THE MIRACLE OF THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA

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THE MIRACLE OF THE SEA CROSSING

In this study today, we come to the great deliverance of the enslaved Jews from Egypt, where they had been in servitude and bondage for generations. God led Moses, now in his 80's, to return from exile to lead them to freedom. God sent ten horrendous plagues into Egypt to force the belligerent Pharaoh to acknowledge Him and let the people go. The last of those plagues was the Death Angel. Only those people who had the blood of a lamb on the doorposts of their home were spared his deadly strike. Even the Pharaoh lost his son.

The Egyptian people had given the Jews money, jewels and possessions as they left the land of the Nile. Now God tells the freed Israelites He expects something from them:

Exodus 13:1-3

[2] Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.

[3] And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten.

A multitude of Jews now left the land of pyramids, Sphinx and Nile on what would become a lengthy journey to the Promised Land. The first born in Egypt had died by the strike of the Death Angel. The gods of Egypt demanded the first born in families there to serve them; now God claims the first born of Israel as His own. Why? Because God always requires our very best, the prime of our lives, not the residue.

The great evangelist Billy Sunday told of being with William Wrigley, the chewing gum magnate. Wrigley was a strong Christian who told Sunday that he had made it a practice in his life to give the Lord a tenth of everything he had made - but not the LAST tenth. He said he gave the Lord the first tenth of his earnings. And God prospered him. I have had people say that after they pay all their bills, they don't have enough money left to tithe. Why would we not give God the FIRST of our income? The first-fruit, as the Bible calls it. God should come first in our lives, not last. Our giving is generally a reflection of our feelings about God. If He is the "last thing" we think of, then that's the way we respond. But in all things, God should be first!
In our over six decades of marriage, we have made tithing to the Lord the first check we write. We do this for these reasons:

- It is God’s money, not mine. All of it. He requires only the tithe, the tenth. He is our priority and so that comes first in our giving.
- It is the way the Church is financially underwritten.
- We tithe because we love God and would not knowingly disobey Him.
- We can live better on the 90% as a believer than a non-believer can live on the full 100%.
- The tithe is only the first of our giving to the Lord.
- God’s claim on the best of our lives is still in effect. We remember what King David said to Araunah: “I will not give to God that which costs me nothing.” (2 Samuel 24:24)

THE TRIP TO THE HOLY LAND BEGINS

Exodus 13:17-18  (New Living Bible)

When Pharaoh finally let the people go, God did not lead them on the road that runs through Philistine territory, even though that was the shortest way from Egypt to the Promised Land. God said, "If the people are faced with a battle, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." [18] So God led them along a route through the wilderness toward the Red Sea, and the Israelites left Egypt like a marching army.

One has to wonder why God did not allow the Israelites to go directly toward the Promised Land. There were reasons:

1. If they took that route, it would take them close to Philistine country (along the southern coast of what we know today as Israel). These people had arrived on the coast not long before from Crete after the Santorini tsunami had obliterated their island and the Minoan civilization. A war would certainly have ensued and the Jews were not prepared for it.

2. But... couldn’t God have provided a miracle to give the Israelites victory? Yes, and He has done that numerous times. But there was a lot of “pruning” to be done before the people could enter Canaan, the Promised Land.

HARNESSED

On line 23 of this page, I have quoted the New Living Bible. The King James has this
line:  (Exodus 13:18) But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.

That word “harnessed” means they left Egypt in an orderly and organized way. Egypt is a “type” of the old sinful life. Christ’s followers leave the old life; the leaving group is the Church. As was the case of Egypt, we are to be organized (harnessed), too. The church cannot be dealt with in a “slip-shod” way. Satan is very organized in his efforts to destroy the people so how much more should the church be organized to save them?

JOSEPH

It had been because of Joseph that the Jews were in Egypt in the first place. When he had interpreted the Pharaoh’s dreams all those long, long decades earlier, the Egyptian leader in his gratitude and respect for Joseph, responded: Genesis 45:17-20 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; [18] And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. [19] Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. [20] Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours.

Joseph lived a long time, but made a request of his family just before he died: Genesis 50:24-26 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. [25] And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. [26] So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

What a prophecy made by Joseph: (24) “God will surely visit you and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham....” That prophecy was fulfilled several hundred years later under the leadership of Moses and the Exodus.

But Joseph did not want to be buried in Egypt in some pyramid. He knew that Israel was the God-given land to his family the Jews and he wanted to be buried there. His wish was granted: Exodus 13:19 And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you. Joseph wanted no part of him left in Egypt but all of him one day in the Promised Land. What a picture that should be of us
as Christians! What are we leaving behind in Egypt? A pyramid? A stock portfolio? A palace? Or...are we sending everything on ahead to our “Promised Land,” which is Heaven?

HOW THE ISRAELITES WERE GUIDED ACROSS THE DESERT

How did Moses know the way to lead them? To be sure he was familiar with the wilderness clear to Sinai. But he had divine assistance:

Exodus 13:20-22 And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. [21] And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: [22] He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

The cloud not only served as protection for the Israelites but primarily it served as a guide. You and I have a guide, too: the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised, John 16:13

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he
will shew you things to come.

Not only did the traveling Israelites have the protection and guidance of the cloud, God provided direction for these pilgrims in this way:

Numbers 10:2-3 Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps. [3] And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

With several million pilgrims crossing the desert, and Moses without the aid of sound systems or e-mail or whatever, how would he call the people to attention? The trumpets would sound. The church has a “trumpet sound” as well. It is the Word of God! The Bible! It is His voice given us in Scripture. How can you know God’s will if you don’t have the “trumpet?” We have the Holy Spirit and the written WORD to guide us through our wildernesses to the Promised Land!

Chapter Fourteen
TROUBLES ALONG THE WAY

Exodus 14:1-4
And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, [2] Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea. [3] For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. [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.

Leadership in Israel has always been a thorny problem. The late Prime Minister of Israel, American-born Golda Maier, once observed: “How great a leader could Moses have been? He took us to the only place in the Middle East where there’s no oil!”

God certainly masterminded this “escape from Egypt.” He knew the Philistines were aligned to the northeast and the Jews were not able at that time to handle them. He knew the people of Israel, after all the years of bondage, would have been defeated by the Philistines (worst case scenario) and so discouraged they would want to return to Egypt (perhaps the obvious outcome). So God took them a different way.
In God's map-making for our lives, the shortest distance between two objectives is not necessarily a straight line. Don't be discouraged in your progress, Pilgrim, if God shows you a way you were not expecting.

EGYPT ATTACKS!

Exodus 14:5-9 (New Living Bible)

When word reached the king of Egypt that the Israelites were not planning to return to Egypt after three days, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds.
"What have we done, letting all these slaves get away?" they asked. [6] So Pharaoh called out his troops and led the chase in his chariot. [7] He took with him six hundred of Egypt's best chariots, along with the rest of the chariots of Egypt, each with a commander. [8] The Lord continued to strengthen Pharaoh's resolve, and he chased after the people of Israel who had escaped so defiantly. [9] All the forces in Pharaoh's army—all his horses, chariots, and charioteers—were used in the chase. The Egyptians caught up with the people of Israel as they were camped beside the shore near Pi-hahiroth, across from Baal-zephon. (We do not know the exact locations of these places.)
Scripture mentions “three days” several times in this epic story of deliverance. In the
days of Moses, travelers (walking or riding animals) would have required three days,
traveling east from Cairo (Memphis) to leave Egyptian territory.

One of the places sometimes mentioned as the locale of the Jewish escape across the
Red Sea is the sea shore resort of Nuweiba. On the previous page (6) there is a
picture of the beach at Nuweiba. That body of water, part of the Red Sea, is also
known as the Gulf of Aqaba. We have spent time at Nuweiba. Looking across the
water, we could see the shoreline of Saudi Arabia. Is this the place where the Jews
crossed the sea? The actual clearing on the beach could have accommodated a
multitude of people. And the surrounding mountains would have been a natural
defense against the approaching Egyptian army. If this is the place, then Mount Sinai
would be in Saudi. There is a lot of debate about this location. It is alleged that a
chariot wheels have been found in the depths of the water there. Critics scoff and
allege they were only coral formations.

No one knows for sure where the Israelites crossed the sea. We only know that they did
cross it - as Scripture affirms. Can you even imagine the panic on the part of the average
Israelite as they saw the sea ahead of them and the rampaging Egyptian army behind
them? On either side of them were the mountains and the desert. It did not matter
where they looked, there was danger – unless....unless they looked UP! That’s where
their salvation would originate!

Exodus 14:10-14

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. [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? [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.

[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. [14] The Lord shall fight for you,
and ye shall hold your peace.

FEAR almost kept the Israelites from freedom. Listen to their pathetic moans: “We
should have just stayed in Egypt!” “We told Moses to leave us alone there.” “We were
much better off in Egypt than we are way out here!” “We’re gonna die out in this wasteland - or the Egyptians will kill us!”

Moses responded, “Fear not! Stand still! See the salvation from the Lord! After today we will not see the enemy again!”

How many of us today never see the promises of God because of fear? Yet the Bible promises: 1 John 4:18 **There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear:** because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. What a reminder: FEAR TORMENTS US! But God’s love casts out fear.

Throughout the New Testament, the Holy Spirit reminds us of victory over fear: 1 Peter 1:5-7 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. [6] Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: [7] That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: “The trial of your faith....” What a rejection of teaching that we never have trials as Christians. Of course, we do. But those trials lead to victory through Christ.

James 1:2-6 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; [3] Knowing this, that the **trying of your faith worketh patience.** [4] But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. [5] If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. [6] But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

What is our response to trials? Exodus 14:15 And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: Every victory in life comes through Christ and His promises to us. You can stand still, cowering in fear, and never see victory – or....you can go forward.

Exodus 14:21-31

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. [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.

[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. [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, [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. [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. [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. [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. [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. [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. [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.

What a victory! At last the people of Abraham are free from bondage and on their way to the Promised Land. What would it require - another month? Two months? Alas! No, it took another forty years. Despite all they had witnessed and experienced, their faith was weak. Many of them rebelled against God and Moses. So many died! Among the men of Israel, Joshua and Caleb reached their destination but many others did not.

We will begin to study that pilgrimage across the wilderness, around the Dead Sea, when next we meet.