



## Exodus - Chapter Fourteen

- I. Exodus 1:1-18:27 - The Exodus of Israel from Egypt (continues)
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### Summary of Chapter Fourteen

With his heart still hardened, Pharaoh led his army in pursuit of the Israelites, who were encamped on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea. The Israelites saw the Egyptians coming and, in fear of their lives, they cried out to God to rescue them. They also complained to Moses for bringing them out but Moses tried to reassure them that God would fight for them.

God instructed Moses to hold out his hand over the sea so that it parted ahead of the Israelites so they could cross over in safety with the Angel of God standing between them and the Egyptian charioteers. He clogged the wheels of the chariots, throwing the pursuers into disarray.

Once the Israelites had reached dry ground on the other side, God instructed Moses to hold out his hand over the sea once more and it closed over the Egyptians, killing all of them. God had once again saved his people.

### I.d.xi.9 Exodus 14:1-25 - Crossing the Red Sea

With statements that echo his words to Moses before the plagues, the Lord indicates that the coming events are governed by his power and purposes. Although the Lord tells Moses that he will gain glory over Pharaoh, he does not tell him just how Israel will be delivered.

Between the time of the plagues in Egypt and the journey to Sinai, the most amazing events at the Red Sea, where God allows the waters to be parted for the

Israelites to cross to safety, show Moses as a maturing leader who trusts the word of the Lord, as they also illustrate Israel’s need to do the same.

<sup>1</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses: <sup>2</sup> ‘Tell the Israelites to turn back and camp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-zephon; you shall camp opposite it, by the sea.

Exodus 14:1-2

Tell the Israelites to turn back and camp in front of Pi-hahiroth. It would appear that it was in God’s plan to set a trap for Pharaoh and his army, and that the coming destruction was part of the lesson to be learned that God is sovereign and will protect his people.

The body of water that Israel is about to cross is called ‘the Red Sea’ in 13:18 and 15:4, but is referred to simply as the sea in this section. The exact route of the exodus is uncertain, but it is likely that they crossed the Red Sea at its narrower, northern end.



**Proposed Route for the Exodus**

Among the many theories regarding the route of the exodus, the traditional route to Jebel Musa is considered by many scholars to be the most plausible. Beginning at Rameses, the Israelites journeyed to Succoth, but these two sites are the only ones on the route identified with certainty. From there they travelled to Etham and Pi-hahiroth, where they crossed the Red Sea. From there they travelled to Marah, Elim, Rephidim, and finally Mount Sinai.

Much recent research has proposed an alternative route for the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, one that sets Mount Sinai in the Arabian Peninsula instead of the Sinai Peninsula. This alternative route puts the crossing at the Red Sea's Gulf of Aqaba, instead of at the Bitter Lakes, the Port of Suez, or the Gulf of Suez. At the Gulf of Aqaba, crossings have been suggested at the northern tip (at Ezion Geber), in the middle (at Nuweiba Beach), or at the southern end (at the Straits of Tiran).

Migdol is located near the border between Goshen and Shur on the road to Canaan, and was part of the normal trade route between Egypt and the east. Migdol is a city that is referenced elsewhere in Scripture, including confirmation of this journey: <<*They set out from Etham, and turned back to Pi-hahiroth, which faces Baal-zephon; and they camped before Migdol*>> (Numbers 33:7), and in later prophecies: <<*The word that came to Jeremiah for all the Judæans living in the land of Egypt, at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, at Memphis, and in the land of Pathros, Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: You yourselves have seen all the disaster that I have brought on Jerusalem and on all the towns of Judah. Look at them; today they are a desolation, without an inhabitant in them, because of the wickedness that they committed, provoking me to anger, in that they went to make offerings and serve other gods that they had not known, neither they, nor you, nor your ancestors*>> (Jeremiah 44:1-3), and: <<*Because you said, 'The Nile is mine, and I made it', therefore, I am against you, and against your channels, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from Migdol to Syene, as far as the border of Ethiopia*>> (Ezekiel 29:9b-10).

<sup>3</sup> Pharaoh will say of the Israelites, 'They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has closed in on them.'<sup>4</sup> I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, so that I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army; and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord. And they did so.'

#### Exodus 14:3-4

They are wandering aimlessly in the land. This was exactly what God wanted Pharaoh to believe. God told Moses to lead Israel in a way that looked confused.

God told Moses and Israel to do something that looked confused because God would gain honour and glory over Pharaoh through it.

The content of this verse is repeated nearly verbatim in the narrative (vv.17-18) and echoes the Lord's words to Moses both before and during the plagues: I will harden Pharaoh's heart, as confirmed by 4:21, 7:3, etc., I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh, as confirmed by 7:16, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, as confirmed by 7:5.

<sup>5</sup> When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the minds of Pharaoh and his officials were changed towards the people, and they said, 'What have we done, letting Israel leave our service?'

#### Exodus 14:5

When the Egyptians refer to letting Israel go by saying "What have we done, letting Israel leave our service?" they exhibit the hardness of heart that the Lord said he would bring about. It seems a strange question to ask in light of the ten plagues that have just befallen the nation due to Pharaoh's resistance and he still had not learned that God is sovereign over him. The question also resembles the way Israel will wrongly attribute their circumstances to Moses in the face of Egypt's pursuit (v.11).

<sup>6</sup> So he had his chariot made ready, and took his army with him; <sup>7</sup> he took six hundred picked chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. <sup>8</sup> The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt and he pursued the Israelites, who were going out boldly. <sup>9</sup> The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, his chariot drivers and his army; they overtook them camped by the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

#### Exodus 14:6-9

The possession of chariots represented a significant advantage in ancient Near Eastern warfare; Egypt was proficient in the use of chariots, as indicated by the distinction of six hundred picked chariots in addition to all the others. Pharaoh was coming out against what appeared to be a wandering and trapped nation with his most prestigious and imposing force.

He pursued the Israelites, who were going out boldly. The idea behind the Hebrew words with boldness or boldly, *ruwn yad*, includes the idea of rebellion against authority, as also seen in: <<*Jeroboam son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, a servant of Solomon, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, rebelled against the king. The following was the reason he rebelled against the king. Solomon built the Millo, and closed up the gap in the wall of the city*

*of his father David*>> (1 Kings 11:26-27). The rebellious nature of Israel was good when it was against Pharaoh and all it stood for; it was bad when it was against the Lord, Moses, and all they stood for. The trouble with most rebels is that they rebel against the wrong things. Yet initially they had confidence in God as they departed the land of their slavery: <<*They set out from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the passover the Israelites went out boldly in the sight of all the Egyptians, while the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the Lord had struck down among them. The Lord executed judgements even against their gods*>> (Numbers 33:3-4), and: <<*The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it*>> (Acts 13:17).

<sup>10</sup> As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the Lord.

#### Exodus 14:10

In great fear the Israelites cried out to the Lord. It made sense for Israel to be afraid. They could see Pharaoh's armies on one side and the Red Sea on the other. They seemed to have had no chance for escape. Yet they knew God could save them: <<*Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress*>> (Psalm 107:6). The reference to Israel seeing Egypt's army and displaying such great fear is thematic for this section. Through the plagues, and continuing on their journey to Sinai, Yahweh calls Israel to fear him over any other nation or battle force.

<sup>11</sup> They said to Moses, 'Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt?'

#### Exodus 14:11

Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Their fear and their cry to the Lord made sense. Yet their words to Moses showed little faith and a loss of confidence in God. No reasonable mind could really think that Moses planned all this to lead the people of Israel to their deaths in the wilderness. Moses said or did nothing that would support such an accusation, but the children of Israel still thought this way.

What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? Note the similar mistake that the Egyptians made with reference to their own actions (v.5). This incident between the people and Moses was prefaced by earlier events: <<*He answered, 'Who made you a ruler and judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed*

*the Egyptian?’ Then Moses was afraid and thought, ‘Surely the thing is known’>> (Exodus 2:14), and: <<They said to them, ‘The Lord look upon you and judge! You have brought us into bad odour with Pharaoh and his officials, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us’>> (Exodus 5:21), and also prefigures those to come: <<And the people complained against Moses, saying, ‘What shall we drink?’>> (Exodus 15:24), <<The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness>> (Exodus 16:2), <<But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, ‘Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?’>> (Exodus 17:3).*

<sup>12</sup> Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, “Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians”? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.’

### Exodus 14:12

Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians. Israel was not yet a week out of Egypt and they already distorted the past, thinking that it was better for them in Egypt than it really was.

When the people of Israel say, ‘For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness,’ they are viewing their circumstances without reference to the fact that the Lord himself brought them to this place. As revealed throughout Israel’s history, the Lord is merciful in never leaving his people simply to themselves or to their circumstances. As both Daniel and his three friends will later assert: <<*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defence to you in this matter. If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up’>> (Daniel 3:16-18), and: <<Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open towards Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously>> (Daniel 6:10), whatever the Lord calls his people to face as a result of fearing him is in fact better than simply remaining alive.*

<sup>13</sup> But Moses said to the people, ‘Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. <sup>14</sup> The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still.’

## Exodus 14:13-14

Do not be afraid. Israel is being called once again not to fear any other nation or circumstance but to fear the Lord. At this point, Moses had no idea how God would help them in the situation. All he knew was God certainly would help. In a sense, Moses knew he was in such a bad situation that God had to come through.

This is one of many such statements by God, Jesus or their agents which indicate how God wishes to reassure his people that he is there to protect them and not harm them. For example: <<After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, 'Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great'>> (Genesis 15:1), <<And that very night the Lord appeared to him and said, 'I am the God of your father Abraham; do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you and make your offspring numerous for my servant Abraham's sake'>> (Genesis 26:24), <<But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine>> (Isaiah 43:1), <<Yet now take courage, O Zerubbabel, says the Lord; take courage, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; take courage, all you people of the land, says the Lord; work, for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts, according to the promise that I made you when you came out of Egypt. My spirit abides among you; do not fear>> (Haggai 2:4-5), <<But he said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid'>> (John 6:20). God told Abram this because he was afraid, and afraid for good reasons. Yet God also gave him a reason to put away his fear. The lesson had been learned by the Patriarchs and Moses knew this, so he could now stand before the Israelites as an agent of God and proclaim this same confident message. God never tells people 'do not be afraid' without giving them a reason to put away their fear.

Stand firm. Moses told the people of Israel to stop. This is often the Lord's direction to the believer in a time of crisis. Despair will cast them down, keeping them from standing. Fear will tell them to retreat. Impatience will tell them to do something now. Presumption will tell them to jump into the Red Sea before it is parted. Yet, just as God told Israel, he often tells those who believe in him to simply keep still as he reveals his plan: <<Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth>> (Psalm 46:10). God knows who he is and those who believe in him can trust in that alone.

See the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today. Moses did not know what God would do. Yet he knew what the result would be. He knew that God would save his people and that the enemies of the Lord would be destroyed. He could say to Israel the Lord will fight for you.

The Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. The idea behind this implies much more than at a first glance. Moses perhaps spoke in terms of eternity as well as their present time.

<sup>15</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward. <sup>16</sup> But you lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the Israelites may go into the sea on dry ground. <sup>17</sup> Then I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and so I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army, his chariots, and his chariot drivers. <sup>18</sup> And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gained glory for myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his chariot drivers.’

### Exodus 14:15-18

Why do you cry out to me? Before the people, Moses was full of faith; before God he cried out in desperate prayer. This was good because Moses had to show confidence before the nation to encourage their faith. There is a time to pray, and a time to act. It can actually be against God’s will to stop doing what needs to be done and to only pray in a particular situation. This was a time for action, and Moses could pray along the way.

Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand. These were simple instructions connected to a mighty miracle. In the same manner, the greatest miracle of salvation happens with simple actions on a believer’s part. Just as the staff of Moses did not actually perform the miracle, so too believers does not save themselves by what they do, but they do connect with God’s saving miracle.

References to the Lord getting glory over Pharaoh (v.4) come on either side of the statement: the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord. Although the plagues have continually revealed that the Lord and not Pharaoh is due honour, the victory over Pharaoh’s chariots in the Red Sea will be known powerfully in Egypt and throughout the surrounding nations, as also seen in: <<*But this is why I have let you live: to show you my power, and to make my name resound through all the earth*>> (Exodus 9:16), and: <<*The peoples heard, they trembled; pangs seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; trembling seized the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away. Terror and dread fell upon them; by the might of your arm, they became still as a stone until your people, O Lord, passed by, until the people whom you acquired passed by*>> (Exodus 15:14-16). Rahab would later give an account of how the name of the Lord and his deeds impacted on those who were Israel’s enemies: <<*Before they went to sleep, she came up to them on the roof and said to the men: ‘I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that dread of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt in*

*fear before you. 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 that were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. As soon as we heard it, our hearts failed, and there was no courage left in any of us because of you. The Lord your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below>> (Joshua 2:8-11).*

<sup>19</sup> The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. <sup>20</sup> It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

#### Exodus 14:19-20

The angel of God. Where the angel of the Lord appears in the OT, he is often described as acting or speaking in a manner that suggests he is more than simply an angel or messenger and that he is closely identified with God himself: <<*For he said, 'Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely'; and he became their saviour in all their distress. It was no messenger or angel but his presence that saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old>> (Isaiah 63:8-9).*

The angel of God; moved and went behind them. If it was not the Lord himself then he sent both a specially commissioned angel and the pillar of cloud (13:21-22) as a barrier between Israel and the pursuing Egyptian army. God protected Israel from the Egyptian attack until a way was made through the Red Sea.

It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. The Egyptians did not know it, but the same pillar that prevented their pursuit of Israel also protected their lives, at least for a while. If they had submitted to the Lord who blocked their way with his presence, they probably would have been spared their coming destruction.

<sup>21</sup> Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. <sup>22</sup> The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

#### Exodus 14:21-22

The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. Some believe this is simply an ancient legend and did not actually happen. However, modern research has

demonstrated that it was completely plausible, according to a Los Angeles Times article by Thomas H. Maugh titled 'Research Supports Bible's Account of Red Sea Parting' (14/3/1992).

Sophisticated computer calculations indicate that the biblical parting of the Red Sea, said to have allowed Moses and the Israelites to escape from bondage in Egypt, could have occurred precisely as the Bible describes it. Because of the peculiar geography of the northern end of the Red Sea, researchers report a moderate wind blowing constantly for about 10 hours could have caused the sea to recede about a mile and the water level to drop 10 feet, leaving dry land in the area where many biblical scholars believe the crossing occurred.

It is important to note that this research does not prove that the crossing of the Red Sea happened at any particular place speculated on in the research; only that natural phenomenon exists, which God may have used to part the waters and allow Israel an exit from the Egyptian army. Even if God had used a natural phenomenon, it was still a great miracle because of the timing involved.

The waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. Psalm 77:16-20 gives more detail in the description of the course of events during the Red Sea crossing. It poetically describes how it rained, thundered, and struck lightning at the crossing of the Red Sea. The image of the waters as a wall is a vivid indication of the protection given by the water on each side, as also seen in: <<*Yet the men were very good to us, and we suffered no harm, and we never missed anything when we were in the fields, as long as we were with them; they were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep*>> (1 Samuel 25:15-16), <<*And I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you, for I am with you to save you and deliver you, says the Lord*>> (Jeremiah 15:20). The text presents the event as a demonstration of the Lord's 'great power' (v.31) including how <<*The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers*>> (v.28). Thus the text is clear that this is not a purely natural event. Similar events will take place when Joshua leads Israel across the Jordan into the land of Canaan (Joshua 3:14-17), when Elijah and Elisha cross the Jordan together on the way to Elijah being taken (2 Kings 2:8), and when Elisha returns across the Jordan alone (2 Kings 2:14).

<sup>23</sup> The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. <sup>24</sup> At the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. <sup>25</sup> He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, 'Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt.'

## Exodus 14:23-25

He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. God miraculously worked on the side of Israel against the Egyptians. He troubled the army of the Egyptians until Israel had crossed over the Red Sea. Only then did he allow the Egyptian army to continue their pursuit through the parted waters. God would cause similar panic among those who would oppose his people, such as: <<*And the Lord threw them into a panic before Israel, who inflicted a great slaughter on them at Gibeon, chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah*>> (Joshua 10:10), and: <<*Then panic struck the whole army – those in the camp and field, and those in the outposts and raiding parties – and the ground shook. It was a panic sent by God*>> (1 Samuel 14:15 NIV).

## I.d.xi.10 Exodus 14:26-31 - The Pursuers Drowned

Once the Israelites were safely on the eastern side of the Red Sea, God instructed Moses to stretch out his staff again over the sea, which immediately returned to its normal state, trapping and drowning the entire Egyptian army. This scene caused all Israel to show reverential fear for God as they should.

<sup>26</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers.’ <sup>27</sup> So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. <sup>28</sup> The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. <sup>29</sup> But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

## Exodus 14:26-29

So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. It is God who controls the forces of nature but here he uses a human agent as the catalyst for his actions.

The Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. Although some also regard this as simply an ancient legend, modern research again shows it is completely possible. Thomas H. Maugh continued in his Los Angeles Times article: ‘An abrupt change in the wind would have allowed the waters to come crashing back into the area in a few moments, a phenomenon that the Bible says inundated the Israelites’ pursuers.’ However, those who know God, also know that he has the power to

perform such miracles without the use of natural phenomenon. Either way, the timing was perfect and his promise was fulfilled.

**Not one of them remained.** The deliverance at the Red Sea became a turning point in Israel's history. In this era they had many troubles ahead but Pharaoh and the Egyptians never troubled them again. This would not be the only time that God would allow an entire army to be destroyed: *<<And the Lord threw Sisera and all his chariots and all his army into a panic before Barak; Sisera got down from his chariot and fled away on foot, while Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Harosheth-ha-goiim. All the army of Sisera fell by the sword; no one was left>>* (Judges 4:15-16).

<sup>30</sup> Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. <sup>31</sup> Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

#### **Exodus 14:30-31**

**Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.** God delivered Israel in seemingly impossible circumstances. He demonstrated his faithfulness to Israel and to all his people.

**So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.** Since the Lord had chosen Moses as the one through whom he would reveal his word, it is necessary for Israel to learn to follow Moses as a consequence of learning to fear the Lord. Although Moses is one of the most revered men in their entire history, many Jews failed to fully understand what it was he taught them and therefore failed to recognise their Messiah when he appeared to them: *<<Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. I do not accept glory from human beings. But I know that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?>>* (John 5:40-47).