

Exodus Chapter 14

Exodus 14:1 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"

Out of the pillar of the cloud in which he went before them; either while they were at Etham, or when journeying from thence, and a little before they turned off to the right, as they were now directed. Saying; as follows:

Exodus 14:2 "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea."

Rather than moving in a straight path, the Lord told Moses to have the people “turn and camp” near the Red Sea.

"Pi-hahiroth" means mouth of the gorges. We know that God was instructing Moses to tell the people to stop there before the Red Sea so that God could be magnified in this exit from Egypt (type of the world), to their promised land. "Migdol" is the Canaanites word for Watchtower. We can possibly assume that this was an outpost to keep watch against an invasion from this side of Egypt.

Verses 3-4: “Pharaoh will say ... I will harden”: Pharaoh was kept abreast of Israelite progress and when he heard of the change of direction, he assumed they were lost in unfamiliar territory and were trapped, closed in by desert, sea, and marsh. God intervened again and the stage was set for the final confrontation and final display of divine power.

Exodus 14:3 "For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They [are] entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in."

Such movements convinced Pharaoh that the Hebrew people were “entangled” and wandering like lost sheep in the wilderness. God, however, was drawing the Egyptian army into His trap.

We need to remember again, that this was close to 2-1/2 million people (by all estimates). They had changed their directions on instructions from God and it now appeared to Pharaoh, and that they were cornered. The Red Sea was on one side and Pharaoh saw an opportunity to attack and destroy them while they were trapped in these close quarters. In all reality, God had put them in this impossible situation, so He could save them with a miracle.

We are like these Israelites many times. We will not cry out to God, until there is an impossible situation. Miracles only happen when there is impossibility with man; otherwise it would not be a miracle. This whole scenario was set up to glorify God and to teach the Israelites to depend on God. This lesson was not only hard for these Israelites to learn, but Christians as well. For

Christianity to work, it must be God with the miracles in our lives. Salvation as well as healing can be classified as a miracle, because we do not deserve it. God saved us in spite of ourselves.

Exodus 14:4 "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honored upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I [am] the LORD. And they did so."

Pharaoh, who would eagerly watch their movements, was now satisfied that they were meditating flight, and he naturally thought from the error into which they appeared to have fallen by entering that defile, he could intercept them. He believed them now to be entirely in his power. The mountain chain being on one side, the sea on the other, so that, if he pursued them in the rear, escape seemed impossible.

"And I will be honored upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host": In his wisdom, faithfulness, power, and justice, by the destruction of them.

"That the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord": The only Jehovah, the Lord God omnipotent. Even those that feel the weight of his hand while troubling their host, and bringing the waters upon them; especially those that shall remain in the land, and will not be involved in the catastrophe.

"And they did so": The Israelites turned to the right to Pi-hahiroth, instead of going by Bishbesh and Tinah (Bubastis and Pelusium), and so along the sea coast towards Gaza and Ascalon, and encamped there between Migdol and the sea over against Baal-zephon, as they were ordered and directed.

We see here, that God was not totally through with Pharaoh. Notice that God had total control over this evil Pharaoh even though Pharaoh was lost. God hardened Pharaoh's heart. The Pharaoh of Egypt was treated as a god and God was about to topple this false god of Egypt. God, was not just proving to these Israelites who He was, but this Scripture said, so that the Egyptians would know. There will come a time when all the world will know who Jesus is and every knee will bow and every tongue confess.

Philippians 2:10-11 "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth;" "And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

You see, God required total loyalty of these Israelites, as Jesus requires total loyalty of the Christians. Notice the last of verse 4 just simply said "And they did so".

Exodus 14:5 "And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?"

“Why have we done this?” Hardened hearts lost all sensitivity to the recent tragedy and focused instead on the loss of the economic benefit Israel’s enslavement had provided. Those who had urged the Israelites to quickly leave now had the urge to force them to return!

The shock of the loss of the firstborn had worn off and they soon forgot that God fights for Israel. The whole of Pharaoh's people had now become alarmed at the loss of such a vast work force (near an estimated 600,000). They saw this perhaps, as a terrible blow to their economy; and even worse, it gave a signal of their weakness to the surrounding countries. Again, we see God about to strike a terrible blow, not only on the false god of Egypt, but also on those who worshipped this false god. Worship of a false god, then and now, will bring the wrath of God.

Exodus 14:6 "And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him:"

Egyptian monarchs of the Ramesside period almost always led their armies out to battle, and when they did so, uniformly rode with a single attendant, who acted as charioteer, in a two-horse chariot. “Made ready” means, of course, ordered to be made ready.

Some estimate that Pharaoh's army was perhaps about 100,000 men. Israel had many times that many, but very few weapons, and no training for battle. Israel would also, be at a disadvantage, because their children were with them. Pharaoh possibly wanted to scare them into surrendering to him.

Exodus 14:7 "And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them."

Pharaoh pursued the Hebrew people with a large army: 600 “chosen chariots” that each carried two people, one to drive and one to fight. A frightening sight! These chariots featured prominently in the army of Egypt, and these “chosen” ones belonged to an elite, specialized unit.

“All the chariots of Egypt” were probably from various parts of the delta region as opposed to the “six hundred chosen” which were most likely a special royal force. Note that the Eighteenth Dynasty was known for its standardization of the chariot as army equipment. The chariots were open at the rear and consisted of a semicircular standing board made of wood. This was encircled by a rim that stood approximately two-and-one-half feet above the standing board. Each chariot had two wheels and was drawn by two small horses. The chariots were usually manned by two men: a warrior and a charioteer. The introduction of the horse and chariot into Egypt during the Hyksos period (1732-1570 B.C.) not only revolutionized the science of war, but provided a sport more dashing than any previously known by adding both verve and a quality of knightly dignity to such pastimes as archery and hunting.

These 600 chariots were used to estimate 100,000 soldiers. Most of the soldiers were on foot. It appears here, that Pharaoh not only used the 600 chosen chariots, but that he used the private citizens' chariots as well.

Exodus 14:8 "And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with a high hand."

“Children of Israel went out with a high hand”: The confidence shown by Israel in their departure is in sharp contrast to the fear they exhibited when they became aware of the pursuing force (verse 10).

We see that these Israelites had not gone out of Egypt in shame; but had left Egypt as the victor, even though God had won the victory for them.

Exodus 14:9 "But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses [and] chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon."

When they thought nothing of it, and had no fears about it.

"All the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army": By the latter Aben Ezra understands the footmen, as distinguished from the cavalry, the horses and horsemen. And perhaps these, as before observed, might be carried in the chariots for quicker dispatch.

"And overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon": Where they had pitched their camp by divine appointment (Exodus 14:2).

You can see here, that all of Pharaoh's army came to get these Israelites. It was not just those with chariots. Sure enough they had encamped where God told Moses to take them and there was no place to retreat, but into the sea.

Exodus 14:10 "And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD."

“Cried out unto the Lord”: The initial reaction of the people on seeing the approach was to turn to the Lord in anxious prayer. But prayer soon turned to complaints with Moses as the target of their dismay.

What a sharp change from the people’s perspective on the night their children were spared and they left Egypt with their heads held high!

Speaking of soon forgetting, can you believe these Israelites had so soon forgotten that God brought them out by the ten plagues He brought on Egypt? Fear is not of God. Fear is the opposite of faith. At least they knew who to cry to for help. They cried out to God for help.

Exodus 14:11 "And they said unto Moses, Because [there were] no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?"

“No graves in Egypt”: In the light of Egypt’s excessive preoccupation with death and various funerary and mortuary rituals, the bitter irony of Israel’s questions marked how easily they had forgotten both bondage and rescue.

Poor Moses, they needed someone to blame and instead of thanking him for all of his efforts in their behalf, we find they blamed him. This was a really cutting remark about the graves, because of their fear of death here, in this desert. These Israelites took a lot of convincing. They did not share in the faith of their ancestor, Abraham.

Exodus 14:12 "[Is] not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For [it had been] better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness."

“Serve the Egyptians”: Just how much they conveniently forgot the degree of enslavement came out in their “we did tell thee” attitude. The comment of being better off living and serving than dying perhaps summarized their earlier reaction to Moses and Aaron outside the royal chambers (5:20-21).

There were several fallacies here. These Israelites only complained to Moses and Aaron, when their work load had been increased. When God brought the ten plagues, they did not complain at all to Moses. These Israelites had all of the fight taken out of them, while they were serving the Egyptians and even though they had the Egyptians outnumbered, they did not even consider fighting to keep their freedom. They wanted deliverance, but with no effort on their part whatsoever.

It reminds me a little of Christians now who sit around and wait for God to do everything for them. We need to at least exert ourselves a little, to let God know that we are sincere. Here again, we see they would rather serve the world (Egypt), than lay their life on the line for God. The world and flesh must not be that important to us. We must stand for God, even in the threat of death.

Exodus 14:13 "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever."

Moses responded to their fear and grumbling with a most remarkable inspirational speech.

“Fear ye not”: Moses’ exhortation turned attention to the Lord, whose power they had already seen dramatically in action, and whose deliverance they were about to witness and personally experience. All they needed to do was stand by and watch their God at work, fighting on their side. Euphemistically, Moses informed his people of the certain death of the Egyptian soldiers, you will not see them again! Expressing and experiencing fear did not mean Israel was less than 600,000 fighting men in number, as some have objected. The poorly trained, inadequately equipped, militarily unprepared and inexperienced Israelites (13:17), were no match for Pharaoh’s experienced troops and his highly trained and mobilized chariot force.

I see in this a message to God's people, that our salvation is not attainable, except through the efforts of the Lord. We see, Moses told them not to fear; and he also said, stand still.

Psalms 46:10 "Be still, and know that I [am] God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

This (Be still"), is for the same purpose as this thirteenth verse (in Exodus 14). Fear is used over 350 times in the Bible. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, but all other fear is sin, because it is lack of faith. God made these Israelites a promise. He said this would be the last time they would bother you. This was not like the temporary relief that they had had from them when they left Egypt, but would be permanent. For God would destroy them.

Many things would come of this. The Egyptians who lived back home would know not to bother Israel for fear of Israel's God and the Israelites would grow in confidence in God. And the other nations, that Israel crossed on the way to the Promised Land, would know that God fights Israel's battles. There was no way to defeat Israel.

Exodus 14:14 "The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

Israel wanted to run, but Yahweh was about to "fight for" His people. He still defends His children today. This has been and will be true throughout the history of Israel (1 Sam. 17:47; 2 Chron. 14:10-11; 20:15; Psalm 24:8; Zech. 14:3).

This was just another way of saying "vengeance is mine, saith the Lord". The battle is God's and the victory God wins is ours. These Israelites would learn more and more to depend on God alone as they made this pilgrimage to the Promised Land. We must realize in this message, as they did; that we too must learn to depend on God and Him alone, to see us through this pilgrimage we are on here on this earth. Until we arrive safely in our Promised Land yonder in heaven with Jesus.

Exodus Chapter 14 Questions

1. Where did God tell Moses to have these children of Israel camp?
2. Why?
3. What does "Pi-hahiroth" mean?
4. What does "Migdol "mean?
5. What does verse 3 mean about them being shut in?
6. Had Pharaoh tricked them, or was this God's plan?
7. What can, possibly, be gained by this move?
8. What is a miracle?

9. What two things should be learned here?
10. Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart?
11. When God destroyed Pharaoh, what would it accomplish?
12. Where do we find the Scripture that says every knee will bow at the name of Jesus?
13. What was told to the king of Egypt?
14. Who was the King of Egypt?
15. What had these Egyptians soon forgotten?
16. Pharaoh's army was estimated at _____.
17. God not only strikes down this false god, but who else?
18. How many choice chariots did Pharaoh have?
19. Besides Pharaoh, whose heart did God harden?
20. What did the Israelites feel, when they saw the Egyptians pursuing them?
21. What did they do?
22. What had the Israelites forgotten so soon?
23. What is the opposite of fear?
24. Who did the Israelites try to blame?
25. What ridiculous statement did they make?
26. Which of their ancestors had great faith?
27. What did these Israelites tell Moses, that they had asked him for in Egypt?
28. What would they rather do than die?
29. What message did Moses give them?
30. If these children of Israel did as Moses said, what would they see?
31. What did God promise that He would do to the Egyptians?
32. Approximately, how many times was fear mentioned in the Bible?
33. In Psalms 45:10, we are told to be still _____.

34. What is the only way salvation is attainable?
35. If fear is sin, what is the only fear that is not sin?
36. Name three lessons that will be learned, when God destroys Pharaoh.
37. The battle is _____, and the victory is _____.
38. What one word could our walk here on earth be explained by?