Through the Sea, and Bread From Heaven

Bible Stories Anthology — Exodus 14–16

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> **Romans 15:4** *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

Why These Stories Were Written — Romans 15:4

Paul had just quoted a thousand-year-old psalm and applied it to Christ (Romans 15:3, quoting Psalm 69:9), and then he explained why he could: *whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning*. **Written aforetime** — the scriptures that already stood before this present age of grace opened at Pentecost: the record God gave through Moses, the prophets and the writings, along with the Gospel accounts of Christ's earthly ministry, which belong to that same time before Pentecost. (When Paul wrote these words, the scriptures he had in hand were the Hebrew scriptures; the Gospels had not yet been written down.) **Written for our learning** — "learning" is the Greek word for *teaching*, the very word rendered "doctrine" in 2 Timothy 3:16. These are not quaint tales; they are doctrine in narrative form. Adam, Ruth and David never knew us, but God did, and He had their lives recorded with us in mind — written *for* us, though not all of it written *to* us, which is why we read Israel's history as our instruction and not as our marching orders. **Through patience and comfort of the scriptures** — "patience" is literally *remaining under*, the staying power we gain from watching men and women stay under a load; "comfort" is a *calling alongside*, the strength God brings when He meets them there, which is why Paul calls Him "the God of patience and consolation" in the very next verse. **That we might have hope** — not a wish, but confident expectation: the return of Jesus Christ and everlasting life with Him. That is why these accounts exist, and it is how they should be read.

Trapped, Then Fed

A few days out of Egypt, two million former slaves stood on a beach with the sea in front of them and the finest army in the world behind them.

They had seen ten plagues. They had eaten the Passover lamb with their sandals on and watched Egypt wake to the death of its firstborn. They had walked out free, with the Egyptians pressing silver and gold into their hands. And now, by God's own direction, they were camped with their backs to the water — and over the horizon came the dust of six hundred chariots.

They panicked. They blamed Moses. They said they would rather have stayed slaves.

And God opened the sea.

A month later, in the desert, they were afraid again — this time of hunger. They blamed Moses again. They said they would rather have died in Egypt beside the meat pots.

And God rained bread from heaven.

These three chapters of Exodus hold two of the greatest miracles in the Old Testament, and between them, a song, bitter water made sweet, and a camp full of complaining people. The New Testament comes back to them again and again: Paul says Israel was **"baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea"** and ate **"spiritual meat"** (1 Corinthians 10:2-3), and that these things **"are written for our admonition"** (10:11). And Jesus stood up in a synagogue in Galilee and said, **"I am the bread of life"** (John 6:35).

The Setting

When. Israel left Egypt on the fifteenth day of the first month, the day after the Passover (Numbers 33:3). The crossing of the sea came within about a week. They reached the wilderness of Sin **"on the fifteenth day of the second month"** (Exodus 16:1) — one month out. By the reckoning most often used, the Exodus took place about 1446 B.C.; the previous story notes other dates that are proposed.

How many. "About six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children" (Exodus 12:37), and **"a mixed multitude"** with them (12:38). With women and children, most estimates run to about two million people, with their flocks and herds.

Where.

- **Not the short road.** The direct road to Canaan ran along the Mediterranean coast through Philistine country, heavily guarded by Egyptian forts. **"God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near"** (13:17).
- **The Red Sea.** In Hebrew, *yam suph*, the "sea of reeds" (the same *suph* as the reeds where Moses' basket was laid). Where exactly Israel crossed is debated: the northern Gulf of Suez, the Bitter Lakes region between it and the Mediterranean, and the Gulf of Aqaba have all been proposed. Scripture names the camp — **"before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon"** (14:2) — but those places cannot be identified with certainty today. What scripture does make plain is that it was a real sea, deep enough for walls of water and to drown an army: **"The depths have covered them"** (15:5).
- **Marah, Elim, and the wilderness of Sin.** Down the eastern side of the Gulf of Suez toward Mount Sinai.

The administration. Still the **Patriarchal** administration, but at its very end. In a few weeks Israel would reach Sinai and receive the Law. In Exodus 16 we see a preview: God begins to give His people **"statutes"** and a **"sabbath."**

Who led them. "The LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light" (13:21). The pillar is also connected with **"the angel of God"** (14:19): God's presence and guidance going before His people.

The Story, Told Faithfully

The Long Way Round

> **Exodus 13:17** *And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt:*
>
> **Exodus 13:18** *But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.*
>
> **Exodus 13:19** *And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.*
>
> **Exodus 13:20** *And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness.*

> **Exodus 13:21** *And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:*
>
> **Exodus 13:22** *He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.*

"Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war." God knew His people. They had been slaves for generations; they were not ready to fight. He did not lead them on the shortest road but on the one they could survive. God's route is not always the direct one, but it is always the wise one.

"Went up harnessed." The Hebrew *chamushim* probably means *in battle order* or *organized in ranks* — not a mob, but a people marching out in orderly companies.

"Moses took the bones of Joseph with him." Joseph had died about two centuries earlier, believing: **"God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence"** (Genesis 50:25). Hebrews counts it as Joseph's faith that he **"gave commandment concerning his bones"** (Hebrews 11:22). The promise was being kept.

"He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night." Every day and every night for forty years. The guidance never failed.

The Trap

> **Exodus 14:1** *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,*
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> **Exodus 14:2** *Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea.*
>
> **Exodus 14:3** *For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.*
>
> **Exodus 14:4** *And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so.*

"That they turn and encamp … by the sea." God deliberately led Israel into what looked like a dead end. Pharaoh would think, **"They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in."**

"I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them." As the previous story noted, the library's study *God: Deliverer, Not Destroyer* traces the hardening statements in order: Pharaoh repeatedly hardened his own heart before God is said to harden it, and from the sixth plague on God confirmed the course Pharaoh had chosen. By the sea, Pharaoh's choice was long settled.

"That the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD." That phrase runs through the whole account of the plagues, and it comes to its climax here (14:4, 18). The purpose was revelation: Egypt, which worshipped the Nile, the sun, and Pharaoh himself, would know who the LORD is.

> **Exodus 14:5** *And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?*
>
> **Exodus 14:6** *And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him:*
>
> **Exodus 14:7** *And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them.*

> **Exodus 14:8** *And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand.*
>
> **Exodus 14:9** *But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon.*

"Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" Their grief for their firstborn had not lasted long. They missed their slave labour.

"Six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt." The chariot was the most advanced weapon of the age — light, fast, two-wheeled, with a driver and an archer. Against foot soldiers, let alone a crowd of families, it was overwhelming.

"The children of Israel went out with an high hand." An idiom meaning *boldly*, *openly*, *defiantly* — not sneaking away, but marching out in plain sight.

"Were There No Graves in Egypt?"

> **Exodus 14:10** *And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.*
>
> **Exodus 14:11** *And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?*
>
> **Exodus 14:12** *Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.*

"They were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD." So far, so good. Crying out to God is the right response to fear.

"Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" This is bitter sarcasm. Egypt was the land of tombs — the pyramids, the royal valleys, whole cities of the dead. *Weren't there enough graves back there?* Saying the opposite of what one means in order to mock is **irony**, and here it is aimed at Moses.

"It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." A few days of freedom, and they were ready to go back to slavery. Fear rewrites memory.

"Stand Still, and See"

> **Exodus 14:13** *And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.*
>
> **Exodus 14:14** *The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.*

"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD." "Stand still" means *take your stand*, *hold your ground*: do not run back to Egypt. And **"salvation"** is *yeshu'ah*, deliverance — the same root as the name *Yeshua*, Jesus. This is the first time the word "salvation" appears in the book of Exodus.

“The Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.” A promise that must have sounded impossible.

“The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.” Israel had one job: be quiet and trust.

> **Exodus 14:15** *And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:*
> **Exodus 14:16** *But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.*
> **Exodus 14:17** *And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.*
> **Exodus 14:18** *And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.*

“Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.” There is a time to pray and a time to move. The moment had come to walk toward the water.

“Lift thou up thy rod.” The shepherd’s rod from the burning bush, the rod of God.

The Angel and the Cloud

> **Exodus 14:19** *And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them:*
> **Exodus 14:20** *And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.*

“The angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them.” The pillar that had led them now guarded them. It stood between the two camps, darkness to Egypt and light to Israel — one cloud, two effects. The same presence that was protection to God’s people was darkness to those who set themselves against Him.

The Sea Divided

> **Exodus 14:21** *And 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 dry land, and the waters were divided.*
> **Exodus 14:22** *And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.*

“The LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night.” God used a wind — a real, physical means — and yet the text makes clear this was no ordinary storm:

- It came **at the moment** Moses stretched out his hand.
- It blew **all night** and dried the sea bed into **“dry ground”** that two million people and their animals could cross.
- **“The waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.”** A wind does not stand water up in two walls with a road between.

- It **stopped** when Moses stretched out his hand again, and the sea **"returned to his strength"** on the pursuing army.

Some researchers have calculated that a strong wind over shallow water can push water back for a time (called wind setdown). That may be part of *how* God did it, but the timing, the walls, and the sudden return are the miracle. The Song of Moses puts it poetically: **"with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap"** (15:8).

"The children of Israel went into the midst of the sea." It took faith to step down between those walls. Hebrews says, **"By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned"** (Hebrews 11:29).

The Morning Watch

> **Exodus 14:23** *And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.*
>
> **Exodus 14:24** *And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians,*
>
> **Exodus 14:25** *And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians.*

"The morning watch." The Israelites divided the night into three watches; the morning watch was the last, roughly from two o'clock until sunrise.

"The LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud." God is said to "look" — speaking of God as though He had human eyes is the figure called **anthropopatheia** (ascribing human features or feelings to God), used so that we can grasp what He did.

"Took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily." The Hebrew can mean the wheels came off, or that they were clogged or bound. Either way, the finest chariots in the world were stuck in the sea bed.

"Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians." Too late, the Egyptians said exactly what Moses had said: *the LORD shall fight for you*.

The Waters Returned

> **Exodus 14:26** *And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.*
>
> **Exodus 14:27** *And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.*
>
> **Exodus 14:28** *And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.*
>
> **Exodus 14:29** *But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.*

> **Exodus 14:30** *Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.*
>
> **Exodus 14:31** *And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses.*

"The sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared." As the sun rose, the sea came back.

"The Egyptians fled against it." They ran straight into the returning water.

"There remained not so much as one of them." The whole pursuing force was lost. Exodus does not say whether Pharaoh himself went into the sea; Psalm 136:15 says God **"overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea,"** where the Hebrew word pictures *shaking off*, as a tree sheds leaves.

Why? This is hard to read, and scripture does not hide it. The library's study of God's goodness in judgment treats the destruction of the Egyptian army as God's act as Judge, as with the Flood: after ten plagues, warnings before each, and a way of escape offered even to Egyptians who **"feared the word of the LORD"** (9:20), Pharaoh's army was riding out to recapture or kill a defenceless people. As this series understands it, there is also a grim justice in the place: the nation that threw Hebrew baby boys into the waters (1:22) lost its army in the waters.

"Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore." Moses' promise had come true: *ye shall see them again no more for ever*.

"The people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses." Seeing led to fearing, and fearing to believing — for now.

The Song of the Sea

> **Exodus 15:1** *Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.*
>
> **Exodus 15:2** *The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.*
>
> **Exodus 15:3** *The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.*

This is the first song of praise recorded in the Bible, and one of the oldest poems in scripture.

"The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." The horse and rider stand for the whole chariot army. Putting a part for the whole is the figure called **synecdoche**.

"The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation." Again *yeshu'ah*. These words were so loved that they are repeated almost exactly in Psalm 118:14 and Isaiah 12:2.

"The LORD is a man of war." A **metaphor**: God fought for His people. He is not only the God who comforts, but the God who defeats the enemies of His people.

> **Exodus 15:6** *Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.*
>
> **Exodus 15:7** *And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.*

> **Exodus 15:8** *And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.*
>
> **Exodus 15:9** *The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.*
>
> **Exodus 15:10** *Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.*
>
> **Exodus 15:11** *Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?*

"Thy right hand, O LORD." The right hand stands for power and skill — another case of **anthropopatheia**.

"The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil ... I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." Six clauses of proud boasting, piled up breathlessly. Then one line answers them all: **"Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them."** The heaping of clauses is **asyndeton** — short statements with no "and" between them, which make us feel the enemy's rush and arrogance.

"They sank as lead in the mighty waters." A **simile**. In verse 5 they sank **"as a stone."**

"Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods?" A question needing no answer — the figure **erotesis**. The gods of Egypt had been judged (12:12); none of them could save Pharaoh.

> **Exodus 15:13** *Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.*

"Thy mercy." *Chesed*, covenant love. **"The people which thou hast redeemed"** — the word *redeem* (*ga'al*) that God had promised before the plagues, **"I will redeem you"** (6:6), now sung as done. The redeemer in Israel was the near kinsman who bought back what had been lost (as in the story of Ruth).

> **Exodus 15:17** *Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established.*
>
> **Exodus 15:18** *The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.*

"The LORD shall reign for ever and ever." The song ends looking forward — to the land, to God's dwelling among His people, and to His everlasting reign.

> **Exodus 15:20** *And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.*
>
> **Exodus 15:21** *And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.*

"Miriam the prophetess." The sister who once stood watching a basket in the reeds now led the women in praise beside the sea of reeds. She is the first woman in scripture called a prophetess.

Bitter Water at Marah

> **Exodus 15:22** *So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.*

> **Exodus 15:23** *And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah.*
>
> **Exodus 15:24** *And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?*
>
> **Exodus 15:25** *And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,*
>
> **Exodus 15:26** *And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.*

"They went three days in the wilderness, and found no water." Three days after the greatest miracle they had ever seen.

"They could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter." *Marah* means *bitter*. (Naomi would later say, *call me Mara*, Ruth 1:20.)

"The people murmured against Moses." The word *lun*, to murmur or grumble, appears here for the first time in that sense; it will appear again and again in the wilderness. Praise to complaint in three days.

"He cried unto the LORD." Moses did the right thing.

"The LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." God did not create a new spring. He showed Moses a piece of wood, and the bitter water became drinkable. Many readers have seen here a picture of the cross, since the New Testament calls it a **"tree"** (Acts 5:30; 1 Peter 2:24) — the thing that turns bitterness sweet. That is a picture drawn by readers; scripture itself does not make the connection.

"There he proved them." "Prove" means *test*, to show what was in them.

"I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians." As the library's study of God's goodness shows, Hebrew often says God "does" what He permits or does not prevent. As this series understands it, the promise means that if Israel listened to God, He would keep from them the plagues that fell on Egypt.

"For I am the LORD that healeth thee." *YHWH Rophe'ka*, "the LORD your healer." At the bitter water God revealed a new side of His name: the God who heals. Scripture does not say *I am the LORD who sends disease*; it says *I am the LORD who heals*.

> **Exodus 15:27** *And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters.*

"Twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees." An oasis — one well for each tribe, and a camp in the shade. After the testing, rest.

Hunger in the Wilderness of Sin

> **Exodus 16:1** *And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt.*

> **Exodus 16:2** *And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:*
>
> **Exodus 16:3** *And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.*

"The wilderness of Sin." The name has nothing to do with the English word *sin*; it is probably connected with *Sinai*.

"The whole congregation ... murmured." Not just some. Everyone.

"Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full." Their memory had grown very selective. They remembered pots of meat; they had forgotten the whips, the bricks, and the babies in the river. And they accused Moses and Aaron of bringing them out to kill them.

"I Will Rain Bread From Heaven"

> **Exodus 16:4** *Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.*
>
> **Exodus 16:5** *And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.*

"Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you." God answered the grumbling not with punishment but with provision.

"Gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them." The manna was a test. Would they trust God for tomorrow's food, one day at a time?

"On the sixth day ... it shall be twice as much." God was preparing them for a day of rest.

> **Exodus 16:6** *And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt:*
>
> **Exodus 16:7** *And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD; for that he heareth your murmurings against the LORD: and what are we, that ye murmur against us?*
>
> **Exodus 16:8** *And Moses said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD.*
>
> **Exodus 16:9** *And Moses spake unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before the LORD: for he hath heard your murmurings.*
>
> **Exodus 16:10** *And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.*
>
> **Exodus 16:11** *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,*

> **Exodus 16:12** *I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God.*

"Your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD." Grumbling against God's servants is grumbling against God. Moses and Aaron were only doing what they were told.

"The glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud." God's answer began with His presence.

"Ye shall know that I am the LORD your God." The same purpose as at the sea — this time for Israel. Egypt learned who the LORD was through judgment; Israel would learn it through daily bread.

Quail and Manna

> **Exodus 16:13** *And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host.*
>
> **Exodus 16:14** *And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground.*
>
> **Exodus 16:15** *And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.*

"The quails came up, and covered the camp." Quail migrate across Sinai in spring and autumn in huge numbers and, exhausted from flying over the sea, often land in flocks low to the ground. God sent them at the right time and place — flesh in the evening, as promised.

"A small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground." When the morning dew evaporated, a fine, flaky substance was left.

"It is manna: for they wist not what it was." The Hebrew is *man hu'*, which means *What is it?* The people saw it and asked, *man hu'?* — and the question became its name. "Wist" means *knew*.

"This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat." Scripture describes it: **"like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey"** (16:31); it could be ground, beaten, boiled or baked into cakes, tasting **"as the taste of fresh oil"** (Numbers 11:7-8). Attempts have been made to explain manna as a natural product, such as the sweet resin some desert insects produce on tamarisk trees. But that appears only in small amounts, for a few weeks a year, and does not rot overnight, double on Fridays, or vanish on Saturdays. The psalmist calls it **"the corn of heaven"** and **"angels' food"** (Psalm 78:24-25).

Enough for Everyone

> **Exodus 16:16** *This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents.*
>
> **Exodus 16:17** *And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less.*
>
> **Exodus 16:18** *And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.*
>
> **Exodus 16:19** *And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning.*

> **Exodus 16:20** *Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them.*
>
> **Exodus 16:21** *And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted.*

"An omer for every man." An omer, **"the tenth part of an ephah"** (16:36), was roughly two quarts (a little over two litres). Two million people, each gathering that much, every morning.

"He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack." However much each gathered, when it was measured out it was exactly enough. Paul quotes this verse to teach Christians to share with believers in need: **"that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want ... As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack"** (2 Corinthians 8:14-15).

"Let no man leave of it till the morning." No stockpiling. Some tried anyway, and **"it bred worms, and stank."** Manna could not be hoarded. It had to be trusted for, daily.

"When the sun waxed hot, it melted." Gathering had to be done early.

The Sabbath

> **Exodus 16:22** *And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.*
>
> **Exodus 16:23** *And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.*
>
> **Exodus 16:24** *And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein.*
>
> **Exodus 16:25** *And Moses said, Eat that to day; for to day is a sabbath unto the LORD: to day ye shall not find it in the field.*
>
> **Exodus 16:26** *Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none.*
>
> **Exodus 16:27** *And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none.*
>
> **Exodus 16:28** *And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?*
>
> **Exodus 16:29** *See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.*
>
> **Exodus 16:30** *So the people rested on the seventh day.*

"To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD." This is the first time the word *sabbath* appears in the Bible. God had rested on the seventh day at creation (Genesis 2:2-3), but scripture records no command to keep a sabbath until here. Nehemiah later said God **"madest known unto them thy holy sabbath"** at this time (Nehemiah 9:14). At Sinai it would become part of the Law, **"a sign between me and you"** — between God and Israel (Exodus 31:13).

“That which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.” On the sixth day, and only then, leftover manna did not spoil. The same bread that bred worms on other nights stayed fresh for the sabbath. The miracle was in the rules as well as the bread.

“There went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none.” There are always some who have to see for themselves.

“How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?”

“See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath.” The sabbath was a *gift*: a day of rest for a nation of former slaves who had never had a day off in their lives.

A Jar for the Generations

> **Exodus 16:31** *And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.*
>
> **Exodus 16:32** *And Moses said, This is the thing which the LORD commandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt.*
>
> **Exodus 16:33** *And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations.*
>
> **Exodus 16:34** *As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept.*
>
> **Exodus 16:35** *And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.*
>
> **Exodus 16:36** *Now an omer is the tenth part of an ephah.*

“Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations.” A pot of manna was laid up **“before the Testimony,”** later in the ark of the covenant (Hebrews 9:4), so that later generations could see the bread God had fed their fathers with.

“The children of Israel did eat manna forty years.” Every day for forty years — until the day after they ate the produce of Canaan (Joshua 5:12). God did not stop the manna when they grumbled, or when they rebelled at Kadesh, or when they wandered. He fed them all the way home.

Moses later explained why: **“he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna … that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live”** (Deuteronomy 8:3). When the adversary tempted Jesus in the wilderness to turn stones into bread, Jesus answered with this verse (Matthew 4:4).

Where the Story Leads

To the Messiah

The salvation of the LORD. “Stand still, and see the salvation (*yeshu’ah*) of the LORD.” Israel could do nothing to save itself at the sea; God did it all, and they walked through. That is the shape of the salvation God later gave in His Son, whose very name, *Yeshua*, means *the LORD is salvation*. **“Neither is there salvation in any other”** (Acts 4:12).

Out of death into life. Israel went down into the sea, where death was all around, and came up on the other side free, with their enemies gone. As this series understands it, the crossing is a picture of the Messiah's work: He went down into death for us, God raised Him from the dead, and He ascended to God's right hand, where He triumphed over every enemy. **"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son"** (Colossians 1:13).

The true bread from heaven. In John 6, after Jesus fed five thousand people, the crowd reminded Him of the manna:

> **John 6:31** *Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.*
>
> **John 6:32** *Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.*
>
> **John 6:33** *For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.*
>
> **John 6:34** *Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.*
>
> **John 6:35** *And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*

"Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." The manna came from God, not from Moses — and it pointed forward to a greater gift. **"I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger."**

> **John 6:49** *Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.*
>
> **John 6:50** *This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.*
>
> **John 6:51** *I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*

"Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead." Manna kept people alive for a day. The bread Jesus gives brings everlasting life. **"The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world"** — His body, given on the cross.

What does "came down from heaven" mean? Scripture uses "from heaven" to mean *from God*, as opposed to *from men*: Jesus asked whether John's baptism was **"from heaven, or of men?"** (Matthew 21:25), and John himself was **"a man sent from God"** (John 1:6). As this series understands it, Jesus was saying that He was God's gift to the world, sent by His Father, just as the manna came from God and not from the ground of Egypt or Sinai.

The song of Moses and the Lamb. The book of Revelation pictures the redeemed singing **"the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb"** (Revelation 15:3). The deliverance at the sea was the first song of redemption. The Messiah's is the last.

To the Grace Administration

Written for our admonition. Paul applies these very chapters to believers:

> **1 Corinthians 10:1** *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;*

> **1 Corinthians 10:2** *And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;*
> **1 Corinthians 10:3** *And did all eat the same spiritual meat;*
> **1 Corinthians 10:4** *And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*
> **1 Corinthians 10:5** *But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.*
> **1 Corinthians 10:6** *Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.*

"Baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." As the library's study of baptism notes, Israel walked through on **"dry ground,"** yet Paul calls it a baptism. The word means immersion or identification: Israel was identified with Moses, their leader, by passing under the cloud and through the sea with him. Believers today are identified with Christ.

"That Rock was Christ." The rock that gave water in the wilderness (Exodus 17, the next part of the journey) was a picture of the Messiah, the source of life for His people. As this series understands it, Paul is using a **metaphor**, not saying Jesus was physically present as a rock; "the same spiritual meat" and "drink" were God's provision that pointed to Christ.

"With many of them God was not well pleased." They all saw the miracles, and many still fell in the wilderness through unbelief.

> **1 Corinthians 10:10** *Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.*
> **1 Corinthians 10:11** *Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

"Neither murmur ye." Complaining was Israel's besetting sin: at the sea, at Marah, in the wilderness of Sin. **"Do all things without murmurings and disputings"** (Philippians 2:14). And notice who Paul says destroyed them: **"the destroyer."** As the library's study of God's goodness observes, Paul keeps the destroyer and the Deliverer distinct.

God's daily provision. The manna came every morning. **"It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness"** (Lamentations 3:22-23). **"My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus"** (Philippians 4:19). **"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"** (Romans 8:32).

Sharing. Paul used the manna rule to teach the church to share: whoever gathered much had nothing over, and whoever gathered little had no lack (2 Corinthians 8:14-15).

The sabbath and the body of Christ. The sabbath was given to Israel as a sign (Exodus 31:13). In the grace administration Paul writes, **"Let no man therefore judge you ... in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ"** (Colossians 2:16-17). The rest the sabbath pictured is found in Christ.

Deliverance by God's hand. Israel was told, *the LORD shall fight for you.* Believers were delivered not by their own strength but by God's work in Christ, **"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world"** (Galatians 1:4).

To the Topic of Trust

- **God sometimes leads us into places that look like dead ends** — to show His power.
- **Fear rewrites memory:** slavery began to look good.
- **There is a time to pray and a time to go forward.**
- **Praise can turn to complaint in three days;** faith has to be renewed daily.
- **God answers complaint with provision,** yet He calls complaint what it is.
- **God's provision comes daily,** and cannot be hoarded.
- **Rest is a gift,** not a burden.

The Main Takeaway

God led His people to the edge of the sea with Pharaoh's army behind them, told them to stand still and see His salvation, divided the waters so they walked through on dry ground, and closed them on their pursuers; when they complained of hunger in the desert, He rained bread from heaven every morning for forty years — the Red Sea shows that deliverance is all of God, and the manna shows that God provides daily for those who trust Him; both point to Jesus Christ, the salvation of the LORD and the true bread from heaven.

- **Salvation is God's work;** we stand still and see it.
- **Faith goes forward** when God says go.
- **God provides every day** — enough, not excess.
- **Man does not live by bread only.**
- **Do not murmur;** remember what God has done.
- **Jesus is the bread of life.**

For Our Learning — The People

- **Moses.** Led Israel through the sea, sang the song, and cried to God at Marah.
- **Aaron.** Moses' brother and spokesman; kept the pot of manna.
- **Miriam the prophetess.** Led the women in song and dance at the sea.
- **Pharaoh.** Pursued Israel with six hundred chosen chariots; his army perished in the sea.
- **The children of Israel.** About six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children and a mixed multitude.
- **The angel of God.** Went before Israel in the pillar, then moved behind them to guard them.
- **Joseph** (in his bones). His dying request honoured as Israel left Egypt.

For Our Learning — Customs and Orientalisms

- **Marching "harnessed,"** in ordered ranks.
- **Carrying a patriarch's bones** for burial in the promised land.
- **Egyptian war chariots,** the elite weapon of the age.

- **Night watches:** the “morning watch” was the last before dawn.
- **Victory songs** with timbrels (hand drums) and dancing, often led by women.
- **Wells and oases** as camping places in the desert.
- **The omer** as a daily measure; the ephah as ten omers.
- **Meat pots** of Egypt — Egyptian workers’ rations.
- **The sabbath,** first given here as a day of rest.
- **Keeping memorials** for later generations.

For Our Learning — Figures of Speech

A figure of speech is a deliberate departure from the plain, ordinary way of saying something, used by God to add emphasis and feeling. These are the ones in this story:

- **Idiom** — “with an high hand” (14:8): boldly, openly.
- **Irony** — “Because there were no graves in Egypt?” (14:11).
- **Anthropopatheia** — ascribing human form or feelings to God. “The LORD looked” (14:24); “the blast of thy nostrils” (15:8); “thy right hand” (15:6).
- **Synecdoche** — a part for the whole. “The horse and his rider” (15:1) for the whole chariot army.
- **Metaphor** — “The LORD is a man of war” (15:3); “that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4).
- **Asyndeton** — clauses without “and.” “I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil” (15:9).
- **Simile** — “they sank into the bottom as a stone” (15:5); “they sank as lead” (15:10); “like coriander seed” (16:31).
- **Erotesis** — questions for effect. “Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods?” (15:11).

What the Bible Actually Says

- **God led Israel the long way on purpose,** and camped them by the sea on purpose.
- **Israel cried to God and then accused Moses.**
- **God used a strong east wind all night,** but the walls of water and the timing were His miracle.
- **The Israelites crossed on dry ground,** yet Paul calls it a baptism.
- **The whole pursuing army was lost;** Exodus does not say Pharaoh himself drowned.
- **Israel murmured three days after the song.**
- **“The LORD that healeth thee”** was revealed at Marah.
- **“Manna” means “What is it?”**
- **Whoever gathered much or little had exactly enough.**
- **The first mention of the sabbath is Exodus 16,** as a gift to Israel.
- **Manna fell for forty years,** until they ate the produce of Canaan.
- **Jesus said He is the true bread from heaven.**

God's Will and Intent

- **God delivers His people** when they cannot deliver themselves.
- **God makes Himself known,** to His enemies and to His people.
- **God heals** — it is His name.
- **God provides daily** and teaches His people to trust Him one day at a time.
- **God gives rest.**
- **God is patient** with complaining people, though He calls them to better.
- **God was pointing to His Son,** the salvation of the LORD and the bread of life — crucified, raised, and ascended.