

Exodus 13, 14

The Children of Israel were free at last to leave the land of Egypt. It was hard for them to believe they would never be slaves again. The men and women marched along, driving the animals before them, while the children ran and played, darting first one way and then another to examine a new kind of flower or a fat lizard on a rock.

The shortest way to the promised land was through the land of the Philistines. These were a people who had strong armies with lots of swords and spears. The Israelite slaves had very few weapons and were not yet strong enough to wage war, so God led them another way. Do you know how God led the children of Israel? By a tall cloud! In the day time a white fluffy pillar of cloud went before them. In the night this white cloud turned dark and looked like it had fire inside of it.



This was like a night-light for the Israelites. They would have enough light to see by when they set up their tents at night and cooked their food. This was a comforting thing, for they could see that God was with them everytime they looked at the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire.

Finally the first day of travel was over. The people weren't used to such long hours of wlaking, pushing at the cattle and sheep to keep them moving,, hauling carts full of their belongings and packing the jewelry and gold they had been given by the Egyptians. Everyone was very glad when the pillar of cloud stopped and as the sky began to get dark the cloud started to glow with a soft fire as the Israelites set up tents or gathered branches and leaves to make little shelters to sleep under. The women prepared food for their suppers while the children gathered wood for the fires, hauled water and helped take care of the herds of cattle and sheep for the night. As the people went to bed that night they must have been thinking of all the strange things that had happened to them in the last few days. They were very tired and as they closed their eyes they weren't afraid, for the softly glowing cloud of fire was there to watch over them.

Just as God watched over the Israelites, he also watches over us. We can't see God, nor can we see a pillar of cloud or of fire, but we know God watches over us because the Bible tells us so. The Bible tells about God and gives us his words. Your memory verse is from **Psalms 145:20**

"The Lord watches over all that love him.." That's a nice thought isn't it? When you've learned the verse put a check mark here



The next morning the Israelites hurriedly packed their belongings and ate a hurried meal as the cloud began to move. They followed the cloud as it moved toward the south. But, what was this? The cloud was leading them toward the broad, Red Sea where there was no place to cross. What was God doing? This wasn't the right way, they thought! That night the cloud stopped in a strange place. The Israelites were in a valley right at the edge of the Red Sea. They couldn't go to either side, only back the way they came or across the sea. But how could they cross the sea? They would have to build hundreds of boats in order to get all the people and their animals across the water.

Already the people had forgotten that God promised to watch over them and lead them to the land he promised them. Suddenly a shout went up, "Look, look at the dust cloud behind us, it's the Egyptians, they are coming after us; Oh what will we do?" The last rays of sun was shining on the swords and spears and gleaming chariots of the Egyptian army! Pharaoh had suddenly realized that he had no slaves left to wait on him, no slaves to make bricks or move the statues or cook the meals. The stubborn, angry, Pharaoh ordered his army to attack the children of Israel and bring them back to Egypt or kill them!

What do you think Moses and Aaron did when the Israelites began to cry and moan, "Why did you bring us here? We are going to die, why didn't you leave us in Egypt?" Moses and Aaron did the only thing that would help them. Moses believed God would help them, they knelt down and prayed to God and God heard their prayers. As Pharaoh's army was getting closer and closer the pillar of cloud began to move. It rose and moved behind the Israelites, coming between them and the army of Egypt. Pharaoh saw this big, dark cloud settling down between the army and the Israelites and he couldn't see to attack the slaves. "We will stay here tonight," Pharaoh said. The slaves are trapped and can't go anywhere. We will attack in the morning when this cloud has lifted."

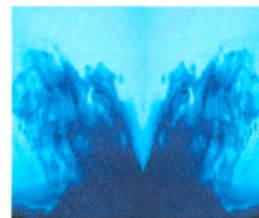
For many years enemy nations have tried to push the people of Israel into the sea and destroy them. But God is with his people and has never let them be completely destroyed. The Bible tells us that they never will be destroyed as a nation, for God has promised them the land of Israel and told them they would inherit this land **forever** when Jesus comes to bring God's kingdom.



As Pharaoh and his troops camped behind the thick, dark pillar of cloud the children of Israel had the soft, warm, light from their side of the of cloud. They didn't need to be afraid because God was between them and the evil army of Pharaoh. God is always between us and evil also...unless we let bad thoughts and actions come over onto our side! We need to push the bad ideas away and keep on the side of God, don't we?

God heard Moses's prayers and he told Moses what to do. Moses held his staff out toward the Red sea and suddenly a strong wind started blowing, soon it was like a hurricane moving across the water. Moses yelled, "Hurry, cross the path, God will keep the waters away from you." The people scrambled down the rocks and into what used to be the sea. Some were driving their animals in front of them, some pulled carts, bumping along the dry path, others carried their children as the wind helped push them along the path. How frightening it must have been to see a huge wall of water on each side of the path, but not a drop touched the Israelites. They were walking on a dry land.

What wonderful miracles God performs to save his people!



It was just barely beginning to get light when the cloud of fire lifted and Pharaoh saw his slaves getting away. Instead of being frightened at God's awesome power, all Pharaoh could think of was that his slaves were escaping. He ordered his army to chase after the slaves and get them back to Egypt. Perhaps he thought this was just a big wind and if it held up the water for the Israelites, it would keep the water standing up for his army as well. Pharaoh still didn't believe in God's power, even after all the plagues God had sent on Egypt.

The Israelites looked back and were very frightened, here came Pharaoh's army! They hurried faster, but they didn't need to worry, God moved the pillar of fire over the Egyptians and many of them yelled, "Let's turn back, Israel's God is too powerful for us." Others forged ahead but their chariot wheels got stuck in the mud, Egyptian chariots were crashing into each other, some wheels came off and the soldiers got out of the chariots and began running one way and another. When the last Israelite reached the shore on the other side of the Red Sea, God told Moses, "Hold out your staff over the walls of water." When Moses held out his staff the walls of water began collapsing and they closed over the heads of the Egyptian army. They drowned because they obeyed the king of their land instead of obeying God.

When the children of Israel saw that their enemies were gone there was a great relief. Everyone yelled and jumped up and down and waved their arms with great joy. Moses began to sing a song about God's might and power, then Moses's sister, Miriam took a tambourine and she led the women in a song and dance, using the words to Moses's song soon Miriam and all the people began dancing and singing. No longer would they be slaves and no longer would they need to be afraid of Pharaoh and his armies.

Below are some of the words that Moses sang and Miriam danced to. See if you can make up a tune to go with these words and you might also like to think up a dance to go with your song.

"Sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted

The horse and it's rider he has hurled into the sea.

The Lord is my strength and my song,

He has become my salvation."



The people were very happy when they begin traveling toward the land God had promised them. For awhile they sang and hummed as they marched along. However that first day they didn't find any water for their flocks and herds and the bags of water they brought along were getting empty. The second day Moses led them even further into the dry country and they didn't find any water all that day either. By time the third day arrived the people were getting very cross and muttering against Moses. "Why did you bring us into this wilderness just to kill us?" They grumbled. That day Moses brought them to a spring where there was supposed to be good water, but the animals wouldn't drink it and when the people tasted the water they spit it out, "Yuck, what's this? This water tastes awful ... it's poison, why did you bring us here, how can we drink this awful stuff, we are going to die, what will we drink?," they shouted, shaking their fists at Moses and Aaron.

Once again when Moses didn't know what to do, he knelt and prayed to God. It's a good thing to always remember, that God always hears our prayers and will help us out of trouble. God told Moses what he was to do, he was to get a branch and throw it into the water. This seems like a strange thing to do? How would a piece of wood make bad water taste good again? It probably wouldn't, if anyone besides God told Moses to do this. God was showing the Israelites over and over, how he could make miracles. He could cure any of their problems if only they would listen to him.

Moses did what God asked, he picked up a branch from the ground and threw it into the pool of water. Suddenly the animals began gathering around the water and started drinking thirstily. "Try it," Moses told the children of Israel. When they knelt down to take a drink it was probably the best water they had tasted in ages. They camped there that night and before they left they filled their water bags full of the good tasting water. They had many more miles to go before they reached the promised land.

Moses told the children of Israel, "If you listen to the voice of the Lord your God and will do what is right in his sight and listen to his commandments and keep his laws, then you will be taken care of and you will have none of the problems the Egyptians had."

As well as the plagues God sent on Egypt, the Egyptian people also had a lot of diseases, for they didn't wash very often and they didn't know how to get rid of germs and viruses. Soon God would give the Israelites laws to help them keep clean and healthy as they traveled toward their promised land.

The cloud lifted and went ahead of the children of Israel. Next it led them to a delightful place where there were 70 palm trees and 12 wells of good water! This was a wonderful spot to stay and rest up and wash clothes and talk to caravans of travelers who must have also stopped at these wells. That was the last pleasant place to stop for a long while. The cloud led the children of Israel further into the wilderness where there were rocks and brambles and only a few clumps of grass here and there for the animals to eat. There were no nice fruit trees, no gardens with vegetables and no fields of wheat for them to grind and make into bread. The people kept thinking of the good things in Egypt. They forgot their long, hard, days of work and the slave masters who beat them with whips. What they remembered was the melons and the cucumbers and onions that they had when they lived in Egypt. After all the miracles God had sent, they kept forgetting about God providing for them. They began to grumble and complain and ask Moses why there were here in the dry, barren land. They were afraid they would starve to death!

Do we sometimes forget that God can help us when we need something? We don't always remember to turn to God when we get in trouble or are sad and unhappy, do we? These stories should help us remember that God is always close by and will give us what we need. We'll see how God answered the people's complaints in our next story.



1. Why didn't God want the Israelites to go the fast route into the land of the Philistines?
2. How did God lead the children of Israel in the daytime?
3. How did he lead them and watch over them at night?
4. What was the name of the Sea that stopped the children of Israel?
5. What did the cloud do when the Egyptian army got close to the Israelites?
6. What did God tell Moses to do when the Israelites were trapped by the Egyptians and the Sea?
7. What caused the waters to stand up like walls with a path in between?
8. Why did Pharaoh want to chase the children of Israel?
9. What can we do when we have problems and don't know how to help ourselves?
10. What happened to Pharaoh's army when they chased the Israelites?
11. What did Moses and his sister Miriam do when they arrived on dry land?
12. How many days did the Israelites travel without finding water?
13. When the Israelites finally came to a spring of water, what was the matter with it?
14. What did God tell Moses to do to fix the water?
15. How many palm trees and how many wells did the Israelites find in the next oasis?
16. What did the Israelites remember most about their time as slaves in Egypt?

"BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD..."

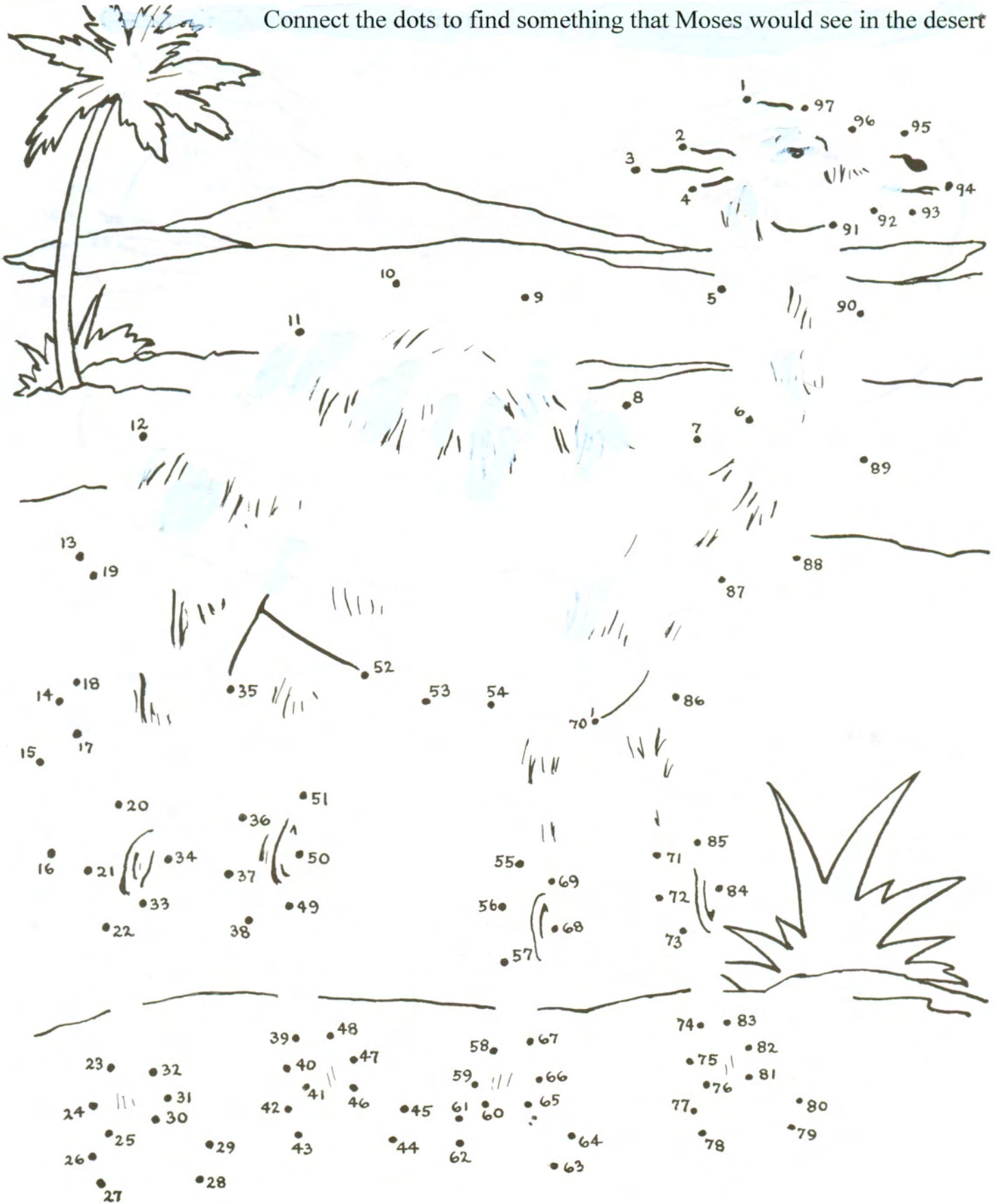
Moses and the children of Israel had to stand still and wait for God to help them cross the Red Sea. Sometime when you are outside, stand very still for awhile. It's surprising how many things you can see when you stand still and wait for a bit...birds, insects, different sizes, shapes and colors of wild flowers and grasses.

Sit still and look at this picture. Can you find these hidden things:

a goat, a red bird, a fish, an owl, a man's sleeping face, a hat, a peach, a spider and a christmas tree



Connect the dots to find something that Moses would see in the desert



Color the _____

A PICTURE TO COLOR

When the Egyptian army chased Moses and his people, God opened the waters to let the people walk through on dry land

