in mind is not specified. Jews in later centuries interpreted the verse to mean that they were to make and wear *phylacteries*. These are small leather boxes attached to straps. They are worn upon the forehead and the left arm. They contain strips of paper with certain scripture passages written upon them. (The passages are Ex. 13:2-10; Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21). The arm phylactery is tied to the inside of the left arm, a little above the elbow, so that the scripture passage might be close to the heart.

Our Lord Jesus referred to phylacteries in Matt. 23:5. He pronounced woe upon the scribes and Pharisees for making their phylacteries extra large, so as to be seen by men and be praised for their holiness. Jesus did not actually condemn the phylacteries, only the misuse of them.

The scripture seems to indicate that the *sign* was the deliverance from Egypt (13:8) or was the feast of unleavened bread (13:7). If this is true, then the later Jewish use of this verse as justification for making and wearing phylacteries is

not a very strong argument. God did not specify exactly how this devotion was to be expressed, or what the sign and memorial consisted of. It would have been best to leave the command just as Moses delivered it. See Deut. 4:2. It is equally wrong to insist on an exclusively spiritual meaning in it, or to use the verse as a warrant for elaborate phylacterial ceremonialism. Similarly in the New Testament church, we do not have details for worship ceremonies, only broad guidelines. To insist on a highly structured formal service or on a very loose informal program is equally wrong.

Regarding the *strength* of God's hand in bringing Israel forth, see Ex. 15:6 and Deut. 7:19.

10. *What was to be done with the firstborn of man and beast?* (13:11-12)

The firstborn were to be set apart to the Lord. Ex. 22:9; 34:19; Lev. 27:26. Literally, they were to cause the firstborn to "pass over." Sometimes this expression meant to sacrifice (as in II Kings 23:10), and sometimes it meant to transfer over to (as in Num. 27:8). Both of these meanings seem to be implied here.

God chose the firstborn of each family to be dedicated to full time labor at the tabernacle in administering the sacred services.

This practice of setting apart the firstborn was to be done when they came into the land of the Canaanites. However it was also done in the wilderness (Num. 3:13).

The paragraph 3:11-16 is a detailed exposition by Moses about God's law concerning sanctifying the firstborn. This law was briefly stated in 13:1-2.

At Mt. Sinai God commanded that the entire tribe of the Levites (the descendants of Jacob's son Levi) be set apart to Him instead of the firstborn of each family in every tribe (Num. 3:5-13, 41, 45).

Regarding the Canaanite tribes and God's promise to Israel's forefathers to give them the land, see notes on 13:5.

Ex. 13:12 is quoted in Luke 2:23. There we are told that the infant Jesus was "presented to the Lord" by Joseph and

Mary, by the act of making a sacrifice. This sacrifice was that which was offered following the birth of all children (Lev. 12:6-7). However, it appears that the sacrifice also involved the matter of redeeming (buying back) the firstborn male sons. Even though the Levites replaced them in the actual temple labors, they still had to be redeemed.

11. *How were the firstborn set apart to the Lord?* (13:13)
  - a. Firstborn lambs, or kids, or cattle were sacrificed. (13:15)  
These animals were killed and their fat burned as an offering made by fire. But their flesh was given to the priests for food. (Num. 18:17-18)
  - b. The firstborn of an ass or any unclean beast (like a camel; Lev. 11:4; Num. 18:15) was to be killed by breaking its neck. Or a lamb or kid could be sacrificed in its place. The people would surely carry out this law scrupulously, because the ass was a much more costly animal than a lamb.
  - c. The firstborn of man was to be redeemed by payment of five shekels each. See Ex. 13:15; Num. 3:46-47; 18:15-16.  
These laws should cause us to consider our own giving to the Lord. Do we give our firstborn, or an equivalent value, to the Lord? Do we in Christ give less to the Lord than those who lived under the law of Moses? May it never be so! Rather, we ought by love to do more than the law required, and thus to fulfill the law and establish it firmly in our lives. (Rom. 3:13; 13:10).

12. *What connection was there between Israel's deliverance from Egypt and the practice of redeeming the firstborn?* (13:14-15)

Redeeming the firstborn was (1) a *memorial* to Israel's redemption from Egypt; (2) also it was a *response* and repayment to God for sparing the firstborn of Israel in Egypt.

Certainly men can never repay God for His saving acts toward us. But we are under the necessity of rendering unto him whatever we can, both as a debt and as an expression of our gratitude.

Concerning the teaching of children about God's acts, see

notes on 13:8; 12:26-27; 10:2. Also see Deut. 6:20-21.

Regarding the "strength of hand" which God used to get Israel out of Egypt, see Ex. 13:3, 16. This refers to all of God's acts during the ten plagues.

Concerning the death of the firstborn in Egypt, see Ex. 11:4-6; 12:12, 29.

Concerning the *signs* and frontlets which Israelites were to use, see notes on 13:9, 16. The word *token* in 13:16 is from the same Hebrew word as *sign* in 13:9.

13. *What are the "frontlets between thine eyes"?* (13:16)

They seem to refer to some type of object, or strap, or bandage about the head. Wearing such an object on the head to commemorate God's delivering the people would be a useful reminder and testimony, if it did not become an object for show and pride.

Jews in later centuries specified that these "frontlets" should consist of leather phylacteries, or amulets, to be worn on the forehead and left arm during morning prayers. (The Jews call them *tephilin*, from the Hebrew word for prayer.) See notes on 13:9, where the "frontlets" are referred to as a *memorial* between thine eyes. Tregelles (in Gesenius' *Hebrew Lexicon*) aptly says, "It requires proof [which is lacking] that the Jewish phylacteries are intended by these fillets or bandages." God surely intended that His instructions regarding these "frontlets" be left simply in the form in which His divine wisdom stated them, without any official ecclesiastical interpretation and enforcement. See Deut. 4:2.

14. *By what route did God NOT lead the Israelites?* (13:17)

God did not lead them by the short route, along the Mediterranean seacoast linking Egypt and Canaan. This was a heavily-travelled route, approximately one hundred and fifty miles across. This route crosses a sandy desert (the desert of Shur). It would have required only about two weeks to travel this way.

This route was called the Way of the Sea (Via Maris) or the Way of Horus (by the Egyptians). The way was dotted

with Egyptian fortresses. Careful lists were kept by Egyptian guards of arrivals and departures at the northeast frontier forts in Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

The Bible calls this road the Way of the Philistines, because Philistines had settled along the SW coast of Canaan, and the road would pass through the area settled by them. Ex. 15:14 also mentions the Philistines.

The Philistines made their major immigration into Canaan about 1200 B.C., coming from Crete, or Caphtor, and other Mediterranean islands. This was 200 years after the time of the exodus. However, the Bible indicates that a few Philistines had settled into Canaan as far back as Abraham's time, about 2000 B.C. (Gen. 21:32; 26:1, 18) Most liberal critics view these early references to the Philistines as anachronisms.<sup>2</sup> However, some recent archaeological inscriptions indicate the presence of settlers in the area of Philistia considerably before 1200 B.C.<sup>3</sup>

Note that GOD LED the Israelites. He chose their path. "He leadeth me, O blessed thought!" (Psalm 23:2; 37:23)

God knew that the Israelites were not yet able to face war. Ex. 14:11-12 reveals how frightened Israel became when they were under attack. Numbers 14:1-4 shows their terror of "giants." The path into Canaan by the short way of the sea would have led them into southern Canaan, the very center of these giants (Anakim; Num. 13:22, 33). God does not allow His people to be tested more than they can bear (I Cor. 10:13). "He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14).

Furthermore, the Israelites were not yet *spiritually* prepared to occupy the land of Canaan. They had a divine appointment to "serve God on this mountain," Mt. Sinai (Ex. 3:12). There they would receive the law from God and be organized into a holy nation (Ex. 19:5-6), with a

<sup>1</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

<sup>3</sup>*Biblical Archaeologist*, Sept. 1966, pp. 73-74.

tabernacle worship center and a priesthood. Frankly, they needed to be converted (turned) to the LORD!

Spiritually, Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan was a longer trip than the physical journey. The people had to be converted from the idolatry of Egypt and converted to the service of God. They were to be transformed from slaves to spiritual leaders. They were to become God's holy nation. The harsh Sinai desert became a demonstration area and a school where they could daily see God's power and care, and learn to rely totally upon Him. God did not intend that they should ever return to Egypt, either in body or spirit (Deut. 17:16; Neh. 9:17; Num. 14:4; Josh. 24:14).

In view of the plain assertion that God did NOT lead Israel by the seacoast route, it is astonishing to read some modern (especially Jewish) authors who say that the route of the Israelites was along this very route. They express the view that the Sea of Reeds (or Red Sea which Israel crossed) was Lake Sirbonis or Lake Menzaleh, both of which are on the Mediterranean Sea.

15. *By what route did God lead the Israelites? (13:18)*

He led them by the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. The name *Red Sea* is literally (in Hebrew) *Yam Suph*, meaning Sea of Reeds, or Sea of Weeds. See Introductory Studies VII and VI. Our study has led us to the firm belief that the *Yam Suph* is simply the same body of water which we call the Red Sea, and here in Ex. 13:18 it particularly refers to that arm of the Red Sea called the Gulf of Suez.

What wilderness (or desert area) is referred to as the "wilderness of the Red Sea"? We feel it was the Sinai wilderness lying just north and east of the Gulf of Suez, the area east of the Bitter Lakes.

Admittedly most interpreters (even conservative authors like John J. Davis) feel that the desert referred to was that which lay between Egypt and the Red Sea, and not that of the Sinai peninsula, which we propose.

Ex. 13:20 indicates that they came into the "wilderness" after they left Succoth. The location of Succoth (Tell

Maskhuta) is only about ten miles west of Lake Timsah. The closeness of Succoth to the Sinai wilderness strongly suggests that the "wilderness of the Red Sea" into which Israel came was *Sinai* wilderness.

The term *wilderness* in Exodus generally refers to the wilderness in Sinai, east of Egypt. Compare Num. 33:8, 6; Ex. 3:18; 5:3. This gives additional support to our view that Israel travelled east from Succoth into the Sinai wilderness, travelling probably just south of Lake Timsah into the wilderness. There they turned southward, going along the east side of the Bitter Lakes, and onward toward the Gulf of Suez (Red Sea).

Note that the Israelites encamped in "Etham in the edge of the wilderness." (Ex. 13:20; Num. 33:6) The Wilderness Etham and the Wilderness of Shur are two names for the same desert; or at least the Wilderness of Etham is part of the Wilderness of Shur. See Ex. 15:22 and Num. 33:8. The fact that Israel came out into the wilderness of Etham AFTER they crossed the Red Sea gives support to our view that the place called Etham was in the wilderness area east of the present Suez canal, in the Sinai peninsula.

16. *Did the Israelites have arms when they went out of Egypt?* (13:18)

They surely did. "The children of Israel went up armed (K.J.V., "harnessed") out of the land of Egypt."

The Hebrew word (*chamushim*) translated *armed* is a difficult term, but the meaning *armed* seems correct.<sup>4</sup> It is used in Judges 7:11; Joshua 4:12; 1:14. All of these passages refer to armed men.

The Greek O.T. translated *chamushim* ("armed") as *pempte*, meaning *fifth*, and says that the people went out of Egypt "in the fifth generation." The Hebrew word for *armed* is somewhat similar to the words meaning five and

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<sup>4</sup>In Num. 32:30, 32 and Deut. 3:18 the word *chalutsim* (meaning "armed for battle") is obviously used as a synonym for *chamushim* in Josh. 4:12. This indicates that *chamushim* also means "armed."



fifty, and this may account for the Greek translation from the Hebrew. Since Israel did not leave Egypt in the fifth generation (see Gen. 15:16), we do not feel that the Greek translation is correct.

We can hardly see how Israel could have come out of Egypt *heavily* armed, well-disciplined, and trained for warfare. Our text states that they had some arms, though these were surely very limited. They went out not as fugitives fleeing in disorder, but prepared and orderly, organized into groups. Moses had been trained in all the wisdom and knowledge of the Egyptians, and this surely included military leadership. Josephus tells that Moses defeated an Ethiopian army by clever strategy. (*Ant.* II, x, 2) We can neither verify nor disprove this story.

17. *Whose bones were carried out of Egypt?* (13:19)

The bones of Joseph! What a thrill it must have been to the Israelites when word was circulated among them that the bones of Joseph were in their possession. These would be an inspiration to the people, because they would know that the prophecy uttered by Joseph three hundred and fifty years before was coming to pass in their day. See Gen. 50:24-25. "By faith Joseph when his end was nigh, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel and gave commandment concerning his bones." (Heb. 11:22).

Joseph was later buried in Shechem. (Josh. 24:32). Like Jacob his father, Joseph never looked upon Egypt as his true homeland, and he showed this by his request for burial in Canaan. No mention is made of the bodies of Jacob's other sons. But Stephen's statement in Acts 7:15-16 implies that all of the "fathers" were carried into Shechem.

18. *Where was Etham?* (13:20)

Etham lay in the "edge of the wilderness." The term *wilderness* is usually employed in Exodus to refer to the desert area of the Sinai peninsula, east of the present Suez canal and the Gulf of Suez. See Ex. 3:1, 18; 15:22. The exact location of Etham is not known. We feel that it lay east or southeast of Lake Timsah. It seems reasonable to suppose

that Etham lay in the Wilderness of Etham. This Wilderness of Etham is identified as being a part of the Wilderness of Shur, which definitely lay east of the present Suez Canal. See Num. 33:6, 8; Ex. 15:22.

19. *How were the people led? (13:21-22)*

They were led by the pillar of cloud and fire.

This column in the air above them began to lead the people at Succoth. It had the appearance of smoke (or cloud) by day and of fire by night. There was only one pillar: "Jehovah looked forth . . . through THE pillar of cloud and fire" (Ex. 14:24). The pillar is sometimes referred to as "the cloud," even when it was shining as fire in the dark. See Ex. 14:19; Num. 9:21.

The cloud must have been huge and high to have been visible to all the Israelites. Seemingly in the first few days of travelling, the Israelites did some night marching as well as daytime travelling. They sought to put as much distance between them and Pharaoh as possible. From Succoth (Tell Maskhuta) to the Gulf of Suez by a route along the east side of the Bitter Lakes is about fifty-five miles. This could have been traversed in four days of marching.

The Scripture does not say that the cloud was a type of any one particular thing. We can safely say that it was an illustration of God's leading His people during the present age. God now leads us by the Bible, by the Holy Spirit, and by providential events.

Those who hold the "liberal" view of scripture, that is merely a human production, naturally reject any miraculous views about the cloud. They assert (without proof) such ideas as that the story of the cloud "goes back to observation of an active volcano"<sup>5</sup> "located perhaps as far away as Midian."<sup>6</sup> Always, however, they assert that whatever the cloud and fire was, it was associated with *natural* phenomena. Some feel that the entire story of the cloud is a vivid but

<sup>5</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

<sup>6</sup>Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 381.

*figurative* way of describing the reality of God's presence with his people. The descriptions of the cloud in the scripture certainly present it as real and miraculous.

The cloud LED God's redeemed people. (Psalm 78:14). God does not abandon those whom He saves. The rising of the cloud was a signal for the people to prepare to move. The people followed the cloud as it slowly went before them. Its descent toward the ground was a signal to stop and make camp. The cloud was an infallible and constant guide. See Num. 9:15-23; 10:11-12, 34; Ex. 40:34-38.

"Let the fiery cloudy pillar

Lead me all my journey through."

The cloud GAVE LIGHT to the people by night. See Neh. 9:12. Interestingly, the same cloud which gave light to Israel was darkness to the Egyptians (Ex. 14:40). How much this is like the teaching of the gospel. The truths which bring light to the believers are hidden from the wise and prudent of this world. See Matt. 11:25; II Cor. 4:3-4.

The cloud was for a COVERING. (Psalm 105:39: "He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light by night.")

"Round each habitation hovering,

See the cloud and fire appear;

For a glory and a covering,

Showing that the Lord is near."

(By John Newton, in the hymn "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken")

God SPOKE from the cloud. Psalm 99:7: "He spake unto them in the pillar of cloud." See Ex. 33:9; Num. 12:15.

The fire and cloud was a visible manifestation of the Lord's presence. The cloud filled the tabernacle with GLORY. There was a shining glow and radiance in it, which indicated God's presence.