

Exodus Chapter 15

Verses 1-21: “Song” likely means “my fortress, defense.” The miracle at the Sea of Reeds, God’s greatest act of redemption during the Old Testament period, is described not only in narrative prose (13:17-14:31), but also in lyric poetry (verses 1-21). It is one of the oldest poems in the Bible. The story focuses on God Himself (verse 11); the name Lord appears 10 times (verses 1, 2, 3a, 3b, 6a, 6b, 11, 16, 17c, 18).

“Lord” (in verse 17d), is the less intimate word (Adonai).

The hymn contains five stanzas (verses 1-5, 6:8, 9-10; 11-12, 13-18), each of the first three concluding with a simile: “as a stone” (verses 5); “as a heap” (verse 8); “as lead” (verse 10). The first four stanzas tell the story of the deliverance of Israel at the Sea of Reeds, and the final stanza predicts the conquest of Canaan.

Miriam was one of several women in the Bible to whom the title “prophetess” was applied. Others were Deborah (Judges 4:4), Isaiah’s wife (Isa. 8:3), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), and Anna (Luke 2:36). Also, Philip the evangelist (Acts 6:5; 8:5) had four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:8-9).

Exodus 15:1 "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

“I will sing”: The Israelites began their song in the first person, effectively personalizing the community’s song as individually relevant, each person heralding Yahweh’s victory and declaring who and what He was to them (note the possessive pronouns in verse 2).

The Song of the Sea (composed by “Moses”), is the first psalm in the Bible. At key moments in their history, the Hebrew people created songs like this to commemorate God’s great works.

Exodus 15:2 "The LORD [is] my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he [is] my God, and I will prepare him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him."

“The Lord is my strength and song” means “He is my strong song: He is my reason for singing” (Psalm 118:15).

We see in this song, a joy and thankfulness for the mighty hand of God delivering them from the bondage of Egypt (world), and heading them for the Promised Land. Song, like laughter, lifts the spirit of man to heavenly heights. The words of this song would be sung for generations. In fact, we even sing this very song in some of our churches today. Every time it is sung, it tells the story all over again; how the Lord delivered the children of Israel. This is a praise and worship song; praising God for deliverance and salvation and worshipping the God that is big enough to bring this all about.

God inhabits the praises of His people, so this song brings the presence of God. This habitation we prepare for God is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which is the body of the Christian. We will continue on with the next few verses of the song now.

Exodus 15:3 "The LORD [is] a man of war: the LORD [is] his name."

The directness and boldness of the attribution of human characteristics is markedly archaic, and is wisely retained by our translators. How grandiose and yet weak are the Samaritan, "mighty in battle," and the LXX., "crusher of wars," in comparison!

"The Lord is his name": In the very name, Jehovah, is implied all might, all power, and so necessarily the strength to prevail in battle. The name, meaning "the Existent," implies that nothing else has any real existence independently of Him; and if no existence, then necessarily no strength.

The Lord is the commander-in-chief of this army and we are His soldiers. The constant war the Lord is in and that we are in with Him, is the war against Satan and our own flesh. The Spirit of God in us is always warring against the lust of the flesh.

Exodus 15:4 "Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea."

This was done by the Angel of the Lord; who was Jehovah himself. Our Immanuel, and man of war, as appears from (Exodus 14:17). Who is an emblem of the destruction of antichrist, and all the antichristian states, of which Pharaoh and his host were types.

"His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea": Who were appointed over his chosen chariots, which all perished in the sea together. In the carnage that will be made by Christ, the warrior and conqueror, among the followers of antichrist, the man of "sin", the antitypical Pharaoh. The flesh of captains is mentioned for the fowls of heaven to feed upon (Rev. 19:18).

Exodus 15:5 "The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone."

The depths of the sea covered Pharaoh and his host, to be seen no more. And in like manner will mystical Babylon, or antichrist, be destroyed, and be no more found and seen. As likewise the sins of God's people, being cast into the depths of the sea, and covered with the blood of Christ, will be seen no more. When they are sought for, they shall not be found:

"As a stone": The warriors in chariots are always represented on the monuments with heavy coats of mail; the defensive armor of "chosen captains" consisted of plates of highly tempered bronze, with sleeves reaching nearly to the elbow, covering the whole body and the thighs nearly to the knee. The wearers must have sunk at once like a stone, or as we read (in Exodus 5:10), like lumps of lead.

You see, in these two verses that the details are remembered, as well as remembering that God overcame them.

Exodus 15:6 "Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy."

"O LORD": The forthright declarations of the opening stanza (verses 1-5), are most appropriately followed by this vocative form of address in the rest of the song (verses 6, 11, 16, 17), since the focus of attention is on His working and intervention.

It matters not whether we are physical Israel (these Hebrews), or spiritual Israel (the Christians); we are all saved by the Right Hand of God, who is Jesus Christ our Lord. We will now, continue the song.

Exodus 15:7 "And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, [which] consumed them as stubble."

Thy great and excellent power: Excellency, or highness, belongs in the most eminent and unqualified sense to Jehovah, who is superlatively high and excellent in all His attributes.

"Thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee": Against His person and His people, who are in such strict union with Him as to be reckoned as Himself. And those that rise up against them, he reckons as rising up against Him, or as His enemies; and both the one and the other are overthrown by Him. As were those that rose up against Him in person when on earth such as Herod, Pontius Pilate, the people of the Jews, with the Gentiles, and as will be antichrist and His followers, and all the spiritual enemies of the people of God.

"Thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble": The wrath of the Lord God Almighty is like fire, and wicked men are as chaff and stubble. And as those cannot stand before fire, but are suddenly and quickly consumed with it. So neither can the wicked, the enemies of Christ and His people, stand before the wrath of the Lamb, when the great day of it is come, but must be presently destroyed by it (see Isa. 51:20).

Exodus 15:8 "And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as a heap, [and] the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea."

From the bottom of the sea, and divided and laid on heaps; and this by a strong east wind, called the blast of the nostrils of the Lord. Because as easily brought by him as a man's breath or wind is drawn through his nostrils. And thus, Christ with the breath of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming, will destroy antichrist (2 Thess. 2:8).

"The floods stood upright as a heap": Though a fluid body, yet by the power of Christ were raised up and continued upright, firm and consistent. As things dry and solid may be laid and heaped up on one another, and remain firm and stable. And so did the waters of the sea, they stood like a wall, and were as firm as a rock. While the Israelites passed between them, they stood upright, and lifted up their hands, as if they blessed them. Or blessed God for the deliverance of them, or in admiration of it (see Exodus 14:22).

We see here, more of the details of God's overthrow of Pharaoh and the false gods of Egypt. As we said before, God not only wanted them to remember this happened, but He wanted them to remember every detail; because there is a lesson to be learned. The song continues.

Exodus 15:9 "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them."

This verse is inexpressibly beautiful. Instead of barely saying, "The Egyptians, by pursuing the Israelites, went into the sea." Moses himself, as it were, enters into the hearts of these barbarians, assumes their passions, and makes them speak the language which their thirst of vengeance and strong desire of overtaking the Israelites had put into their hearts.

"I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil": We perceive a palpable vengeance in these words as we read them. The inspired penman has not suffered one conjunction to intervene between the distinct members of the sentence, that it might have the greater spirit, and might express more naturally and forcibly the disposition of a man whose soul is fired. Who discourses with himself, and does not mind connecting his words together. Moses goes further; he represents them as rioting on spoils, and swimming in joy.

"My lust shall be satisfied upon them": Both his lust of covetousness to possess himself of the wealth the people had of their own, and which they had spoiled the Egyptians of, by borrowing of them. And also his lust of revenge and cruelty upon them; as appears from what follows:

"I will draw my sword": Out of its scabbard, and sheathe it in them.

"My hand shall destroy them": Which he made no doubt of, they being an unarmed people; and therefore, though numerous, were unable to engage with him, and defend themselves (see Rev. 6:14; compare Isa. 10:11).

This is a description of the thoughts of the Egyptians in hot pursuit of the Israelites. They had planned, at the last, to kill the children of Israel and take home the jewels that they had taken to the wilderness with them. They perhaps wanted the cattle, because most of their cattle were killed in the plague. At first, they intended to carry their slave labor back with them; but at the last they had gotten so angry, they desired to kill all of them.

Exodus 15:10 "Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters."

What an idea does this give us of the power of God! He only blows, and he at once overwhelms a numberless multitude of forces! This is the true sublime. It is like, "Let there be light, and there was light". Can anything be greater?

"The sea covered them": How many ideas are included in these four words! Any other writer than one divinely inspired would have set his fancy to work, and have given us a long detail; would have exhausted the subject, or impoverished it, and tired the reader by a train of insipid and useless descriptions, and an empty pomp of words. But here God blows, the sea obeys, and

the Egyptians are swallowed up! Was there ever a description so full, so lively, so strong, as this? There is no interval between God's blowing and the dreadful miracle of vengeance on his enemies, and mercy to his people!

We have seen over and over throughout the Bible, that the Lord has control of the wind. It was not only here at the Red Sea that the Lord controlled the wind and caused it to do His will, but He calmed the Sea of Galilee to keep the ship from sinking. He just spoke to the wind and it hushed. It was also, a mighty wind that blew into the room of 120 of Jesus' followers and baptized them with the Holy Spirit of God (in Acts chapter 2:2). You see, the Lord is in control of all the elements, not just the wind. The song continues.

Exodus 15:11 "Who [is] like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who [is] like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful [in] praises, doing wonders?"

So called; the idols or princes. To the wonderful relation above mentioned, succeeds a wonderful expression of praise. And how, indeed, could the writer possibly avoid being transported, and carried, as it were, out of himself at the sight of such a wonder? Well might he describe Jehovah that performed it, as glorious in holiness, in justice, mercy, and truth.

Fearful in praises; in praise-worthy actions; the act being put for the object, as fear is put for a thing to be feared (as Psalm 14:5 1 Peter 3:14). Or, to be feared or had in reverence when thou art praised; to be both loved and feared at the same time.

Exodus 15:12 "Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them."

That is, exerted his power, and gave a display and proof of it; of which the right hand is an emblem.

"The earth swallowed them": The sea, which actually "swallowed them," was a part of the earth. Literalism might argue that the statement contravened former ones (Exodus 15:4-5; 15:10); but the fact is otherwise. If we only allow our common sense fair play, and permit sacred writers the same latitude as profane ones, we shall find wonderfully few discrepancies, or even difficulties, in the Biblical narrative.

This is just going into detail again, that there is no greater God than the Lord God Jehovah (Lord God Almighty). God is supernatural, immortal, powerful, eternal deity; we could give another 1,000 adjectives and just be started. These false gods of Egypt were no match for the Lord.

Exodus 15:13 "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people [which] thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided [them] in thy strength unto thy holy habitation."

Or, leadest forth ... guidest. The guidance was not over; rather, it was just begun. The want of a present tense in Hebrew causes the a past action or state and future to have both, under certain circumstances, the force of the present.

"Thy holy habitation": It might be supposed that Canaan was the "habitation" intended; but the words of (Exodus 15:17), imply something more. Moses certainly knew that when Canaan was reached God would select a place to "put His name there" (Deut. 12:5; 12:11; 12:14; 14:23-24; 16:6; 16:11). And possibly knew by revelation what place would be ultimately selected.

We notice here, that this mercy (unmerited favor), of God was what saved them. God Himself would bring them to this land He promised Abraham for his ancestors.

Exodus 15:14 "The people shall hear, [and] be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina."

The dramatic way in which the Lord delivered the Hebrew people from Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea caused Yahweh's name to be feared among neighboring nations (Joshua 2:9).

This was talking about the people who now inhabit the land God had promised the children of Israel; such as the Amalekites, Moabites, etc. God was sending them a warning, that He fights Israel's battles. They were afraid of God who did this to these Egyptians.

Exodus 15:15 "Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away."

"Edom ... Moab ... Canaan": Edom and Moab were on the eastern border of the Jordan; Canaan or Palestine is to the west.

Yet even the nations' fears did not hearten the Hebrew people to take the land the Lord had promised them (Num. Chapters 13 and 14).

We see that all of these mighty warriors had heard of the ten plagues God brought on Egypt. No, they had heard of this drowning of about 100,000 of Pharaoh's army. At least 600 of the chariots were lost for sure. This type of news travels fast and these surrounding countries' leaders were wondering, who God would destroy next for Israel? Really, the Egyptians were destroyed for worshipping false gods and these countries would be too. He had given them a time to repent, and they had not. They had reason to fear. Canaan would be turned over to these Israelites eventually.

Exodus 15:16 "Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be [as] still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, [which] thou hast purchased."

In verses 16 and 17 we see an expression of confidence in the promises that God had made to Abraham 700 years earlier (see Gen. 12, 15, 17).

This was Moses actually, prophesying what would be and he stated it as if it had already happened. Just as Jesus has bought us with a price (His shed blood), these people had nothing to do with their redemption. The Lord brought them out and they were His.

Exodus 15:17 "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, [in] the place, O LORD, [which] thou hast made for thee to dwell in, [in] the Sanctuary, O Lord, [which] thy hands have established."

This again, was prophecy by Moses of the future occupying of the Promised Land. Moses had had a vision, or else God's words quickened to Moses about the building of the sanctuary, where He (God), would dwell to be near the people. Moses was absolutely sure that what God begins, He would finish. Even though it was not a fact at that time, Moses was sure it would happen. He knew that God Himself would make it happen.

Exodus 15:18 The LORD shall reign for ever and ever."

“Reign for ever”: This speaks of the eternal, universal kingship of the Lord (Psalm 145:13).

We see Moses stating the eternal reign of the Lord.

Exodus Chapter 15 Questions

1. Why were Moses and the children of Israel singing?
2. "The LORD is my _____ and _____, and he is become my _____"
3. What two things do we see in this song?
4. What do song and laughter do for man?
5. How long would this song be sung?
6. What does God inhabit?
7. What is the habitation, we prepare for God?
8. "The Lord is a man of _____"
9. What is the Lord in this army?
10. What is the constant war the Lord and His followers are in?
11. The description of how Pharaoh's men sank was like a what?
12. "Thy right hand, O LORD, is become _____ _____"
13. Who are the two Israels?

14. What is the Lord called in this?
15. Who did God destroy?
16. What caused the water of the sea to stand in a heap?
17. What did God want them to remember about this great struggle?
18. What did the Egyptians expect to gain, by killing these Israelites?
19. Give two other examples, when God used the wind specifically?
20. What is another name mentioned, besides Lord?
21. What is mercy?
22. Sorrow shall take hold on whose inhabitants?
23. Name two of them.
24. "All of the inhabitants of _____ shall melt away."
25. How many chariots of Pharaoh's were destroyed, that we know of?
26. Why did God destroy the Egyptians?
27. What had God given these countries time to do, and they had not?
28. Who owns the Christians?
29. What was paid?
30. What did Moses prophesy would be built for God to dwell in?