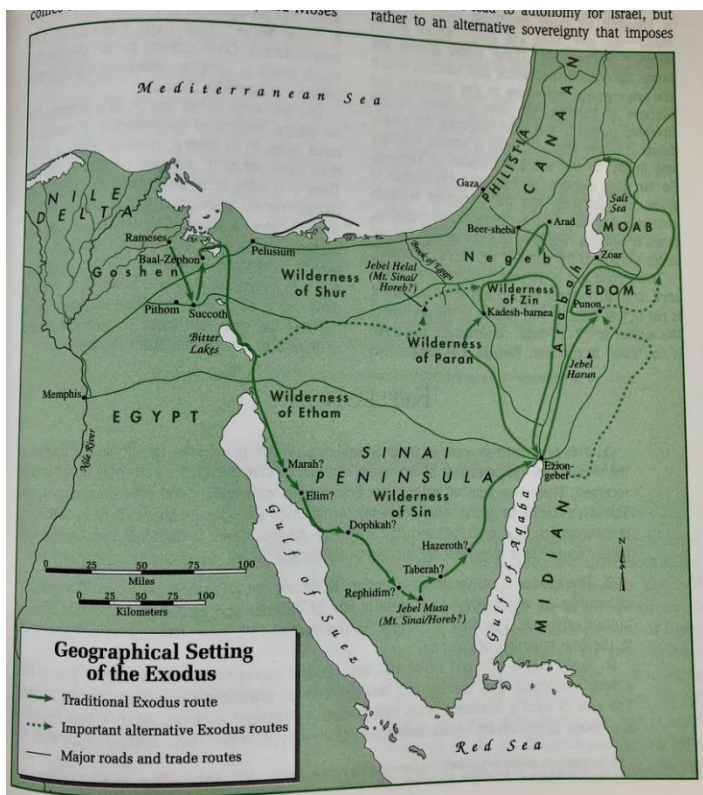


Bible Study September 23, 2020
Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
Exodus 17:1 – 18:27
[text Exodus 17:1-7]

The focus text for today is God's provision of water in the wilderness, and, like last week, the surrounding text is a bit shorter than what we have seen recently. Overall, these chapters in Exodus are a travel narrative of the people of Israel from the Red Sea (Egypt) to Mt Sinai in Exodus 19. The sequence of their travel is described in these stories in this way:

- 1) Red Sea to Shur – three days in the wilderness;
- 2) Shur to Marah and then to Elim – a shortage of water followed by an abundant oasis
- 3) Elim to the Wilderness of Sin – God provided manna and quail
- 4) On to Rephedin – again no water. This is where our focus text begins.

Review these portions of their travel as we have read in previous chapters. Give an estimate of the amount of time they have been traveling. What events or themes are most meaningful to you?



[Are we there yet??]

The stories in this travel narrative from Egypt to Sinai have common elements: a scarcity of some resource, the blaming of Moses and the leaders, and then God hears the complaint and provides. What signs do you see of God's presence or care or concern for the people of Israel?

Some commentators have noted that this journey in the wilderness is one of transformation – being transformed from people enslaved by Egypt to a people who learn and live the truth that where God leads, God provides. What are the distinctions that you see between these two different ways of being?

Once again we are facing their crisis about water. One commentator noted that under normal circumstances, people can live for up to 100 hours without water. This is complicated, of course, by the extreme temperatures in the wilderness that may have hovered around 100 degrees. This may have dropped the length of time to perhaps 50 hours. And then factor in the needs of livestock, the physical burdens they were carrying, the difficult terrain over which they traveled and it could have been only a matter of hours they could continue to survive. Summarize the conversations that take place in 17:1-7. What is Moses' response?

In 17:5, God instructs Moses to take his staff. Look back over past chapters and see what you can find about Moses and his staff. When did he use it? What is the staff's significance?

In Chapter 18, Moses' father-in-law enters the scene again. In 18:8 we read that Moses told Jethro all that they had been through. And in 18:10-11, we read Jethro's response which was followed by a liturgical rite. Think of a time when you have been reunited with friends after a long time period that held many life events. What has that reunion been like?

What is happening in 18:13-27? Take a look at 17:12. How do these compare? What does this say about the church today?

Let us pray: *O God you made your presence so visible to the people of Israel as they were in difficult times. Help us to see you now. May we be care and support for each other as Aaron and Jethro were for Moses. In the name of Jesus, Amen.*