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## Moses Took the Bones of Joseph With Him

### 13: 17-19

Moses took the bones of Joseph with him **DIG**: At the outset of this journey to the Red Sea what is God's assessment of the Israelite's emotional state? How did He allow for that? With God having defeated all the gods of Egypt (12:12), why do you think the people were afraid of one more battle? What significance do the bones of Joseph have (Hebrews 11:22)?

**REFLECT**: Has God ever taken you the longer way to get you to where you need to be? Were you better prepared when you got there? Or does your life seem like it is in the wilderness right now? What needs to change to get to your promised Land?

**Parashah 16: b'Shallach (After he had let go) 13:17-17:16**  
(See the commentary on Deuteronomy, to see link click [Af](#) - Parashah)

**The Key People** are **Pharaoh**, the **Israelites**, **Moshe**, 600 **Egyptians** on chariots, **Miriam**, **Amalek**, **Joshua**, **Aaron** and **Hur**.

**The Scenes** include **the Sea of Reeds**, **Sukkot** to **Etham**, **Pi-hahiroth** before **Ba'al Zephon** by the sea, **the wilderness of Sin**, **Rephidim**, **Horeb**, **Massah** and **Meribah**.

**The Main Events** include **Moshe** carrying out **Joseph's** bones, **pillar of cloud** and **fire**; **chariot** chase, parting **the Sea of Reeds**, **the Song of Moses**; **bitter waters** sweetened; **mannah and quail**, **water from a rock**; fighting against **Amalek** as **Moshe's** arms are held up, and **Amalek** remains **Isra'el's** enemy.

We now come to one of the most dramatic portions of Scripture - the story of **the exodus** from **Egypt**. It is a masterpiece of excitement, suspense, and awe. The writer returns to a description of **the Hebrews** in **their** escape from **Egypt** after the parenthetical section regarding the commandment of the firstborn. There was a

short way and a long way to return to the Promised Land. **When Pharaoh let the people go, ADONAI did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter.** The **shorter** way was called the *Via Maris*, or *the Way of the Sea*, that extended from the Nile River, across the northern Sinai into the coastal plain of Canaan. It was heavily traveled and was the most commonly used route from **Egypt** to Asia.

**The Hebrews** had just come out of slavery and **they** were not prepared for warfare. **The distance from Egypt to Canaan by the direct route would have taken about ten days; if it had taken longer Jacob's sons could not have managed so easily to make that journey many times.** It was the shortest and most direct route, but it was heavily guarded by a line of **Egyptian** fortresses that would have surely forced **the people to return to Egypt.** Therefore, **God reasoned: If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt (13:17).** A play on words is evident from the two major verbs of this verse. The verb for **God's** leading them is *naham*. The verb used for **the Hebrews'** changing their minds is *yinna-hem*. Although the two verbs come from different roots, here they look and sound alike in **Hebrew**. The reason for it is perhaps to underscore the contrast between **God's** leading and **Isra'el's** desire to **return to Egypt.**<sup>245</sup>

**So God chose the longer way to go and led the people around by way of the wilderness (NKJ) toward the Sea of Reeds (13:18a).** Throughout the parallel accounts of the crossing, the water is often referred to as the *yam suph*, or **Sea of Reeds (Exodus 15:4; Deuteronomy 11:4; Joshua 2:10, 4:23, 24:6; Psalm 106:7, 9, 22, and 136: 13, 15).** There is one site that fits all the biblical accounts of the crossing. It is a ridge that is raised up in the deep waters of the Red Sea/Gulf of Aqaba, from Newieba Beach across to Saudi Arabia. God planned for this crossing at exactly this place from the creation of the world, for He formed a ridge to rise up from the very deep chasm of Aqaba. For Aqaba's chasm to the north and south is deeper than the Grand Canyon, but this exceptional flat underwater ridge from Newieba beach over to Saudi Arabia is flat, very wide, no rough coral to walk but has a sandy/silty floor- which would provide a perfect crossing for **a multitude of people.** Four and six spoke wheel frames (most encrusted with coral and one valuable gold frame) were discovered at Gulf of Aqaba's Newieba beach. They were the design of chariot wheels used in **Egypt** during **Egypt's** eighteenth dynasty- no later than 1400 BC time frame which coincides closely with Biblical date of exodus.

**There were two reasons why God did not lead the Israelites directly to**

**Canaan.** One is stated directly and the other is implied. First, **the Israelites** had just come out of slavery, and **they were not prepared for warfare.** The shortest way for them to get to the Promised Land of Canaan was up the seacoast. During the Six-Day War in Palestine in 1967, **the Israeli** army moved right down the seacoast and moved **the Egyptians** right out. Of course **they** had tanks, guns and planes to do that. **They** were prepared. **The Israelites** coming out of **Egyptian** slavery had no weapons to fight with. So for the most part, **God** graciously delayed the fight and took them through the wilderness. It was a longer route, but they would not have to face an enemy (except against the Amalekites in **17:8-13**), until they entered Canaan under **Joshua**. It took them forty years to get through the wilderness into Canaan, but by then **they** would have an army and be equipped to fight.

Secondly, **God had much to teach them** before **He** would have **them** enter **the Land** to stand before the nations of the world as **His** particular treasure, a model for other nations. **Isra'el** would eventually become the channel through which **His** blessing would flow out to the entire world. If **they** were to fulfill their calling, it would take time for **God** to reveal **His** will to **them** and for **them** to get to know **Him**. **They** were to sit at **God's** feet, listen to **His** instruction, and understand **His** plan and **His** methods for accomplishing that plan. Above all, they had to learn how **He** wanted them to conduct themselves toward **God** and man. **They** had to be willing to obey **His** commands. **God** *needed to spend time with them* and the long wilder-ness journey afforded it.<sup>247</sup>

**The Israelites went up out of Egypt** as if **armed for battle (13:18b).**

Numerous ancient and modern translators (such as **the Targums** and the Vulgate) say that **the Hebrews** left **Egypt armed for battle.** The meaning of the **Hebrew** term is uncertain, however. The Septuagint translators render it *the fifth generation*. It seems to be related to the number five in some way, and may refer to an army in five parts or divisions. Thus, the word may indicate that **the Hebrews** were leaving **Egypt** not necessarily in a military posture, but rather in an orderly, military-like fashion. In other words, **they** were well organized when **they** left **Egypt.**<sup>248</sup>



It is significant that the move forward out of **Egypt** does not commence without a look backward because **Moses took the bones of Joseph with him. God** had told **Joseph** that **his** descendants would leave **Egypt** and **return to Canaan (Genesis 15:13-16)**. Before he died, **Joseph** said: **God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place (13:19)**. Therefore, **Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the sons of Isra'el swear an oath (Genesis 50:24-25)**. **They** would carry **his bones** around for the next forty years until **they** finally entered **Canaan**. Then **Joseph's bones**, and **the bones** of **his** brothers were buried in the territory of **his** second son **Ephraim (Joshua 24:32)**. Stephen tells us that **their bodies were also brought back to Shechem (Acts 7:15-16)**.

But why did **Joseph** want to be buried in **the Promised Land**? If **Joseph** knew **he** would be raised from the dead someday and taken up to heaven, what difference would it make if his launching pad was in **Egypt** or in the land of **Isra'el**? Well, the fact of the matter is that **he** was not expecting to go to heaven. Like other righteous of the TaNaKh, **he** expected to be raised in the resurrection of the Messianic Kingdom and to live there forever. And the Messianic Kingdom was going to be in **Isra'el**. That was why it was imperative the he be buried in **the Promised Land**. **He** didn't want to miss the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom (**Isaiah 11:1-10, 65:17-25, 66:1-24**). This was the hope of **Joseph**, and it was also the hope of **Moshe**. Thus, **by faith Moses took the bones of Joseph with him (Hebrews 11:11)**.<sup>249</sup>

**God** often does not lead **His people** by what **they** perceive to be the easiest and shortest way! **He** knows our hearts and how we falter in times of danger. Oh, how like **the Israelites** we are! Thus **God** will frequently take us by the long road in many things. In that way, **He** protects us from danger and destruction. **His** leading also teaches us to rely upon **Him** and **His** purpose. We think we know best, but



**there is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death (Proverbs 14:12).<sup>250</sup>**