

EXODUS 13: 17 – 14: 51

WHEN AND WHY GOD TAKES US ON A DIFFERENT PATH

History, MW and the Apostle Paul.

From last week: Nation building and a new culture

Looking at things from the outside can be of help, at times, but it can also lead to false impressions as to what is really happening. If we aren't walking with God – speaking to God, then we can misinterpret what is happening. And if we don't trust that He is sovereign, then we can live in fear at every turn. And that is no way to live.

17 Then it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, "Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt." 18 So God led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up in orderly

ranks out of the land of Egypt.

- They weren't led the shortest or easiest route. Egyptians and Philistines were everywhere.
- We are told why this would be an issue for the Israelites. They were in no position to fight, for one thing and they lacked the will to fight for another.
- So we see them leaving Egypt in an orderly manner. At this point there is no panic to be seen.

19 And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you."

- Joseph had asked that his bones be taken with Israel when they left. This was done in faith on his part.
- Have you ever stopped to ask, "What the effect of his coffin being on the journey with the Israelites would have had? Take into

account his life story – a life of faith and obedience even in a foreign prison. That would have ministered to them.

20 So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness. 21 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. 22 He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people.

- They leave Succoth, east of the Nile delta and head to Etham, where they camped. This is on the Eastern Egyptian border.
- They navigated according to **GPS: God's Positioning System.**
- Pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. This shielded them from the sun during the day and provided light by which to see and walk by night. So, at this point as they are just leaving Egypt, they are able to move 24/7.
- As we shall see later, the Angel of the Lord is in this cloudy/ fiery pillar. This is Jesus, the same angel that brought either protection or

death back in Egypt.

1 Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2 “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. 3 For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, ‘They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.’ 4 Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.” And they did so.

- God leads Israel to circle around, wandering aimlessly back and forth, making them look as though they were lost and confused.
- Pharaoh got wind of this. There was an Egyptian outpost not far from Migdol.
- But we are told why God did this. He did it in order that He may spring a trap. Pharaoh's pride grew and his heart hardened as he heard the news that the Israelites were wandering around aimlessly. I'm sure he

- thought that God was unable to lead them and they were now vulnerable.
- But this was just a ruse so that God would get the glory.

5 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?" 6 So he made ready his chariot and took his people with him. 7 Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them. 8 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. 9 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.

- Pharaoh is now second-guessing his decision to let Israel go. This was due to the news that they looked to be wandering aimlessly.

10 And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord. 11 Then they said to 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? 12 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.”

13 And Moses said to the people, “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. 14 The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.”

- Pharaoh and his army eventually caught up with Israel.
- The people were fine as long as there was no sign of Egypt in their rearview mirror, but

once the Egyptians caught up with them, the fear and complaints began.

- This is when Edward G. Robinson shows up. The people now fault Moses with everything and blame what they see as their impending deaths on him.
- This is why God didn't lead them in the way of the Philistines in the first place. God knew what He was doing. He knew they would fold like a cheap chair at the first sign of hard times. God knows His people.
- How many of us would have been an Edward G. Robinson, had we been there?

15 And the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward. 16 But 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. 17 And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen. 18 Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his

horsemen.”

- This is funny! God asks, “Why are you crying to me?”
- Just keep moving forward.
- This is part of the plan. Pharaoh will be neutralized and God will be exalted.
- This is the meta-narrative. This is the ultimate reason for all this. God is to be exalted through the deliverance of His people.

19 And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them. 20 So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all that night.

21 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. 22 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. 23 And the Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

24 Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the Lord looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled the army of the Egyptians. 25 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."

26 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen." 27 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. 28 Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them

remained. 29 But the children of Israel had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

- The denouement:
- The cloud moves so as to be a buffer between Israel and Egypt.
- Moses raises his hand and the waters part due to the east wind.
- Eventually the wind dries out the ground and the Israelites are able to walk through on dry ground.
- Once they are on the other side, Moses once again lifts his hand the waters come crashing down on the Egyptian army.
- We see God moving in the cloud as a buffer, allowing the ground to dry and Egypt to pass through. And we also see Moses raising his hand. God is moving both by himself in a supernatural way and also through Moses.
- God wants to work in both ways – through us as well as “on His own.”

30 So the Lord saved Israel that day out of the

hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 31 Thus Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt; so the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.

- Egyptians are then seen floating on the beach. This was an important visual lesson for the Israelites. They knew Egypt was in their past.
- God doesn't always lead us the way we, or the world would have us go. (Nonsensical)
- God knows His people. Their failure in a faith moment didn't take Him by surprise. All this was done for their benefit. God moves slowly for our own good. We don't have to get in a hurry to keep up; we merely have to move in obedience.
- Israel didn't have to fight. God fought and beat the Egyptian army by Himself.
- Question: Why didn't God just whip the Egyptians and the Philistines on the short route like He did at the Red Sea? Answer: the route was important.
- God sprang a trap for Pharaoh. There is always a reason why God leads us on any

route – let alone a circuitous one. To the world it may look as though we and/ or God don't know where we are going, but rest assured that He is leading us in the way that is best for us. Israel's entire journey took longer than it needed and went in what the world would have considered the wrong direction, but there was a purpose for it. Israel could not enter the Promised Land until they were ready for it. So when we are being led in what we see as circles, it simply means that we may not yet be ready. Don't get ahead of God.

- Throughout all this that we've read today, we must understand that though it didn't make sense from a human standpoint, God was working according to His plan and for Israel's best interest. In fact, God's plan and what is best for us are synonymous. We need to realize that.
- No matter how nonsensical or circuitous the route, God's plan is what is best for us.
- Let me encourage you if you are walking in circles...