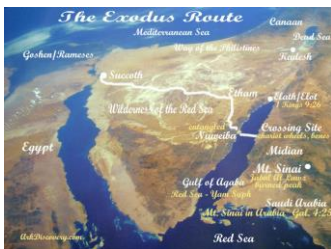


## Manna In The Wilderness

Today's scripture is from the Book of Exodus. It is about God's power, provision, care, and relationship with his people, the Israelites. This story mirrors the experiences of all individuals symbolically.

During that time, the Israelites were slaves under Pharaoh and the Egyptian empire. They suffered and cried out to God. God heard their prayers and chose Moses and empowered him to speak on God's behalf to Pharaoh, saying, "Let my people go." Pharaoh resisted. God sent many miraculous disasters upon Egypt until Pharaoh finally allowed the Israelites to leave. However, as they fled, Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army to destroy the people, committing genocide. There was a dramatic turn. God divided the red sea; the Hebrews were able to cross the red sea like a dry land. When they crossed the Red Sea, the water covered the Egyptian chariots.

Here are some archaeological proofs that the Israelites crossed the Red Sea and that the story is real. It was not a fabricated story or an exaggeration. As you can see on the map, the white line in the middle of the Sinai Peninsula marks the route. In the middle of the Gulf of Aqaba, the white line continues as shown. Scholars explored the ocean floor with scuba divers and discovered ancient chariot wheels on the seabed. I saw this on the Discovery Channel.



The Israelites had freedom. And this takes us to the Exodus story in chapter 16. The Israelites are now in the desert for about four, five and six weeks. Question: how long was their journey in the wilderness? Yes, 40 years.

Scholars tell us that the quickest way from Goshen, where they start, lower Egypt towards Jericho, the Promised Land, was this path right here called the way to the land of the Philistines. Some scholars estimate that had they had gone on a straight line without really appropriate rest and stops, it would've taken them about two weeks. However, This journey of Israelites took 40 years. God's pillar of cloud and pillar of fire led them to a totally different direction from the speediest way toward Canaan, the promised land, where milk and honey flows.

**1st Lesson:** If we're honest, the story makes us a little uncomfortable. We don't want to wait for 40 years for the journey that takes only two weeks. We're not fans of waiting. When we have goals, and agenda in our life, we want to get it as fast as we can. We care so much about our destination. Why God let them wait 40 years? Their journey symbolically is similar to ours. What does God want from us in the desert?

**Desert** is important place for God's people. **And desert is the time that we don't want to be. Desert is the place that we never thought we would be.** It is a place where there is no water and no life at all. If God, who is good, leads us to the wilderness, then it must be a place of blessing even if it is difficult. The wilderness is a valley of life. Obviously, the destination is not the first goal of God. **God cares more about the elevation of our spirits as in Genesis 1:26. "Then God said, "Let us make man in Our image, Let's make them just like us."** It is God's only desire for human beings. God is single minded for one purpose: to make us like God.

What is your current valley? A broken relationship? Serious illness? A disaster that you cannot cope with? Loss of Job? A loved one struggling with addiction? Or perhaps you're facing consequences from mistakes you've made. Also, the desert sometimes comes without any discernible reasons too. **So, the first things, whenever anything happens in our life-circumstances, the purest thing you can do is to establish yourself in the love of God. How?** If you are in fear or anxiety, it is the state that you are taken by the spirit of fear or anxiety. Because you are taken, it is not so simple to come out of the state. That is why, after you pray, you are in continuous fear.

One of my former congregations said that "We can only pray, but we cannot have real peace. If we can, it is extremely short." Another person next to her said, "Right, we just try!" Friends! Listen. If you pray in fear, you cannot get what you want, peace of heart and mind. **Wait until you have the right connection with the Lord. It is to establish yourself in the love of God again. "Father I just want you to know that I love you. And I trust you. And I know that you are with me, and I know that you are for me."** By praising and worshipping God, you find peace.

Praise God in the middle of stress and fear. Yes, Praise God! Do not ask God to come into your circumstance but establish who you are in him at first. Then you will feel peace. If you still have fear and anxiety, which is in outer men mode, then worship more, until you can have full peace. If you find peace, your prayer is automatically answered. **We should pray always in peace! Find peace. Wait until you find peace wherever you are.** Usually I stop everything, I hide myself in an isolated place. And enter an intense prayer and worship of connection. Jesus is already interceding for us, and the Holy Spirit groans in prayer, and now, let our new man, inner man, joins for prayer, and pray with God.

**Every circumstance is about one thing. It's about you getting an elevation in who you are. God constantly transforms you.** It is God's relentless nature that he has. He sees you as a new person. He only responds to the new person, inner man. Just trust God's eternal goodness, his perfection in guiding us, and molding our souls. It is the place of safety, growth, and a place where everything works together for good. And this place gives you prominence. Relax, let it wash over you. And if your rhythm is aligned with God's rhythm, we will find peace. Through this process, we learn patience in the wilderness. We will get to enjoy God wherever we are.

**2nd lesson:** We read in the scripture how the Israelites grumbled and complained. When we don't get what we want, our speech and thinking can become very negative and toxic. Negativity starts to seep out. Have you ever had a disagreement with a friend or loved one, and said things that were not entirely true or exaggerated? Such as "You always do this!" Strangely, these words start to have an impact on me, and can turn me into a monstrous version of myself, making it feel real. If you think about it carefully, you can sense that there is a certain power driving you in that direction and adding fuel to your negative emotions.

As we read in the story, there's something that becomes dangerous when they start distorting reality, manipulating stories in their skewed perception. What do they say? They say, "Man, God should have killed us back there." Really? And then, they say, "Back then, at least we had pots and pots of meat." That's a lie. It was all fabricated. So, when all of these things combine together, it becomes incredibly dangerous. And it leads us now to our second point. And it's this, we have to be very wise, beware of a culture and life of critiquing, grumbling and complaining.

And the next thing you know, it festers, and festers, and festers. Our scripture today says the entire assembly began to complain. And that doesn't happen by itself. It happens likely with a small group of people. That becomes contagious, and it grows and grows. Let me give you an example. When I think about examples of what they were complaining about, here are my guesses. **"I'm so hungry and tired. I want to go back to Egypt. You're a horrible leader. It's all your fault. You always fail us."** Can anybody just do me a favor, and just, as a complainer, read these lines for me. Go for it. **"I'm so hungry and tired. I want to go back to Egypt. You're a horrible leader. It's all your fault. You always fail us."** Okay. So, hold on, stay standing. Hey friends, this time I want to ask you all follow the same complaint. Ready? Go for it. **"I'm so hungry and tired. I want to go back to Egypt. You're a horrible leader. It's all your fault. You always fail us."** Do you hear that it all became personal suddenly! Yes. Big difference. But you got to realize that, when the Bible says the entire assembly, it doesn't just happen like this. It starts with a small group of people, and then it becomes contagious.

So, be wise that you're not that person. Is this word aligned to the word of God? Not at all. Aligned to the Holy Spirit? Not at all. Align to the spirit of Love? Not at all. Words are powerful. We should not speak even for yourself any negative word, because it really has power to comply. Words have great power to create. Speak no negative words! It is biblical principle.

**This negativity should disappear at any corner of the church building, in the Sanctuary, hallway, fellowship hall, parking lot. Nowhere! It doesn't have a place in the house of God!** If you hear any critique, you stop them. Otherwise, you yourself become influenced. Stop those words. Don't be that person and be careful that you are not around people who begin to speak toxicity into your own life and into the church life. The habit of Israelites' complaining repeated and again until they reached the Canaan. Those who complaint could not enter the promised land. They all died in the desert.

What's the remedy? What's the antidote of grumbling and complaints? Worship God! Worship God as faith community! As a small group, and worshipping community, we gather together as people of all backgrounds, ages, generations, ethnicities! The center of the story is God, is Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit. And we remember together all that God has done in the past, today, and what God will do in the future. May only God be praised!