Jesus our Living Bread and Living Water

1. Into the wilderness

a. Having escaped slavery in Egypt by the covering blood of the sacrificial lamb, the Israelites faced the Red Sea. There is much in the story of the crossing of the Red Sea that speaks of our journey with Christ after the salvation of the cross but in this series we are concentrating of the types of Christ. Obviously, the imagery of crossing the Red Sea speaks of our baptism in Christ but this is not strictly a type of Christ himself but our journey of salvation.

b. After Israel was on the safe side of the Red Sea, with Egypt behind them and the Egyptian army devastated by the waters, its people entered into a wilderness. The exhilaration of their miraculous victory (Ex. 15:1-21) quickly gave way to complaints about their environment.

Ex.15:22-24 *Then Moses led Israel to journey away from the Red Sea. They went out to the wilderness of Shur, walked for three days into the wilderness, and found no water. [23] Then they came to Marah, but they were not able to drink the waters of Marah, because they were bitter. (That is why its name was Marah.) [24] So the people murmured against Moses, saying, "What can we drink?"*

c. Just two verses later, just three days later, the dancing and songs of their joy in God's wonderful previous deliverance is gone. The dancing has turned into moaning! The waters at Marah were bitter and the people weren't much better! What was God's solution?

Ex.15:25-26 *He (Moses) cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree. When Moses threw it into the water, the water became safe to drink. There the Lord made for them a binding ordinance, and there he tested them. He said, "If you will diligently obey the Lord your God, and do what is right in his sight, and pay attention to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, then all the diseases that I brought on the Egyptians I will not bring on you, for I, the Lord, am your healer."*

d. He showed Moses a tree - a tree that could turn that which is bitter into something that is sweet. What a good picture of the cross of Christ this is - the tree on which Christ was crucified! It has the power to soften and sweeten the hardest and bitterest of hearts. The Lord is our healer as the text says and it was 'by his (Jesus) wounds that we are healed.' (Isa 53:5).

e. This passage also speaks to us in our Christian lives. We all face difficulties and trials like Israel did here. Do we get bitter or take up the cross? We never fully understand why things happen, but when we submit ourselves to God and take up the cross, God still uses that tree to turn bitter experiences into sweet.

Luke 9:23 *Then he said to them all, "If anyone wants to become my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.*

f. And let's look at what happens after submitting themselves to God.

Ex.15:27 *Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees, and they camped there by the water.*

g. After looking to God, and taking up the 'tree', what do we find? We find that there is refreshment and times of rest. The Lord has comfort as well as the cross!

Mat 11:28 *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*

h. However, as we move on to Exodus 16 we see the Israelites are back again doing what they did well - moaning and groaning and looking only at the natural, and completely forgetting, once again, the gracious and miraculous provision that God had repeatedly made for them.

Ex.16:1-3 *When they journeyed from Elim, the entire company of Israelites came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their exodus from the land of Egypt. [2]The entire company of Israelites murmured against Moses and Aaron in the desert. [3]The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this desert to kill this whole assembly with hunger!"*

i. You will also note that they were even starting to exaggerate as to how good it really was back in Egypt! It seemed to them that they had merely swapped a harsh life of slavery in Egypt for a brutal death in the wilderness east of Egypt. They had no food. They grumbled against Aaron and Moses— and, by extension, against God.

2. The Living Bread from heaven

a. However, in His goodness God does provide for them with the miracle of manna. The New Testament is clear that manna is a type of Christ. Jesus Christ compared Himself to the manna.

John 6:32-35 *Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. [33]"For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world." [34] Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread." [35] Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.*

b. It is a type (a divinely intended illustration) of Christ. Our Lord gave Himself unreservedly, but each Christian has no more of Him experientially than we appropriate by faith. To meditate on Him is to feed on the true manna.

Ex.16:4 *Then the Lord said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people will go out and gather the amount for each day, so that I may test them. Will they walk in my law or not?*

c. They were to gather the manna every day except on the Sabbath however, as the seventh day was a day of rest. The application here is clear - Jesus is the true manna from Heaven. We are to feed on Him i.e. find our nourishment and spiritual strength through our relationship with Christ. And notice that they gathered every day. So is the Christian life a daily relationship.

Ex 16:19-20 *Moses said to them, "No one is to keep any of it until morning." [20]But they did not listen to Moses; some kept part of it until morning, and it was full of worms and began to stink, and Moses was angry with them.*

d. The reason that the manna was collected each day was because it didn't last till the next day. It gave strength and nourishment for that day but not beyond. This passage again emphasises the need of daily feeding on Christ and His word. The strength we received yesterday is not enough for today. We need to renew our mind with the truth on a daily basis especially in the difficult times.

e. It also emphasises the need to use what God provides. Today's grace is for today's living.

Matt.6:32-34 *…for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. [33]"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. [34]"So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

Ex.16:21 *So they gathered it each morning, each person according to what he could eat, and when the sun got hot, it would melt.*

f. They had to gather in the morning before the manna was melted by the hot sun. The application? Well, there are certainly verses in the Bible which emphasise starting each day with the Lord (especially in the Psalms such as 5:3, 59:16, 143:8). It makes sense to renew our mind early with God's word so that we start each new day with how God sees things.

Ex. 16:17-18 *The Israelites did so, and they gathered – some more, some less. [18]When they measured with an omer, the one who gathered much had nothing left over, and the one who gathered little lacked nothing; each one had gathered what he could eat.*

g. Interestingly, those who gathered a little did not have too little and those that gathered a lot didn't have too much! In a sense it's not about how much we feed on Christ and His word but that it is a daily feeding. That's not to encourage laziness in anyway when it comes to our quiet time with the Lord, but it does show that the Lord can still feed us when we look to Him and don't have the time to 'gather much'.

Ex.16:13-14 *In the evening the quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning a layer of dew was all around the camp. [14]When the layer of dew had evaporated, there on the surface of the desert was a thin flaky substance, thin like frost on the earth*

h. Just a small point, but the manna was easily assessable. They didn't have to struggle and strive to get it - God brought it straight to the people. God has also made Jesus assessable for all. The word encourages us to come boldly to His throne of grace! The challenge is, are we going to come? Are we going to receive God's provision daily? Are we going to gather?

i. For 40 years, while Israel wandered in the wilderness, they lived on the manna! It was a complete food in and of itself, giving them everything that their bodies needed. The Psalmist called it the 'bread of angels'. (Ps 78:25). This gives us a picture of how Jesus is totally complete in Himself and is all we need. Watchman Nee once said, *'It does not matter what your personal deficiency is... God has always one sufficient answer, His Son Jesus Christ, and He is the answer to every human need.'*

j. As born again Christians we are heavenly people and as a heavenly person we need to be sustained by heavenly things! We need to sustain ourselves by feeding on the Bread of Life daily.

k. Finally, the manna was a daily reminder of things to come.

Ex.16:31 *The house of Israel called its name "manna." It was like coriander seed and was white, and it tasted like wafers with honey.*

l. The manna tasted like wafers made with honey. So every day, if they gathered, God gave them a small taste of what was to come - a small taste of their final destination - the Promised Land 'flowing with milk and honey!' So it is with Jesus. The Bible says that currently we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now we know in part; then we shall know fully. (1 Cor 13:12).

m. We may only see and experience the Lord Jesus in part right now, but it is certainly a good taste of the wonderful things still to come! And one day soon it will be face to face!

3. The Rock and Living Water

a. Having left the Desert of Sin the Israelites travelled on to Rephidim. Rephidim was near the wilderness of Sinai and the Horeb (Sinai) range of mountains (v. 6). Again the Israelites complained because there was no water to drink when they camped at Rephidim. At Marah there was bad water, but now there was none.

Ex.17:1-4 *The whole community of the Israelites travelled on their journey from the wilderness of Sin according to the Lord's instruction, and they pitched camp in Rephidim. Now there was no water for the people to drink. [2] So the people contended with Moses, and they said, "Give us water to drink!" Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you test the Lord?" [3] But the people were very thirsty there for water, and they murmured against Moses and said, "Why in the world did you bring us up from Egypt—to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" [4] Then Moses cried out to the Lord, "What will I do with this people?—a little more and they will stone me!"*

b. The Israelites' grumbling demonstrated lack of faith, since God had promised to supply their needs (v. 2). They wanted Him to act as they dictated rather than waiting for Him to provide as He had promised. This was how they tested or challenged the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 10:10). It was proper for God to test them (15:25; 16:4), but it was improper for them to test Him in the sense of trying His patience.

Ex.17:5-6 *The Lord said to Moses, "Go over before the people; take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile and go. [6] I will be standing before you there on the rock in Horeb, and you will strike the rock, and water will come out of it so that the people may drink." And Moses did so in plain view of the elders of Israel.*

c. Now here is a strange thing. The people need water and God tells Moses that he will find the water inside a rock. Not the normal place you'd go looking for water, so what is God's purpose in this unusual solution. When God does really strange things, He is doing it for a reason and that reason is given to us in 1 Corinthians.

1 Cor.10:4 *….. and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they were all drinking from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ*

d. The rock is Christ! As a type of Christ, the striking of the rock pictured Christ being struck and crucified when He came to earth 2000 years ago. And after the rock was struck water flowed out.

John 7:37-39 *On the last day of the feast, the greatest day, Jesus stood up and shouted out, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me, and [38] let the one who believes in me drink. Just as the scripture says, 'From within him will flow rivers of living water.'" [39] (Now he said this about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were going to receive, for the Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus was not yet glorified.)*

e. Jesus had to be struck, to die and rise again, so that the living water of the Holy Spirit would be given, once He was glorified. The implication of both of Jesus' claims in John 6 and 7 is not only that the manna and water from the rock in the wilderness symbolise Jesus and point to Him; He was also the guiding, sustaining presence of God for Israel in their wilderness wanderings. He saved them physically in the Old Testament, and in much deeper ways in the New.

Ex.17:7 *He called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contending of the Israelites and because of their testing the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"*

f. "Massah" means "testing" or "proof," and "Meribah" means "murmuring," "dissatisfaction," or "contention" (v. 7). Except for Joshua 9:18 and Psalm 59:15, all the other references to grumbling in the Old Testament occur in six chapters of the Pentateuch: Exodus 15, 16, 17, and Numbers 14, 16, and 17. The first name commemorated the Israelites' testing of God and the second name their quarrelling with Moses. They failed to believe that the Lord was among them as He had promised He would be.

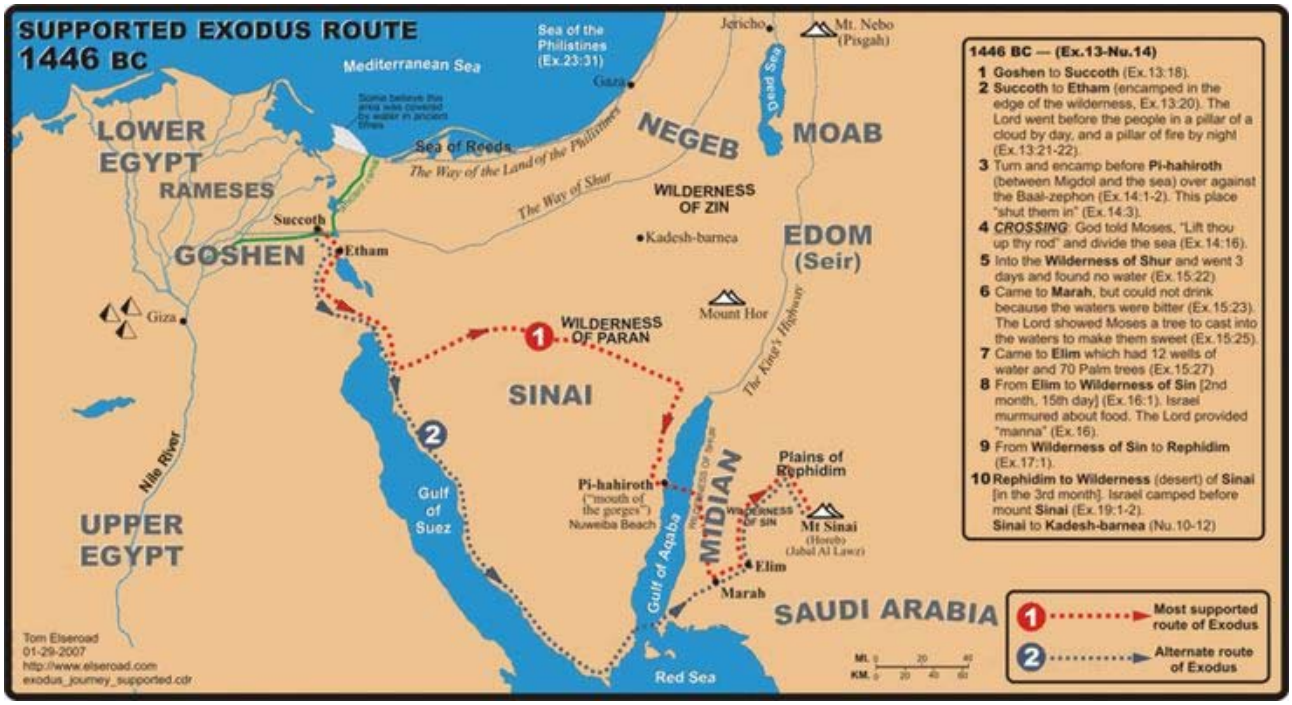
g. God had assured the Israelites in Egypt that He would bring them into the Promised Land (3:8, 17; 13:5, 11). Consequently, all their grumbling demonstrated a lack of faith. This second instance of complaining about lack of water was more serious than the first because God had provided good water for them earlier in the desert

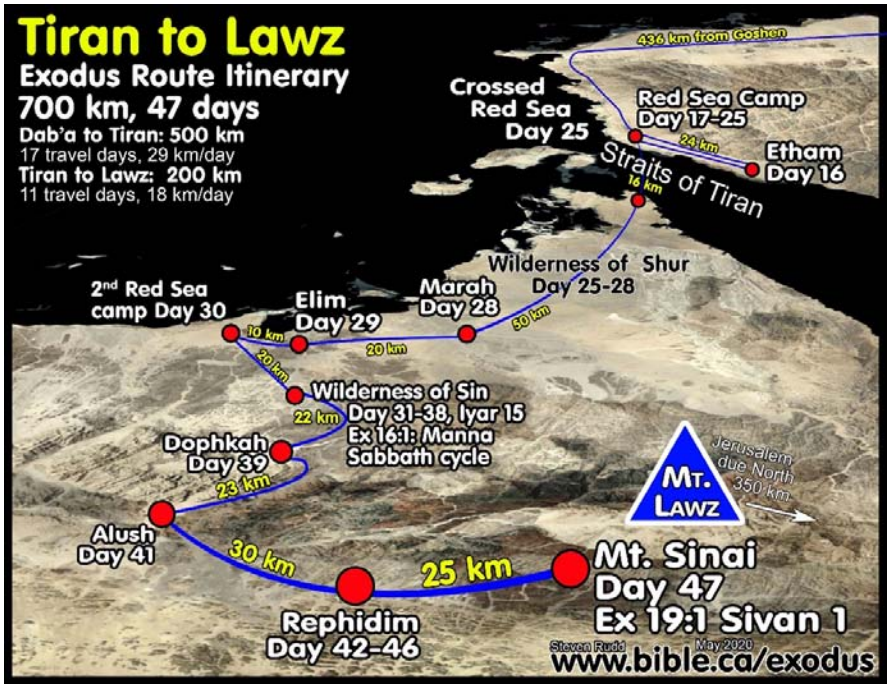
h. So here's the challenge – do we really believe that Jesus is the provision for all of our needs or are we grumblers like the Israelites? Grumbling demonstrates our lack of faith and our expectation that God should provide on our demand rather than waiting for His timing and means. If He has been faithful in the past surely He will always be faithful.

4. For reflection

a. According to these stories of manna and water from Exodus, it's clear that God doesn't want to hear His people complaining. What's your default response when faced with difficult or seemingly impossible situations? In what ways is Jesus "bread" and "water" for you? What does He offer—physically, spiritually, emotionally, mentally, relationally, etc.—to nourish and strengthen you?

Phil.4:19 *And my God will supply your every need according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus*


SUPPORTED EXODUS ROUTE
1446 BC
Mediterranean Sea
Sea of the Philistines (Ex.23:31)
Gaza
Jericho
Mt. Nebo (Pisgah)
Dead Sea
LOWER EGYPT
RAMESES
Succoth
GOSHEN
Etham
Sea of Reeds
The Way of the Land of the Philistines
The Way of Shur
NEGEB
WILDERNESS OF ZIN
Kadesh-barnea
MOAB
EDOM (Seir)
Giza
WILDERNESS OF PARAN
SINAI
Mount Hor
The King's Highway
Nile River
Gulf of Suez
Pi-hahiroth ("mouth of the gorges") Nuweiba Beach
MIDIAN
Plains of Rephidim
Mt Sinai (Horeb) (Jabal Al Lawz)
Elim
Marah
Gulf of Aqaba
UPPER EGYPT
SAUDI ARABIA
Red Sea
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1446 BC — (Ex.13-Nu.14)
1 Goshen to Succoth (Ex.13:18).
2 Succoth to Etham (encamped in the edge of the wilderness, Ex.13:20). The Lord went before the people in a pillar of a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night (Ex.13:21-22).
3 Turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth (between Migdol and the sea) over against the Baal-zephon (Ex.14:1-2). This place "shut them in" (Ex.14:3).
4 CROSSING: God told Moses, "Lift thou up thy rod" and divide the sea (Ex.14:16).
5 Into the Wilderness of Shur and went 3 days and found no water (Ex.15:22)
6 Came to Marah, but could not drink because the waters were bitter (Ex.15:23). The Lord showed Moses a tree to cast into the waters to make them sweet (Ex.15:25).
7 Came to Elim which had 12 wells of water and 70 Palm trees (Ex.15:27)
8 From Elim to Wilderness of Sin [2nd month, 15th day] (Ex.16:1). Israel murmured about food. The Lord provided "manna" (Ex.16).
9 From Wilderness of Sin to Rephidim (Ex.17:1).
10 Rephidim to Wilderness (desert) of Sinai [in the 3rd month]. Israel camped before mount Sinai (Ex.19:1-2).
Sinai to Kadesh-barnea (Nu.10-12)
1 Most supported route of Exodus
2 Alternate route of Exodus


Tiran to Lawz
Exodus Route Itinerary
700 km, 47 days
Dab'a to Tiran: 500 km
17 travel days, 29 km/day
Tiran to Lawz: 200 km
11 travel days, 18 km/day
436 km from Goshen
Crossed Red Sea Day 25
Red Sea Camp Day 17-25
24 km
Etham Day 16
Straits of Tiran
16 km
Wilderness of Shur Day 25-28
2nd Red Sea camp Day 30
Elim Day 29
Marah Day 28
10 km
20 km
50 km
20 km
Wilderness of Sin Day 31-38, Iyar 15 Ex 16:1: Manna Sabbath cycle
22 km
Dophkah Day 39
23 km
Alush Day 41
30 km
25 km
Rephidim Day 42-46
Mt. Sinai Day 47 Ex 19:1 Sivan 1
Mt. Lawz
Jerusalem due North 350 km
Steven Rudd
May 2020
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