

EXODUS 17: GEOGRAPHY, GENEALOGY and IMAGERY

INTRO:

Last week

4 So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!"

5 And the Lord said to Moses, "Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink."

And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

8 Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. 9 And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." 10 So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

REPHIDIM (PLACE) [Heb rĕpîdîm (רֵפִידִים)]. A station of the Exodus located between the Wilderness of Sin and the Wilderness of Sinai (Exod 17:1, 8; 19:2;

So let me just read Exodus 19:2, just so that you have that in your head.

Ex. 19: 1,2

1 In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai. 2 For they had departed from Rephidim, had come to the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the

wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain.

Numbers 33:14,15:

14 They moved from Alush and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink.

15 They departed from Rephidim and camped in the Wilderness of Sinai.

So you get the impression that Rephidim and Sinai are somewhat close. We don't have measurements or anything like that in here. But we kind of get that impression.

Jebel Musa is the traditional site of Sinai, way down in the "V" that's formed between the two forks of the Red Sea. And the other main one, (Jebel el Lawz) ones are, of course, further north—a variety of situations. But the key point at this point is to note that Rephidim had some proximity to Mount Sinai.

DT. 33:1,2

1 Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel

**before his death. 2 And he said:
“The Lord came from Sinai,
And dawned on them from Seir;
He shone forth from Mount Paran,
And He came with ten thousands of saints;
From His right hand
Came a fiery law for them.**

“Ten thousands of saints, (Holy Ones). That is a translation.

This passage is from whence the NT idea of the Law being given by angels comes.

Acts 7: 52,53

52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, 53 who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.”

Also: Hebrews 2: 1,2; Galatians 3: 19

But the Hebrew words there, (ten thousands of saints), when translated in the LXX, are transliterated because they are actually a place name. That name is Meribat (Meribah Kadesh) The point being that Meribah,

Rephidim and Kadesh are all in the same general area.

Numbers 20: 14 – 16

14 Now Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom. “Thus says your brother Israel: ‘You know all the hardship that has befallen us, 15 how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we dwelt in Egypt a long time, and the Egyptians afflicted us and our fathers. 16 When we cried out to the Lord, He heard our voice and sent the Angel and brought us up out of Egypt; now here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your border.

Numbers 33: 32 – 37

They moved from Bene Jaakan and camped at Hor Hagedgad. 33 They went from Hor Hagedgad and camped at Jotbathah. 34 They moved from Jotbathah and camped at Abronah. 35 They departed from Abronah and camped at Ezion Geber. 36 They moved from Ezion Geber and camped in the Wilderness of Zin, which is Kadesh. 37 They moved from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the boundary of the land of Edom.

Remember where Israel is said to be in Exodus 17: 1? **“Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, (Zin)”**

My point in all this is showing you that we have several toponyms, that is, place – names. Some of them can be identified, others cannot be. But all these places are in close proximity to Mt. Sinai. So when we find the places we know on a map, we know that Mt. Sinai has to be in the same general area. And that is a problem if you wish to place Mt. Sinai at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula or as many would like to do today, in Midian. Both of these places are just too far south of the region of Kadesh, Edom, Seir and Paran.

Show slide of map

Edom was Esau’s territory. It was linked to the region of Seir. If you have heard of Mt. Seir, but aren’t sure where it is, then you most likely have heard of its modern name: Petra. These places are in what is now known as Jordan. (Can go back to Dt. 33: 1,2) They were in the Negev, south of Canaan proper, in the days of the OT. Israel

essentially wandered around this area for 40 years.

Ps. 95: 8 – 11

**do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,
9 when your fathers put me to the test
and put me to the proof, though they had seen
my work.**

**10 For forty years I loathed that generation
and said, “They are a people who go astray in
their heart,**

and they have not known my ways.”

**11 Therefore I swore in my wrath,
“They shall not enter my rest.”**

Dt. 2: 8 – 15

**8 “And when we passed beyond our brethren,
the descendants of Esau who dwell in Seir,
away from the road of the plain, away from
Elath and Ezion Geber, we turned and passed
by way of the Wilderness of Moab. 9 Then the
Lord said to me, ‘Do not harass Moab, nor
contend with them in battle, for I will not give
you any of their land as a possession, because I
have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a**

possession.’ ”

10 (The Emim had dwelt there in times past, a people as great and numerous and tall as the Anakim. 11 They were also regarded as giants, like the Anakim, but the Moabites call them Emim. 12 The Horites formerly dwelt in Seir, but the descendants of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their place, just as Israel did to the land of their possession which the Lord gave them.)

13 “ ‘Now rise and cross over the Valley of the Zered.’ So we crossed over the Valley of the Zered. 14 And the time we took to come from Kadesh Barnea until we crossed over the Valley of the Zered was thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war was consumed from the midst of the camp, just as the Lord had sworn to them. 15 For indeed the hand of the Lord was against them, to destroy them from the midst of the camp until they were consumed.

And this is where they find themselves when the spies who were sent into Canaan return with their report.

Numbers 13: 25 – 33

25 And they returned from spying out the land after forty days.

26 Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. 27 Then they told him, and said: “We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. 28 Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. 29 The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan.”

30 Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, “Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.”

31 But the men who had gone up with him said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.” 32 And

they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, “The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. 33 There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”

If we look back at verse 26, we can see that the spies returned after 40 days to Kadesh. The same general area in which were just before reaching Mt. Sinai. And this passage brings us to the next point in our study. One of the giant clans mentioned were the “Amalekites.” And the land they possessed was in the general area of Sinai as well as in the part of the Promised Land in which the Israelite spies went.

Who was Amalek and who were the Amalekites?

8 Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

Gen. 36: 8 - 12

8 So Esau dwelt in Mount Seir. Esau is Edom.

9 And this is the genealogy of Esau the father of the Edomites in Mount Seir. 10 These were the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau, and Reuel the son of Basemath the wife of Esau. 11 And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz.

12 Now Timna was the concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son, and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These were the sons of Adah, Esau's wife.

Amalek is a descendant of Esau, who settled in the land of Edom, (the same general area about which we've been talking this morning) and eventually his tribe grew. And, as we have seen from the account of the Israelite spies, they were associated with the clans of giants.

“How is this?” you may ask. “If Esau and Jacob are both descendants of Abraham, then where do the giants enter the picture?”

We are told in Genesis that Esau took his wives from the Canaanites.

Gen. 36: 20,22

20 These were the sons of Seir the Horite who inhabited the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, 21 Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. These were the chiefs of the Horites, the sons of Seir, in the land of Edom.

22 And the sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam. Lotan's sister was Timna.

So we learn from that genealogy that Timna, who was the concubine of Eliphaz, who was the son of Esau, and Eliphaz's own mother was Adah, who was the daughter of the Hittites. We learn that Timna was a Horite, one of the native population of Edom. And the Horites were a people group who lived in the hill country of Seir, according to Genesis 32:3, which says, "Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom." So Seir is a sub-geographical set of Edom. Seir was part of Edom.

There is a lot more to what happened geographically concerning the giant clans, but the short story is that they had to be cleared out of the Promised Land when Israel first crossed the Jordan under Joshua's leadership. God had already been cleaning house through Esau and others

before Israel had gotten there.

Amalek – patriarch of the Amalekites – a people with at least some connection to the giant clans living in that region has now confronted Israel somewhere close to Mt. Sinai. We may suppose that the fight is over water. We can't be too sure. I personally feel that there is more here.

If Israel is in the general vicinity of Mt Sinai, then they are close to “Holy Ground – sacred space.”

Mountains, gardens and temples are the abode of God. (gods)

This area is obviously infested with giant clans, as is most of the Promised Land. So Israel is now about to rid the immediate area of Mt. Sinai of this clan in particular – clearing the sacred space around Mt. Sinai.

So now back to the main text.

8 Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. 9 And Moses said to Joshua, “Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.” 10 So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And

Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. 13 So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

14 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." 15 And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner; 16 for he said, "Because the Lord has sworn: the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

Israel is now in this battle with the Amalekites. Joshua had chosen warriors from among the tribes. Moses and others had then gone to the top of the hill. And like a general, Moses watched the battle. But he wasn't just watching. Look again at

the B portion of verse 10.

. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. 13 So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

We see that as long as Moses' hands were raised, Israel prevailed in battle. But when his arms grew tired, then Amalek would prevail. But this isn't just about Moses' hands. Throughout Exodus, Moses and Aaron have had a staff. Remember from a couple weeks ago when we talked about tree imagery and Edenic imagery? If not, then you can see, read or listen to the message in order to catch up with us. Let's look back at verse 9.

"Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand."

Moses wasn't just standing there with his hands in the air. He was holding the "rod of God" in his

hands. And if we put that together with the last few verses of the chapter, we get the bigger picture.

14 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."

15 And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner; 16 for he said, "Because the Lord has sworn: the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

Moses orders that this is to be written down and then he builds an altar. Look at what he names it, "The Lord is my banner."

A banner was what some call a standard. It was a sort of battle flag, which would have been flown during a battle. The flag represented who was fighting. (examples)

Israel's battle flag was God, Himself. God controlled the battle.

Meta-narrative

Mt. Sinai was a holy place – sacred space. God “lived” on that mountain until the tabernacle was built. Then He “lived” in the Temple. The Promised Land was infested with giant clans who were in God’s space – the land He chose as a beachhead in His plan to take back the nations, so that He would have a family on earth, as in Heaven. In order to take back that sacred space, Israel would have to conquer the land. But though they were in the fight, it was God that was actually fighting the battles. It was only when Moses held up the “rod of God” that they would prevail. Whenever Israel went into a battle in her own power, she lost. And she lost badly.

Israel is learning valuable lessons on their journey. And many of those lessons are also valuable to us. Why? Because we also have a part in taking back the nations. That is what evangelism and discipleship are all about – taking back the nations. That is, winning the lost to a relationship with Jesus Christ. But it can’t be done in our own power. Unless God is given the glory; unless He is lifted up, then we are fighting a losing battle. Go! Walk in the power of the Spirit! Know your task

and show the world what being a child of God is really like and about.

Israel had the advantage, numerically. And sometimes we look at a situation and think we have the advantage due to our abilities, skills or financial situation. But even when we think we have the advantage, we are weak and fighting under our own power if we haven't consulted God. If He isn't brought into the battle, we can lose and we are on dangerous ground. We are a temple and therefore are sacred space. God now resides within us and we must think and live that way. So go, knowing that God is with you in that sacred space.

Hittite, Oholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite...

²⁰ These are the sons of Seir [MH: there's a familiar name or term] the Horite,

the inhabitants of the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ²¹ Dishon, Ezer, and

Dishan; these are the chiefs of the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of

Edom. [MH: Horites are in Seir and Edom... hmm...] ²² The sons of Lotan were

Hori and Hemam; and Lotan's sister was Timna.

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