

## **Robert Vannoy, Exodus to Exile, Lecture 3A**

### **Red Sea into Wilderness**

#### Review

#### I. The Deliverance from Egypt, Exodus 1-11

#### F. The Passover, Exodus 12:1-13:16

At the end of our session last time, we talked about the Passover which is Roman numeral I, “The deliverance from Egypt, Exodus 1-11,” letter F, “The Passover, Exodus 12:1-13:16.” If you remember right at the end of our last session, we looked at the citations of paragraphs from J. Motyer’s lecture notes on, “The theology of the Passover,” and he summarized the theology of the Passover with those 5 words: propitiation, salvation, substitution, deliverance and pilgrimage.

#### G. The Departure from Egypt and the Escape through the Red Sea – Exodus 13:17-15:21

So we will pick up at that point and move on to G, which is, “The departure from Egypt and the escape through the Red Sea – Exodus 13:17-15:21.” I think we can say that full deliverance for the Israelites really didn’t come until they had crossed over and passed through the Red Sea. It’s interesting, in that single event Israel is delivered and Egypt falls under God’s judgment. You have something very similar to what you had at the time of the plagues, where there was discrimination between the Egyptians and the Israelites. Here you see another example of that. In chapter 12, verse 33, after that last plague, the death of the firstborn, the Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country, otherwise, they feared, “We will all die.” Actually, if you go back to verse 31, Pharaoh told Moses and Aaron and said, “Leave my people, you and the Israelites. Go worship the Lord as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds as you have said and go and bless me.” So the Pharaoh and the Egyptians urged the Israelites to leave, which they did, but then Pharaoh changes his mind.

When you get to chapter 14, you read in verse 5, “When the king of Egypt was told the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officers changed their minds about them and

said, ‘What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services.’” So they set out in pursuit. That’s something we mentioned early on. The Egyptians didn’t want to lose their services. They wanted to control them, benefit from them, exploit them and not lose them. Now the awareness dawned on them – we’ve lost this great work force. Let’s go force them to return.

So, the Israelites are fleeing out of Egypt, and Pharaoh decides to pursue them. Notice the attitude of the Israelites. In verse 10 of chapter 14, “As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up and there were the Egyptians marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord. They said to Moses, ‘Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us bringing us out of Egypt? Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone. Let us serve the Egyptians.’ It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert.’” Now after all these miraculous signs and wonders that the Lord had performed on their behalf it doesn’t seem like a very grateful response. They cried out to the Lord to end their oppression and the Lord had responded to their prayers and delivered them. But then they complained. This is the first of a series of complaints that goes from this point through that whole wilderness period where Israel was constantly grumbling and complaining.

### 1. Prayer & Action

But what’s Moses’ response? In chapter 14 verse 13 Moses answers, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you. You need only to be still.” What the Lord then says to Moses in verses 15 and 16 is, “Are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on and raise your staff, stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the waters so the Israelites can get through on dry ground.” I think in that statement you see the Lord desires us to pray and seek his deliverance but at the same time, he wants us to act. The Israelites go forward and he delivered them. That

brings us to this remarkable occurrence of the division of the waters that enabled the Israelites to cross through the Red Sea. I'll say something about the Red Sea in a minute—but in verse 21 you read, “All that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and the waters were divided and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground.”

## 2. Where was the Red Sea Crossing?

A question often arises about this passing through the Red Sea, as to where exactly did this take place and what was the body of water that the Israelites were able to cross. In Exodus 13:17, you read, “When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter.” In other words, naturally they would have just gone north and then right up into the area of Gaza in southern Canaan following the well-traveled Via Maris coastal highway. But he didn't lead them that way, for God said, “‘If they face war they might change their minds and return to Egypt.’ So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea.”

## 3. Yam Suph — Sea of Reeds

There you get the first reference to the Red Sea. If you have the NIV translation you'll notice a text note there, the Hebrew is *yam suph* that is “Sea of Reeds.” The Hebrew is *yam suph*, which literally translated is “Sea of Reeds.” The translation “Red Sea” comes from the Septuagint – that's the way the Septuagint translators translated the Hebrew *yam suph*, and then it came through the Latin Vulgate and on into the English versions. If you look at the use of the term *yam suph* besides right here in this Exodus narrative, you find that it has a range of uses. On slide 14 if you look at the Sinai peninsula you have these two bodies of water—this is the gulf on the west of the Sinai peninsula, today known as the Gulf of Aqaba and this is the Gulf of Suez on the east side. Today what we call the Red Sea is down off the map. You get these two arms coming off the Red Sea, one to the east of the Sinai Peninsula, one is to the west of it. Now let's go

back to the Gulf of Suez. If you look in the book of Numbers, you can find *yam suph* referring to this body of water. But you can also find it used, and it seems in this case, for what's called the Bitter Lakes region up here between the tip of the Gulf of Suez and up to the Mediterranean Sea. There's a string of lakes and it seems to refer to that area as well.

#### 4. Route of the Exodus

When you get to the route of the Exodus, on this map you'll see places from Rameses, which is where they started out, up and over the coastal islands there and down into the coastal highway. But that seems highly unlikely because of that verse we read a few minutes ago where the Lord told them in verse 17 of chapter 13 they would not go on the road through Philistine country, even though that was shorter. There were Egyptian fortresses along this so-called "way to the land of the Philistines" and it seems like the Israelites would have been in major trouble if they tried to go up that way. So as we see on slide 15, most people think that the route of the Exodus was through the southeast, down in this direction and then across one of these Bitter Lakes and it is one of those Bitter Lakes that is the *yam suph*, called the "Red Sea" of the biblical text. I think it's important to be aware of that because if you read "Red Sea" and look at a map you'll wonder how did Israel get from way down here off this map to the south and cross the Red Sea. The Red Sea is an enormous body of water. A strong east wind blowing all night is not going to move the waters of the Red Sea. It possibly could have moved the waters in an area in this lake region in a way that would have enabled the Israelites to cross. So it seems like that's the best way to look at the route of the Exodus.

#### 5. Difficulty of the Place Names

There are a number of place names mentioned in the text. Of course, there's been a lot of attention given to those place names to try to pinpoint the route of the Exodus. The problem is the place names are very difficult to identify. Exodus 13:17 says, "They

would not go on the road through Philistine country but God led the people on the desert road toward this *yam suph*.” But Exodus 12:37 says, “The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth. And then you read in 13:20, after leaving Succoth they camped at Etham on the edge of the desert. So there’s dispute about the precise location of those places.

But the interesting thing is that it’s from there that they turned. You read in Exodus 14:1 and 2, “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi Hahiroth between Migdol and the sea. They are to encamp by the sea directly opposite Baal Zephon.’” There are three place names in 14:1 and 2—Pi Hahiroth, Migdol, and Baal Zephon. Most students of geography say those three places are not identifiable. Those are the crucial sites that we need to know if we really want to pinpoint the route of the Exodus. However, it’s that turn that tracks the Israelites with the water on one side and the Egyptian army pursuing on the other side. I think what you find here is an interesting situation. God commanded them to turn. The Lord said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp at this place.” And then verse 3, “Pharaoh will think the Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, and I will harden his heart and he will pursue them.” So you see, the Lord’s setting the stage to get Pharaoh to come here again and attack the Israelites, which would enable God again to show his strength, his arm, his might, and bring glory to himself by bringing judgment on the Egyptians and deliverance on the Israelites. Look at verse 4, where the Lord said, “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart and he will pursue them, but I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army.” Then notice that next phrase—it’s that same statement we have had all through that series of the ten plagues—“And the Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh.” And that goes back to Pharaoh’s question in 5:1, “Who’s Yahweh? Why should I serve Yahweh?”

## 6. Israel Delivered Egyptians Destroyed

If you go down to 14:17-18, the Lord says, “I will gain glory through Pharaoh and

all his army through his chariots and his horsemen and the Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen.” So you really have a continuation in this deliverance through the Red Sea, which is exactly the same thing we saw in the plagues. In Nahum Sarna’s commentary on the Torah, the volume on Exodus, he speaks of a stratagem to mislead the Egyptians and lure them to their doom. Then he comments, “Egypt does not appear in Israelite history again until the time of Solomon.” After this deliverance through the Red Sea the next time you read about the Egyptians is in the time of Solomon. So this was an enormous deliverance for Israel.

At the end of chapter 14, you have a very significant statement in verses 30 and 31, “That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore and when the Israelites saw the great power of Yahweh displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared Yahweh and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.” So you see, Israel observed this great deliverance, and it was this mighty act of God on their behalf which led them to faith and to belief in Yahweh as well as in Moses, who was the one the Lord used to lead them out of Egypt. You see that statement in verse 31, “When the Israelites saw,” the NIV says, “the great power.” It’s literally “the great hand,” if you look at that in Hebrew. So the hand of Egypt was no match for the hand of God as he delivered Israel from Egypt.

## II. Israel in the Wilderness – Exodus 15:22 to the End of the Book of Deuteronomy

Let’s go on to Roman numeral II, “Israel in the Wilderness,” Exodus 15:22 to the end of the book of Deuteronomy. That is a lot of material. After the deliverance through the Red Sea, Israel starts on their way to Sinai and they get waylaid, from then to that thirty-eight year period of wandering in the wilderness before they come up to the plains of Moab just prior to entering into the land of Canaan towards the end of Moses’ life. This is their deliverance out of Egypt to a 40-year period at the end of Deuteronomy, and of course, the center of that is Israel in Sinai.

I might mention before going on, chapter 15 is a poetic résumé of that great deliverance through the Red Sea. You have a narrative description of it in chapter 14, and then you get this song of Moses and Miriam which celebrates that victory through the Red Sea. So that's why we picked up at verse 22 where you read Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and went into the desert of Shur.

#### A. The Importance of this Period

Notice A on your outline is, "The importance of this period." Only a few general comments here. It's a relatively short period of time—40 years. I say relatively short because if you compare it with the patriarchal period, which precedes the book of Exodus, from Genesis 12 to Genesis 50, that is 215 years. So there is a significantly longer period of time in Genesis 12-50, which is 38 chapters, only 68 pages in the Hebrew Bible, 215 years. Here you have 40 years that takes up 353 pages in the Hebrew Bible and 137 chapters. In other words, here you have a shorter period of time, but probably five times more material approximately. Of course, much of that material is legal material in the law that Moses revealed at Mount Sinai. So it's largely legal material rather than historical narrative. I think the result is often the historical narrative is overlooked. The focus is on the legal material. When you think of Leviticus you think of legal material. Deuteronomy is pretty much legal material, as is the latter part of the book Exodus. But the things that happen in this section of the Old Testament from Exodus 15 through the end of Deuteronomy are of enormous significance in the history of Israel. I would say that this material takes a place of enormous prominence in the history of revelation in the entirety of the Old Testament. The reason for that is that it's in these chapters that we learn about the establishment of the Sinai covenant between Yahweh and the descendants of the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It's by means of that covenant that was established at Mount Sinai through the work of Moses that the nation of Israel became formally established as God's covenant people. That's what happened. Under the terms of that covenant, this newly established nation is a nation that is to be

ruled by Yahweh as their divine king. So you might say the nation is a theocratic nation. God is the king.

### 1. Comments on Legal Material

The legal materials that appear in much of this section of the Old Testament are the covenant stipulations, the obligations that this great king places on the people with whom he has entered into the covenant. That legal material is given to Israel as he defines the way in which Israel is to live. Israel was to live in a way that set them apart from every other nation on earth. They were to live as God's covenant people.

I want to make a couple comments on the law. You've probably heard that you can divide the law into three categories of material, and there is some value in that kind of division: the moral law, civil law and ceremonial law. When you hear that sort of categorization of the law, the moral law usually refers to the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. I think a better label for the Ten Commandments is the foundational law. I think that's a better label because if you say it's the moral law as distinct from the civil and ceremonial law, it almost implies that there aren't moral aspects in the civil and ceremonial law, which there certainly are. But the Ten Commandments are the foundational laws. The Ten Commandments are worked out in the civil and ceremonial and given concrete shape to these more abstract principles. I'll say more about that later. But you have the foundational laws, the Ten Commandments, the civil law are regulations for family affairs, marriage, property rights, inheritance, how you treat slaves, things of that sort that have to do with societal and governmental organization. Then clearly you have an enormous amount of material given in the ceremonial law which is regulations for religious observances, sacrifices, what kinds of sacrifices, how they were to be brought, festivals, how they should be observed, the duties of priests, all sorts of cultic matters of that sort.

Now, as I already mentioned, that legal material is given to guide the Israelites in the conduct of their daily lives. This is enormously important because they were to live



their lives in ways that conform to all these regulations. Those regulations served as a restraint against evil. If someone followed the law, he would certainly live a life that was honoring to God and would avoid many of the errors that a person might otherwise become involved in.

I think more importantly, the law was a mirror in which the Israelites could see themselves as sinners and recognize their fallen condition. No one could wholly live up to all the obligations of the law. And as Romans 3:20 says, “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” And Galatians 3:24 says, “The law was our school master to bring us to Christ,” because ultimately as a person recognizes their inability to live up to all the requirements of the law, that is what brings one to Christ. Some brief comments on that legal material. As I mentioned earlier, that legal material is set in a historical framework. Our concern is primarily in the historical framework and that includes what happened at Mount Sinai and then the subsequent wilderness wandering.

## B. General Features of This Period

### 1. Redemption is Foremost

Let’s move forward to B, “General features of this period.” I have four sub-points there in your outline. The first is, “Redemption is foremost.” Israel’s deliverance out of Egypt became the central confession of ancient Israel with respect to the mighty acts of God on her behalf. When Israel reflected back on their history and the way in which God had worked in their history, the thing that took the most prominent place was their deliverance out of Egypt. That becomes the high point of Israel’s confession of God’s saving actions in her past history.

#### a. Three Covenant Renewals and the Exodus Event

Let me just point you to a few places further along in Scripture where references are made back to what God did in delivering Israel out of Egypt. In Deuteronomy 26, Deuteronomy is the renewal of the covenant at the end of the wilderness period, there’s

the regulation for bringing the offerings of first fruits and the tithes. Israel is told when you bring the first fruits of the land to the Lord as an offering, in verse 5 of Deuteronomy 26, “Then you shall declare before the Lord your God” What? This is a confession. “My father was a wandering Aramean. He went down into Egypt with a few people, lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. But the Egyptians made us suffer, putting us to hard labor. Then we cried out to the Lord the God of our fathers. The Lord heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and outstretched arm with miraculous signs and wonders. He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.” You see at the heart of that confession what the Lord had done in the past for Israel. The focus is on that deliverance out of Egypt.

In Joshua 24:17, you have another covenant renewal, and you have a covenant renewal in the book of Deuteronomy at the end of Moses’ life. The next leader of Israel is Joshua. At the end of Joshua’s life he calls all Israel to Shechem and again you get a covenant renewal ceremony. Notice in 24:17, Joshua said, “It was Yahweh our God himself who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt from that land of slavery and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us throughout our entire journey in all the nations in which we travelled. And the Lord drove out before us all the nations including the Amorites to live in the land.” So what has the Lord done? He delivered us from Egypt, and he brought us to the land of Canaan.

If you go to 1 Samuel 12, just after the period of Judges and at the time the institution of the monarchy, there’s another covenant renewal ceremony held by Samuel at Gilgal. The occasion was the inauguration of Saul as king. What does Samuel say? First Samuel 12:6 says, “Samuel said to the people, ‘It is the Lord who appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your forefathers up out of Egypt. Now stand here because I am going to confront you with evidence before the Lord as to all the righteous acts performed by the Lord before your fathers after Jacob entered Egypt. They cried out to the Lord for help and the Lord sent Moses and Aaron and brought your forefathers out of

Egypt and settled them in this place. But they forgot the Lord their God.” So again, the focus is on the deliverance from Egypt.

#### b. Exodus in the Prophets and Post-Exile

If you go to the prophets, for instance, Micah 6:3 and following, you have what’s often called a covenant lawsuit passage where Israel has broken the covenant and the Lord comes to hold them to account for that. So you read in 6:3, “Listen to what the Lord says stand up, plead your case before the mountains let the hills hear what you have to say. Hear, O mountains, the Lord’s accusation. Listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth, he is lodging a charge against Israel.” That charge is basically that you’ve broken the covenant. But notice what follows, “My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me. I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you and Aaron and Miriam. My people remember what Balak king of Moab” and so forth. So the Lord calls Israel to account and in doing that he reminds them of what he has done for them. He has been faithful to them, yet they have turned away from him. But at the heart of what he’s done for them is this deliverance out of Egypt. “I have brought you out of Egypt.”

Go to Nehemiah 9. There’s a prayer there of Nehemiah when he confesses the sin of Israel in turning away from the Lord and in the course of that prayer, Nehemiah 9:9, he says, “You saw the suffering of our fathers in Egypt, you heard their cry at the Red Sea, you sent miraculous signs and wonders in front of Pharaoh and all of his people. You know how arrogantly the Egyptians treated them. You made a name for yourself which remains till this day,” and this is centuries later. “You divided the sea before them so they could pass on dry ground. But you hurled their pursuers into the depths like a stone into mighty waters. By day you led them by a pillar cloud and by night the pillar of fire was like the light of day.”

So this becomes Israel’s central confession of what God has done for them. He delivered them from Egypt. That confession has a physical or geographical point of

reference: Egypt. But it carries with it the spiritual symbolism of deliverance from sin and death. You remember when we talked about the Passover. We said the Passover reminded Israel of her deliverance out of Egypt. But it also reminded Israel of their deliverance from sin and death. It was when that blood was sprinkled over the lintel and the doorposts that the angel of death passed over the Israelites. The Israelites needed that atoning work of the blood every bit as much as the Egyptians did. And so you get the language of redemption used in connection with Israel's deliverance out of Egypt. If you go back to Exodus 15, that poetic description of their deliverance, look at verse 13 of Exodus 15, "In your unfailing love, you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling." In verse 16 of Exodus 15, you read, "By the power of your arm, they will be as still as a stone—until your people pass by, O Lord, until the people you bought pass by. You will bring them in and plant them." So you get that kind of language applied to this deliverance out of Egypt. Israel was redeemed, Israel was purchased.

### c. Exodus in Psalms

If you go to Psalm 74, you have an echo of this in verse 2, where the psalmist says, "Remember the people you purchased of old," the same word as in Exodus 15, "the tribe of your inheritance whom you redeemed." If you go to Psalm 77, verses 7-15, the psalmist is in a situation in which he thinks the Lord has turned away his favor and is silent. You read in verse 7, "Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again? Has his unfailing love vanished for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?" So the writer of this psalm is in a situation of distress in which he feels as if the Lord has forgotten him. But then in verse 10 he says, "Then I thought, 'To this I will appeal: the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the deeds of the Lord, yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all your works, consider your mighty deeds. Your ways, O God are holy. What god is as great as our God? You are the God who performs miracles: you display

your power among peoples.” Then notice verse 15, “With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph. The waters saw you, O God, the waters saw you and writhed... the skies resounded with thunder; your arrows flashed back and forth. Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked. Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen.” What’s all this talking about? Verse 20, “You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.” That’s the deliverance through the Red Sea. Here is another poetic description of it, but you have the language here of redemption again in verse 15. “With your mighty arm you redeemed your people.” This redemption is what gives hope to the psalmist who was in despair. He thought God was forgetting him and then he reminds himself, “I must think about the great and the mighty acts of the Lord in the past and that gives hope to the future.” But my point here is: redemption is foundational. Here is a group of people that God rescues and delivers in a supernatural miraculous way and in the Passover sacrifice their deliverance from Egypt is linked with their deliverance from sin and death. The language used to describe that deliverance is the language of the redemption. So redemption is foundational.

## 2. The Promised Land Was the Goal

Let’s go on to 2, “The Promised Land was the goal.” Israel was led out of Egypt in order to go in and to possess the land of Canaan that God had promised to Abraham. But because of lack of faith and disobedience along the way, recorded in Numbers, Israel was condemned for a 38 year period of wandering in the wilderness and a new generation would inherit the land of Canaan. So the Promised Land was the goal, but Israel had a lot to learn before they were permitted to enter the Promised Land. I think in the larger context of the movement of redemptive history, the entrance into Canaan has typical significance. I think it becomes typical in a provisional way of entrance into the blessings of life in the new covenant and then even beyond that, I think it finds its highest

fulfillment in the rest of the eternal state. So Israel is entering the land of Canaan. Canaan was to be a land of rest. But Israel's experience in the land of Canaan is not always one of rest because Israel fell so far short of what God desired of them that rest of the land of Canaan was filled with labor. In the new covenant there is a spiritual sense and ultimately in eternal rest further down the road. God's final rest is yet to come.

Hebrews 3 and 4 speak of that. I don't want to take time to look at that passage in detail, but look at Hebrews 4:9. The writer of Hebrews says, "There remains then a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work just like God did from his. Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience," that is the Israelites' disobedience. Historically, it's talking about the land of Canaan. Spiritually, or soteriologically, it is a picture of the fullness of salvation that is experienced by the people of God, and eschatologically it speaks of the eternal kingdom and our living and reigning with Christ. So here's an idea that's introduced in connection with entrance into the land of Canaan that carries theological significance and becomes a theological theme that moves through the rest of Scripture.

### 3. God's Supernatural Care for His People

Let's go on to 3, "God's supernatural care for his people." God gave instructions for the building of the tabernacle. The tabernacle was eventually constructed. The Lord then descends upon it, takes up his residence in the midst of his people. That's at the end of the book of Exodus. So he is dwelling with them. From that point forward the pillar of fire and cloud that hovered over that tabernacle would lift and move to guide Israel in their journey through the wilderness. So the Lord provided direction, he provided water, he provided food, he provided clothing that did not wear out. But when you read through those narratives, in spite of that remarkable provision, the Israelites regularly failed to see and appreciate that. They grumbled and complained and did not respond as they should.

#### 4. The General Features of the Law

4, “The general features of the law.” I think you need to understand that this people that was delivered from Egyptian bondage was established as God’s covenant people. They were not made God’s covenant people because of their own goodness. But rather because of God’s grace. That’s foundational. Look at Deuteronomy 4:34-37. Moses says, “Has any God ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? You were shown these things so that you might know that Yahweh is God; beside him there is no other. From heaven he made you hear his voice to discipline you. On earth he showed you his great fire, and you heard his words from out of the fire.” Then notice verse 37, “Because he loved your forefathers and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength, to drive out before you nations greater and stronger than you and to bring you into their land and give it to you for your inheritance, as it is today.” Why did he choose Israel? Verse 37, “Because he loved your forefathers and chose their descendants after them.” That’s why he brought you out. Look at chapter 7 verse 7 of Deuteronomy, “The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all people. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to the forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” So there's nothing in Israel in and of itself that merited God’s favor. It was because he loved them and chose their fathers. Abraham gave a promise to them.

Look at Deuteronomy 9 verse 4 and following, “After the Lord your God has driven them out before you, do not say to yourself, ‘The Lord has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness.’ No, it’s on account of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is going to drive them out before you. It’s not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you were going to take possession of

the land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the Lord your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Understand, then, it is not because of your righteousness that the Lord your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people.” So it’s not because of Israel’s goodness or anything inherent in Israel that they were chosen to be God’s special people but because God set his love upon them and gave that promise to Abraham.

But then what do we find—he delivers them from Egypt and brings them to Sinai to establish his covenant with them but then he gives them his law. Deliverance did not come because of good works but after deliverance God wants his people to be holy. So he gives his law. Election is not just a privilege. It is also a responsibility. That’s what the law is about. Israel as God’s chosen people had an enormous responsibility to live their lives in conformity to the covenant obligations that God placed upon them. So those are general comments about this period of Israel in the wilderness. I’m going to come back to that matter of the law a bit later.

### C. From Egypt to Sinai, Exodus 15:22-18:27

#### 1. Man and Quail

Let’s go on to C, “From Egypt to Sinai, Exodus 15:22-18:27,” and I have two sub-points. I’m not going to spend a lot of time in this section but just highlight a few things. The first thing is “manna and quail” given in chapter 16. At the end of 15, the Israelites are grumbling because they don’t have water and the Lord provided water. But then when we get to chapter 16, and in verse 2, “The whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, ‘If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt. There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted. But you brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.’” So again you get a complaining spirit in spite of all the Lord had provided for them. The Lord says to Moses in verse 4, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go each day and gathered



enough for each and this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.” So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, ‘In the evening you will know that it was Yahweh who brought you out of Egypt.’” Here is this same refrain again that went through all the plagues of Egypt, the deliverance through the Red Sea. Now with the feeding, it is so that you may know that it is Yahweh who brought you out of Egypt. ““In the morning you will see the glory of the Lord because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we that you should grumble against us.’ Moses also said, ‘You will know that it is Yahweh when he gives you meat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning.’” So the Lord again is going to demonstrate his power providing in a miraculous way for the sustenance of Israel.

Now I want to make a few comments on the remainder of the chapter. First, a comment on the name “manna.” Why was it called “manna”? In verse 14, you read, “When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, ‘What is it?’ For they did not know what it was.” It says there the Israelites said to each other “What is it?” The Hebrew there is *man-hu*. They said *man-hu*. For they did not know what it was. If you look at your citations page 19, middle of the page, there’s a comment from C. F. Keil’s commentary on the Old Testament. He says, “*Man*, or *mah* belongs to the popular phraseology, and has been retained in the Chaldee and Ethiopic, so that it is undoubtedly to be regarded as early Semitic.” This word *man* is an interrogative. It’s translated ‘what.’ So the Israelites go out and they see this strange substance and say, “what is it”—*man-hu*. If you go over to verse 31, you read, “The people of Israel called the bread *manas*.” So they called it *manna*, from this expression when they first saw it, “what is it?” So the translation of that *man-hu* has become manna in a kind of transliteration, but it really means, “what is it?”

A couple other brief comments about some of the features of the chapter. A day’s

provision is given at a time. It normally would not keep overnight. It would spoil with the exception of the seventh day. On the sixth day they would get twice as much so they would have enough for the seventh day, and then it would not spoil. Look at chapter 16 verse 16 and following, “This is what the Lord commanded: ‘Each one is to gather as much as he needs. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent. The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. And when they measured it by the omer, he who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little didn’t have too little. Each gathered as much as he needed. Then Moses said to them, ‘No one is to keep any of this until morning.’ However, some paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them. Each morning everyone gathered as much as they needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away. On the sixth day they gathered twice as much, two omers.” Verse 23, “Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning. So they saved it until morning and it did not stink or get maggots in it.” So a day’s provision at a time. Now in connection with this, it’s interesting that you have reference here to the Sabbath, and this is prior to the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20. This is prior to Sinai. So before Sinai it seems quite clear that there was Sabbath observance. In fact, when you come to the Ten Commandments, the wording of the commandment about the Sabbath is “remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.” It is worded in a way that suggests there was previous knowledge about the Sabbath. It seems to me it suggests it was a creation ordinance. So the Sabbath goes back a long time prior to Exodus 20 and the revelation of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai.

Manna was also used, I think, to teach other lessons. If you look at Deuteronomy 8:3, Moses says in reflecting on this, “He humbled you causing you to hunger and then fed you with manna which neither you nor your fathers had known.” Why? “To teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Your clothes did not wear out, your feet did not swell during these forty years.”

God was teaching them dependence on himself. Man does not live on bread alone but on the word of the Lord. I think there's an allusion in the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." You need to have a conscious awareness of our dependence on God day by day and he was teaching them that. Jesus refers to manna as a type of himself because Jesus says in John's gospel that he is the bread that comes down from heaven. If you look at John 6:49, Jesus says, "I am the bread of life, your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven." And that whole chapter appeals to manna as a type of Christ himself. In verse 35 Jesus says, "I am the bread of life," and in verse 38, "I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me" and so forth.

So it is an interesting chapter in which there's a lot going on. At the end of the Exodus 16 the Lord says to preserve a pot of manna as a memorial for the days to come. Notice Exodus 16 verse 32, "This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Take an omer of manna and keep it for the generations to come, so that they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the desert.'" Verse 35 says, "The Israelites ate manna 40 years until they came to the land that was settled; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan." It's interesting when you go to Joshua chapter 5 verse 12 after Israel had crossed the Jordan River and settled at Gilgal you read, "The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land." There was no longer any manna for the Israelites after they ate the produce of the Canaan. So the Lord provided this sustenance for Israel a day at a time from right after they got out of Egypt all the way through that period of wandering until they crossed the Jordan River and entered the land.

## 2. At Rephidim: Exodus 17-18 – The Amalekites & Jethro's Advice

### a. Amalekites

Let's go one more before our break. 2 is, "At Rephidim," Chapters 17 and 18. You notice I have three sub-points: water is provided again in 17:1-7, then victory over the

Amalekites in 17:8-16, and then Jethro's advice in chapter 18. First, the water provided. This is the second time they complained about water and the Lord provided water again; that's in the first 7 verses and I'm going to skip over that. But I want to make a few comments on the second point, verse 8-16, the Amalekites were defeated by the Israelites. You read in verse 8, "The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim." All of these events occurred at Rephidim. Note in 17:1, they camped at Rephidim where there was no water. But then while they were there the Amalekites attacked and Moses tells Joshua to go out and fight the Amalekites. So Joshua does that and Moses at the end of verse 9 goes to stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in his hands. "So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on the one side one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword. Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Moses built an altar and called it The Lord is my Banner. He said, 'For the hands were lifted up to the throne of the Lord. The Lord will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation.'" So here's this attack by the Amalekites who were, by the way, descendants of Esau, related to the Edomites. And when they attacked, Joshua formed an army and led Israel into battle against them.

I think in general, we might say from this that we can learn that there are times and situations in which forcible resistance to evil is warranted even to the extent of going to war. It is not only permissible, but at times required. Of course, that raises a large issue in the Christian community on the Just War question, and the Pacifist question. It seems to me that there are situations in which it is justifiable to go to war without getting into a lengthy discussion about it. I think in this case we need to put this into a historical

perspective. I think that helps us understand the significance of the battle. It seems to me that the Amalekites' attack on Israel is another episode in that ongoing struggle between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent—between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

Their attack, if you think about it, is really an attack that if it was successful, would have destroyed the Israelites and prevented Israel from reaching Sinai where they were to enter into covenant with Yahweh and become God's covenant people. The Amalekites might not have understood all of that but their attack was a very real threat to the establishment of Israel as the covenant people of God. It was an attack on God's redemptive purposes toward his people. Moses resisted and Joshua goes out and fights. When Moses reflects back on this in Deuteronomy 25, verse 17, he says, "Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt." That's Deuteronomy 25:17, "When you were weary and worn out they met you on your journey and cut off all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God. When the Lord your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven." So Moses says that and, of course, that's the last line in this passage, "The Lord will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation." What we find is that when Israel came into the land and settled down and kingship was established and the first king was Saul; one of the first things the Lord tells Saul to do is to destroy the Amalekites. Saul in 1 Samuel 15 goes out but doesn't do it. He spared some flocks and herds and Agag, the king of the Amalekites. Because of that the Lord rejected Saul from being king. It says, "Because you rejected me, I am rejecting you." It's a very serious offense.

Still later in Israel's history, in the Persian period, the enemy of Esther and her uncle Mordecai was a man called Heman, the Agagite. You read that in Esther 3:1. Many think that Haman the Agagite was a descendant of the royal house of the Amalekites. The king of the Amalekites was Agag. Samuel kills him but Saul refused to. So again you get in that period of Israel's history an attempt to destroy the Israelites and frustrate God's

redemptive purposes at the hands of these Amalekites. So it seems to me that putting this little narrative in that flow of redemptive history is helpful in seeing the significance of what's going on here.

Just one final comment about this thing of Moses holding up his hands and what he does so the Israelites were winning, when his hands come down they lost. Certainly there's no mere physical connection between Moses hands being lifted and things going well for Joshua and his army but it's a symbol that I think when we go out to oppose evil and fight against evil we need to do so remembering that victory and strength come from the Lord and the Lord alone. It's not our own might that enables us to prevail. But it is the Lord who gives the victory.

#### b. Jethro's Advice

One final thing from this section and that's chapter 18 which I've labeled as "Jethro's advice." Jethro was Moses' father-in-law and as Israel journeys, they encounter Jethro and you read in verse 7, "Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him and told him about their deliverance from Egypt." You read in verse 9 "He was delighted to hear about all the good things the Lord had done for Israel rescuing them from the hands of the Egyptians." He makes the interesting statement in verse 11, "Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all other gods, for he did this for those who mistreated Israel." But Jethro observes something that Moses was doing and gives him some advice. That's why I mention Jethro's advice. You read in verse 13, "The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning to evening. When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, 'What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?' Moses answered him, 'Because the people come to me to seek God's will. Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and laws.'" Now I want to call your attention to the reference to God's decrees

and laws being given by Moses prior to Sinai. I want to come back to this later in another connection but I just want to call your attention to that. “Moses father-in-law replied, ‘What you’re doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people’s representative before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them the decrees and laws.’”

Here is another reference to decrees and laws before Sinai. “Show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter.” You read in verse 24, “Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said.” They brought the difficult cases to Moses but he was then alleviated from having to adjudicate all of the disputes for this vast number of people. How many people there were we’ll talk about later. But the thing I want to call your attention to becomes important later: there were decrees and laws that Moses was teaching to Israel prior to the law giving at Mount Sinai and you read in verse 15, “Moses says, ‘The people come to me to seek God’s will.’” So Moses was God’s spokesman even prior to Mount Sinai. The significance of that I think becomes clearer as we go further and come back to it later.

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