

Out of the Way

Exodus 13:17-22

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A. Rerouted (vs. 17-20):

1. It came to pass; to be – Pharaoh’s release of the people means that they will never be in bondage in Egypt again.
 - a) As Yahweh has said, no human force could bend the proud king of the proudest kingdom. Under the power of Yahweh’s hand, however, Pharaoh has become an enthusiastic participant in the exodus, not only permitting but demanding, even forcing it.^[1]
2. People - Despite all the horrific things that took place in Egypt, God kept His people together and therefore accomplished what He said to Abraham in Genesis 15:12-16.
3. Go; Sent – To let the people go means that they were successfully removed from Pharaoh's presence and power. He has lost complete control of them, and it would never be regained.
4. Lead them by way; Guide - God was completely committed to His divine will to not tenderly guide His people to 'the land of the Philistines.' God acted by placing a fire and cloud before the people to make sure they did not go that way.
 - a) *Road through the Philistine country* - Although this was the most direct route from Goshen to Canaan, it was heavily guarded by a string of Egyptian fortresses. (NASU Study Bible).
5. Though it was near - Left to themselves, Moses, who most likely knew the territory would have gone to the closest crossing to get away from Pharaoh. This word can also mean that Moses went this way knowing that he may face war, so he organized the people in a battle formation.
6. God said – This decision was completely Gods’. God did not consult with Moses but verbally made His decision known to Moses.
 - a) Could God have destroyed the Philistines on behalf of the Israelites? Of course. But the Philistines had, so far, done nothing to the Israelites and were not in the same category as the Egyptians, who well deserved the punishment they had already received and were about to receive more of (i.e., their defeat at the Red Sea). Moreover, the

Philistines were latecomers to Palestine, as compared to the Amorites/Canaanites, and therefore did not fall under the blanket condemnation of the “sin of the Amorites” that God had announced to Abraham in Gen 15:16 as the basis for the conquest of Canaan. So, the Philistines were to be dealt with later rather than immediately; it was not part of God’s plan that they should be fought and subdued at this early stage.^[2]

7. Change of mind; repent - As was displayed repeatedly in the wilderness when Israel faced difficult circumstances, God knew His people's heart would fail and their disposition to leave would change. For them to immediately face a tough enemy would be disparaging.
 - a) God knew what they can bear and knew He would provide a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13; Romans 8:28).
8. Change of mind; repent - After years of slavery, then war, it would have been hard for the people of Israel to not become discouraged and return home.
9. See war – When the people intelligently inspected the might of the enemy and came to a full understanding of their capabilities, they lost heart and returned to their homes.
10. Return; Deny; Turn away – God knew that their return to their homes would be permanent. They completely had no desire to leave again.
 - a) Would Israel really be so inconsistent as to give up the conquest and return to Egypt—of all places? And would they do so after all they had seen and experienced during the ten plagues? The answer is yes—decidedly yes. Not only did this very plan to return to Egypt actually occur less than two years later (Num 14:3, 14), but one must not forget that the Israelites were only accustomed to Egypt; they lived nowhere else for 430 years.^[3]
11. God led - God endlessly moved the people in the direction He wanted for them even though it would trigger Pharaoh to come out and fight against them. So, God decided which fight He believed they could handle.
12. The way - Moses says “the way” describing that this is God's divine will to be executed. *"In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps."* (Proverbs 16:9)
 - a) “From Rameses to the head of the Gulf would be a distance of

some 35 miles, which might easily have been passed over by the Israelites in three days” (Robinson I., 80). The deviation from the direct way must, however, be taken into consideration, even though it may have added little to the distance. On the three routes from Cairo to Suez, see Robinson.^[4]

- b) “The Israelites went up out of the land of Egypt organized by fifties.” Fifties were one of the smallest fighting units, what might be called today “squads.” The term does not literally refer to groups of fifty men but is part of the “thousand-hundreds-fifties-tens” language employed to delineate military units. The Israelites were at this point not armed at all. Later they would carry mainly short swords (cf. Exod. 32:27). ^[5]

B. His Way.... Got Your Back (vs. 21-22):

1. The Lord - The Lord endlessly has all authority and executes His will based on His covenant and His plan for us. This is all so His power establishes a relationship with Israel.
2. Was going – The entire nation walks behind “a pillar of cloud by day,” and “a pillar of fire by night”; following whatever direction God provided.
3. Before – The Lord being before them means that the cloud and the fire represented that His presence was with them. Moses did not want His presence to ever not be with them (Ex. 32:12-23). Before, can also mean that the nation was in His face every moment of everyday.
4. Lead them; guide - In contrast to the way of the Philistines, God was committed to His divine will to tenderly guide His people by His divine plan by placing a fire and cloud before His people to make sure they went the way that He determined was best.
5. The way - Notice this phrase says, “the way”. This defines that this is God's divine plan, and it is perfect and therefore should not be altered (Deuteronomy 32:4).
6. He did not take; cease - God endlessly never left His place in front of the nation of Israel and was committed to remain with them. God's covenant is to forever walk with Israel. It is the same for us (Matthew 28:20). The Holy Spirit is with us forever (John 14:16-17).
7. From before the people – God's presence represented by the pillar of cloud and fire became a permanent fixture that vividly portrayed God's faithful service for Israel.

God, no matter how many times Israel rejected Him, always fought for a relationship with Israel all the way to Calvary's cross.

- a) Therefore, even the seemingly erratic route described by 13:20 in combination with 14:1–3 could be trusted because Yahweh was directing them on it. Yahweh chose the odd route—not them. Again, the pillar was not merely a sign from Yahweh—it *was* Yahweh Himself (“The LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light,” 13:21). He manifested Himself in the form of a pillar of cloud/fire for their benefit.^[6]

[1] Durham, J. I. (1987). [Exodus](#) (Vol. 3, p. 184). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

[2] Stuart, D. K. (2006). [Exodus](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 322–323). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

[3] Stuart, D. K. (2006). [Exodus](#) (Vol. 2, p. 323). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

[4] Lange, J. P., Schaff, P., & Mead, C. M. (2008). [A commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Exodus](#) (Vol. 2, p. 46). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

[5] Stuart, D. K. (2006). [Exodus](#) (Vol. 2, p. 324). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

[6] Stuart, D. K. (2006). [Exodus](#) (Vol. 2, p. 328). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.