

Exodus Chapter Fourteen

Read **Exodus 14:1-9** – Pharaoh’s Pursuit

v.1-2 “AND THE **LORD** SPAKE UNTO MOSES, SAYING, SPEAK UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, THAT THEY TURN AND ENCAMP BEFORE PI-HA-HI-ROTH, BETWEEN MIG-DOL AND THE SEA, OVER AGAINST BA-AL-ZE-PHON: BEFORE IT SHALL YE ENCAMP BY THE SEA.

At the end of chapter thirteen the Israelites had reached a location called Etham. Now we have three more location names given us through the scripture.

They were to locate their camp before Pihahiroth, a name that simply means the bay or mouth of Chiroth. This location is generally identified with a fortress on the Red Sea later called Aj-rud. It is at the foot of a high point next to what today is the Suez canal and had a well of good water.

Migdol was a tower or fort called Mak-tal by the Egyptians and is probably the same site later called Bir Suweis. It is located about two miles from modern Suez, a seacoast town near the head of the Gulf of Suez.

Ba-al-ze-phon was a place nearby on the Red Sea where the Phoenicians worshiped their chief god when they had a settlement near the head of the Red Sea.

This location is in a natural valley that leads from the interior of Egypt to the sea and as we will see shortly also would place Israel between high ground and the sea. Cook in the Baker Commentary gives the distance that Israel as about four leagues. A league is generally thought to be the distance that a person or horse could walk in an hour or about three miles. So that would translate into a move of about 12 miles.

The KJV and NKJV says that Israel turned, the ASV and ESV says that they turned back. Our map from the Thompson Study Bible would indicate simply that instead of continuing into the Sinai Wilderness from Etham they turned south and a little bit west (back) and went to the seacoast.

In the journeys of the children of Israel that Moses records later; he describes this move:

Numbers 33:7 “AND THEY REMOVED FROM ETHAM, AND TURNED AGAIN UNTO PIHAHIROTH, WHICH *is* BEFORE BAALZEPHON: AND THEY PITCHED BEFORE MIGDOL.”

v.3 “FOR PHARAOH WILL SAY OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, THEY ARE ENTANGLED IN THE LAND, THE WILDERNESS HATH SHUT THEM IN.”

As is always true God has a purpose in giving these instructions to Moses. Cook in the Baker Commentary records that the Red Sea extended much further north at this time in history connecting with what is labeled the “Bitter Lakes” on this map. Thus by turning south Israel is now “ENTANGLED”, literally trapped between the high ground west of the Red Sea and the sea. Consequently they are shut in without any escape except that which God will supply.

Exodus Chapter Fourteen

v.4 “AND I WILL HARDEN PHARAOH'S HEART, THAT HE SHALL FOLLOW AFTER THEM; AND I WILL BE HONOURED UPON PHARAOH, AND UPON ALL HIS HOST; THAT THE EGYPTIANS MAY KNOW THAT I AM THE **LORD**. AND THEY DID SO.”

Pharaoh will change his mind again. God knows that he will not overcome the temptation provided when Israel is found to be in a position in a valley between the high ground to the west and the sea to the east with no natural means of escape. And again, just as God has stated several times before, this was done so that the Egyptians would understand the He is Lord God Jehovah and in total control of all creation.

v.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?”

In this verse Pharaoh is told that Israel is fleeing. The commentators contend that Pharaoh had only given permission for Israel to go into the wilderness to worship for and then return. But now reports are coming to him that Israel is leaving Egypt and leaving permanently.

Consequently Pharaoh and his immediate servants and advisors start to think they've made a mistake. With the loss of this slave nation, in addition to the effect of the plagues, their economy is going to be devastated for it was very much dependent upon the work of their slaves.

v.6-7 “AND HE MADE READY HIS CHARIOT, AND TOOK HIS PEOPLE WITH HIM: AND HE TOOK SIX HUNDRED CHOSEN CHARIOTS, AND ALL THE CHARIOTS OF EGYPT, AND CAPTAINS OVER EVERY ONE OF THEM.”

The chariot as a weapon of war was common during this era of history and would equate to the tank in the world's arsenals today. Pharaoh had at least 600 of them in Lower Egypt and the scripture indicates that they were especially trained, i.e. “CHOSEN”. A chariot was usually pulled by at least two horses and frequently more. There were usually three people on board; the driver, the owner and another soldier that served to protect the other two.

v.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 AN HIGH HAND.”

So now Israel has an angry king with an army capable of destroying them coming after them in the valley where they are trapped. We're told here that the children of Israel went out with an “HIGH HAND”. What does this mean? Just what common logic would indicate. They went out in triumph. God has chosen them above all others.

Exodus Chapter Fourteen

He has allowed them to suffer but then he is also now delivering them from their bondage. Consequently they are marching boldly, courageously, perhaps even singing, toward something that they envisioned as complete and total freedom. In his sermon at Antioch Paul describes it this way:

Acts 13:17 “THE GOD OF THIS PEOPLE OF ISRAEL CHOSE OUR FATHERS, AND EXALTED THE PEOPLE WHEN THEY DWELT AS STRANGERS IN THE LAND OF EGYPT, AND WITH AN HIGH ARM BROUGHT HE THEM OUT OF IT.”

v.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 PIHAHIROTH, BEFORE BAALZEPHON.”

So Pharaoh went after them with everything he had at his disposal, horses, chariots, horsemen and soldiers that were not mounted. As a result and because of the location that God has led them to Pharaoh now has them penned against the Red Sea. See Map:

Read **Exodus 14:10-14** – Israel’s Reaction

v.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**.”

It didn’t take long for the “HIGH HAND” that Israel had been exhibiting to turn into fear. This verse says that they “CRIED OUT UNTO THE **LORD**” but it didn’t take long for them to turn on Moses. Anyone that does the Lord’s work needs to remember this lesson. When you represent God or the church in a position of leadership and things go wrong, or if something just doesn’t go as someone thought it should, you will bear the brunt of their displeasure just as Moses will here and time and time again over the next 40 years.

v.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?”

Israel is in fear for their very lives. They expect to see Pharaoh unleash his armies and destroy them. Then they all but call Moses a lyer, a betrayer. He had promised to carry them out of Egypt but now they are trapped.

Exodus Chapter Fourteen

They are also being somewhat sarcastic as Egypt is known as the Land of Tombs because Egypt did honor their dead, especially people of nobility, and built pyramids for graves or tombs of their kings

v.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.”

Cook in the Baker Commentary calls this complaint a “gross exaggeration, yet not without a semblance of truth. When Pharaoh increased their burdens in defiance of God and the demands being made by Moses to let God’s people go, they confronted Pharaoh and then Moses.

Exodus 5:21 “AND THEY SAID UNTO THEM, THE **LORD** LOOK UPON YOU, AND JUDGE; BECAUSE YE HAVE MADE OUR SAVOUR TO BE ABHORRED IN THE EYES OF PHARAOH, AND IN THE EYES OF HIS SERVANTS, TO PUT A SWORD IN THEIR HAND TO SLAY US.”

v.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 TO DAY: FOR THE EGYPTIANS WHOM YE HAVE SEEN TO DAY, YE SHALL SEE THEM AGAIN NO MORE FOR EVER.”

Moses said unto the people “FEAR YE NOT”. In his description of God’s marvelous providence Isaiah the prophet wrote:

Isaiah 41:10 “FEAR THOU NOT; FOR I *am* WITH THEE: BE NOT DISMAYED; FOR I *am* THY GOD: I WILL STRENGTHEN THEE; YEA, I WILL HELP THEE; YEA, I WILL UPHOLD THEE WITH THE RIGHT HAND OF MY RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

Which brings to mind the first line of a hymn that we sing on occasion: “Be not dismayed, what’er betide, God will take care of you.”

Today they would see the salvation of the Lord. God would deliver them from the Egyptians. Moses continues that the Egyptians that they see, this army that Pharaoh himself has led against them, they will see “NO MORE FOR EVER”.

v.14 “THE **LORD** SHALL FIGHT FOR YOU, AND YE SHALL HOLD YOUR PEACE.”

Exodus Chapter Fourteen

Israel is to “HOLD YOUR PEACE”, be unafraid, have faith in God because He is going to fight the battle that is sweeping down upon them. He will continue to do so; a fact that Moses uses to encourage them again as he prepares them to enter Canaan and prepares to leave them for the last time.

Deuteronomy 1:30 “THE **LORD** YOUR GOD WHICH GOETH BEFORE YOU, HE SHALL FIGHT FOR YOU, ACCORDING TO ALL THAT HE DID FOR YOU IN EGYPT BEFORE YOUR EYES;”

Read **Exodus 14:15-20** – God’s Marching Orders

v.15 “AND THE **LORD** SAID UNTO MOSES, WHEREFORE CRIEST THOU UNTO ME? SPEAK UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, THAT THEY GO FORWARD:”

Moses did not record his petition to God in this situation so we only have God’s answer. Why are you crying to me about your situation? Tell the “CHILDREN OF ISRAEL” to “GO FORWARD.” And then God explains:

v.16 “BUT LIFT THOU UP THY ROD, AND STRETCH OUT THINE HAND OVER THE SEA, AND DIVIDE IT: AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SHALL GO ON DRY **ground** THROUGH THE MIDST OF THE SEA.”

“LIFT UP THOU UP THY ROD” the same shepherd’s rod that God chose to bring about the various miracles related to the confrontations with Pharaoh.

Exodus 4:17 “AND THOU SHALT TAKE THIS ROD IN THINE HAND, WHEREWITH THOU SHALT DO SIGNS.”

In this case God will use it to divide the sea and provide a passage way for Israel to escape the wrath of Pharaoh.

v.17 “AND I, BEHOLD, I WILL HARDEN THE HEARTS OF THE EGYPTIANS, AND THEY SHALL FOLLOW THEM: AND I WILL GET ME HONOUR UPON PHARAOH, AND UPON ALL HIS HOST, UPON HIS CHARIOTS, AND UPON HIS HORSEMEN.”

God knew the outcome, God knew what this obstinate ruler would do when he saw Israel jammed against the sea with, apparently, in man’s view at least, no way to escape. So God is going to use Pharaoh’s nature to destroy the major portion of Egypt’s army. With that accomplished, then Egypt would need to completely rebuild their army, their economy and the basic wealth of their country before they could again undertake any kind of expedition against Israel or any one else.

Exodus Chapter Fourteen

v.18 “AND THE EGYPTIANS SHALL KNOW THAT I *am* THE **LORD**, WHEN I HAVE GOTTEN ME HONOUR UPON PHARAOH, UPON HIS CHARIOTS, AND UPON HIS HORSEMEN.”

God is going to show Egypt, just one last time; the depth of his love and the breadth of his vision and the power of His might..

v.19 “AND THE ANGEL OF GOD, WHICH WENT BEFORE THE CAMP OF ISRAEL, REMOVED AND WENT BEHIND THEM; AND THE PILLAR OF THE CLOUD WENT FROM BEFORE THEIR FACE, AND STOOD BEHIND THEM:”

“THE ANGEL OF GOD”, the pillar of cloud, the manifestation of the presence of God, the symbol that Israel would see every day for the next 40 plus years now moves to a position that places God between Israel and Egypt.

v.20 “AND IT CAME BETWEEN THE CAMP OF THE EGYPTIANS AND THE CAMP OF ISRAEL; AND IT WAS A CLOUD AND DARKNESS *to them*, BUT IT GAVE LIGHT BY NIGHT *to these*: SO THAT THE ONE CAME NOT NEAR THE OTHER ALL THE NIGHT.”

So this pillar of cloud, or cloud, gave light to Israel but only darkness to Egypt. Its purpose was to protect Israel and it did just that for “ALL THE NIGHT.”

Read **Exodus 14:21-31** – Israel Saved, Egypt Destroyed

v.21 “AND MOSES STRETCHED OUT HIS HAND OVER THE SEA; AND THE **LORD** CAUSED THE SEA TO GO *back* BY A STRONG EAST WIND ALL THAT NIGHT, AND MADE THE SEA DRY *land*, AND THE WATERS WERE DIVIDED.”

Many years later as one of the expressions of the love of God for his people a psalmist writes:

Psalms 106:9 “HE REBUKED THE RED SEA ALSO, AND IT WAS DRIED UP: SO HE LED THEM THROUGH THE DEPTHS, AS THROUGH THE WILDERNESS.”

In another psalm about the goodness of God to Israel the inspired writer gives this account:

Psalms 78:13 “HE DIVIDED THE SEA, AND CAUSED THEM TO PASS THROUGH; AND HE MADE THE WATERS TO STAND AS AN HEAP.”

Exodus Chapter Fourteen

Some observations about this crossing of the Red Sea by Israel: critics of the Bible deny that this miracle ever took place. One of their contentions is that this crossing took place in a swampy area between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean called the Reed Sea. In a time of drought this Reed Sea usually dried up and could be crossed quite readily. However, this does not account for the destruction of Egypt's army and their weakness as a nation following the Exodus of Israel.

Based upon the locations of the site called out in God's inspired revelation, Bible scholars have painted a very different picture. Adam Clarke, quoting travelers who had visited the sites involved, reports that the Red Sea at the site most probably used was about 4 leagues (or 12 miles) across and about fourteen fathoms (or 84 feet) deep.

Another note from Clarke that is very interesting is that rather than the east wind parting the waters, as I have been taught at various times, the God parted the waters, as he has the power to do and the east wind was his instrument used to dry the land between the walls of water. Was this the only time that God parted waters for Israel to cross? No, they crossed the Jordan the same way:

Joshua 3:16 "THAT THE WATERS WHICH CAME DOWN FROM ABOVE STOOD *and* ROSE UP UPON AN HEAP VERY FAR FROM THE CITY ADAM, THAT *is* BESIDE ZARETAN: AND THOSE THAT CAME DOWN TOWARD THE SEA OF THE PLAIN, *even* THE SALT SEA, FAILED, *and* WERE CUT OFF: AND THE PEOPLE PASSED OVER RIGHT AGAINST JERICHO."

v.22 "AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WENT INTO THE MIDST OF THE SEA UPON THE DRY GROUND: AND THE WATERS WERE A WALL UNTO THEM ON THEIR RIGHT HAND, AND ON THEIR LEFT."

As we all well know the creditability of what we see depicted in movies is suspect because movie makers change many things to enhance the story, provide better entertainment, etc. However, when I read this verse I think of the scene in the movie Exodus where the Israelites are depicted as traveling through the sea with these tremendous walls of water on either side. The artist's rendition in that case is probably very close to what actually happened on this occasion.

v.23 "AND THE EGYPTIANS PURSUED, AND WENT IN AFTER THEM TO THE MIDST OF THE SEA, *even* ALL PHARAOH'S HORSES, HIS CHARIOTS, AND HIS HORSEMEN."

Not realizing the danger, or perhaps even ignoring it, the Egyptian army plunges into the gap between the waters in hot pursuit. Remember, this crossing is about 12 miles long so there is plenty of room for even a large army in the trap that God has created for them.

Exodus Chapter Fourteen

v.24 “AND IT CAME TO PASS, THAT IN THE MORNING WATCH THE **LORD** LOOKED UNTO THE HOST OF THE EGYPTIANS THROUGH THE PILLAR OF FIRE AND OF THE CLOUD, AND TROUBLED THE HOST OF THE EGYPTIANS,”

What time is the “MORNING WATCH”? As we should remember, in scripture, both the day and the night is divided into segments or watches. The night, from sunset until sunrise, was divided into four watches of three hours each. We find them named in:

Mark 13:35 “WATCH YE THEREFORE: FOR YE KNOW NOT WHEN THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE COMETH, AT EVEN, OR AT MIDNIGHT, OR AT THE COCKCROWING, OR IN THE MORNING:”

So the fourth watch would be the morning watch beginning at 3:00 a.m. and ending at 6:00 a.m. According to Clarke the more literal translation would be the “WATCH AT DAYBREAK” and he gives the time as four o’clock in the morning. God “TROUBLED” the Egyptians and the next verse tells us how he did that.

v.25 “AND TOOK OFF THEIR CHARIOT WHEELS, THAT THEY DRAVE THEM HEAVILY: SO THAT THE EGYPTIANS SAID, LET US FLEE FROM THE FACE OF ISRAEL; FOR THE **LORD** FIGHTETH FOR THEM AGAINST THE EGYPTIANS.”

In our imaginations we can see the chaos that would reign in this situation. The Egyptian army is somewhere in the midst of the twelve mile path across the Red Sea with 84 foot walls of water on each side. The wheels start to fall off their chariots. They and the horsemen would generally be out front of everyone else. The rear part of the army is still charging forward when the front stops, decides they are over matched and turns to flee back to the far bank. There are 600 chariots, plus cavalry and foot soldiers so when the wheels start to fall off their chariots all order vanishes.

v.26 “AND THE **LORD** SAID UNTO MOSES, STRETCH OUT THINE HAND OVER THE SEA, THAT THE WATERS MAY COME AGAIN UPON THE EGYPTIANS, UPON THEIR CHARIOTS, AND UPON THEIR HORSEMEN.”

So now instead of the Israelites being trapped between Pharaoh’s army on the high ground west of the Red Sea and the sea shore, the Egyptians are in God’s trap. He is going to close it.

v.27 “AND MOSES STRETCHED FORTH HIS HAND OVER THE SEA, AND THE SEA RETURNED TO HIS STRENGTH WHEN THE MORNING APPEARED; AND THE EGYPTIANS FLED AGAINST IT; AND THE **LORD** OVERTHREW THE EGYPTIANS IN THE MIDST OF THE SEA.”

Exodus Chapter Fourteen

As Moses did as God commanded, God allowed the water of the sea to collapse and the “LORD OVERTHREW THE EGYPTIANS IN THE MIDST OF THE SEA.”

v.28 “AND THE WATERS RETURNED, AND COVERED THE CHARIOTS, AND THE HORSEMEN, *and* ALL THE HOST OF PHARAOH THAT CAME INTO THE SEA AFTER THEM; THERE REMAINED NOT SO MUCH AS ONE OF THEM.”

Again we see in the psalmist’s tribute to the love that God had for the Israelite nation a remembrance of this occasion.

Psalm 106:11 “AND THE WATERS COVERED THEIR ENEMIES: THERE WAS NOT ONE OF THEM LEFT.”

v.29 “BUT THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WALKED UPON DRY *land* IN THE MIDST OF THE SEA; AND THE WATERS WERE A WALL UNTO THEM ON THEIR RIGHT HAND, AND ON THEIR LEFT.”

In the psalm labeled by men as “The Great Works of God” the psalmist writes

Psalm 66:1 “MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE UNTO GOD, ALL YE LANDS:” **v.6** “HE TURNED THE SEA INTO DRY *land*: THEY WENT THROUGH THE FLOOD ON FOOT: THERE DID WE REJOICE IN HIM.”

v.30 “THUS THE **LORD** SAVED ISRAEL THAT DAY OUT OF THE HAND OF THE EGYPTIANS; AND ISRAEL SAW THE EGYPTIANS DEAD UPON THE SEA SHORE.”

God saved Israel from certain destruction and a return to slavery but did they remember and honor Him throughout their days. In the psalm “Israel Sins Against God’s Love” we find that:

“THEY FORGAT GOD THEIR SAVIOUR, WHICH HAD DONE GREAT THINGS IN EGYPT; WONDROUS WORKS IN THE LAND OF HAM, *and* TERRIBLE THINGS BY THE RED SEA.” **Psalm 106:21-22**

The scripture says that Israel saw Egyptians “DEAD UPON THE SEA SHORE”. We can imagine that the force of the waters returning to fill the void through which over 2 million people traveled twelve miles would create quite a turmoil in the sea. Seeing dead bodies on the sea shore is a logical result. Adam Clarke goes a bit further in his commentary indicting that this is where Israel got the weapons they needed to defend themselves during the wilderness wanderings but this is pure assumption without any scriptural foundation that I found.

Exodus Chapter Fourteen

v.31 “AND ISRAEL SAW THAT GREAT WORK WHICH THE **LORD** DID UPON THE EGYPTIANS: AND THE PEOPLE FEARED THE **LORD**, AND BELIEVED THE **LORD**, AND HIS SERVANT MOSES.”

Yes, Israel feared God, believed God and Moses and rejoiced in a song that makes up most of chapter 15 but it didn't last very long. In fact, in less than a week, they are murmuring, complaining and ready to rebel.