

Ex. 13:17

Now when Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Phillistines, although it was nearer; for God said, “The people may have a change of heart when they see war, and return to Egypt.” 18 So God led the people roundabout, by way of the wilderness at the Sea of Reeds [יַם סוּף] ...

Ex. 14:1

The Lord said to Moses: 2 Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, before Baal-zephon; you shall encamp facing it, by the sea.

Ex. 15:4

Pharaoh's chariots and his army
He has cast into the sea;
And the pick of his officers
Are drowned in the Sea of Reeds.

Ex. 15:22

Then Moses caused Israel to set out from the Sea of Reeds. They went on into the wilderness of Shur; they traveled three days in the wilderness and found no water.

Ex. 23:31

I will set your borders from the Sea of Reeds to the Sea of Philistia, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hands, and you will drive them out before you.

HALOT variously located:

- (1) trad. the **Gulf of Suez**;
 - (2) the **Gulf of Aqaba** 1K 9₂₆ Jr 49₂₁;
 - (3) **Lake Sirbonicus**;
 - (4) refraining from specifying a location;
 - (5) mythical (lake) at the eastern edge of the earth;
- GnAp. as יַם שְׂמוּקָא “dead sea” the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

DCH יַם סוּף | ^{28.0.2} n.m. **rushes**, plants growing in fresh and salt water, sometimes **reeds**, a fresh water plant, beside the Nile (Ex 2_{3.5} Is 19₆), and perh. **kelp**, **seaweed** in the depths of the sea (Jon 2₆); יַם סוּף *Sea of Rushes* (rather than *Sea of Reeds*), i.e. Red Sea, appar. comprising both the Gulf of Suez and Gulf of Aqaba

1Kings 9:26 King Solomon also built a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber, which is near Eloth^k on the shore of the Sea of Reeds in the land of Edom. [Jer 49:21 is about Edom and Teman]

Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*

The Shihor was evidently an elongated lake or pond lying alongside the course of the ancient eastern branch of the Nile between Baal-zephon (Daphne) and Pelusium. The “**Reed Sea**” was the large marshy area that once existed to the southeast of Baal-zephon. Between these two bodies of water passed the “Way of Horus,” the route taken by New Kingdom pharaohs (incarnates of Horus) on their military campaigns to Canaan and Syria. The Bible calls it “the way of the land of the Philistines” (Ex 13:17).

The Hebrew word for “reeds” is actually a loan from Egyptian, meaning papyrus reeds. Marshes of papyrus are known from Egyptian sources to have existed in the area of Ramesses (Gardiner 1947: vol. 2, 201*-202*). In the monarchial period the name **Reed Sea** was transferred to the Gulf of Elath (1 Kgs 9:26 et passim).

...

How and why the name “**Reed Sea**” had become transferred from the Egyptian border to the Gulf of Elath/Aqabah is not known.

Hillel Halkin, *Beyond the Sabbath River*, 133

Browsing in Herodotus one day, I came across a passage in which the Greek historian — writing in the fifth century B.C.E., a mere three hundred years after the Assyrian exile — mentioned a “very long narrow gulf” between Egypt and Arabia “running up from the Red Sea (as it is called).” A verse in Kings suggested an explanation for this geographical term, which the Greeks must have taken from a Hebraic or Semitic source. One reads there, in the King James Version, “And king Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-geber ... on the shore of the Red sea, in the land of Edom.” Although the Hebrew rendered as “Red Sea” is indeed *yam suf*, or Reed Sea, the word “Edom” — the biblical name for the arid, mountainous land along the northeastern shore of the Gulf of Aqaba — comes from *adom*, Hebrew for “red.” (Whoever has seen a sunset on the mountains of Edom can vouch for the fiery crimson they then turn.) If the gulf had also been known in biblical times as *yam edom*, “the Sea of Edom,” or *ha-yam he-adom*, “the Red Sea,” an ancient “red sea song” would not have been out of the question.

Herodotus Book 2 [http://classics.mit.edu/Herodotus/history.2.ii.html]:

In Arabia, not far from Egypt, there is a long and narrow gulf running inland from the sea called the **Erythraean**, of which I will here set down the dimensions. Starting from its innermost recess, and using a row-boat, you take forty days to reach the open main, while you may cross the gulf at its widest part in the space of half a day. In this sea there is an ebb and flow of the tide every day. My opinion is that Egypt was formerly very much such a gulf as this- one gulf penetrated from the sea that washes Egypt on the north, and extended itself towards Ethiopia; another entered from the southern ocean, and stretched towards Syria; the two gulfs ran into the land so as almost to meet each other, and left between them only a very narrow tract of country. Now if the Nile should choose to divert his waters from their present bed into this Arabian gulf, what is there to hinder it from being filled up by the stream within, at the utmost, twenty thousand years? For my part, I think it would be filled in half the time. How then should not a gulf, even of much greater size, have been filled up in the ages that passed before I was born, by a river that is at once so large and so given to working changes?

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