

Lesson 22

Crossing the Red Sea and First Adventures in the Desert

Exodus 14, 16, 17



Teacher, please remember that the commentary below is intended to help you in your study, not to be read to your students. Make your own list of applications, using the help from the commentary, but don't necessarily try to cover everything! Think of the students in your class, then be prayerfully selective.

Contents:

1. Preparation
2. Memory verses
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5. Verse by verse commentary (suggested location of activities included)
6. Suggested prayer to close
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9. Bible Text (in full, without commentary)

1. Preparation

- 1) Choose memory verse
- 2) Select attention grabber to start off lesson / break the ice - optional, recommended for younger classes. See point 7.
- 3) Suggested activities- optional, recommended for younger children. See point 8.

2. Choose memory verse

EXODUS 15:2a, "The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him..."

JOHN 6:33, "For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

PSALM 114:7-8a

"Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, At the presence of the God of Jacob, Who turned the rock into a pool of water..."

3. Themes

God is our Protector—let us not murmur and complain when he provides and cares for us!

4. Lesson introduction

To the teacher: This is a **combined lesson** on the crossing of the Red Sea, the giving of manna and water from the rock. You will not be able to emphasize everything. Choose whether you will accent the miraculous provision of God in taking the people of Israel across the Red Sea or the sinful response of the people of Israel, who grumbled and complained when he provided for them. But remember that your application must be framed by the whole account.

God delivered the children of Israel, although deliverance seemed quite impossible. When God works on behalf of His people, there is no obstacle too great--not an Egyptian army and not an entire sea.

Moses led the Israelites through the desert on a journey to the Promised Land. It was not easy to travel through a vast desert. Sadly, the people forgot the great miracles God had performed in delivering them from Egypt. They began to murmur and complain. They longed to return to Egypt and eat meat and bread like they had in Egypt. Not only did they forget God's miracles and fail to trust Him with their present situation, they forgot how painful were their years of servitude in Egypt. Their unbelief had blinded their eyes. May we trust God in hard times.

The children of Israel had some incredible experiences as God took care of them in the wilderness. They saw the Red Sea

part and they walked through it on dry ground. They saw the Egyptian army covered by the Red Sea, the very sea that they had passed through. They tasted bitter waters that God made sweet for them, and they saw miraculous provision of the manna, the food that would sustain them for the next 40 years. One would think that such great miracles would build their faith so much that they would never doubt God again. Yet, the Israelites struggled with unbelief time and time again. We will see, once again, faced with a seeming impossibility, they begin to murmur and complain. And we will see, once again, the wondrous grace and long suffering of God toward them. [Let us not be guilty of murmuring and complaining when God provides and cares for us!](#)

5. Verse by Verse Commentary

EXODUS 14:1-9

Moses and the children of Israel left Egypt. Pharaoh has, once more, hardened his heart and is now pursuing the children of Israel. Pharaoh had been humiliated and angered by the events surrounding the Israelite's deliverance, and he now sought revenge. Although the Egyptian army was much more powerful than God's people (who had no weapons and traveled with their families--women, children, and elderly), they lacked that which was most important: the presence of God on their side. [God is our Protector.](#)

When Moses looked up and saw the Egyptian army coming, he was not surprised. Not only did God tell Moses of the approaching Egyptian army, but God revealed his plan to judge the Egyptians. Egypt had been full of pride against God, and now they faced judgment. If we, as the Egyptians, turn against God, all of our plans will be frustrated; and eventually, we will be judged. Instead, let us turn to God. He will go before us and cause us to triumph.

EXODUS 14:10-12

Pharaoh's army was close behind the children of Israel. They were being followed by hundreds of men on chariots who sought to capture them. Seeing the great Egyptian army behind them, the Israelites became overwhelmed with fear. They cried out to God, but did not trust Him. In their unbelief, they began to complain. They even accused Moses of making a foolish decision to leave Egypt. How quickly the children of Israel forgot the miracles God had wrought in Egypt. Now, blinded by their unbelief, they wished they were back in Egypt serving Pharaoh again, back in bondage where they imagined they would be safe. The children of Israel did not know that God had a magnificent plan to rescue them. Their eyes were on the mighty Egyptian army and not on their all-powerful God. We, as Christians, will face circumstances in our life that could easily overwhelm us. May we choose to focus our attention on our mighty God and not on our circumstances.

EXODUS 14:13-14

Moses was a good leader and pointed them to the Lord. The Bible says, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" The mighty Egyptian army was not a match for God. In our time of need, may we realize that if the Lord is on our side, the strength of our enemies is insignificant. [God is our Protector.](#)

EXODUS 14:15-20

God did a mighty thing for His people that night. He used a pillar of cloud to go behind them and cause darkness for the enemy, but light for His children.

EXODUS 14:21-22

God did another miraculous act in order to protect His children from the enemy that pursued them. God parted a mighty sea and allowed the Israelites to pass through on dry land. Can you imagine how it must have been to walk on dry land while the sea was restrained on either side of you? God is all-powerful! He can do anything He wants to accomplish His will. As Christians, we need never be afraid, for [God is our Protector.](#)

Note, the children of Israel had desired to go backwards in their hearts (back to Egypt); God's way was forward. God always moves us forward in our relationship with the Lord. As we move forward, God will show Himself strong on our behalf.

EXODUS 14:23-29

The Egyptians tried to follow the Israelites into the sea; but God confused them, and their chariots became difficult to drive. When the Egyptians began to realize that God was in control of the situation, they tried to escape. However, God caused the sea to close as Moses stretched out his hand.

EXODUS 14:30-31

God enabled the Israelites, over two million people, to pass safely through the Red Sea. God cast judgment on Pharaoh and the Egyptian army who did not obey for follow Him. God had demonstrated His great power to deliver—not only from the bondage of Egypt, but from the pursuing Egyptian army—a circumstance that seemed like certain death to the Israelites. God is able to deliver us no matter our circumstances. May we not, as the Israelites, cry out in fear and complaining when faced with impossible circumstances; may we, instead, be filled with faith, remembering God's past miracles. God who delivered us in the past will surely deliver us today and in the future. II Corinthians 1:20 states: "...who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us..."

Even if it seems like the Egyptian army is pursuing you and the Red Sea is in front of you, you can "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today" (Exodus 14:13). We can trust God fully. [God is our Protector.](#)

EXODUS 16:4-8

God had a special plan for the Israelites—that is why He called them out of Egypt. God intended to provide for their needs the whole time, but the Israelites lacked faith. The Israelites needed to trust God to provide their daily needs. This should not have been difficult—they had seen God do greater miracles! However, they again let doubt and fear overcome them and murmuring was the result. Murmuring is complaining in a low tone or in private; when the Israelites complained against their circumstances, they were complaining against God. God had brought them there and given them great promises; complaining revealed their doubt that God had led them into the desert and would certainly provide for them. [Let us not be guilty of murmuring and complaining.](#)

EXODUS 16:9-18

To prove that He was with the Israelites and that He would care for them, God displayed His glory in a cloud in the wilderness. Then God provided food for them miraculously. God caused quail to come in the evening to provide meat for them. In the morning, small pieces of bread-like food had formed on the ground. They called the bread "manna" which means "what is it?" because no one knew what it was. God provided just enough every day for each person. No one had too much or too little. God is patient and compassionate. His people were complaining about how God was not taking care of their needs; yet He miraculously provided for them. God's provision of manna would continue for the Israelites for 40 years as they lived in the wilderness. God always provides our needs.

EXODUS 16:19-29

The Israelites were not to keep manna overnight or to gather it on the Sabbath. God promised to provide it fresh every day except for the sixth day. On the sixth day, He would provide double so they could save it and not need to gather on the Sabbath. However, the people lacked faith—some tried to keep it overnight; some tried to gather on the Sabbath. God saw that the people did not keep His commandments. The Sabbath was to be holy; no work was to be done on this special day. God gives us His commandments to bless us and protect us. When we do not trust the Lord and obey, we miss out on the blessings He desires to bestow upon our lives. [Let us not be guilty of murmuring and complaining.](#)

EXODUS 16:30-35

May we not, as the children of Israel did, forget God's past miracles and begin to murmur and complain about our present circumstances. Our God can rain bread from Heaven upon us if necessary. We can trust Him to provide our needs daily! Our trust should lead us to fully obey God, knowing His plans for us are good. Jeremiah 29:11 states: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." [Let us not be guilty of murmuring and complaining.](#)

EXODUS 17:1

In this verse, we see the children of Israel journeying from the wilderness of Sin to Rephidim, "according to the commandment of the Lord," and there was no water for them to drink there. Did God make a mistake? It was God who led them into an "impossible" situation. Surely, their Great Shepherd who led them knew what trials would befall them. Surely, He is prepared to work on their behalf. God will sometimes lead us into "impossible" situations in order to accomplish His divine purposes. We, too, can trust that He knows the trials and obstacles we are facing and will face; and He is prepared to work on our behalf. [God takes cares of His children.](#)

EXODUS 17:2-4

Here we are told that the people "contended" with Moses. They challenged Moses to supply them with water, almost as if it were a debt that he could not honor. Moses responded that they were, in reality, contending with the Lord. Moses was God's appointed leader and His representative to the people. To murmur against Moses was to murmur against the Lord. As their need grew stronger, and no evidence of water was to be seen, the children of Israel grew angrier. They

accused Moses of bringing them out of Egypt to let them die of thirst in the wilderness. They were questioning God's goodness and faithfulness.

Now, it was no difficulty for God to provide water—He who had parted the Red Sea, buried the army in it, turned bitter water to sweet, and given manna from heaven. How quickly they forgot all the miracles God had done and became, again, overwhelmed with the circumstances.

Their unbelief had blinded their eyes and, foolishly, they were even ready to stone Moses—the one who had laid down his life for them. May we be cautious that we do not fall prey to an "evil heart of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:12) as did the children of Israel. How did Moses respond? Rather than become angry and attempt to defend himself, Moses brought the problem to the Almighty God—the source of His strength. He cried out to the Lord, "What shall I do?" He, wisely, sought counsel from the Lord.

We, too, should learn to seek God's counsel and wisdom when faced with every decision and problem. With our own solutions and "fix it" attempts, we can make a greater mess than we started with. It is always wise to seek the counsel of the Lord. Proverbs 3:5,6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." [God takes cares of His children.](#)

EXODUS 17:5-6

God graciously answered Moses cry. (When we come to God in prayer with our needs, we can be assured that He answers us.) God told Moses to go before the people, even though they wanted to stone him. Moses knew God was with him and would protect him.

God then told Moses that He would "stand before you there upon the rock in Horeb." What a beautiful promise: God would stand before Moses. Moses was to "strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." We see a beautiful type of Jesus Christ in this picture (see 1 Corinthians 10:1-4). We see the rock being struck, speaking of the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross. Moses used his rod to strike the rock—the same rod that had been the symbol of judgment (Exodus 4:3; 7:17) in the hand of Moses. Jesus took the judgment for our sins that we deserved. It is awesome to consider is the fact that it was the people's sins that led to the smiting of the rock, just as our sins led to the smiting of the Rock of our salvation, Jesus. Note, God, Himself, stood upon the rock while it was smitten (verse 6). The Bible says, "...God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them...." Just as the water flowed out of the rock to meet the need of the people, so grace flows from our Rock to meet each of our needs. In John 7:37-38, Jesus said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The water flowing from the rock is a beautiful type of the Holy Spirit, who fills us and refreshes us as God's children.

EXODUS 17:7

Moses named the place Massah, meaning "temptation," because the people tempted God; and Meribah, meaning "strife." A name was given as a remembrance of their sin; it would serve as a warning to their children not to commit the same sins as their parents.

We truly see God's love and forbearance for His people; although, they had murmured and complained, accused Moses and God. The Bible says where sin abounds, grace much more abounds. May we not be guilty, as the children of Israel were, of "an evil heart of disbelief" and find ourselves complaining when faced with "impossible" circumstances. Our faithful and all-powerful God can, if necessary, provide "waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink..." (Isaiah 43:20). Remember, [God takes cares of His children.](#)

6. Prayer:

Lead the children in a prayer thanksgiving for the Lord's deliverance, care and protection. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them an opportunity.

7. Attention Grabbers

Paper Wad Wars

You will need about fifty pieces of wadded paper and some large pieces of cardboard for shields. Divide your class into two groups. Have them throw the divided pieces of paper at each other without the cardboard shields first. When they have sufficiently hit one another, have them start over using the shields. Point out that if they are behind the shield, they are safe from the incoming paper bombs. Explain that the Lord is our protection and shield. If we stand behind Him (live

obedient lives as His children), He will protect us from the weapons of the enemy.

Kooky Creations

Use self-hardening clay or Sculpey to let the kids create something that they have never seen before! We are going to learn in our lesson today that if God chooses, He can make something brand new that no one has ever seen before in order to meet our needs. God did this for the children of Israel when they were hungry.

Can't Blow It

You will need a trick birthday candle (the kind that will not blow out!) and matches. Please read the directions on the candle box. Please supervise the use of the lit fire and matches carefully. Have the children try to think of things a person could do that would make God stop loving them. As they share their ideas, let them try to blow out the candle. It will not go out, just as the love of God will not go "out."

8. Activities:

Try to Part the Sea

You will need a large tub of water, a spatula, a blow dryer, and a towel. Have different volunteers try to part the water in the tub using the tools you've brought. Of course, they will not be able to. Explain what a miracle God performed for His children. Ask your students what they think it must have been like to witness and be saved by such a miracle.

The Red Sea

You will need a pan of red Jello. Make Jello jigglers out of your pan. Cut the Jello in the middle and remove the center pieces first. Explain how God divided the Red Sea for the children of Israel.

What's That?

Make some pretend manna by crushing animal crackers or graham crackers to cornmeal size crumbs. Give your students a taste in individual paper cups. Be sure to tell them that this is pretend manna. Talk about what the word "manna" means.

Omer Pile!

Bring two quart sized containers and some substance you have on hand such as white cornmeal, flour, yellow cornmeal, macaroni, beans, etc. Let the kids take turns measuring into the jar. Older kids could guess how many loaves of bread could be made out of it.

Explain that a quart is approximately the amount of an omer. God knew that the Israelites had a tendency to forget His miracles, so He commanded Moses to keep an omer of manna so that future generations would have evidence of God's miracle. We, too, can so easily forget God's miracles of the past and fail to trust Him in our present difficult situation.

The Rock

Make a "rock" out of gray clay with several strands of blue yarn "flowing" from it. If you want, have the children make rocks too, so they can take them home as a reminder of the power of God.

What a Reminder

In a small baby food jar, mix water with a little baby oil and blue food coloring. Glue the lid on. This can be passed around just to remind them of the water that came from the rock as you talk about it.

9. Bible text (NIV):

Exodus 14:1

Then the LORD said to Moses,² "Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. They are to encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal Zephon.³ Pharaoh will think, 'The Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert.'⁴ And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD." So the Israelites did this.

⁵ When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, "What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!"⁶ So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him.⁷ He took six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them.⁸ The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites, who

were marching out boldly. ⁹The Egyptians—all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots, horsemen and troops—pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi Hahiroth, opposite Baal Zephon.

¹⁰As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. ¹¹They said to Moses, “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? ¹²Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!”

¹³Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. ¹⁴The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

¹⁵Then the LORD said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. ¹⁶Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. ¹⁷I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. ¹⁸The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen.”

¹⁹Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel’s army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, ²⁰coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long.

²¹Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, ²²and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

²³The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. ²⁴During the last watch of the night the LORD looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. ²⁵He jammed the wheels of their chariots so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, “Let’s get away from the Israelites! The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt.”

²⁶Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen.” ²⁷Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the LORD swept them into the sea. ²⁸The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived.

²⁹But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. ³⁰That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. ³¹And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

^{16:4}Then the LORD said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. ⁵On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.”

⁶So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt, ⁷and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?” ⁸Moses also said, “You will know that it was the LORD when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD.”

⁹Then Moses told Aaron, “Say to the entire Israelite community, ‘Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.’”

¹⁰While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud.

¹¹The LORD said to Moses, ¹²“I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.’”

¹³That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. ¹⁵When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, “It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat. ¹⁶This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.’”

¹⁷The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. ¹⁸And when they measured it by the omer, the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little. Everyone had gathered just as much as they needed.

¹⁹Then Moses said to them, “No one is to keep any of it until morning.”

²⁰However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them.

²¹Each morning everyone gathered as much as they needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away. ²²On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much—two omers for each person—and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. ²³He said to them, “This is what the LORD commanded: ‘Tomorrow is to be a day of sabbath rest, a holy sabbath to the LORD. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.’”

²⁴So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. ²⁵“Eat it today,” Moses said, “because today is a sabbath to the LORD. You will not find any of it on the ground today. ²⁶Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any.”

²⁷Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. ²⁸Then the LORD said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? ²⁹Bear in mind that the LORD has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where they are on the seventh day; no one is to go out.” ³⁰So the people rested on the seventh day.

³¹The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey.

³²Moses said, “This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Take an omer of manna and keep it for the generations to come, so they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the wilderness when I brought you out of Egypt.’”

³³So Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar and put an omer of manna in it. Then place it before the LORD to be kept for the generations to come.”

³⁴As the LORD commanded Moses, Aaron put the manna with the tablets of the covenant law, so that it might be preserved. ³⁵The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a land that was settled; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan.

17:1 The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ²So they quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.”

Moses replied, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?”

³But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?”

⁴Then Moses cried out to the LORD, “What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.”

⁵The LORD answered Moses, “Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.” So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”