

EXODUS CHAPTER 13-14

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God has raised up a prophet in Moses and has sent him to the king of Egypt. God will have Pharaoh release the nation of Israel from bondage. Moses and his brother Aaron have confronted the Pharaoh and their request has been rejected. Now, God will show the Egyptians His incredible power to release Israel from Egypt.

DEMANDS AND DIRECTIONS TO THE REDEEMED

(13:1) Then the LORD said to Moses, (2) "Dedicate to Me every firstborn among the Israelites. The first offspring to be born, of both humans and animals, belongs to Me."

- Here is one of many clear claims to inspiration on the part of **Moses**. He is speaking for **the Lord**.
- While the Lord took the lives of the **firstborn** of Egypt, He still claimed possession of **the firstborn of Israel**. They weren't off of the hook.

THE OBSERVANCE OF THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

(3) So Moses said to the people, "This is a day to remember forever -- the day you left Egypt, the place of your slavery. Today the LORD has brought you out by the power of His mighty hand. (Remember, eat no food containing yeast)

- **Moses** again urges **people** to **remember this day** they were let out of **Egyptian slavery**. One way to **remember** is to not eat food with **yeast**. Taking action like this strengthens our memory of the event. We all forget our blessings so easily.

(4) On this day in early spring, in the month of Abib, you have been set free. (5) You must celebrate this event in this month each year after the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites, and Jebusites. (He swore to your ancestors that He would give you this land -- a land flowing with milk and honey)

- When Israel settles in the **land** promised to the patriarchs, they must keep the Passover and Unleavened Bread feasts every **Abib**.

(6) For seven days the bread you eat must be made without yeast. Then on the seventh day, celebrate a feast to the LORD. (7) Eat bread without yeast during those seven days. In fact, there must be no yeast bread or any yeast at all found within the borders of your land during this time.

- The instructions are repeated for emphasis.

(8) "On the seventh day you must explain to your children, 'I am celebrating what the LORD did for me when I left Egypt.' (9) This annual festival will be a visible sign to you, like a mark branded on your hand or your forehead. Let it remind you always to recite this teaching of the LORD: 'With a strong hand, the LORD rescued you from Egypt.'

- They were to tell their **children** in a very personal way. Figuratively, he speaks of **hands, forehead** and mouth.

THE REDEMPTION OF THE FIRSTBORN

(10) So observe the decree of this festival at the appointed time each year. (11) "This is what you must do when the LORD fulfills the promise He swore to you and to your ancestors. When He gives you the land where the Canaanites now live, (12) you must present

all firstborn sons and firstborn male animals to the LORD, for they belong to Him.

- From now on, all **firstborn sons** belong to **the Lord**, as well as the **firstborn** of the **animals**.

(13) A firstborn donkey may be bought back from the LORD by presenting a lamb or young goat in its place. But if you do not buy it back, you must break its neck. However, you must buy back every firstborn son.

- **A donkey** could be **bought back with a lamb**. If one did not want to bear the cost, the **donkey's neck could be broken**. For **sons**, a plan to **buy them back** them will be put in place.

(14) "And in the future, your children will ask you, 'What does all this mean?' Then you will tell them, 'With the power of His mighty hand, the LORD brought us out of Egypt, the place of our slavery.

- These activities will cause **your children** to ask questions and then tell them about the **Lord** bringing Israel out of **Egyptian slavery**.

LOOKING AHEAD AT WHAT IS COMING FROM THE LORD

(15) Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, so the LORD killed all the firstborn males throughout the land of Egypt, both people and animals. That is why I now sacrifice all the firstborn males to the LORD -- except that the firstborn sons are always bought back.'

- **The Lord** claimed all of the **firstborn males** of Israel for His own. This required the **sacrifice** of all **firstborn animals** and the redemption of the **firstborn sons**.

(16) This ceremony will be like a mark branded on your hand or your forehead. It is a reminder that the power of the LORD's mighty hand brought us out of Egypt." (17)

When Pharaoh finally let the people go, God did not lead them along the main road that runs through Philistine territory, even though that was the shortest route to the Promised Land. God said, "If the people are faced with a battle, they might change their minds and return to Egypt."

- The short route from **Egypt** would be to use the "Way of the Land of the Philistines" along the coast. God chose a different route to keep Israel out of armed conflict and **returning to Egypt**.

(18) So God led them in a roundabout way through the wilderness toward the Red Sea. Thus the Israelites left Egypt like an army ready for battle.

- **Barnes** makes the point that they prepared for the march, as contrasted with fleeing in disorder like fugitives.

(19) Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had made the sons of Israel swear to do this. He said, "God will certainly come to help you. When He does, you must take my bones with you from this place." (20) The Israelites left Succoth and camped at Etham on the edge of the wilderness.

- **Wilbur Fields** writes:

These (bones) would be an inspiration to the people, because they would know that the prophecy uttered by Joseph three hundred and fifty years before was coming to pass in their day. See Gen. 50:24-25.

"By faith Joseph when his end was nigh, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel and gave commandment concerning his bones." (Heb. 11:22).

THE LORD LED HIS PEOPLE

(21) The LORD went ahead of them. He guided them during the day with a pillar of cloud, and He provided light at night with a pillar of fire. This allowed them to travel by day or by night. (22) And the LORD did not remove the pillar of cloud or pillar of fire from its place in front of the people.

- **The Lord** provided guidance for Israel. There was a **pillar of cloud** in the daytime and a **pillar of fire at night**, not only to lead them, but to **light** the way. The **cloud** must have been huge and high to have been visible to all the Israelites. This special guidance didn't appear for a few minutes and then leave. It did not depart, it stayed. Their travel was not limited to **daylight** hours. They had lights for safety and guidance.

POSITIONING ISRAEL TO CROSS THE SEA

(14:1) Then the LORD gave these instructions to Moses: (2) "Order the Israelites to turn back and camp by Pi-hahiroth between Migdol and the sea. Camp there along the shore, across from Baal-zephon. (3) Then Pharaoh will think, 'The Israelites are confused. They are trapped in the wilderness!' (4) And once again I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will chase after you. I have planned this in order to display My glory through Pharaoh and his whole army. After this the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD!" So the Israelites camped there as they were told.

- There were spies, trackers and runners watching the movements of these **Israelites** who are so valuable to the **Pharaoh**. **Pharaoh** would see **Israel** as trapped (vs. 3) and so **chase** them and the **Lord** will be **glorified**. This will be another evidence to the **Egyptians** that the God of **Israel** is the **Lord** of all the earth.

(5) When word reached the king of Egypt that the Israelites had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds. "What have we done, letting all those Israelite slaves get away?" they asked.

- **Pharaoh** realized that his public workforce was gone and he wanted them back. The **Egyptians** could see Goshen empty, the brickyards deserted and the fields forsaken. **The king** was inspired to undertake what turned out to be a suicide mission to retrieve the people of **Israel**.

(6) So Pharaoh harnessed his chariot and called up his troops. (7) He took with him 600 of Egypt's best chariots, along with the rest of the chariots of Egypt, each with its commander.

- He took *all* of his military **chariots**, far more than **600**. This army has not been mentioned during the ten plagues. Now they are the focus of the story and a formidable force.

(8) The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, so he chased after the people of Israel, who had left with fists raised in defiance. (9) The Egyptians chased after them with all the forces in Pharaoh's army--all his horses and chariots, his charioteers, and his troops. The Egyptians caught up with the people of Israel as they were camped beside the shore near Pi-hahiroth, across from Baal-zephon.

- Overtaking them does not mean they encountered **Israel**, but could see them. They had **Israel** trapped and the **Egyptians** would get back their free labor. But they had not considered who was fighting for Israel.

“THE EGYPTIANS ARE COMING!”

(10) As Pharaoh approached, the people of Israel looked up and panicked when they saw the Egyptians overtaking them. They cried out to the LORD,

- **The people** were surmising their recapture at the hands of the advancing army of **Pharaoh**. They had little choice, **they cried out to the Lord**.

(11) and they said to Moses, "Why did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness? Weren't there enough graves for us in Egypt? What have you done to us? Why did you make us leave Egypt?"

- When things aren't going right, someone is to blame and now it was **Moses'** turn. They heaped sarcasm on the Lord's prophet.

(12) Didn't we tell you this would happen while we were still in Egypt? We said, 'Leave us alone! Let us be slaves to the Egyptians. It's better to be a slave in Egypt than a corpse in the wilderness!'"

- Now they wished they had continued the grueling labor of **Egypt**.

(13) But Moses told the people, "Don't be afraid. Just stand still and watch the LORD rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again."

- **Moses** pointed his **people** forward rather than answer their sarcastic questions. He had remarkable faith having watched God come through with solutions many times. **Moses** hinted at the total separation of God's people from their **Egyptian** enemies.

(14) The LORD Himself will fight for you. Just stay calm."

- Stop complaining, accusing and second guessing. Simply be **calm**. **The Lord** will handle this crisis. Thrilling.

“TELL ISRAEL TO MOVE FORWARD”

(15) Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the people to get moving!"

- The supplication of **Moses** to **the Lord** is not recorded, but the response from the **Lord** comes in just two sentences.

(16) Pick up your staff and raise your hand over the sea. Divide the water so the Israelites can walk through the middle of the sea on dry ground.

- Moses' **staff** is still in the story. Remember, Egyptians despised shepherding. He is to stretch his **hand** over **the sea and divide it**, letting the **people walk** through on **dry ground**.

(17) And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they will charge in after the Israelites. My great glory will be displayed through Pharaoh and his troops, his chariots, and his charioteers. (18) When My glory is displayed through them, all Egypt will see My glory and know that I am the LORD!"

- **The Lord** isn't through with **Pharaoh**. Now He will **harden the hearts** of the **Egyptian** military leaders for His **glory**. The word will get around.

ISRAEL WAS PROTECTED BY THE CLOUD

(19) Then the angel of God, who had been leading the people of Israel, moved to the rear of the camp. The pillar of cloud also moved from the front and stood behind them. (20) The cloud settled between the Egyptian and Israelite camps. As darkness fell, the cloud

turned to fire, lighting up the night. But the Egyptians and Israelites did not approach each other all night.

- To protect His people, the Lord moved **the pillar of cloud** to a place behind Israel, protecting them from the charging **Egyptians**. How the Lord protects His people! He did it then and He does it now by the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit and providential events.

(21) Then Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the LORD opened up a path through the water with a strong east wind. The wind blew all that night, turning the seabed into dry land.

- **The Lord** dried up a passage through the **sea**. Connected with the crossing was a storm as recorded in a Psalm:

The clouds poured down rain; the thunder rumbled in the sky. Your arrows of lightning flashed. Your thunder roared from the whirlwind; the lightning lit up the world! The earth trembled and shook. Your road led through the sea, Your pathway through the mighty waters -- a pathway no one knew was there! (Psalms 77:17-19 NLT)

THE SEA WAS CROSSED SAFELY

(22) So the people of Israel walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on each side!

- **The people of Israel** marched through **the sea on dry ground**. They were safe on the other side. Until the crossing of the Red Sea Israel was in Egyptian territory and in danger from Egypt.
- **Wilbur Fields** gives an idea of the people movement crossing the Red Sea:

Dr. Edward Robinson argued very plausibly that the Israelites probably could not have entered the passage much before midnight, because the blowing of the wind would require some time for its full effect. Their march was completed (or nearly so) by the time of the morning watch, about two o'clock.

They must have marched slowly because of encumbrances. If the column moved one thousand abreast, it would occupy a space more than half a mile wide, and being at least 2,000 people in depth, would extend for not less than two miles from front to rear. It would require an hour for all to enter the sea, and two hours more for the column to traverse a space of four miles across.

The whole body of Israelites could have passed over the distance of four miles before the morning watch time, when the Egyptians were troubled as they tried to pursue Israel.

(23) Then the Egyptians -- all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and charioteers -- chased them into the middle of the sea.

- **Pharaoh** led his finest military units right into the lake-bottom Israel had been using.

(24) But just before dawn the LORD looked down on the Egyptian army from the pillar of fire and cloud, and He threw their forces into total confusion. (25) He twisted their chariot wheels, making their chariots difficult to drive. "Let's get out of here -- away from these Israelites!" the Egyptians shouted. "The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt!"

- **The Lord** did two things in the morning:
 - He threw the **Egyptian** forces into **confusion**.

- **He twisted their chariot wheels.** Some commentators believe that He removed their **chariot wheels**.
- **The Egyptians** realized they were **fighting** the God of the Hebrews and wanted out of the battle.

THE WATER COVERS THE PURSUERS

(26) When all the Israelites had reached the other side, the LORD said to Moses, "Raise your hand over the sea again. Then the waters will rush back and cover the Egyptians and their chariots and charioteers." (27) So as the sun began to rise, Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the water rushed back into its usual place. The Egyptians tried to escape, but the LORD swept them into the sea.

- **The waters** closed in over the **Egyptian** hordes. The finest elements of Pharaoh's vaunted military had an enemy they could not conquer — **the sea** itself.

(28) Then the waters returned and covered all the chariots and charioteers -- the entire army of Pharaoh. Of all the Egyptians who had chased the Israelites into the sea, not a single one survived.

- There weren't any survivors. Not "many were," not "most were lost," but not **one survived**.

(29) But the people of Israel had walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground, as the water stood up like a wall on both sides.

- **Israel** was safely on the other **side**. They didn't wade through some reeds, there was a **wall of water** on both sides.

WHAT ISRAEL SAW

(30) That is how the LORD rescued Israel from the hand of the Egyptians that day. And the Israelites saw the bodies of the Egyptians washed up on the seashore.

- **Egyptian bodies** began to float and the people of **Israel** saw them.

(31) When the people of Israel saw the mighty power that the LORD had unleashed against the Egyptians, they were filled with awe before Him. They put their faith in the LORD and in His servant Moses.

- **Israel saw the great power** of God that had delivered them from the armies of **Egypt**. This caused them to **believe in the Lord and Moses**.

The location of the Red Sea crossing cannot be determined in our time. Too many changes in topography and the definition of words confuse the issue. However, Rahab, an ordinary woman living at Jericho, knew about the miracle at the Red Sea and that was the reason she treated the two spies so carefully. While we don't have a map, we have an independent witness:

Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them. "I know the LORD has given you this land," she told them. "We are all afraid of you. Everyone in the land is living in terror. For we have heard how the LORD made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River, whose people you completely destroyed. No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the LORD your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below. (Joshua 2:8-11 NLT)