

JANUARY 26

Exodus 13-15

Welcome to the most memorable event in the whole of the Old Testament. The crossing of the Red Sea and the dunking of Pharaoh will be the most remembered reference point in the rest of the Old Testament, and could be argued, it the most known event of the entire history of Israel.

When Leaving Egypt, there were several potential routes out of Egypt by which Israel could have moved. The most direct route, by the way of the land of the Philistines, was called the coastal route. It is also called the "Way of the Sea." It runs along the Mediterranean Sea straight from Egypt right up to Canaan but it was heavily guarded by a string of Egyptian fortresses. The first reason Moses gives for not taking that route was that God did not want the Israelites to freak out when they saw the Egyptian fortresses and run back to Egypt. There was another, deeper reason, however, and it involved God's promise to meet Moses on the mountain at which He had first appeared to him, after the job of freeing the Israelites was completed. For that reason, alternative routes through the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula were not taken either.

It is at this critical point in their journey that the Israelites became aware of the visible presence of the Lord, who led them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. He Himself was in that cloud. The glory of the Lord was in their midst, to lead them and to reassure them. This came to be known as the "shekinah", the glory. You ever heard that term? It was the very visible presence of God - in power. It would later be present in the Tabernacle and the Temple, and would in Ezekiel's day, in that terrible vision, depart from the Temple. The appearance of the "shekinah" was the first of seven important events between the Passover and Mt. Sinai.

Exodus 14- 15:21

The second event of importance, and the greatest in significance, is the deliverance at "Yam Suph" - the Hebrew name, which is correctly translated the "Sea of Reeds." The Sea of Reeds may well have been a natural extension of the Red Sea, but the Hebrew word definitely is "Sea of Reeds." The language of Chapter 14 makes it quite clear that Moses knew his Egyptian geography very well. He tells us exactly where the Israelites camped. Our problem is that Pi-hahiroth, Migdol and Baal-Zephon are unknown to us today, so we are not sure exactly which body of water the Israelites had to cross.

JOKE- Sea of Reeds "God Drowned Pharaohs army in 6 inches of water!"

In order for Israel to get to the site of this great miracle, they had to follow the cloud and pillar as it reversed directions, led them away from the border of Egypt, back toward danger and then stopped in an indefensible position between a mountain, the army and the sea.

*How about you? Are you stuck between a mountain, a sea and an army? Did God even lead you there? If so, you are as safe as can be. Sometimes God puts us in helpless positions so that he can show up and rescue us in dramatic ways..*

When we get into that kind of position, we don't need to worry, because the Lord who put us there will fight for us. We need only be still! Moses' words to the children of Israel are for us as well. "*Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today.*"

So God gives them plan B or D or G... but what was always his plan A. Moses - hold out your staff. HA! Miraculously, the waters part and it amazes hundreds of thousands of Israelites as well as all of Pharaoh's army!

As is usually the case with miracles noted in Scripture, there are all kinds of truly amazing explanations of how this could have happened. Here are a few of my favorites:

1. A strong southeast wind blowing strongly up a narrow channel in the Bitter Lakes region combined with a strong ebb tide pulling water back into the Red Sea, produced a dry path, and they walked across it.
2. A volcano sucked the waters down, then spit it back up. (volcanoes are great all-purpose explanations for solar eclipses and crucifixion, or numerous miraculous partings of water, or nearly any otherwise inexplicable phenomenon).

No matter how hard you try, you cannot write the God-factor out of this story! God saved Israel that day and judged Egypt. "*The Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore...and the people feared the Lord and put their trust in Him and in Moses His servant.*"

*Then Crash! Old Pharaoh thought he could get a piece of the action and God waited until the whole army was below sea level and let them have it! He protected his people with a level of drama that Hollywood has never captured or matched!*

One more thought - did you notice that the Passover event that we read about yesterday was a foreshadowing of the cross - the atoning blood of Jesus. The red sea event reminds us of baptism - going in the water and out. When a person responds to the work of the cross, the appropriate response is baptism and then they become a part of a new community called the church. Just like the people of Israel became a new community - a nation - in the wake of the Red Sea. Pretty amazing how God sets these things up, eh?

This has been Mark Ashton reminding you that God's Word is an amazing compilation of his history with people. They remind us that his plans blow our mind. The depths of his Word can never be fully known... but let's keep trying! Peace be with you.