

Handout 1: Exodus Lesson 8

Seven significant place names are recorded on Israel's route out of Egypt:

- *Ramese/Rameses*: a region in the Delta (Gen 47:11) and a city in the Delta (Ex 1:11; 12:37; 13:20; also mentioned in Num 33:3-5).
- *Sukkot/ Succoth*: means “shelters/enclosures”; possible a site with large pens for fencing livestock. It is the place-name the campsite of Jacob before crossing the Jordan River to re-enter Canaan (Gen 33:17); an Israelite encampment in the wilderness on the journey out of Egypt (Ex 12:37; 13:20; Num 33:5-6); a site in Canaan/Israel occupied by the tribe of Gad (Josh 13:27; Judg 8:5-16); a city in Israel belonging to the tribe of Ephraim (1 Kng 7:46; 2 Chr 4:17; Ps 60:6; 107:7).
- *Yam Suph*: Sea (of) Reeds = body of water on the border of Egypt; mentioned fourteen times in the Pentateuch (Ex 10:19; 13:18; 15:4, 22; 23:31; Num 14:25; 21:4; 14; 33:10, 11; Dt 1:1, 40; 2:1; 11:4) and where King Solomon kept his navy (1 Kng 9:26). This body of water is usually identified as the sea dividing Egypt and Arabia and its two arms: the Gulf of Suez (on the Egyptian side of the Sinai Peninsula) and the Gulf of Aqaba (between Sinai and Arabia). The Greek Septuagint scholars translated the Hebrew *yam (sea) suph (reeds)* as *Erythran Thallessa (Thallasan)*: “Red Sea,” a translation that was repeated in St. Jerome's 4th century AD Latin Vulgate. There are several passages in Scripture that seem to identify the Gulf of Aqaba as the Yam Suph (used in Scripture over 20 times; i.e., see: Ex 23:31; Dt 1:40; 2:1; Judg 11:16; 1 Kng 9:26; Jer 49:21).
- *Pi-ha-chirot/ Pi-ha-hiroth*: literally “mouth-(of) the-gorges” (ot is a plural ending); another possible meaning could be “mouth-(of) the-canals, or some Egyptologist have suggested House of (the goddess) Hathor; however this interpretation neglects the plural ending (Ex 14:2, 9; Num 33:7-8).
- *Migdol*: literally tower or fortress; a Semitic designation/ place name found fairly frequently in Scripture. It can refer to a natural or man-made tower/fortress (used as a place-name see Ex 14:2; Num 33:7; Jer 44:1; 46:11).
- *Baal-Zephon*: literally “Baal (lord)-destroyer”; a place name in Egyptian territory of a cultic site for the worship of the Canaanite storm-god Baal. Since Baal was a mountain storm-god who hurled thunderbolts his cultic shrines were usually located on mountain tops (only mentioned in Ex 14:2, 9 and Num 33:7).
- The Wilderness/Desert of Shur: The place-name *shur* is literally the Hebrew word for “wall” (see Gen 49:22; 2 Sam 22:30) and therefore may refer to more than one wilderness “wall” that bordered fertile land. According to Exodus 15:22 the Desert of Shur was on the other side of the Yam Suph crossing. Genesis 20:1 suggests that Shur was near Philistine territory. Most biblical scholars locate the Desert of Shur in the northern Sinai between southern Canaan/Israel and Egypt (Gen 16:6-7; 20:1; 25:18; Ex 15:22; 1 Sam 15:7; 27:8).

Unfortunately, none of the place names have been positively identified.

Handout 2: Exodus Lesson 8

At this time in the history of the children of Israel the hours of darkness were divided into three watches of five seasonal hours as the ancients counted them, but four hours each as we count:

- First night watch: sundown to c. 10PM
- Second night watch: c. 10PM to c. 2AM
- Third night watch: c. 2 AM to sunrise

These were of course seasonal hours, which means the “hour” varied according to the seasons of the year—longer “hours” in summer and shorter in winter with the day evenly divided between hours of light and hours of darkness.

In the 1st century AD, during Jesus’ ministry under Roman occupation, the Jews adopted the Roman system of four night watches:

- The first watch: Sundown to c. 9 PM
- The second watch: c. 9 PM to midnight (the beginning of the Roman day),
- The third watch: midnight to c. 3 AM
- The fourth watch: c. 3 AM to sunrise

The *Shirat ha-Yam* can be divided into three parts or stanzas which celebrate God’s mightily works for Israel in the past, the present and the future. This beautiful poem/song will take a central place in Israelite worship and liturgy, becoming the oldest piece of sustained poetry in the Hebrew Bible (*JPS Commentary*, page 75). According to verses 20-21 the song was an antiphonal arrangement with Miriam acting as Israel’s first cantor and the women singing the refrain from verse 1b.

- Part I: verses 1b-3 is the introduction that sings God’s praises as Israel’s warrior-deliverer.
- Part II: verses 4-8 praise God for His defeat of the Pharaoh and his army by using His sovereign power over the elements.
- Part III: verses 9-13 celebrate God’s victory over Israel’s enemy, God’s holiness, sanctity, and His covenant love for His people in guiding them to His sacred dwelling.
- Part IV: verses 14-18 describe the impact the God’s victory on the other peoples in the region and prophesizes God’s future plans for Israel.