

Exodus 14:1-31 | Then the Lord said to Moses, ² “Tell the people of Israel to turn back and encamp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-zephon; you shall encamp facing it, by the sea. ³ For Pharaoh will say of the people of Israel, ‘They are wandering in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.’ ⁴ And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord.” And they did so.

⁵ When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, “What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?” ⁶ So he made ready his chariot and took his army with him, ⁷ and took six hundred chosen chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. ⁸ And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly. ⁹ The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them encamped at the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

¹⁰ When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the Lord. ¹¹ They said to Moses, “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.” ¹³ And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. ¹⁴ The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”

¹⁵ The Lord said to Moses, “Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. ¹⁶ Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. ¹⁷ And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. ¹⁸ And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.”

¹⁹ Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, ²⁰ coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night.

²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. ²² And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ²³ The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. ²⁴ And in the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, ²⁵ clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from before Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians.”

²⁶ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.” ²⁷ So Moses stretched

out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the Lord threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. 28 The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. 29 But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. 30 Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 31 Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

Exodus 14 | Through the Waters

On the outskirts of the promised land Joshua sent in two spies to scope out Jericho. They snuck just inside and found refuge in the house of a prostitute in the city wall. It seems like it was no decision at all for her to hide the men, she knew immediately she would be on their side. Why was she so welcoming to these strangers and enemies of her people?

Joshua 2:9-10 | and said to the men, “I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction.

Everyone knows about the Red Sea.

1. Bait & Pursuit

Exodus 14:1-2 | Then the Lord said to Moses, ² “Tell the people of Israel to turn back and encamp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-zephon; you shall encamp facing it, by the sea.

The instruction must have seemed bizarre. Your fleeing your oppressor and the word of the Lord tells you to turn back. And then as you turn back put yourself in a precarious position, between two mountains and the sea. But the Lord is a warrior, a tactician, and he knows how to deceive his enemies. He instructs Moses that Pharaoh will think they are wandering and the wilderness has shut them in! And the Lord will take advantage of the shrivel of hubris left in Pharaoh’s heart to harden him once more against the Israelites.

Exodus 14:5 | When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, “What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?”

Pharaoh swells with regret at driving out the Israelites. And he can’t resist the bait. He mounts up his army and leads the great force of his might towards sure victory.

2. Fear & The Warrior

Pharaoh takes his chariot, along with more than 600 chosen chariots, and all the other chariots of Egypt. Imagine the sound of the horses, the rolling, and the marching. Coming across the desert, prepared and dressed for battle. The people of Israel see the war coming and cry out to the Lord. They panic in their complaint against Moses.

Exodus 14:11-12 | They said to Moses, “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.”

This is not an ordinary response. This is not a typical response. This is not an expected response. This is a cowardly and faithless and wicked response that shows the Israelites have become the type of people who love death. They have become a culture of safety. Slavery is a type of safety culture and they are literally longing for the tyrant. **They are on Pharaoh’s side in their complaint!** How we long for chronic pain when the reality of our situation is made acute. How quickly they have forgotten the deliverance of the Lord! The Lord is always calling you into some place new but our urge to remain in the chronic pain were in under the slave driver we know than to find freedom in the Lord. The Lord ought to turn them over to pharaoh. Give them what they want! And what is the word of the Lord through Moses to his people.

Exodus 14:13-14 | And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. ¹⁴ The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”

I have some coffee shop friends on Tennyson. One of them met Flavor Flav in an airport. When a friend meets a celebrity its customary to ask, “What’s he like?” Was he wearing a clock? You know we want to know what there really like, off camera. Would we get along? Is he a good hang? Deep in your heart of hearts I know you wonder “what is God like?” I’ll tell you what he’s like. When his own people wanted to defect and abandon him to his and their enemies. He said. “Fear not, stand firm. I’ll fight or you. You have only to be silent.”

What is he like? He’s gracious, merciful, slow to anger abounding in steadfast love. Do you think you’ve exhausted his grace? Do you think you’ve worn out his patience? Do you think you’ve stepped beyond the reach of his love? Do you think he has no mercy for you? Do you think the obstacle your facing or the attack headed your way is too big, are you backed up into a corner? Are you stuck after doing what you thought was following his will? Is he strong enough to bail you out? Remember what he’s like, be silent.

3. Through the Sea

Exodus 14:15 The Lord said to Moses, “Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward.

The Lord is always sending his people forward. You must always be going forward. Ours is an advancing religion. An adventurous faith. A conquering and taking new ground type of faith. This life of faith is not a life of arrival it is a life of advancing. To go forward in faith is to love God and love life and renewal. To stay put is to love death and decay.

The Lord shares his plan. Moses lift up your staff and I will make the sea dry land. Then I will harden the hearts of Pharaoh’s army so they will pursue you. Then I will destroy them and get glory over them and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord. Like a true King the Lord moves first.

Exodus 14:19-20 | Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, ²⁰ coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night.

The angel of God was going before the host, and he moves along with the pillar of cloud from in front of his people to behind them. As he moves behind them he positions himself directly between the Egyptians and the Israelites. He positions himself between his people and their enemies. And he shows his light and his darkness. He separates the light from the darkness.

The Angel of the Lord. We’ve seen him before, once in this story. When Moses was at the burning bush. His own light. Now this angel of the Lord, who called Moses himself to go rescue his people stands between his people and their enemies. Making them his enemies. Who is this angel of the Lord but God the Son, manifest for the rescue of his people. And what is it but the first day when he separates the light from the darkness.

Exodus 14:21-22 | Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. ²² And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

The question was, “forward into what?” The Lord turns the sea into dry land. How many questions have been raised about this event. Did it really happen? Doesn’t this plunge the whole book into the realm of fantasy? There must be a natural explanation for this parting of the seas! These questions are the questions of fools. The one who seperated the light from the darkness is the one who separated the seas from the dry land. He can do it again!

he can make a new creation because he has made the first creation! Is anything too hard for him.

Exodus 14:26-27 | Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.” 27 So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the Lord threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea.

As the Egyptians followed after the Israelites onto the dry land the Lord bogged down their wheels and made their task drudgery until he commanded Moses to stretch out his hand once again to restore the waters to their normal place. All of Pharaoh’s army and Pharaoh himself are plunged to the bottom of the sea.

Exodus 14:30-31 | Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 31 Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

Now I want you to imagine asking an Israelite what the Lord is like? Remember moments ago when you wanted to abandon him? How did he treat you?

He placed himself between me and my enemies. And even when my heart was not for him, he made a way for me to go. He washed away my oppressors and hid me in his protection. While I was faithless he was faithful to me. How did you defeat Egypt? The Lord defeated Egypt for me. I could not hide myself. I could not cross the waters. I could not bog down the chariots. I could not even trust myself to depend upon him. He saved us. By the Angel of the Lord he saved us.

Christian this is your story too. The Son of God stood between you and your enemies. While you were faithless. Jesus Christ was faithful to you. When you abandoned him for your sin, he called you forward out of darkness into his glorious light. Why do we tell this story today, because it shows us what God is like. God saves sinners. This is the good news. God saves sinners.

Remember the Exodus, remember the Red Sea. Remember when you’re backed into a corner. Remember him. Remember what he is like.