

### Israel Trapped at the Red Sea

#### Exodus 14:1-20

In this first half of Exodus 14, the children of Israel were trapped between the Red Sea and Pharaoh's army, which was chasing after them. Moses told them to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.

Exodus 14:1-20 – *“Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>2</sup> ‘Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea. <sup>3</sup> For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, ‘They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.’ <sup>4</sup> Then I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.” And they did so.*

*<sup>5</sup> Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people; and they said, “Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?” <sup>6</sup> So he made ready his chariot and took his people with him. <sup>7</sup> Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them. <sup>8</sup> And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness. <sup>9</sup> So the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon.*

*<sup>10</sup> And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Then they said to Moses, “Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? <sup>12</sup> Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, ‘Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.”*

*<sup>13</sup> And Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. <sup>14</sup> The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” <sup>15</sup> And the Lord said to Moses, “Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward. <sup>16</sup> But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. <sup>17</sup> And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen. <sup>18</sup> Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.”*

*<sup>19</sup> And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them. <sup>20</sup> So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all*

that night. <sup>30</sup> So the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. <sup>31</sup> Thus Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt; so the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.”

## Background Notes

Exodus 12 is the account of the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt. Exodus 12:51, “*And it came to pass, on that very same day, that the LORD brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt according to their armies.*” At the end of chapter 13, we saw that the Lord was going before Israel in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to lead them and guide them. Exodus 13:20-22, “*So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness. And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night.*” <sup>22</sup> He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people.”

In chapter 14 we learned that God led His people to camp by the Red Sea. When Pharaoh heard about this, he was convinced that they were wandering aimlessly in the wilderness - that they didn't know what they were doing or where they were going. He thought that they were sitting ducks for his army. So, Pharaoh sent out his army with 600 choice chariots and other chariots with military captains to capture the Hebrew slaves that had escaped from Egypt. Chariots, by the way, were the tanks of ancient warfare, and they certainly gave the Egyptians superior military strength. Humanly speaking!

But Pharaoh didn't realize that the Hebrews were not wandering aimlessly in the wilderness! God was guiding them specifically with His pillar of cloud and pillar of fire. In fact, God's pillar of cloud and fire not only led the children of Israel – it protected them as well. “*And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all that night*” (v19-20).

The “Angel of God” here is not just any angel, but **THE** Angel of God - that is, God Himself. So the Lord guided His people, and He guarded His people as well. And the Lord does the same for His people today. He leads us and He protects us. He guides us and He guards us.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Sometimes the Lord tells His people to turn back.

*“Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea.”*

We know that the Lord was guiding His people specifically by the pillar of cloud and fire, but when He had them turn back and they were trapped between Migdol and the Red Sea, it certainly appeared that God didn't know what He was doing. But from the rest of the story we see that God purposely led them to turn back so Pharaoh would think that they didn't know what they were doing, and they could easily be trapped.

Why would God do such a thing? Well, we know the answer, don't we? God planned to show His power and deliver His people through the great miracle of the parting of the Red Sea - and to knock off the enemy at the same time. *“But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen. Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen (v16-18).”* God had a reason and a purpose for telling His people to turn back and camp between Migdol and the Sea.

The same is true today. Has the Lord ever turned you back from where He has already led you? I remember when the Lord turned us back from a new church plant that we had planned, and prayed about, and believed was the Lord's direction. But the Lord turned us back. He was opening other doors of ministry that He wanted us to enter - but we didn't know it at the time.

Just because the Lord tells you at times to turn back from where you believe He has led you does not mean that the Lord wasn't guiding you. This is true for churches and ministries, as well as for individual believers. This does not happen all the time, but sometimes the Lord tells His people to turn back.

### 2. Sometimes the Lord tells His people to stand still.

The threat of the Egyptian army not only caused Israel to fear and cry out to the Lord, but to complain as well. How often do we do the same thing? Do we fear, complain, and cry out to the Lord at the same time? The people of Israel said to the Lord, *“Were there no graves in Egypt, that have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt?”* Egypt was known for its many tombs and graves, so this complaint was bitter sarcasm.

What was Moses' response? Verse 13, *“Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD.”* In other words, stop complaining! Give the Lord a chance! Hang in there. Don't despair. Be tough. Stand by and wait for the Lord to act. He hasn't forgotten you and He hasn't lost His power. Just stand still and see the salvation of the Lord!

Sometimes the Lord has to tell us the same thing. We get anxious and antsy and think that the Lord has lost His power, or doesn't care about us. And we complain. What does the Lord would say to us? The same thing that He told Moses to say: *"Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord!"* Sometimes the Lord wants us to wait and see how He will act on our behalf.

Recently it seemed that our ministry was facing a financial problem - but we didn't panic. We stood still - and we saw the salvation and deliverance of the Lord! Sometimes, the Lord tells His people to stand still.

## **2. Sometimes the Lord tells His people to stop pleading.**

That doctrinal point doesn't sound too biblical, does it? But look at verse 15: *"And the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward."* The Living Bible paraphrases this verse, *"Quit praying and get the people moving."* In other words, the Lord said, 'Moses, now is not the time to be pleading and crying out to me. I told you what I am going to do. Your job is to get the people moving forward!' Sometimes, the Lord tells His people to stop pleading.

We see the same message in Joshua 7, after Israel's defeat at Ai. Joshua was pleading and crying out to the Lord, and the Lord told him, *"Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? Israel has sinned, and they have transgressed My covenant which I commanded them"* (Joshua 7:10-11). In other words, 'Stop pleading, Joshua! Get moving! Deal with the sin!'

Certainly there are times and places for pleading before the Lord and crying out to Him. But when the Lord opens the doors or tells us what to do, He expects us to act. Sometimes the Lord tells His people to stop pleading.

## **Practical Application**

### **Be quiet when you feel trapped!**

*"The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."*

Israel was trapped between the Red Sea and the Egyptian army that was closing in on them. Talk about being trapped "between a rock and a hard place"!

Do you ever feel trapped? Problems on every side, no place to turn, and all hope has vanished? What do we generally do at times like that? We cry, we complain, we blame others - and we may even blame God.

What should we do when we feel trapped? Be quiet. Hold our peace. Verse 14 could be translated, *"The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent. Shut up."* Quit the complaining and doubting and mouthing off. What a lesson for us! Be quiet when you feel trapped.