

## CHAPTERS 13, 14 and 15

*\*all quoted scripture is NKJV unless otherwise noted\**

## THE CONSECRATION OF THE FIRSTBORN – (Verses 1 &amp; 2)

In chapter 12, we saw the initiation of the Passover and witnessed the Israelites' flight from Egypt with the cries of Egyptians mourning the death of their firstborn ringing in their ears. As chapter 13 begins, the Lord is speaking to Moses concerning the Israelites' firstborn. Since they were spared, all future firstborn animals and males are to be considered *"holy to the Lord."* Verse 2 says ***"Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is Mine."*** ***"Consecrated"*** means they were to be *"dedicated"* to His service. The King James version uses the word ***"sanctify"*** (in Hebrew, ***"kadash"***) which literally means *to separate, or set apart, a thing or person from all secular purposes for religious use*. As he says in verse 2, they ***"are Mine"***. Therefore, these people would be employed in the service of the tabernacle or temple (neither of which existed yet, but the tabernacle will soon be built). They were to have no other job or duties. While other men would support their family by tent making, shepherding, etc., these consecrated ones were entirely devoted to the service of God, and would probably never marry.

Now let's concentrate on specifically who these "sanctified" or "consecrated" ones in verse 2 were to be. The Hebrew word rendered ***"firstborn"*** in verse 2 is ***"bekor"*** which refers specifically to males. This makes sense and is a natural "consequence" of what happened 80 years previously when the Pharaoh ordered the death of all Hebrew male newborns (and the midwives refused to comply) and then on the night of the Passover when the Lord spared the Hebrew firstborn. So, were the "first sons" of each family to be consecrated? The added phrase, ***"whatever opens the womb"*** answers that question. In plain language: if a woman's first child was a boy, he was to be consecrated. This child *"opened the womb."* However, if the firstborn child was a girl, she was not consecrated, nor was any male child born after her, because the "womb was opened" with a female child. Therefore, the "first son" of the family was only consecrated if he was also the first child. And by the way, when instructions are given for the

building of the tabernacle, and all Levites are designated for tabernacle service, this consecrated firstborn will be separate from or in addition to that. While all priests came from the Levite tribe, these “sanctified ones” probably served as ministers and served in the tabernacle and later the temple in some way.

Looking at chapter 13:13, I believe it would be proper to assume the same rule applied to the animals as well. “***But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb...***” Clean beasts would be “consecrated to God” through sacrifice, but unclean animals could not be, so they had to be “redeemed” (replaced) by the sacrifice of a clean animal. This is all further detailed in the Law of Moses that will be given to them in about 3 months.

### **THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD – (Verses 3 – 16)**

It is often thought by non-Jews that the Feast of Unleavened Bread is part of the Passover, but that is not correct. They both occur in the same month, but the Feast of Unleavened Bread follows the Passover, starting on the 15th day of Nisan, almost immediately after the Passover. It begins at twilight and is a seven-day-long observance with the first and last days treated as if they were Sabbaths – even though they are NOT the weekly Saturday Sabbath. Because the first day of the Feast changes from year to year, the first and last day can fall on any day of the week. But, regardless of when they do fall, the first and last day of the feast are treated just like the Saturday Sabbath – as holy days of rest.

Seven days before this feast begins all leaven must be removed from the homes. This includes the leaven itself, and any leftover food with leaven in it! This seven day period overlaps the Passover, but again is not a part of it. All food eaten – meals and snacks included – during this seven day period (and during the seven days of the feast itself) are not to contain any leavening agents or leavened products. These instructions were not just for the period of their wandering in the wilderness, but were intended to be followed after arriving in Canaan and possessing it as their own.

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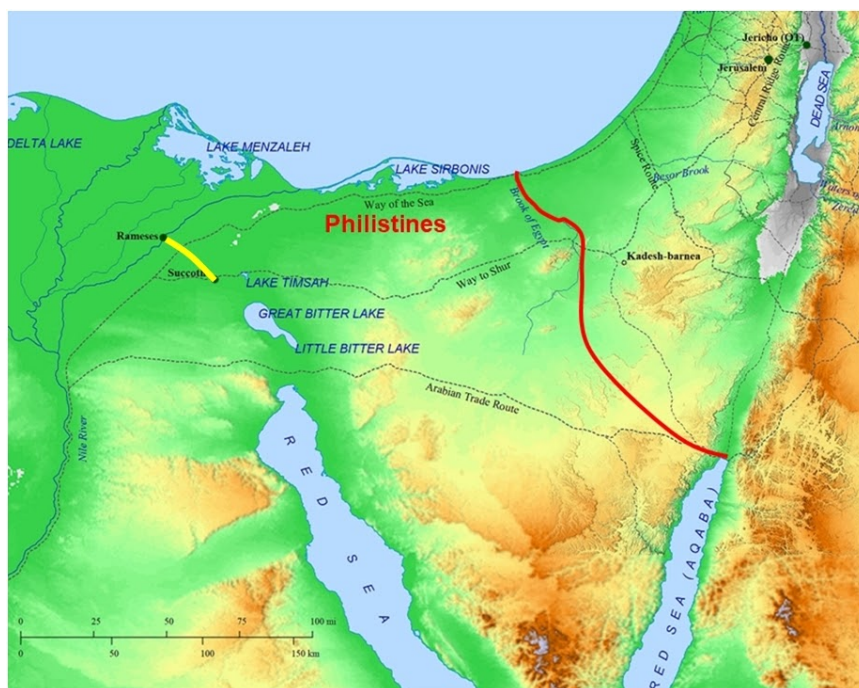
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Note that in verse 4 the first month is said to be “Abib”. If you recall from the last lesson, **Abib** and **Nisan** are two names for the same month: Abib is the old Canaanite designation, and Nisan the name later given by the Babylonians during the captivity.

### PILLARS OF CLOUD AND FIRE – (Verses 17 – 22)

In our last lesson, we left the Israelites camped in Succoth after having departed from Ramses (short yellow line). Their destination Canaan is the land in the extreme upper right on this map, so as you can see they have a long way to go. In fact, they won't even be out of Egyptian territory until they cross the red line running from the Mediterranean Sea to the top of the Gulf of Aqaba. That is the eastern boundary of the Sinai Peninsula, which was all under Egyptian control. After an exhaustive search and much time spent reading, I believe I can say all authorities agree on the journey out of Egypt up to this point – first stop Succoth.



But, from that point on – it's not so cut and dried. Beginning at Exodus 13:20, where it says their second stop was Etham (*verified in Numbers 33 - 40, where every leg of the journey is documented*) – all sorts of disagreements emerge. Most are because it is extremely difficult to accurately identify and locate many of the names mentioned here and in Numbers 33. It is not the intent of this lesson to prove or disprove any of those disagreements, but to write what I believe to be true based on an honest study of the scriptures and a tremendous amount of research deemed to be reasonably authentic.

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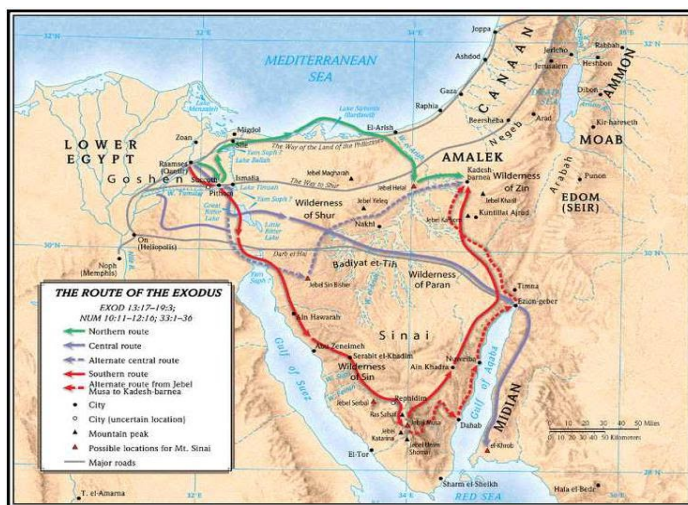
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Shown on this page are two of the “more prominent” views – that is, the ones most likely to show up in a Google search – as to the route taken by the Israelites when they left Ramses.



cities! But, one thing I do want to point out about these maps is their “traditional” placement of Mt. Sinai in the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula. We now know that to be incorrect.

So, what I submit to you in this lesson is my own belief of what scripture is telling us. If at some point I am proven wrong, I will gladly admit it and correct my errors.



This first map was produced for the “Gospel Armory,” an online book publishing company, and the one below by Mary Rubow of the CenterPoint Presbyterian church in Smyrna, Delaware. You will notice some differences of opinion. That is certainly understandable, because in studying several ancient maps of the area, I found that even they do not agree on the placement of some of the

The shortest route to Canaan from Succoth (the lower end of the yellow line) on the map above, would be straight east for a little over 100 miles – through the land of the Philistines – to Kadesh- Barnea, the southernmost city in Canaan. It is believed that a group of trained men traveling on level ground with plenty of water can walk at the average speed of 4 to 5 miles per hour – which in a 10 hour day would amount to about 40 - 50 miles. They would be able to cover a distance of 100 miles easily in 3 days, and more likely in two.

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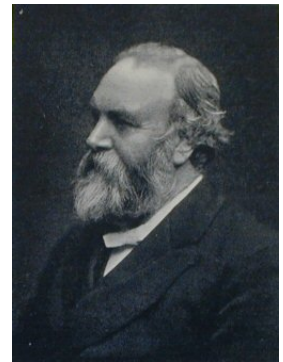
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But I doubt those calculations would hold true for the group we're dealing with here: 600,000 adult males + maybe a half million women or more + a large number of children (some small), none of them trained military, but all in good health + a tremendously huge number of animals! And, let's keep in mind they are carrying their own tents, cooking utensils, clothes, and a load of "gifted" gold and silver jewelry – which is heavy. Granted, the heaviest of their possessions would be strapped to animals, and we are not told if they had wagons, but either way, we can assume that their estimated speed would drop greatly, maybe as low as 2 miles per hour. This would turn the journey into a five day experience if they walked 10 hours a day, 20 miles per day.

But even that pace probably wouldn't be feasible because they would not be walking on smooth, level ground and have readily available water. Read the description below about the terrain of the Wilderness of Shur:

James Orr (1844 – 1913) a Scottish Presbyterian minister, professor, and author of several commentaries, offers another reason for not traveling through the Wilderness of Shur where the Philistines lived. *"If they went that way, they would quickly plunge into a wild waste of sand and rock which separates Africa from Asia by an almost impassable barrier. If they took the northern line (closer to the Mediterranean Sea) they would come upon the sandy desert. Before them would be a stretch of endless sand yielding nothing but small stunted shrubs, broad plains, newly reared hills, and valleys dug out by yesterday's storm. The hills, the valleys, and the plains were all sand! Sand, sand, and more sand; nothing but sand! If they took the southern passage, they would find themselves in a labyrinth of twisted wadys, and huge mountains, in a region consisting chiefly of bare granite and sandstone rocks."*



Of course, we know the real reason they didn't take that route: Exodus 13:16-17 reveals that God did not take them near the Philistines ***"lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt."*** Fresh out of bondage, the Israelites would not have been in any



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shape for battle, and the Philistines were a warring nation. So, not wanting His people to be put in such a position so soon, God led them by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea.

According to the text Etham is the second stop on the way to Canaan: ***“And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness.”*** As best I can determine, Etham was located right on the edge of the Wilderness of Shur, just north of the Great Bitter Lake, near Lake Timsah as shown on this map.



How perfect that the Lord accompanied them in the way He did: ***“So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people.”*** We don’t know when they were “joined” by this cloud and pillar of fire. The text seems to imply that it was at Succoth, but since we know they left Ramses shortly after midnight, it would make sense that it was actually then. Can you even begin to imagine what that might have looked like to the Egyptian observer. A more powerful example of God’s power and love for His people there could not be! ***“The Lord went before them.”*** I’m reminded of the beautiful verse from Romans 8:31: ***“If God be for us, who can be against us.”***

And did you notice that they were led ***“by day AND night:”*** That certainly could change things! Instead of walking 10 hours a day, they had the option to be on the move 24 hours a day! Of course, this verse could be suggesting an either/or option. After all, who could walk 24 hours a day without stopping? Before we answer that, let’s not forget Who goes in front of this band of

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Israelites. With God as the leader, there is no limit to what can be done! We're going to see later that their clothes and shoes last 40 years with no signs of wear. And when they arrive at a place where there is no water, Moses strikes a rock and an unlimited supply flows forth. So, obviously the same God who provided them with a way to follow Him both day and night could also have provided their bodies with the strength, endurance and nourishment necessary to do it. At a speed of 2 miles per hour, walking 24 hours instead of 10, they could make the 100 mile journey (Succoth to Canaan) in just over 2 days! But did they? We will learn in the next lesson that it actually took them 30 days to get to the Wilderness of Sin from Ramses (their starting point). That means they averaged about 8 miles per day.

Let's keep verse 22 in mind as we journey along with the Israelites: ***“He did not take away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night...”*** Not only are they able to see equally as well at night as by day; they have a visible reminder at all times that they are never, ever alone. This cloud is mentioned again in Numbers 9:21, as it appears over the tabernacle. In Numbers 16:42, we find the last distinct mention of it, but there is a possible allusion to it in Numbers 20:6 when Moses and Aaron ***“went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the Lord appeared to them.”***

Since there is no mention of the pillars in the book of Joshua, it makes me believe the Cloud and Pillar of Fire were with them ONLY while they were in the wilderness. If that is true, then their last appearance was on the final leg of the journey: from Beth-jesimoth to Abel-Shittim in the Jordan valley (Num. 33:49).

Chapter 14 begins with the Lord telling Moses to rouse the people so they can prepare to leave and ***“turn and encamp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal zephon: You shall camp before it by the sea.”***

Correspondingly, Numbers 33:7 records, ***“And they moved from Etham, and turned back to Pi Hahiroth, which is east of Baal zephon: and they camped near Migdol.”***

I have placed the names mentioned in these verses in their proper locations on this map as best I can based on 14 different ancient maps I studied. The name Baal-zephon means “*lord of the north*” and according to an Egyptian history website, a large idol image of him had been



erected there. It appears that God wanted the Israelites to camp across from it so the Egyptians would see what an actual miracle... from a real God... looked like – from right at the foot of one of their gods of stone. A reputable Jewish history website maintains that during the 10<sup>th</sup> plague when the firstborn were killed, all the idols in Egypt were broken down, except for this Baal-zephon. Since there is no mention of that in the Bible, I suspect this is hyperbole.



Migdol, a Hebrew word meaning “*tower*” or “*elevated*,” was a watch tower built on an elevated area overlooking the Gulf of Suez (Red Sea on our map). The ruins of the tower of Migdol are shown on the left. Incidentally, they are still a tourist attraction in the area and their location helps prove where the Israelites crossed the sea.

Pi Hahiroth – this is one of the locations often misplaced on the maps that attempt to recreate the route of the Exodus. How long did it take them to arrive there? We know it only took part of one day to get from Ramses to Succoth, since we know they left after midnight and arrived later that afternoon. It is roughly the same distance from Succoth to Etham, so another



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day to get there. The distance from Etham to Pi Hahiroth might be another 2 days, but likely less.

By the way, back in Exodus 12: 51 we were told that “...*it came to pass that very same day, that the LORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt according to their armies.*” There are two points to be made from this verse dealing with their release from bondage. One, the exodus took place on the same day of the 10<sup>th</sup> plague, albeit after midnight. Two, the Lord brought them out of Egypt “*by their armies.*” This does not necessarily mean any of the 600,000 men were trained to battle, although later the Lord does lead them into battle. “*By their armies*” means they were organized by their tribe – a reference to which son of Jacob is their ancestor. The “12 tribes of Israel” are descendants of the 12 sons of Jacob (name later changed to Israel in Gen 32).

As we discuss the Israelites’ various encampments on their journey out of Egypt, it’s easy to forget that even though they’re “out of bondage” – as far as the Egyptian armies are concerned, they’re certainly not “out of the woods”. *Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled, 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?” So he made ready his chariot and took his people with him. Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them. 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 Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon.” (14:5-9)*

Chapter 14 recounts what is commonly understood to be the third greatest miracle in the Old Testament, after Creation and the Flood – the crossing of the Red Sea on dry land. Verse 2 gives us the tiniest hint of God’s plan to carry out this spectacular event. It’s the description of where they were to camp. Let’s read it again: “*Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea.*” Did you see it?

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It is the use of the word **“turn.”** God told Moses that they were to ***“turn and encamp before...”*** If you look at the yellow route I mapped out on page 8, it is obvious they were headed east and could certainly have continued in that direction, but instead they turn and head south! Why is that? I believe it was because God knew what was in Pharaoh Ahmose’s heart! He knew Ahmose would ***“ready his chariots”*** and come after them so He had the Israelites continue east to Etham, then “turn,” that is, double back west from there (around the lake) and head south. All of this was to position them just where He wanted them to cross the Red Sea in order to ***“gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.”***

In verse 5 we are told that the hearts of his servants were ***“turned against the people.”*** Could these servants be the very same officials who so strongly urged the Pharaoh to let them go in the first place? Remember their plea coupled with the question, ***“How long will this man be a snare to us?”*** I suspect these may be the very same servants now saying, ***“Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?”*** Even though it was ultimately Ahmose’s decision, they planted the thought in his head. Could they be trying to conceal that fact, wanting him to think the full blame is on his shoulders? Whatever the case, we know the Lord hardened his heart and he gathered his chariots to go after them.

Six hundred chosen chariots, plus all the other chariots of Egypt, with captains over every one of them, AND his horsemen, and his army! Granted, he knew their numbers were massive, but this sounds like Ahmose rallied every fighting man Egypt had to offer – in order to go after a group of slaves. No doubt his troops were well-trained for battle, and, as verse 9 tells us that the army overtook the Israelites as they encamped by the sea, beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal zephon. We are not told what time of day it was, but probably late afternoon or early evening.

Three more things about this pursuit:

First of all, I feel certain that those servants of Pharaoh Ahmose did not wait for 2 or 3 days before coming to him with their regrets about letting the people go. I suspect it was that same night, only a few minutes or hours after they discovered the dead firstborn.

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Secondly, I am equally certain that most of Ahmose's army was stationed nearby, so it didn't take long to get ready to roll. If he was truly the commander I believe he might have been, the first group of soldiers to assemble would have gone with him "on the heels" of the Israelites, so to speak. The remainder of the soldiers would have followed behind as soon as they were able to prepare themselves. It is common military practice in such circumstances to position a small group of men periodically along the route to direct latecomers so that all arrive in the correct place.

And third, the misdirection God saw fit to use worked. They were now in the exact place He wanted them to be to showcase His power with yet another miracle.

If you were a general, would you have been comfortable with your troops camping where the Israelites were? They were by the Red Sea (Gulf of Suez) by Pi Hahiroth, in a valley surrounded by hills or mountains on three sides and a body of water on the fourth. There was no way out! Or we could say... there was no better place for a miracle!

When the Israelite people *"lifted their eyes"* and saw that *"the Egyptians marched after them,"* they turned on 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'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."*

Did they not remember a single one of the miracles God performed while they were in bondage? Did the Lord's presence in the cloud and pillar of fire mean nothing to them? Moses is quick to admonish them: *"Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."* What beautiful words, applicable then as the Egyptian chariots became visible over the horizon and the sound of the thundering hooves reached their ears, and just as much so now as we live in a world full of turmoil and ugliness. It would do us well to *"Stand still"* and remember, *"the Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."* Moses was told to *"lift up your rod, and stretch*

*out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.”*

And Moses did as the Lord said...



This illustration is a striking image, but I doubt it even comes close to what the Israelites and the Egyptians actually saw. The text says, *“Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord 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. So 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.”* (Exodus 14:21 & 22)

A similar miracle will occur 40 years later when crossing the Jordan River, but unlike that instance, this miracle is done in three steps:

Step 1 – (verse 19) the angel of the Lord moved the two pillars from in front of the Israelites, to behind them. From the description that follows, the Cloud settled over the Egyptian



army because *“it became a cloud and darkness to them.”* At the same time, the Pillar of Fire settled on the Israelite side of the cloud to provide light for them during the night.

Step 2 – (verse 21) Moses stretched his hand with the rod in it and God caused the sea to be split by a strong easterly wind.

Step 3 – (verse 21) If the force of the wind was strong enough to part the water, it was surely strong enough to dry the ground so the Israelites weren’t slowed by mud or muck in their trek between the walls of water.

Speaking of the walls of water on each side of the dry ground, the inevitable question at this point is, “How high were these walls?”

Most commentators agree that they were about 30 feet high! The second question is usually, “How wide was the Gulf where they crossed? For what distance were they walking between these walls of water?” The scale on the map pictured on Page 8 indicates approximately 20 miles across. It is the distance from their camp at Pihahiroth to the village of Marah, which is their next stop on their journey.

The text doesn’t tell us at what time of day the Israelites began the crossing, but my guess is early morning. The cloud has held the Egyptians at bay, and the fire is lighting the way for the Israelites. The ground has had time to dry due to that easterly wind, so...they start across. How long did it take for 2 million people to cross – and their animals? Of course we can’t be certain, but it may have been all of the day and at least a part of the night. We do know this: The Lord *“troubled the army of the Egyptians. And He took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove them with difficulty; and the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians.”* What did this “troubling” accomplish? It kept them out of the water until the Israelites had safely crossed. And then, when they were foolish enough to venture in after the Israelites ... verse 28 says of those who went into the sea, *“...there remained not so much as one of them.”*

We know for certain Ahmose did not go into the water, because, according to the charts back in lesson 2, he reigned another 12 years after this. He probably did not allow his entourage

and bodyguards to enter the sea, either. But we can rest assured he was standing helplessly on the shore watching the One True God completely wipe out his army. And we know from the scripture that those who did live to tell the story came to a very obvious conclusion – one that they surely carried with them for the rest of their lives: ***“The Lord fights for them.”*** (Exodus 14:25) This is no less true today. The Lord protects us, guides us, comforts us and delivers us from evil....if we truly live as His people.

The destruction of the Egyptians probably happened on the morning, after the Israelites were safely on the other side and Moses stretched out his hand again and the waters closed back up. I don't think it could have been the morning after the night the wind started and divided the waters – that wouldn't have given the Israelites time to cross on dry ground. We do know the majority of the Egyptian army was in the midst of the sea and lost their lives when the Lord closed the waters.

The last two verses of chapter 14 sum up the results of the crossing. ***“Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses.”***

The first 21 verses of chapter 15 are a song to the Lord praising Him for the triumph over the Egyptians. They exalt Him by singing ***“The Lord is my strength and song. And He has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise Him. The Lord is a man of war. The Lord is His name.”***

They also praise Moses for his part in their salvation. And for the first time, we see Miriam (Moses and Aaron's older sister) called a “prophetess.”

The map on the next page shows the location of the crossing of the Red Sea and how they then turned north into the lower end of the Shur Wilderness, where they were unable to find water. They then went further south to a small village they named “Marah” (Hebrew for “bitter”) because the water there was not fit to drink.

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That all took 3 days. This poor quality of water was all it took to bring their rejoicing and praise for the Lord and his servant Moses to an end. They complained to Moses and he was instructed by the Lord to cast a tree into the water, and it was made sweet. The Lord also made a statute



and tested them saying, ***“If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals***

*you.”*

That sounds pretty simple and straight-forward, doesn't it? As lesson 10 ends, they will go further south to Elim, another day's journey, and camp in what must have been a beautiful place, surrounded by 12 fountains of water and 70 palm trees.