

“The Parting of the Red Sea”

Exodus 13:17 – 14:31

- ☞ **What would you like to praise God for today?**
- ☞ **Pray for God’s guidance as you study**



1. What was your most frightening experience in water and how has that experience affected your feelings about water?
2. At the outset of this journey to the sea, what is God’s assessment of the Israelite’s emotional state? How did He allow for that?
3. With God having defeated all the gods of Egypt (see Ex. 12:12) why do you think the Israelites were afraid of one more battle? Would you have been fearful too?
4. With what resources (human, natural and divine) did God lead the people out of Egypt? Which ones were easier to follow than others?
5. How does Pharaoh end up showing his true colors? (Ex. 14:5, 8) Why do you think God is concerned that “the Egyptians will know that I am Lord” (v. 4) ? Compassion? Justice? Vengeance? Explain.
6. How do you feel when you are forced to make a detour on an urgent trip? How do you think the Israelites felt *towards God* when Moses turned them back to camp by the Red Sea? How do you think they felt *towards Moses*? What did Pharaoh think?

7. If I looked up and saw the Egyptian army coming, I would:

- a. cry out to God in fear.
- b. get upset and blame Moses.
- c. wait assuredly for another miracle
- d. surrender – because slavery is better than death
- e. fight to the finish – because death is better than slavery

8. How did Israel's faith in God change under pressure? Read Exodus 14:8-12.

9. How does Moses respond to trials? (Ex. 14:13—15)

10. In Acts 7:33-39 how did Stephen use Moses as a type (or shadow) of Jesus the coming Messiah?

11. What is the one “pursuing army” you fear in your life right now? What one battle would you like God to fight for you this week?

12. In what ways might this passage help you to trust God with your fears?

13. Finally, read 1 Cor. 10:1-6 and Hebrews 3:16. Why aren't miracles enough to keep us spiritually strong growing in our relationship with God?

Prayer: For one another

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DID YOU KNOW?

The crossing of the Red Sea is to the Old Testament what the Resurrection is to the New. When the prophets and writers of the Old Testament wanted to refer to God's miraculous hand, they returned to this event more than any other. Just so, when a writer in the New Testament wanted to illustrate the power of God, he most often referred to the Resurrection. . . . While the scenes are altogether different, both were astonishing miracles of redemption from the hand of God.

----Charles R. Swindoll pg. 222

Four Mighty Miracles

Remarkable as it may seem, the Israelites did exactly what Moses had instructed, and God came through again. (He always does.) He did four mighty things on behalf of the Israelites.

First, He told Moses to go forward:

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward." (v. 15)

I love that. There's the ocean in front of you; so, forward march! Moses saluted, and as he got his troops together, God did something else.

He moved the cloud from above them to behind them:

Scripture tells us that, "The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them" (v. 19)

The biblical account then explains why God did this: "So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night" (v. 20).

What does that mean? It means that the cloud moved from in front of the Hebrews to behind them, by the Egyptians. This awesome, massive cloud formation dropped from heaven to earth and blocked the Egyptians' view. Not only that, but it kept the Hebrews from staring back and quaking with fear. The cloud blocked the one from the other so the Hebrews could listen to God.

It was then that God performed a massive miracle.

He opened a path through the sea:

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord swept the sea back by
A strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters
were divided (v. 21)

I think Cecil B. DeMille's *Ten Commandments* missed the reality of this miracle in his attempt to make it picturesque. Do you know why the wind blew all night? If the waters had parted suddenly, the Israelites would have walked right into a bog. Any riverbed recently drained of water remains an impassable swamp for a number of days, if not weeks. It takes time to dry. That's the reason for the east wind. So as the sea split in two, and its waves formed great, massive, vertical walls on either side, the east wind bore down and dried up the land.

Picture the Israelites as they stood back and watched that divine wind howling down into that riverbed, drying it to dust. God got everything ready for His people. And once God took His hand off that wind, the Israelites moved right in.

Of course, so did the Egyptians. Those gullible pagans! They fell right into God's trap. The thought, *Man, if they can walk between the sea, we can too! Giddy'up horse.*" Scripture says "the Egyptians took up the pursuit, and all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen went in after them into the midst of the sea" (v. 23).

And then God did the fourth thing.

He brought confusion to the Egyptians:

At the morning watch [that's long before daybreak], the Lord looked down on the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and brought the army of the Egyptians into confusion. He caused their chariot wheels to swerve, and He made them drive with difficulty; so the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from Israel, for the Lord is fighting for them against the Egyptians." (vv24-25)

Remember what the Lord had said? "When this is over, they will know that I am the Lord." But not all of them would be around to remember anything.

The Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and their horsemen" (v. 26). So that is exactly what Moses did. He turned and stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea plunged back to its normal state with crushing force. The Egyptians were caught in the middle of the angry torrent, and as Scripture says, "The Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea."

What a remarkable contrast! The Hebrews, on the other hand, "Walked on dry land through the midst of the sea, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right and on their left" (v. 29). Just as the Israelites cleared the riverbed, the Egyptians filled it. That's when God said to Moses, "Now! Get that stick in action. Bring the water back." He did, and the waters rushed in.

Nothing short of a massacre took place that day at Baal-zephon, but the Israelites weren't the victims. By the end of the day, not one of the Egyptian soldiers who had pursued the Hebrews had a pulse. Not a single Egyptians lived through God's ambush, and not a single Hebrew was hurt.

Verse 30 tells us the Hebrews later took a walk along the seashore and "they saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore." Please notice, the Bible doesn't say the Israelites killed a single man, because they didn't. It doesn't say they defended themselves, because they didn't. It doesn't even say they *fought*, because they didn't. They waited, they walked through then they turned and watched God work. Period. And He did. He did it all, precisely as He had planned to do when He first led them into that predicament.

Isn't it remarkable what God can do without our help? Sometimes we think, *My company needs me. My church needs me. My family needs me.* Hey, God must need me too. No He doesn't. He can manage quite well without us, remarkable though it may seem. In fact, He prefers us to step aside and leave the striving to Him.

The capstone is captured in verse 31 where we read that God's people stood in awe: "When Israel saw the great power which the Lord had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses."

After the battle an awesome silence reigned. When they saw what God had done, an enormous groundswell of respect spread over that shoreline. They gave God glory, and they looked at Moses through a different set of eyes.

Historians and unbelieving archaeologists have helped us draw additional insights about this milestone event. Archeological discoveries from obelisks and other records indicate that the Egyptians did not frequent this place for seventeen long years after this miracle took place. They held it in awe. In fact, they did not attempt to regain their ascendancy over Syria for twenty-two years after this incident. Not until the twenty-third year did they seriously try to reestablish their authority over western Syria. The message arrived back home that God had visited the Red Sea, and it remained an unfriendly place for Egyptians for a long, long time.

Excerpt from: Moses A Man of Selfless Dedication by Charles R. Swindoll pgs. 219-222