

*The Books of Moses
Fact or Fiction?*

Session 8

*The Exodus from
Egypt*

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The Exodus from Egypt

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Joseph in Egypt.....	1
Slide into Slavery.....	2
Moses and the Plagues.....	4
The Passover.....	6
The Exodus Begins.....	7
Where are They?.....	8
And Where Are They Going?.....	9
Other Exodus Routes and Crossing Places.....	11
Sea of Reeds, Balla Lake, Bitter Lake.....	11
Crossing at the Gulf of Suez.....	13
Crossing at the Straits of Tiran.....	14
The Journey to Nuweiba Beach.....	17
Crossing the Soph Sea.....	23
Israel in Midian.....	27
Some Issues to Consider.....	28
Archaeological Evidence to Support This Crossing Place.....	28
Israelite Population Growth.....	30
How Could Pharaoh's Military Catch up to the Israelites?.....	31
Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Exodus.....	32
Could They Have Crossed the Soph Sea Using Boats?.....	34
Conclusion.....	35

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and Jehovah caused the sea to depart by a mighty spirit from the east that night. He made the sea into dry land, and the waters were split. 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

Introduction

In our last session we looked at Nimrod, Babel and the Confusion of Languages, which resulted in the dispersion of various descendants of Noah to their lands throughout the world.

This session, we will quickly review how the Israelites became slaves in Egypt, and focus on how that led to their Exodus via a series of miracles.

Joseph in Egypt

There are traditions that Harran, the likely site of Babel, was named after Abraham's brother, Haran, and Abraham was born in the Harran plain area. Eventually, one of Abraham's descendants, Joseph, was sold as a slave and wound up in Egypt in about 2218 After Creation, or 1787 BCE. This is about 212 years after the Babel event we looked at last session. Joseph was eventually put into prison, but from there he was taken to Pharaoh to interpret his dream. God had given Joseph the meaning of Pharaoh's dream of seven fat cows that were swallowed up by seven starving cows, which remained starving. There was to be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of drought, and Jehovah also gave Joseph wisdom in how to use the situation to save many people from death during the drought and also to use it to the Pharaoh's advantage (Genesis chapters 37 to 41). It is very likely that the Pharaoh in question was Djoser and Joseph's Egyptian name was Imhotep.¹ Djoser was grateful to Joseph and gave Goshen² to his family as a thank you when they moved to Egypt during the years of drought. Goshen was the best

¹ For details of the corrections needed to the Egyptian timeline and the resulting correspondence with the Bible, see www.creationsixdays.net/2013_ICC_Habermehl_Joseph.pdf and *Exodus, Myth or History*, by David Rohl.

² Means *drawing near* in Hebrew. This area is also called Rameses by the Egyptians as in Gen 47:11.

The Books of Moses

land in the Nile river delta (see Genesis 45:1 to 21). It is likely that all the Israelites moved to Egypt about 2237 AC (1768 BCE).

The thank you was well deserved. Joseph, as Vizier to the Pharaoh, had made Egypt into a Superpower and Pharaoh the owner of virtually all of Egypt. For some time the Israelites were respected because of what Joseph had done for the Pharaohs, but over time there was a change of dynasty and a change of heart in the Egyptian rulership.

Slide into Slavery

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. Exodus 1:8

As the Egyptians' memory of Joseph waned, things began to go wrong for the Israelites. By about 2375 After Creation, or 1630 BCE the Israelites have, within 133 years, become slaves in Egypt. And despite desperate attempts by this Pharaoh to kill off all the male Israelite children, their numbers continued to grow rapidly even while the Egyptian oppression and cruelty grew:

And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel are abundant and mightier than we; come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happens, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land."

Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built supply cities for Pharaoh, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel.

So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with brutality. And they made their lives bitter with

severe bondage; in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of work in the field. All their work in which they made them serve was with brutality.

Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of one was Shiprah and the name of the other Puah; and he said, "When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstools, if it is a son, then you will kill him; but if it is a daughter, then she will live." But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive.

So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, and saved the male children alive?"

And the midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives come to them." Therefore God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied and grew very mighty. And so it was, because the midwives feared God, that He provided households for them.

So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, "Every son who is born to the Hebrews you will cast into the waterways, and every daughter you will save alive."
Exodus 1:9 to 22

This command led to the infant Moses being placed in a waterproof basket and put into the Pharaoh's daughter's bathing pool on the side of the Nile. Moses then grows up in the palace, but when he is 40 he strikes and kills an Egyptian who was beating an Israelite. He has to flee for his life. He spends the next 40 years living in Midian as a shepherd, on the east side of the Soph Sea (Gulf of Aqaba).

So another eighty years have elapsed, and it is now about 2451 After Creation, or 1554 BCE.

Moses and the Plagues

It is in Midian that Moses sees the burning bush which is not consumed and Jehovah commands him to return to Egypt to lead the Israelites out:

And Jehovah said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey....

"Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

So He said, "I will certainly be with you. And this will be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will serve God on this mountain." Exodus 3:7 to 12

Moses and his brother Aaron return to Egypt and God brings ten plagues of increasing severity on the Egyptians, until Pharaoh finally allows them to leave.

The plagues are:

- 1: Nile river turns to blood for seven days. Exodus 7:14-25
- 2: Frogs by the millions come out of the Nile. Exo 8:1-15
- 3: Lice from the dust. Exo 8:16-20

The Exodus

5

- 4: Flies everywhere, but not on the Israelites, nor any of the following plagues. Exo 8:21-32
- 5: Livestock: all die from diseases. Exo 9:1-7
- 6: Boils cover the Egyptians and their new animals. Exo 9:8-12
- 7: Severe hail kills all people and animals outside, and destroys their barley and flax. Exo 9:13-35
- 8: Locusts eat all the plants that remain. Exo 10:1-20
- 9: Blackness, total lack of light for three days and nights. Exodus 10:21-29
- 10: Passover, all the first-born of people and animals die. Exo 11:1 to 12:51

Every one of these plagues is a direct attack on one or more of the Egyptian gods, and against Pharaoh, who claims to be a god. These supposed gods are named in Figure 1.

The 10 Plagues - Jehovah Versus the Gods of Egypt		
PLAGUE	GODS OF EGYPT	INTERESTING NOTES
1 WATER TURNED TO BLOOD Exodus 7:14-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Khnum - Guardian of river's source. • Hapi - Spirit of the Nile. • Osiris - Nile was his bloodstream. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duplicated by the Egyptians. • Occurs in Goshen where Israelites lived. • Dead fish — putrid smell
2 FROGS Exodus 8:1-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hapi } Frog goddess to Egypt. • Heqt } Both related to fertility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duplicated by the Egyptians • Occurs in Goshen where Israelites lived.
3 LICE Exodus 8:16-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seb - The earth god of Egypt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not duplicated by the Egyptians • Occurs in Goshen where Israelites lived. • Attributed to the "finger of God."
4 FLIES Exodus 8:20-32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uatchit - The fly god of Egypt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God now makes a separation between the Egyptians and the Israelites. • No more plagues will come upon the Israelites.
5 DISEASE ON CATTLE Exodus 9:1-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ptah } Egyptian gods associated • Hathor } bulls and cows. • Mnevis • Amon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affects property. • Death of livestock.
6 BOILS Exodus 9:8-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sekhmet - Egyptian goddess of Epidemics • Serapis } Egyptian gods of healing. • Imhotep 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affects physical bodies. • Pharaoh's magicians cannot even appear in court.
7 HAIL Exodus 9:13-35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nut - Egyptian sky goddess. • Isis & Seth - Egyptian agriculture deities. • Shu - Egyptian god of the atmosphere. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical uniqueness for such a storm in Egypt. • Pharaoh confesses his sin but later changes his mind.
8 LOCUSTS Exodus 10:1-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serapia - Egyptian deity protector from Locusts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pharaoh offers a compromise. • The compromise is rejected. • Pharaoh again confesses his sin.
9 DARKNESS Exodus 10:21-29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re } Egyptian sun gods. • Atum } • Horus } • Thoth - Egyptian moon god. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dark in Egypt at midday. • Apparently light was still provided for the Israelites in Goshen.
10 DEATH OF FIRSTBORN Exodus 12:29-36	This plague was a judgment on all of Egypt's gods, including Pharaoh himself. In Exodus 1, Pharaoh had killed the sons of Israel. Now the Lord kills the firstborn sons of the Egyptians (Exodus 11-12). Pharaoh will now let Israel go. He will later lose his army to death in the Red Sea (Exodus 14:4-31).	

Barnes' Bible Charts

Figure 1: Jehovah's Judgements on the Egyptian 'Gods': a Barnes Bible Chart.

In every case, Jehovah shows that He is the true God and the Egyptian ‘gods’ are powerless frauds. In the final plague, all the Egyptians, including Pharaoh and many of whom were murdering the sons of the Israelites, have their own first-born killed.

The Passover

As the last plague is the trigger that begins the Exodus, we will look at it in more detail:

It is Jehovah’s Passover:

‘For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from man and beast; and I will execute judgement on all the gods of Egypt: I am Jehovah.

‘Now the blood will be for a sign for you on the houses which you are in. And I will see the blood and I will pass over³ you; and the plague will not be on you to destroy you when I strike in the land of Egypt.⁴

‘So this day will be a memorial for you; and you will celebrate it as a feast to Jehovah throughout your generations. You will celebrate it as an everlasting statute. Seven days you will eat unleavened bread. Indeed, on the first day you will remove leaven from your houses. For anyone who eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that soul will be cut off from Israel. Exo 12:12 to 15

³ This is the “pass over” from which the “Passover” acquires its name. As this happens during the “Night of Solemn Observance” on the First Day of Unleavened Bread, this is also why the First Day is also often called the Passover, as well as the preceding Preparation Day on which the Passover Lamb was sacrificed.

⁴ John 1:29, Acts 8:32, 1 Pet 1:19

The Exodus

7

And it came to pass at midnight that Jehovah struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock.

So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead. Then he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, "Rise and go out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel. And go, serve Jehovah as you have said. Exodus 12:29 to 31

The Exodus Begins

So while the Egyptians were burying their dead, God began leading them out of Egypt:

So it came to pass, on that very same day, that Jehovah led the host of the children of Israel away from the land of Egypt. Exodus 12:51

That 'very same day' was the First Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. But how could God lead out slaves who were scattered throughout Egypt? Before the last plague fell on Egypt, God had them recover the value of their work while slaves from the Egyptians and then gathered them all into Goshen to observe the Passover (See Exodus 11:1 to 12:14) God also commanded them to always remember what He had done, and made it into the Mark of God:

"It will be a sign to you on your hand and a reminder between your eyes,⁵ that Jehovah's Instructions may be in

⁵ These are the Marks of God, 'the hand' signifying that we keep and 'between the eyes' that we know Jehovah's Instructions. This passage ties these signs to keeping the Passover. Others tie them more broadly to

The Books of Moses

your mouth; for with a strong hand Jehovah brought you out of Egypt. You will therefore keep this statute in its season from year to year. Exodus 13:9 & 10

First the Israelites assembled at Rameses and then began their march out of Egypt:

Then the children of Israel departed from Rameses towards Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, plus their families. A mixed crowd went up with them also, and flocks and herds; a great deal of livestock. Exodus 12:37 & 38

So we have two landmarks: Rameses, where they assembled and prepared to depart, and Succoth, their first stop on their Exodus.

Where are They?

Rameses is the Egyptian name for the land of Goshen, the land which Djoser gave to them (Gen 45:10 and 47:11). So they assembled on their own land. They did not assemble at Raamses, which was one of the pharaoh's guarded supply cities.

It is very likely that the Pharaoh in power during the Exodus was Amenemhat IV and he, or his predecessor, built Raamses to control the Israelites. Amenemhat IV was the last powerful pharaoh before the near total collapse of Egypt near the end of the 12th dynasty. Both he and his son appear to have disappeared without a trace. Soberkneferu, his successor and a woman, ignored his existence and linked her claim to power to his father, Amenemhat III. This would be consistent with her father dying in disgrace and her brother dying

keeping and understanding Jehovah's Instructions, such as Deut 6:8, Deut 11:8, Rev 7:3, Rev 14:1 and Rev 22:4. The Beast's marks are similar: its marks on its followers' hands and between their eyes means that they obey its commands and believe what the beast tells them (Rev 13:16, Rev 20:4).

young, as the Exodus account indicates. See Habermehl, *Revising the Egyptian Chronology*, for more details.

Goshen was the area around the modern city of Qantir, Markaz Fakous, Egypt today. Extensive excavation at the nearby Tell el-Daba by the Austrians, led by Manfred Bietak, have revealed the remains of a large city built in a distinctive Israelite style, and which appears to have been suddenly abandoned (Location 30.7864N 31.8231E, Elev 9m). The Egyptians later called the city Avaris, and it seems that the Hyksos, who invaded the almost defenseless Egypt after the Exodus, then made the abandoned city their capital and built over it.⁶ Nearby Qantir was the site of Raamses.

And Where Are They Going?

So we have the starting point for their Exodus. However, the Israelites did not take the northern road towards the Promised Land of Canaan:

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. So God led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Soph Sea. And the children of Israel marched⁷ out of the land of Egypt. Exodus 13:17 & 18

So we know that their first stop was at Succoth, and that they are being taken towards the Soph Sea. And of course there are many

⁶ See *Exodus, Myth or History*, by David Rohl. Since then, 30 more abandoned and buried Israelite cities have been found in this area.

⁷ The Hebrew indicates that they marched out in an orderly manner organised like an army. There is nothing to indicate that they obtained weapons until after crossing the Gulf of Aqaba.

ideas about where Succoth was, and even about what is the Soph Sea.

To get some idea of where to look for Succoth, first we need to sort out where the Soph Sea is. Much of the confusion comes from mistranslations of Soph Sea. The Hebrew is יָמָה סוֹפִי *Yam Soph*, and everyone agrees that Yam means Sea. The scholars who translated the Hebrew into the Greek Septuagint about 200 BCE rendered it as the Red Sea, indicating what they thought it referred to. But some modern scholars think that Soph is derived from an Egyptian word which means Reeds, so they render the phrase as the Sea of Reeds. This encourages them look for a very shallow sea or lake full of reeds.⁸ Others think the word is derived from a Hebrew root meaning “red”, so they translate it as the Red Sea. But the usual Hebrew meaning for Soph is “Ending”, so we have the Sea of Ending. Various Bible verses confirm this is the sea called the Gulf of Aqaba today. One is Exodus 10:19, when a strong westerly wind blows the locusts of the plague from Egypt into the Soph Sea and drowns them. This means the Soph Sea is east of Egypt and fairly large to drown all of those locusts. The most important one is 1 Kings 9:26, which talks of King Solomon’s shipyard on the Soph Sea. The remains of Solomon’s shipyard have been located at the northern end of the Gulf of Aqaba, which the Israelis call the Gulf of Elat(h) today. And in Exodus 23:31, we are told that the Land of Israel will extend down to this area of the Soph Sea. And Solomon’s shipyard is indeed where the sea ends. Soph Sea probably also includes all of the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf. See *The Exodus Case*, by Dr. Lennart Moller and *The Lost Sea of Exodus* by Glen Fritz for much more detail.

And why would Jehovah take them in this direction, which actually takes them farther from the Promised Land? They are going there to worship Jehovah at the mountain where Moses saw the burning bush, as we were told earlier in Exodus 3:12. And where is this mountain?

⁸ We will discuss this option later in the context of the crossing.

–In Midian, which is on the east side of the Soph Sea (Gulf of Aqaba). Jehovah plans to give them their laws and organise them into a nation there, as we will explore in the next session. Then they are to move north to Canaan and take over the Promised Land.

But for completeness, we will briefly look at the other proposed routes and crossing places.

Other Exodus Routes and Crossing Places

Sea of Reeds, Balla Lake, Bitter Lake

Rohl essentially follows the Sea of Reeds scenario, in which he claims that Moses made numerous errors in leading the Israelites out of Egypt, and after several days was eventually trapped only a day's walk north-east from where they began, on the west shore of the small and shallow Balla Lakes. This is on the Philistine route that the Bible says they DID NOT take (Exodus 13:17 above). There are also no hills or mountains in this area to trap the Israelites, so crossing these lakes would not have been their only option for escape.

Rohl then suggests that a strong wind blew back the water, like a natural event that happened in 1882 which exposed about a seven mile long section of a lake bottom which was five feet (1.5 m) deep. Rohl claims the actual Balla(h) Lake crossing they used was only half a mile (800m) across and up to ten feet (3m) deep. My Figure 2 shows his location, which today has a more generous 4.4 km (2.7 mi) crossing point. This small shallow lake, entirely in Egypt, is clearly not the Soph Sea, as explained above. There could be no walls of water, and it is difficult to see how the slow return of the water as the wind died down across his wide and short crossing would drown anyone, let alone the elite of the Egyptian army. And once out of the lake bed, the cavalry could quickly ride the short distance around the lake, recapture their slaves and slaughter their leaders. And all this

would happen within Egypt. There would have been no Exodus. Rohl proposes this pathetic scenario so he can offer “a rational, non-miraculous explanation” of the Exodus crossing.⁹ His crossing is indeed non-miraculous, but it is not rational nor scriptural. One wonders why he bothered to write a book about these miracles when he clearly does not really believe in the accuracy of the Bible, in Jehovah God or in God’s ability to perform miracles.



Figure 2: Seed of Reeds Crossing Point as proposed by Rohl. He must increase the lake size to make it seem even slightly plausible.

Similar problems also apply to the scheme which suggests they crossed at a neck of the nearby Lake Tanis at Kedia (by Carl Drews). Ditto for the Bitter Lakes, which are only about 85 km (53 mi), a 17 hour walk from Rameses, but southward this time. Again, they are too close, there are no mountains or wilderness to entrap them, the lakes can easily be ridden around and these lakes are not the Soph Sea.

⁹ Rohl, pg 189-190

And every one of these lake crossings fail on these Scriptures too:

Are you not the One who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; that made the depths of the sea a road for the redeemed to cross over? Isa 51:10

But I am Jehovah your God, who divided the sea whose waves roared. Jehovah of Hosts is His Name. Isaiah 51:15

These small lakes are not the sea, do not contain the great deep and are not capable of having waves large enough to roar.

Crossing at the Gulf of Suez

Ashton and Down, on pg 204 of *Unwrapping the Pharaohs*, do somewhat better. They suggest a crossing that begins at modern Adabiya, close to the top of the Gulf of Suez. At least they do not use the way of the Philistines. And if one assumes that the Israelites only walked by day, and camped each night, it is a reasonable 150 km (93 mi), or 30 hour (3 day) distance from Rameses. And the crossing is about 9 km (5.6 mi), which would be possible. But as Figure 3 shows, it is a senseless crossing place. A mounted armed force could ride around the top of the Gulf as quickly as the Israelites could walk through the divided waters, so there would be no need for Pharaoh's military to enter the dangerous looking channel in the water. They picked this location because the water was "only a maximum of 26 feet [8 m] deep". Apparently their god couldn't handle water any deeper than this.

Ain Sokhna would seem a better Suez crossing location, as it is a significant distance down the Gulf and their way farther south is largely blocked by mountains. It is a 185 km (115 mi), 37 hour walk, which could be achieved in three hard days. This Suez crossing

would be 31 kilometers (19.3 mi) across and up to 60 meters (197 ft) deep. However, it would be impossible for the Israelites to walk the 31 kilometers in the few hours that the Bible says they had.

And both of these locations suffer from another fatal flaw: Moses was taking the Israelites to Midian, which was west-south-west from Rameses. Why would he, or God, take them south, and thus deeper into Egyptian territory, when they were fleeing from Egypt?

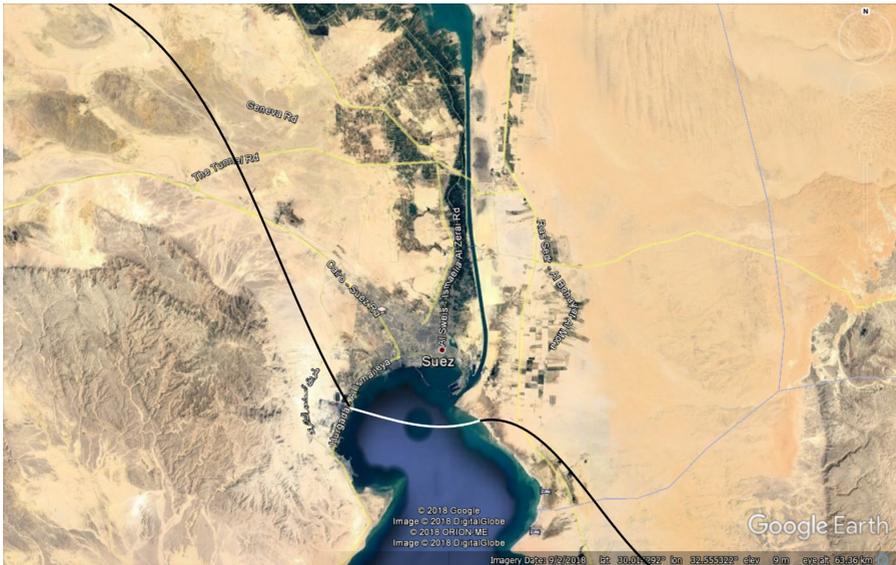


Figure 3: Ashton and Down’s Gulf of Suez Crossing Path. The Egyptian army could have easily ridden around the top of the Gulf rather than enter the path through the water.

Crossing at the Straits of Tiran

The Straits of Tiran are at the south end of Gulf of Aqaba. This crossing point is championed by Steve Rudd. Details are at <http://www.bible.ca/archeology/bible-archeology-exodus-route-straits-of-tiran.htm> and in Figure 4.

It is 560 km (348 mi) from Rameses to Nabq-Tiran. It would take 123.6 hours or 5.15 day and night (24 hour) walks to cover this distance, which is more time than they had, as I believe they crossed the Sea on the Last Great Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (see below). There was not enough time to have the two rest camps mentioned in Scripture.



Figure 4: Straits of Tiran Exodus and Crossing, by Steve Rudd. Note the great distance to the Straits and the doubling back from ‘Etham’.

Rudd avoids this problem by giving them 25 days to very slowly walk to this site, even though he admits that as they only had two camps, they mostly walked day and night. But walking at this slow rate (averaging 22.4 km/day or 13.9 mi/day, less than 1km/hr), the

Egyptian cavalry could have caught up with them two or three weeks before they reached the Straits.

To trap them on his route, he has the Israelites march about 20 km past their crossing point, wait there for the Egyptians to catch up to them (review the previous sentence), then march back down to the crossing point. None of these details are consistent with the Bible account. And Figure 5 shows that the proposed Strait crossing routes have sections which have steep slopes, making this crossing route dangerous, and probably impossible.

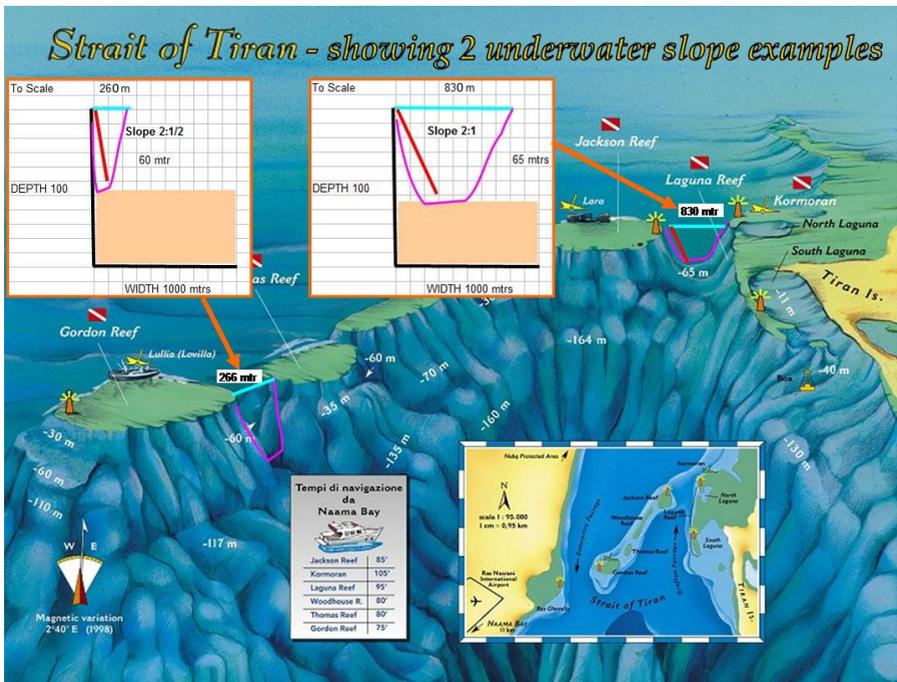


Figure 5: Steep Slopes making the Tiran Crossing dangerous. However, note that the vertical scale is actually ten times the horizontal (1000m wide vs 100m deep), so though still too steep, it is not as severe as these graphics make it appear. (Source unknown)

So, the only real contender for the Soph Sea is the Gulf of Aqaba, and as we will see, the only viable crossing point is from Nuweiba Beach.

The Journey to Nuweiba Beach

Now we have a starting point and a destination. How did they get from Rameses to the Soph Sea? Where was Succoth—their first stop?

Succoth was a stopping place on the road from the Nile Delta to the top of the Soph Sea (Gulf of Aqaba). As we are looking at an enormous group of about 2.5 million people plus their livestock, we need a large, flatish area for them to set up camp. Just for the Israelites, they would have required an area of at least 5 square kilometers. To allow space for the mixed crowd and the animals, they may have needed three or four times this area. So, where on the route do we find such camping areas at the distances that would be required? A likely place is near El Hassana at 30.445N 33.128E Elev 303m (994 ft). The cross that appears on the ground at this location is likely an abandoned airfield. It is a 147 km (91 mi), 30 hour walk from Quantir.

So they took their journey from Succoth¹⁰ and camped in Etham¹¹ at the edge of the wilderness.

And Jehovah 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. Exodus 13:20 to 22

This is an important aspect of their journey: Jehovah led them, and they were strengthened and enabled to travel both day and night.

¹⁰ Means “Booths”

¹¹ Means “Their plowshare with them”

Even their walking to the Soph Sea crossing point involved miraculous support. They needed water, as well as the health and strength required to walk day and night. They brought enough food for the trip to the Soph Sea, and the animals could graze when they stopped for breaks and the two camps. But God provided the other things for them and their animals. Here are some verses which confirm this:

‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself.
Exodus 19:4

So it was, when the cloud remained only from evening until morning; when the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they would journey; whether by day or by night, whenever the cloud was taken up, they would journey. Numbers 9:21

He also brought them out with silver and gold, and there was none who stumbled among His tribes. Psalm 105:37

The earth shook; the heavens also dropped rain at the presence of God; Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel. You, O God, sent an offering of heavy rain, whereby You established Your inheritance when it was weary. Psalm 68:8 & 9

As we saw above, Etham was on the edge of the wilderness. It was 203 km (126 mi), a 41 hr walk from Succoth. Etham is also where they turned off the main road, as detailed in this passage from the Book of Numbers:

They departed from Rameses in the first new moon, on the fifteenth day of the first new moon; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with

boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians. For the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom Jehovah had killed among them. Also on their gods Jehovah had executed judgements.

Then the children of Israel moved from Rameses and camped at Succoth. They departed from Succoth and camped at Etham, which is on the edge of the wilderness.

They moved from Etham and turned to Pi Hahiroth, which faces Baal Zephon; and they camped before Migdol. Numbers 33:3 to 7

Etham is a better defined location than Succoth, and is at 29.6504N 34.6913E Elev 696m (2283 ft). It is called Nakhl today. Like Succoth, it also has a large flat area where there was plenty of room for the Israelites to set up camp. To the east of Etham is a rugged wilderness area which descends to the northern end of the Soph Sea/Gulf of Aqaba. Etham is where there is a south branch off the road to Midian that leads to Pi Hahiroth and Migdol, which are called Nuweiba Beach today. The south road runs down into Wadi Watir, a usually dry river valley between the mountains, shown in Figures 6 & 7. It is a 106 km (66 mi), 22 hour walk to the Soph Sea. Exodus also tells us about this area:

Now Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying: “Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth,¹² between Migdol¹³ and the sea, facing Baal Zephon;¹⁴ you will camp opposite it by the sea. Exodus 14:1 & 2

¹² The Hebrew may mean “Mouth of the Gorge”. The location is probably where the Wadi opens onto Nuweiba Beach on the Gulf of Aqaba.

¹³ Meaning ‘fortress’ or ‘tower of mountains’.

¹⁴ ‘Lord of the North’, likely a mountain on the east side of the Gulf of Aqaba.

These locations have the Israelites set up camp on the seaward part of Nuweiba Beach. As the beach has an area of over 22 square kilometers, there is plenty of room for both the Israelites and Pharaoh's military force.

As Figure 6 shows, Google Maps indicates that an average healthy adult could walk this 453 km (281 mi) route in 92 hours. This is a pace of 4.9 km/hr (3 mi/hr).

There are some who claim the Israelites couldn't maintain the walking pace that we propose, because their livestock could not travel that fast. However, it is well known that animals can travel this fast and sustain it for a number of days in emergency conditions, as long as they have access to water. They will lose weight, but can regain that when they are able to slow down again. And as noted above, the Exodus took place in late spring and God was providing water for them, so the stock would have had plants to graze on at many of their stops.

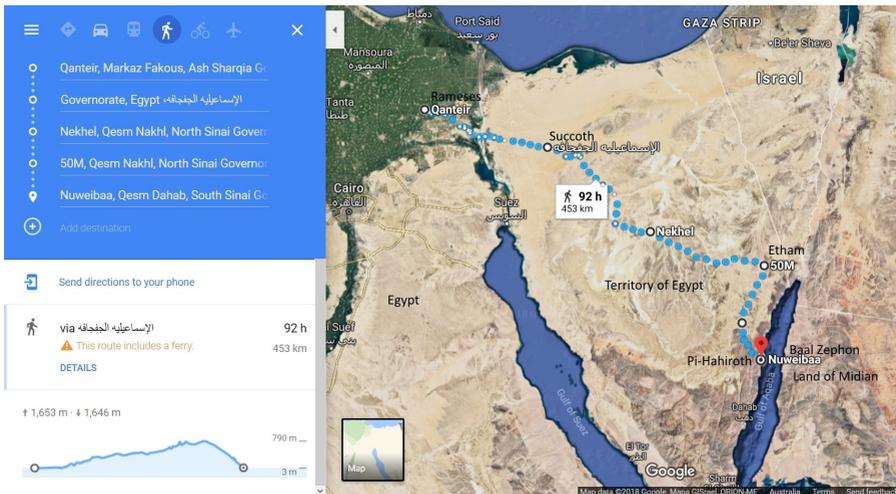


Figure 6: My Proposed Route to the Exodus Crossing at Nuweiba. This route is based on modern roads which follow the ancient routes.

It is likely that Pi-Hahiroth was where the road through the wadi opened onto the beach area (28.9891N 34.6417E) and Migdol was an Egyptian fortress built near the Wadi to prevent anyone using this beach and road to invade Egypt. The remains of a fortress can be seen there today. To both the north and south of the beach the mountains run down to the sea, blocking these directions so the Israelites were physically trapped on the beach. See Figure 7. Baal Zephon was a mountain (probably at 28.9891N 34.9112E, perhaps with a fortress near it) on the Midian (eastern) side of the Soph Sea (Gulf of Aqaba).



Figure 7: Nuweiba Beach, with Wadi Watir and its road extending to the north-west from the huge beach platform.

“For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, ‘They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.’ And I have strengthened Pharaoh’s heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honour over

The Books of Moses

Pharaoh and over all his might, that the Egyptians may know that I am Jehovah.” And they did so.

Now the king of Egypt was told 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? Why have we let Israel go from serving us?” So he made his chariot ready 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 Jehovah strengthened 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 with all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his might, and they overtook them camping by the sea near Pi Hahiroth, facing Baal Zephon.

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 Jehovah. Exodus 14:3 to 10

The Egyptians had four powerful reasons for pursuing them. First: losing their slaves made them look weak. Second: losing their slaves meant that they now had to do all the work themselves. Third: the Israelites had taken all of their valuables. Fourth: they wanted revenge for the death of their firstborn children. But their pursuit was all part of Jehovah’s plan:

And Jehovah said to Moses, “Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward. Now lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and split¹⁵ it. And the children of Israel will go on dry ground

¹⁵ From *baqa*, the same word used to describe the splitting apart of the crust that released the Fountains of the Deep to initiate the Great Flood (Gen 7:11).

through the midst of the sea. And I indeed will strengthen the hearts of the Egyptians, and they will follow them. So I will gain honour over Pharaoh and over all his might, his chariots, and his horsemen.

“Then the Egyptians will know that I am Jehovah, when I have gained honour for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.”

And the Envoy¹⁶ 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. 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.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and Jehovah caused the sea to depart by a mighty spirit from the east that night. He made the sea into dry land, and the waters were split.¹⁷ Exodus 14:15 to 21

Crossing the Soph Sea

So we see that the Bible account explains how Jehovah kept the Egyptians from attacking them that night. And it also tells us that Jehovah split the sea open. It seems that the mighty spirit helped by drying the sea floor.

And now we are looking at the greatest miracle of the entire Exodus, at least from an engineering perspective. Crossing the Gulf of Aqaba at this place is not a simple operation. Indeed, some parts of the Gulf are very deep: the northern basin is 900 meters (2,950 ft) deep and

¹⁶ Envoy is an accurate translation of the Hebrew. Angel comes from the Greek *angelos*.

¹⁷ Verse 16 shows that the splitting of the sea was done miraculously by God when Moses obeyed Him. The east wind was only there to dry the newly exposed seabed so they could cross easily.

the southern basin is 1900 meters (6,235 ft) deep. The seabed between Migdol and Baal Zephon is shallower, but still has a maximum depth of 785 metres (2,575 ft). It is also 16.8 kilometers (10.4 miles) from shore to shore. If we assume that God selected the smoothest crossing path for them, their path—based on Google Earth data and detailed seafloor sounding by the Israeli navy—was this: Their Nuweiba Beach Central Crossing Start Point would be 29.003N 34.686E, and their Baal Zephon Crossing Finish Point would be 29.001N 34.861E as shown in Figure 8.

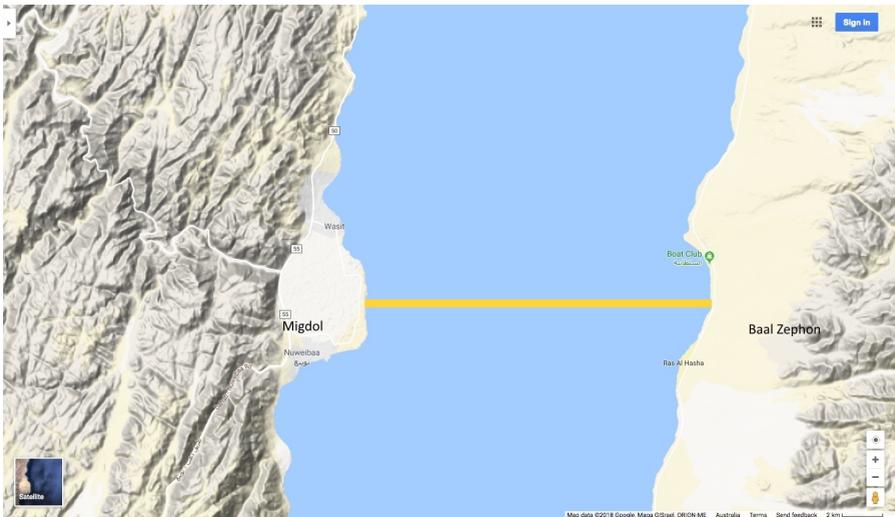


Figure 8: Probable path across the Soph Sea (Gulf of Aqaba), showing the likely path width of 600m. (From Google Maps)

This route would have a maximum downwards slope off Nuweiba of 0.131 and a maximum upwards slope of 0.214 about three kilometers from the Baal Zephon beach. These slopes would be easy for fit people to walk through. Only four kilometers, from about six to two kilometers off the Baal Zephon beach would present great difficulties for chariots when the surface became somewhat soft (See Figure 9). And once on land again, the Baal Zephon beach would provide plenty of space for the Israelites and their animals.

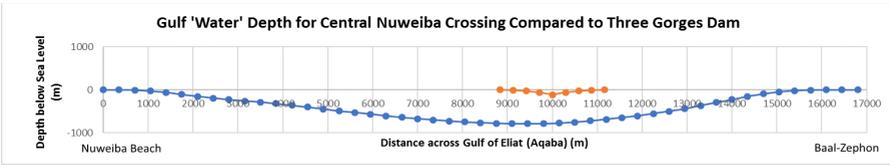


Figure 9: A 1:1 Depth Graph of the Floor of the Gulf of Aqaba beneath the Proposed Crossing Path. There are no steep sections that would make the crossing difficult.

The depth and length of the crossing is where the engineering challenges come in. How does the scale of these walls compare to our largest human-built dam—the Three Gorges Dam, and how much water pressure was it required to withstand? Table 1 below shows this data for one side of the channel. Both sides will of course double the Exodus values, so the channel through the sea required its two dams to have ninety times the area and over 560 times the strength of the Three Gorges Dam (3GD). And unlike the 3GD, which took eighteen years to build, these dams were formed in minutes by transforming seawater into something much stronger than concrete and steel and then pushing them apart—or taking out the water between them—to empty the channel.

Table 1: Comparison of Exodus ‘Dam’ to Three Gorges Dam			
	Aqaba (Exodus)	3GD	Ratios
Length (km)	16.8	2.34	7.2
Max Water Depth (m)	785	110	7.1
Face Area (sq km)	6.69	0.15	44.6
Wall Pressure	1,998,610,000	7,102,780	281.4

The depth of the channel makes the following verse very true, as a 785 meter high channel wall is exceeded in height by human engineers only by the needle-like Burj Khalifa tower in Dubai:

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.¹⁸ Exodus 14:22

A related issue is how wide would the crossing need to be, as they had to get about 2.5 million people plus their livestock across in just a few hours before dawn? If the crossing was 600 meters wide, 750 people could cross side by side. Allowing similar space for their livestock, the time taken from the first person to enter the channel until the last one came out of it on the Baal Zephon side would be five hours. The width of it would make the towering walls seem less intimidating from the beach and near its center, encouraging this action:

And the Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea; all of Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. Exodus 14:23

And so they sealed their fate:

Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that Jehovah looked down upon the Egyptian forces through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled the Egyptian forces. 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 Jehovah fights for them against the Egyptians."

Then Jehovah 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."

¹⁸ 1 Cor 10:3

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 Jehovah overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the might of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained.

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. So Jehovah saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Thus Israel saw the great work which Jehovah had done in Egypt; so the people feared Jehovah, and believed Jehovah and His servant Moses. Exodus 14:24 to 31

The Egyptians were trapped at the bottom of the crossing, with increasingly soft and slippery slopes working against them in both directions. Then hundreds of meters of water pounded down upon them.

As I have pointed out, if one believes the Biblical account of the Exodus and the crossing of the Soph Sea, there can be no doubt that this was indeed an amazing miracle, and is one which no natural phenomena can achieve. And if you are wondering, Psalm 136:15 confirms that Pharaoh died in the Soph Sea with his mighty chariots and cavalry.

Israel in Midian

The Israelites spent the rest of that day celebrating their release from the Egyptians and praising their awesome God:

Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to Jehovah, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to Jehovah,

The Books of Moses

for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! Jah is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him.

“Jehovah is a man of war; Jehovah is His Name. Pharaoh's chariots and his might He has cast into the sea; His chosen captains also are drowned in the Soph Sea. The depths have covered them; they sank to the bottom like a stone.

“Your right hand, O Jehovah, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O Jehovah, has dashed the enemy in pieces. And in the abundance of Your excellence You have overthrown those who rose against You; You sent forth Your wrath which consumed them like stubble.

“And with the spirit of Your anger the waters were heaped together; the liquid stood upright in a heap; the depths congealed in the heart of the sea.

“The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my soul will be satisfied on them. My sword is hungry, my hand will seize them.’

“You blew with Your breath, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

“Who is like You, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? You stretched out Your right hand; the earth swallowed them. Exodus 15:1 to 12

Some Issues to Consider

Archaeological Evidence to Support This Crossing Place

A large number of artefacts have been found which support the idea that this is the actual Soph Sea crossing point. Most of the ones I give are from *The Exodus Case* by Moller.

Perhaps the first things to mention are the two large red granite columns that were placed on the opposite shores at essentially the same positions as we have proposed that the Israelites entered and exited from the Gulf. The columns are 4.7 meters tall and weigh about 11.5 tons. There is no red granite in the vicinity (Figure 10 shows the Nuweiba column where it was relocated and re-erected by the Israeli army).



Figure 10: Column on Nuweiba Peninsula, possibly commissioned by King Solomon. (Sung Hak Kim)

There is also what appears to be a smooth roadway across the floor of the Gulf, with the larger rocks pushed to the north and south. This could have happened when Jehovah pushed the two ‘dam’ walls apart to create the path for the Israelites. There is no logical natural way for this to have happened.

There have also been numerous parts of chariots, including wheels and axles, as well as both horse and human bones and bone fragments found on this underwater path and also to the sides of it. Given the force with which these massive walls would have collapsed, one would expect substantial swirling, breakage and redistribution of the Egyptian military's remains. Moller has extensive photos and explanations of these artefacts in his book (pgs 243 to 258). No other proposed crossing site has any of these artefacts.

Israelite Population Growth

How could the Israelites expand from 75 males (Genesis 46:27 - assumed to be 120 fertile male and female adults) to over two million people (Exodus 12:37, plus 12:38) in about 215 years?

If the average Israelite woman had 6.5 children, beginning at 20 and having a child every two years, and if the average person lived to 110 years old, there could have been up to 2.6 million of them alive by the time of the Exodus, as shown in Table 2. As the estimated population of Egyptians by then was about two million, it is not surprising that the Pharaoh was trying, though unsuccessfully, to control their numbers.

Table 2: Israelite Population Growth While in Egypt

Date (AC)	Date (Greg)	Generation Number	People Born per Generation (Millions)	People alive (Millions)	Event
2237	-1768	0	0.000070	0.000070	Drought
2265.5	-1739.5	1	0.000280	0.000350	
2294	-1711	2	0.001120	0.001470	
2322.5	-1682.5	3	0.004480	0.005943	
2351	-1654	4	0.017920	0.023772	
2379.5	-1625.5	5	0.071680	0.095088	
2408	-1597	6	0.286720	0.380352	
2436.5	-1568.5	7	1.146880	1.521408	
2452	-1553	8	1.316279	2.821559	Exodus

How Could Pharaoh’s Military Catch up to the Israelites?

The Israelites had at least a one day head start on the Egyptians, plus they walked all night for four nights. The Egyptians could catch up because they were pursuing them on horseback and in horse-drawn chariots. The horses were able to trot for long periods of time, at a speed of 13 to 19 km/hr (8 to 12 miles/hour). If we assume they kept an average pace of 15 km/hr and rode for 11 hours per day, it would take them 2.8 days to cover the 453 km (281 mi) from Rameses to Pi-Hahiroth. As there were five and a half days from when the Israelites left Rameses until the Egyptians arrived at Pi-Hahiroth, they had 2.7 days to decide they wanted to pursue them, learn where they had gone and rapidly organise their army and supplies. This would all have been done with great urgency, as they needed to recapture the Israelites before they left their territory.

Clearly it was only the Egyptians’ top soldiers, with their cavalry and charioteers, who would have arrived in time to enter the Gulf of Aqaba. The rest, including the foot soldiers and most of their supplies, would have lagged behind. But the entire force that had made it to Pi-Hahiroth with Pharaoh was drowned in the Soph Sea,

as the Bible states.¹⁹ Which meant that in one stroke, Egypt lost their Pharaoh, all of their cavalry, all of their chariots, all of their commanders and virtually all of their high ranking officers. And this was in addition to all the first-born sons that they had already lost, many of whom had been influential adults. They immediately sank from being a superpower to a disorganised, impoverished and leaderless rabble.

Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Exodus

These Annual Holy Days are all connected intimately to the Exodus. As we saw above, the death envoy's Pass-over was the trigger which caused Pharaoh to send the Israelites out of Egypt. The Israelites had spent that day preparing to leave Egypt. The Bible teaches that the Passover lambs, which protected the Israelites, were killed near the end of the Passover day,²⁰ which occurs at dusk, as Biblical days run from dusk to dusk. This means that the lambs were cooked and eaten that evening, which was now the First Day of Unleavened Bread, God's first annual Holy Day. And as the sky began to brighten into dawn, Moses and Aaron were called to see Pharaoh and told to leave Egypt. They then assembled the people and left that morning. All of this happened during that same 24 hour day, the First Day of Unleavened Bread.

What many people do not understand is that the entire week of Unleavened Bread was embedded in the Exodus. Though it began with the Passover, they then spent six days, with the exceptions of the two camps, actively fleeing from Egypt. The Soph Sea crossing

¹⁹ Many translations imply that Pharaoh's entire army was with him and they all drowned in the Soph Sea. But the Hebrew actually says that Pharaoh's **might** was with him, which would mean his heavy-hitting mounted military, the horsemen and chariots as it explained.

²⁰ The New covenant teaches that these lambs represented Jeshua the Anointed (Jesus Christ), who was also killed on Passover, and is called the Lamb of God (See John 1:29-36 and Rev 5:1-10).

occurred on the last Great Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. None of this was random. It all unfolded according to God's Design, carefully embedded in His Holy Days.

Biblical Chronology places the year of Exodus at 1550 BCE plus or minus perhaps five years. Bible calendar considerations place the year of the Jordan Crossing at 1513 BCE,²¹ so the Exodus was in 1553 BCE. In that year, the Passover sacrifice would have been slain on Wednesday afternoon, 24 March using the Proleptic Gregorian calendar. This is the same day of the week as the Passover in the year of Jeshua's impalement. This means the day they began leaving Egypt was the morning of Thursday 22 April, the first Great Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. They walked all of that day, the following night and the next day (Friday). On days where they walked day and night, I allow for them to walk for three hours including a 7 min break at the end, then another three hours including a 23 minute break at the end for a quick meal, repeated until they reach their destination. Using this schedule, they would arrive at Succoth about 3PM, set up their camp and prepare meals. Then dusk would come and they began their Sabbath rest. They remained in Succoth that night, but the following day (Saturday) they would have to pack up camp after breakfast and begin walking again, with the pillar of fire leading the way, so they could stay ahead of the Egyptians. They walked all that day, the following night, the next day (Sunday), and most of the next night, arriving at Etham about 4 AM. They set up camp, rested at Etham and prepared food until about 2 PM Monday.

Then they packed up and left, but the cloud changed direction, leading them south instead of continuing east on the road towards the top of the Gulf of Aqaba, which was the normal way to Midian. This put them on the road to Pi-Hahiroth, which went down the Wadi

²¹ The Biblical Calendar software, available from our website, shows how this works. The fact that 1553 BCE also works in perfect detail as the Exodus further confirms these dates.

Watir, between mountains. They walked the rest of that day, the following night and most of the following day, reaching Pi-Hahiroth (the opening to Nuweiba Beach peninsula) about 3PM on Tuesday, the 30th of March. They set up camp along the seashore in front of Migdol. That evening would begin the Last Great Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which they began to prepare for.

When Pharaoh discovered they had taken this road, he decided that they had made a mistake and the mountains would trap them for him. This is because that Wadi led to a dead end at Pi-Hahiroth. It opened onto Nuweiba Beach peninsula on the Gulf of Aqaba. It was surrounded by mountains to the north, west and south. The Egyptian army raced down the wadi, confident that they would soon be recovering their slaves, all the valuables they had taken from them and their reputation as a superpower. They had already forgotten that they were also taking on Jehovah God again.

When the Egyptian army came thundering out of the Wadi in the late afternoon, they did not realise that they would play a tragic part in the miracles of God's Great Day which was about to begin. It would soon be dawn on Wednesday, 31st of March, 1533 BCE—the last Great Day of Unleavened Bread, when they drowned as the walls of water crashed down upon them.

Could They Have Crossed the Soph Sea Using Boats?

Not in the few hours they had available. Even if we assume that there were twenty-five large fishing and trading boats there that they could use exclusively, and the average boat could take thirty passengers each trip, and the average return time per trip was five hours, and they sailed day and night, it would take at least 695 days for them to transfer all the people across. Their livestock would likely take that long as well.

The Exodus Conclusion

35

There is considerable evidence that the Israelites became a huge community in Egypt, that Jehovah God's plagues devastated Egypt, that the Israelites miraculously trekked to and crossed the Yam Soph (Gulf of Aqaba) from Nuweiba Beach, and that the Egyptian cavalry perished there.²²

It is therefore reasonable to believe that Moses' account is correct and that Jehovah's Passover and His Feast of Unleavened Bread are annual reminders of these amazing events.

Next Session

Where is Mount Sinai, and what happened there?

***Bruce Armstrong
M App Sci***

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*Revised 8th October***

***Published by
CENTRAL HIGHLANDS CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS
PO Box 236, Creswick, Vic 3363 Australia
Email info@chcpublications.net
Web Page <https://chcpublications.net/>***

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²² Update: If you would like this information, and more, in an excellent movie format, Timothy Mahoney, in his *Patterns of Evidence* DVD series, is doing just that.

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The Exodus from Egypt—Historical and Scientific information relating to the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt is presented, analysing several proposed pathways to Midian, including crossing the Soph (Red) Sea.

To Mount Sinai and God's Instructions—After crossing the Soph Sea, where did the Israelites go until their arrival at Mount Sinai, and where is this mountain? This article includes Jehovah God giving them His Instructions there. Historical and Geographical information is presented, some of it new and previously unpublished.

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