

# THE SALVATION OF THE LORD

## EXODUS 14

The march out of Egypt continued with instructions for the site of the next camp.

Exodus 14:1–2      <sup>1</sup>Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Tell the sons of Israel to turn back and camp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea [יָם]; you shall camp in front of Baal-zephon, opposite it, by the sea.

This is a bit of a surprising development. The course they were originally on would have sent them into the eastern border control checkpoints manned by the Egyptian army. This turned them in a southwesterly direction which would result in this sea blocking the way east into the Sinai. The exact location of these places is not known. Subsequent revelation will show this was part of God's divine plan for guiding the Israelites out of Egypt, for destroying a large part of Pharaoh's army, and for proving His divine identity one last time to the Egyptians. Yahweh was setting a trap and Pharaoh would fall right into it.

The location has ramifications for understanding where the crossing of the water took place. Whether or not the “sea” refers to the Red Sea or a lake is open to speculation and no one knows for certain but sea, יָם, could refer to either one.

This change in direction appeared to Pharaoh as though the Israelites were confused and uncertain of the direction they should take.

Exodus 14:3–4      <sup>3</sup>“For Pharaoh will say of the sons of Israel, ‘They are wandering aimlessly [בְּיָדָה] in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.’ <sup>4</sup>“Thus I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored through

Pharaoh and all his army [תַּיִל], and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD." And they did so.

Wandering aimlessly, בִּזְזֵה, means to wander around or to mill about. It refers to linear movement that seems to have no destination with a strong indication of a confused or unplanned movement. God hardened Pharaoh's heart one last time by insuring he would follow his already present murderous inclinations to go after and punish the Israelites the moment he sensed weakness and vulnerability in them. This change in direction seemed to suggest they didn't know what they were doing, that they were confused and disorganized, and a man with a military mind would recognize that in an adversary and want to take advantage of it.

Some theologians believe Pharaoh went after them because he only let them go to worship their God and they hadn't returned (Ex. 10:31-32). However, when we discussed this the first time Moses requested to go into the wilderness to worship, we noted that the nuances of Middle Eastern bargaining terms left no doubt in Pharaoh's mind that a permanent exit was being planned by Moses for the Israelites. That hadn't changed after the ten judgments had been levied against Pharaoh and his nation. If anything, the concept of a permanent exit was reinforced. The whole situation is rather straightforward. Satan had, and still has, an insane hatred for the Jewish people and a burning desire to eliminate them in an effort to thwart God's plan for history and Pharaoh was his willing tool, his man of the hour, to do that. Many men throughout history have been

used by Satan in this role, there are more working to do that today, and there will be one final world figure who will try to eliminate the Jewish people once and for all. Pharaoh wasn't successful, those historical figures who preceded him and succeeded him have not been successful, and those who are yet to come in the future will not be successful.

The end result is that God would continue to be exalted while the Egyptians and their impotent gods were humiliated. Pharaoh, his army, and the citizens of Egypt were going to learn, once and for all time whether they liked it or not, the power and the identity of this God of the Israelites. It is interesting to note that the previous judgments had not specifically targeted the Egyptian army; that was about to change. Yahweh was not only validating Himself to the Egyptians, but He was also showing the Israelites that He was their God and He was not only capable of freeing them but of insuring their safety along the way and beyond into the land of Canaan.

Exodus 14:5–7 <sup>5</sup>When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his servants [עֲבָדָיו] had a change of heart toward the people, and they said, “What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?” <sup>6</sup>So he made his chariot ready and took his people [עַמּוֹ] with him; <sup>7</sup>and he took six hundred select [בְּחֹרֵר] chariots, and all the *other* chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them.

Pharaoh and his court suddenly realized their slave labor force was gone and they had work they wanted done—work that was apparently beneath the dignity of the Egyptians to do for themselves. One of the reasons the Egyptians enslaved the Israelites was their fear the Hebrews would join forces with an en-

emy of Egypt and turn on them (Ex. 1:10). That fear may have returned now that their slaves were leaving Egypt. Once they realized what they had done by letting the Israelites go, Pharaoh's court was probably quite eager to see their vaunted, experienced army destroy this seemingly disorganized gaggle of ex-slaves and return the survivors to bondage. The Israelites were not trained, experienced soldiers. We already know God did not want to take them out of Egypt and into Canaan on the most direct route because that would have led them into combat, and at that point in their history, they would have folded and retreated back into Egypt to avoid combat (Ex. 13:17). The people, עַם, Pharaoh took with him suggests that some civilians accompanied the armed force. Why this would be the situation is unknown, their identity is not clearly specified, and they are not mentioned again. Perhaps the people blamed the Israelites for the destruction of their nation and wanted revenge. Some theologians believe this refers to his army (see HCSB, RSV, and NET Bible), but there is a word for army, חֵיָל, that could have been used as it was in Exodus 14:4. Servants refers to the royal court. עֲבָדָה, translated "servants" in the NASB and most other translations, may be better translated "officials" (HCSB) or "courtiers" (TANAKH) because the context suggests the royal court is in view rather than bond slaves or servants. The word may mean either one and context here suggests the royal court.

There may have been a religious reason for this change of mind as well. Pagan gods were thought to come and go as they pleased according to no rhyme or reason. They were undisciplined and could act erratically, unpredicta-

bly, and viciously. Pharaoh may have decided his gods were simply absent when Yahweh was judging his nation and the seemingly confused behavior of the Israelites was a sign to him that his gods had returned to support him. Also, Pharaoh may have thought God had left the Israelites on their own just as his gods had left him on his own as evidenced by their seemingly confused march out of Egypt, and they were now vulnerable. This is supposition, of course, but we can't discount the influence of these pagan gods on their thinking.

The Bible provides a hint of the concept that pagan gods could go away and leave their subjects on their own when Elijah mocked the priests of Baal by suggesting their god was away or asleep and therefore unavailable to them.

1 Kings 18:26–27 <sup>26</sup>Then they took the ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, “O Baal, answer us.” But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made. <sup>27</sup>It came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, “Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened.”

Pharaoh prepared to lead his troops against the Israelites. Chariots were the ultimate implement of warfare at that time in history, and he mobilized a unit of chariots that must have been his premier fighting unit six hundred chariots strong. Select, *בְּחִירָה*, means the best, finest, or choice. It pertains to that which is the best of a class or kind. That apparently wasn't enough, however, because he also mobilized all the chariot units in the area that could be quickly mobilized.

Exodus 14:8–9      <sup>8</sup>The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he chased after the sons of Israel as the sons of Israel were going out boldly [בָּרָא [רָמָה]]. <sup>9</sup>Then the Egyptians chased after them *with* all the horses *and* chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen [פָּרָשׁ] and his army, and they overtook them camping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

Pharaoh also mobilized infantry units, his army, as well which would have been standard operating procedure because chariots and infantrymen worked together as a cohesive fighting unit. This was no small force. According to historians, Egypt did not have cavalry units at this time and the word horsemen refers to the men who handled and drove the horses pulling the chariots, the chariot-eers. To my mind, the word “horsemen” makes it sound like they had cavalry and since they had horses, it isn’t unreasonable to suppose they used them as cavalry mounts and other, later, biblical accounts use the word in that way. For example, the HCSB translates the word as “cavalry” in 2 Samuel 1:6. The word translated horsemen, פָּרָשׁ, also means horse and rider. Some lexicons say it means horsemen and cavalry while others claim it only refers to the men who handle the horses. It isn’t that hard to figure out that horses could be used in more than one way as effective tools in combat and the Egyptians were good at conducting effective warfare. Historians are insistent they did not have cavalry so it is entirely possible that “horsemen” refers to those who train, care for, and drive the horses.

Pharaoh began his pursuit of the Israelites not only with his chariots but also with his infantrymen and his cavalry if they, in fact, had cavalry units which seems to be debatable and doubtful. We don’t know how much of his overall fighting forces were committed to the pursuit, but it wasn’t a small number in-

cluding what was apparently nearly all of his chariot forces in the immediate area. Egypt's armed forces would take some period of time to recover from this judgment. History proves they were able to effectively wage war after this incident.

The Israelites went out boldly, *בְּיָד רָמָה*, literally meaning “with hand being boldly lifted.” It wouldn't take long before that attitude of boldness or confidence would turn into terror at the sight of the Egyptian army. After all the miraculous works of God they observed on their behalf in Egypt, they should have been confident; however, the Israelites would prove to be a more than a bit fickle in their attitude towards God and His work on their behalf. We have no idea of the time interval from leaving Goshen to arriving at this point in their history, but it wasn't very long.

One thing to keep in mind is that the specific geographical locations are all unknown; no one knows the exact location of any of these places. One map will show one location and another map will show a different location for the same place. A lot of theologians will write as though they have these locations all figured out, but they don't.

The response of the Israelites was the response of unbelief, or at least doubt. Remember, these people had just seen some of the most incredible, powerful, miraculous works the world has ever seen, and their faith in Yahweh's ability to deliver them seemingly dissolved at the first hint of trouble.

Exodus 14:10–12 <sup>10</sup>As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD. <sup>11</sup>Then they said to Moses, “Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? <sup>12</sup>“Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.”

The Israelites hadn't been removed from bondage for more than a few days and at the first sign of physical danger they were crying out to God and rebelling against Moses. They accused Moses of taking them out of Egypt against their will, but is there any basis for such a charge? To this point in the narrative, there has not been one word of revelation to suggest the Israelites wanted to stay in Egypt as Pharaoh's slaves. It is the opposite; they wanted deliverance from the burden of slavery. Yahweh addressed this issue in His call to Moses as He commissioned him to go back to Egypt and be His prophet to not only the Israelites, but to Pharaoh and his nation.

Exodus 3:7–9 <sup>7</sup>The LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. <sup>8</sup>“So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. <sup>9</sup>“Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them.

It is correct to say the Israelites condemned Moses when Pharaoh refused to let the people go and increased the burden of their labor, but that is a far cry from expressing a desire to remain slaves (Ex. 5:4-21). It is also correct to say they



had believed and worshiped when Moses and Aaron first explained to them that God heard them and was going to rescue them (Ex. 4:31).

The example of the Israelites panicking at the very first sign of trouble is disturbing, particularly considering the works of God they had personally witnessed only days before. This emphasis on the present situation is somewhat understandable because we live in the present. However, we should also learn from the past and as believers we should understand we have an incredibly amazing future no matter our present circumstances. That was true then and that is true today. We have the incredible advantage of possessing the completed canon of Scripture. We know who we were as fallen people with a sin nature before coming to faith. We know God to the extent He has revealed Himself to us, including the wealth of knowledge available to us in the Exodus story. We know His plan for history and His plan of salvation—justification, sanctification, and glorification. Because of that, we should be living our lives with a biblical worldview looking to an eternal future secure in the promises of God. The Israelites didn't have all the knowledge we have now, but they had enough knowledge to avoid rebelling against God and His prophet at the first hint of trouble in their lives.

I also don't want to second guess the fear the predicament they were in generated; most of us would be quite frightened when faced with the same situation. They were a bunch of newly freed slaves and suddenly they were confronted with one of the most powerful armies in the ancient world bent on doing

them harm and returning them to bondage. Also, in their defense, they did cry out to Yahweh for deliverance while at the same time abusing Moses with their anger. Despite all that, God was going to perform another amazing work in their presence and deliver them from this danger. The Exodus account will bear witness to the fact they continued to have a hard time exercising faith. Despite all the knowledge of God we have today, we probably aren't so very different from the Israelites, either.

The next verse contains a wonderful command: "stand by and see the salvation of the Lord."

Exodus 14:13–14 <sup>13</sup>But Moses said to the people, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation [יְשׁוּעָה] of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. <sup>14</sup>"The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent."

Moses, the leader that he was, took control of the situation and told them to stand by and watch the deliverance of the Lord unfold before their very eyes. The people's faith wavered, but Moses' faith did not. In this case, the salvation, יְשׁוּעָה, is the physical deliverance of the Israelites from harm and enslavement at the hands of Pharaoh. This is not a reference to justification salvation; Exodus 4:31 already revealed the Israelites believed God. In this case, the salvation spoken of is at the hands of God for physical deliverance from harm. The Israelites were not commanded to fight the Egyptians; they were commanded to stand by and see their deliverance at the hand of Yahweh who would fight the Egyp-

tians on their behalf. At the end of it all, the Lord promised them they would never see the Egyptians again.

At this point, the crossing of the sea is about to commence. Exodus 13:19 revealed that God led the Israelites to the Red Sea, יַם סוּף, the Sea of Reeds. Reeds probably refers to papyrus. Interestingly, in Exodus 14, this body of water is always referred to as the “sea” rather than the Sea of Reeds. This has led many theologians to claim the water crossing must not have been a miraculous act of God, but simply a journey through the marshy area north of the Gulf of Suez called the Sea of Reeds. The problem is the Old Testament refers to the northern Red Sea as the Sea of Reeds including the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqaba both of which are salt water and have no reeds although they may have had reeds on the shoreline in places.

Numbers 33:10–11 <sup>10</sup>They journeyed from Elim and camped by the Red Sea [יַם סוּף]. <sup>11</sup>They journeyed from the Red Sea [יַם סוּף] and camped in the wilderness of Sin.

1 Kings 9:26 <sup>26</sup>King Solomon also built a fleet of ships in Ezion-geber, which is near Elath on the shore of the Red Sea [יַם סוּף], in the land of Edom.

The New Testament twice refers to the crossing as the Red Sea.

Acts 7:36 <sup>36</sup>“This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea [Ἐρυθρᾷ Θαλάσσει] and in the wilderness for forty years.

Hebrews 11:29 <sup>29</sup>By faith they passed through the Red Sea [Ἐρυθρᾷ Θαλάσσει] as though *they were passing* through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.

The Hebrew text actually reads "Sea of Reeds" and not the Red Sea, but Elim is next to the Gulf of Suez and Ezion-geber is at the north end of the Gulf of Aqaba where the modern Israeli city of Elat is located. While the Hebrew text actually says "Sea of Reeds," it is referring to the whole northern area of the Red Sea.

There are probably three possible locations for this crossing: Lake Timsah, Great Bitter Lake, and the north end of the Gulf of Suez. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* claims these two lakes are large, deep bodies of water that could have been the crossing site. Many dispensationalists believe the crossing must have been north of the Gulf of Suez in order to go into the wilderness of Shur, AKA the wilderness of Etham, (Ex. 15:22).

Biblical skeptics have to find an alternate explanation for the crossing. One claims they crossed Lake Timsah which is shallow, no more than three feet deep, and waded across. The Egyptians subsequently charged into the water after the Israelites and got their chariots stuck in the mud.<sup>1</sup> Not only does this theory conflict with the biblical description of the crossing, but we have already noted the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* claims it is a deep lake.

Skeptics question why the Israelites stopped at a body of water when they could have marched around all of it. The skeptical answer is the Egyptians tricked them into being trapped by the water. The real answer is they stopped at this place simply because God led them to a place where they would seem-

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<sup>1</sup> As reported by Colin J. Humphreys, in *The Miracles of Exodus: A Scientist's Discovery of the Extraordinary Natural Causes of the Biblical Stories* (New York: Harper One, 2003), 187.

ingly be trapped by this water in order to glorify the Lord by means of their deliverance and the destruction of the Egyptian army (Ex. 14:4, 17).

A rationalist scientist named Humphreys claims the crossing had to be at the Gulf of Aqaba because that is the only place where the high mountains could funnel an east wind down the Gulf, which is not an unknown natural phenomenon, and push back the water so the Israelites could cross, a process that would take many hours to pile up the water. Once they got across, the wind stopped and the water flowed back to its place and drowned the Egyptians. The reason they could cross with water on both sides is due to the exposure of a ridge in the midst of the waters they could walk across.<sup>2</sup>

Others claim the strong east wind coupled with a very low ebb tide cause the water to part. Still others claim it was the result of tsunami after a volcanic eruption although there is no record of one at the time of the Exodus and tsunamis are too brief for the Israelites to have crossed during one.

None of these claims are compatible with the biblical revelation. The water was parted far too quickly for natural forces to have caused it and the ground was immediately dry which is a process that would otherwise take days or weeks. Even the natural phenomenon that does occur when a strong wind can cause the water to pile up in one direction takes a long time and it could not have moved the water to the extent that a lane was created with a wall of water on each side. Crossing on shallow, marshy ground is directly contradicted

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<sup>2</sup> Colin J. Humphreys, in *The Miracles of Exodus: A Scientist's Discovery of the Extraordinary Natural Causes of the Biblical Stories* (New York: Harper One, 2003), 244-260.

by the Bible and shallow water could not have drowned the Egyptian army. Besides that, the word for sea, יָם, does not mean a marsh or shallow area of water; it means a large, deep body of water. The Egyptians may have gotten stuck in the mud in shallow water, but they wouldn't have drowned in shallow water the Israelites were able to walk across.

The biblical facts are that God provided a supernatural wind to part the waters and cause them to stand on either side of a passageway of dry ground, supernaturally dried, that allowed the Israelites to pass from one side of this body of water to the other. Whatever this wind was, it was not an impediment to their ability to walk across. Once the Israelites safely crossed, the Lord allowed the Egyptians to enter that dry path. Once they were in it, he caused them problems to keep them in it and allow time for all of Pharaoh's fighting forces to enter it. When that happened, He removed the power that held the waters in place so they returned to their normal position and drowned the Egyptians. If the Bible is allowed to speak for itself as the result of employing a literal hermeneutic, it need be no more complicated than that in order to properly understand the water crossing. The Psalmist perfectly described what happened and he proves the Israelites certainly had no doubt about what happened:

Psalm 74:13 <sup>13</sup>You divided the sea by Your strength...

Psalm 78:13 <sup>13</sup>He divided the sea and caused them to pass through, And He made the waters stand up like a heap.

Psalm 106:9 <sup>9</sup>Thus He rebuked the Red Sea and it dried up, And He led them through the deeps, as through the wilderness.

Concerning the identity of the body of water that was crossed by the Israelites, its identity is less an issue than the fact it happened. Whether it was the Great Bitter Lake or Lake Timsah or the north end of the Red Sea in the Gulf of Suez, does not matter. What does matter is God placed them in a position with their backs against a body of water where they needed Him to deliver them from destruction and He did that by supernaturally parting those waters to allow them safe passage on dry ground to the other side. The water had to be deep enough and wide enough they could never have crossed without His intervention because they couldn't wade it or swim it. It also had to be deep enough and wide enough to allow Pharaoh's pursuing army to enter it and be drowned when the water was released over them. While the parting of the water and the drying of the ground seem to us to be so far outside the realm of possibility that we can't imagine how that could possibly be accomplished, the Creator God of the universe has no problem performing these miraculous feats. After all, creating the universe was so simple a task for Him, the Psalmist said it was merely the work of His fingers (Ps. 8:3).

Exodus 14:15–18 <sup>15</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward. <sup>16</sup>“As for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land. <sup>17</sup>“As for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. <sup>18</sup>“Then the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD, when I am honored through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen.”

The waters did not begin to part until Moses lifted up his staff over them. Moses didn't part the waters, God parted them, but Moses was the symbol of God's power in his capacity as God's prophet so it may have looked like Moses parted the waters, but he really didn't. Once the waters were parted by means of a strong, east wind, the Israelites were able to cross the sea on dry ground. They would not have to wade through any water or slog through the mud, they would have a highway through the waters on which they could safely walk across. Then the Lord insured the Egyptians followed the Israelites into the water to their destruction so He would be glorified because the Egyptian people would be forced to confront His identity as the one true God of the universe.

The Lord then moved to protect the Israelites from the Egyptians while the they were crossing between the walls of water.

Exodus 14:19–20 <sup>19</sup>The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. <sup>20</sup>So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night.

The angel of God had been going before the Israelites in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Ex. 13:21). At this point, He moved behind them to provide a protective barrier between the Israelites and the Egyptians and it kept the Egyptian army from pursuing the Israelites as they crossed the sea. God was not just a guide for the Israelites, He was the protector/defender of them as well. Whether or not the angel of God is a theophany of the preincarnate Messiah or an angel sent to act in His stead is not known, however, the



connection between Yahweh and the pillar of cloud and fire is unmistakable. In Exodus 13:21, it was revealed that Yahweh was going before them in the form of a pillar as a cloud by day and fire by night. In Exodus 40:38, the cloud of Yahweh was on the Tabernacle. In Numbers 12:5, Yahweh came down in a pillar of cloud at the tent of meeting and in Deuteronomy 31:15, Yahweh appeared in the tent of meeting in a cloud. In Numbers 9:15-23, the cloud covered the Tabernacle without the claim it was the personification of Yahweh, the association between the two seems to be undeniable. Overall, the preponderance of biblical evidence covering the period of time of the Exodus concerning Yahweh and the cloud suggests it was a manifestation of Yahweh and therefore a theophany, but I wouldn't get dogmatic about it.

This pillar kept the Egyptians in the dark but gave its light to the Israelites. The darkness put upon the Egyptian army was probably the state of complete darkness that one of the previous judgments imposed on Egypt. There was something about this barrier that kept the Egyptians from continuing to pursue the Israelites that night. Whether it was simply the darkness or some form of physical or spiritual barrier that kept the Egyptians in place, they could not come near the Hebrews as they escaped through the passage the Lord provided in the sea.

Concerning the pillar of fire, the man who authored the Ipuwer Papyrus apparently thought the Egyptian gods had returned to take up the Egyptian cause and destroy the Israelites.

“Behold, the fire has mounted up on high. Its burning goes forth against the enemies of the land” (Isa. 63:1).

This Egyptian man obviously misunderstood the source and the purpose of the pillar of fire!

Moses lifted his staff, Yahweh rolled back the waters, and the Israelites crossed over the sea.

Exodus 14:21–22 <sup>21</sup>Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD swept the sea *back* by a strong east wind [רוּחַ] all night and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided. <sup>22</sup>The sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters were *like* a wall [חוֹמָה] to them on their right hand and on their left.

This text might make it sound like the wind blew all night and then the Israelites crossed, but that isn't the case. Moses lifted his staff, God immediately parted the waters and dried the ground, and they crossed that night. We will note in a moment that the Egyptians went after them on the morning watch which was the period of time from about 3:00 AM until sunrise. This supernatural wind separated the waters and kept them that way until the Lord released them onto the Egyptians the next morning.

The waters were like a wall on either side of them as they crossed. Wall, חוֹמָה, refers to a barrier around a city of a height suitable for protecting that city from invaders. A city wall was not something that could simply be hurdled or stepped over; it was meant to keep people out. This wall of water was a substantial barrier on either side of them much like a city wall was a barrier.

Exodus 14:23–25 <sup>23</sup>Then the Egyptians took up the pursuit, and all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen went in after them into the midst of the sea. <sup>24</sup>At the morning watch, the LORD looked down on the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and brought the army of the Egyptians into confusion. <sup>25</sup>He caused their chariot wheels to swerve, and He made them drive with difficulty; so the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from Israel, for the LORD is fighting for them against the Egyptians."

Once the Israelites were either completely across the sea, the divinely imposed barrier keeping the Egyptian army at bay was lifted and Pharaoh's army pursued the Israelites by entering the sea between the walls of water just as the Israelites had done. They obviously did not understand the God who delivered the Israelites safely through the sea while keeping the Egyptian army from them, was not going to let the Hebrews be killed or captured after all that divine intervention.

As noted, the morning watch was the time period from about 3:00 AM until sunrise; it covered the final hours of darkness. This was the time the Egyptians began what they thought was their final assault on the escaping Hebrew slaves. Once into the slot, they began having trouble with their chariots. There is no rational explanation for this and the Egyptian soldiers knew it. The wheels of their chariots began doing things so strange they knew Yahweh was intervening in the lives of the Israelites in order to prevent their recapture. They wanted to flee and save themselves, but they were unable to do so. We know the ten judgments were not specifically imposed on the armed forces of Egypt, but they had to suffer under them in the same way their fellow citizens suffered and they certainly knew about the destruction levied against Egypt by the God of the He-

brews; therefore, they knew Yahweh was fighting for the Israelites. That just happens to be exactly what Moses told the people would happen in Exodus 14:14, “The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent.” The Egyptians knew enough about this Hebrew God that they wanted to flee, but the Lord’s work in disabling their chariots kept them in the kill zone so they would drown in the sea water when it was released. The bottom line is they entered the trap and it was about to be sprung.

Exodus 14:26–29 <sup>26</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and their horsemen.” <sup>27</sup>So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state at daybreak, while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it; then the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. <sup>28</sup>The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh’s entire army that had gone into the sea after them; not even one of them remained. <sup>29</sup>But the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea, and the waters were *like* a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

When Moses lifted his staff back over the waters, the Lord caused them to return to their place and drowned the Egyptian army—the entire army. This took place at daybreak. The collapse of the walls of water must have been sudden and catastrophically chaotic. There would have been no chance to swim in these violently churning, twisting, moving waters even if they had been close enough to shore to swim back. No one who experienced this could have possibly survived it. As near as I can tell, Pharaoh himself was not drowned in the sea.

The evening before the Lord parted the waters, dried the ground, and the Israelites passed through to the other side. The next morning the divine barrier was lifted, the Egyptians were drawn into the sea, and drowned. How much of

Pharaoh's army was lost we don't know, but it must have been substantial. We do know he took all of his chariots (Ex. 14:7) which were the most potent part of his army, and he took much of his infantry as well (Ex. 14:9).

Exodus 14:30–31 <sup>30</sup>Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. <sup>31</sup>When Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses.

Yahweh's deliverance not only served to further validate His identity to the Egyptians, but it also further impacted the faith of the Israelites. They believed in the Lord. This is the second time that fact is recorded in the book of Exodus. The first time was recorded in Exodus 4:31 after Moses and Aaron first spoke to the Israelites, performed the signs in their presence, and told them the words of the Lord promising to deliver them from bondage. This last sign, the miraculous crossing of the sea and the defeat of Pharaoh's army confirmed their belief. This same generation would prove to be unfaithful and they were temporally disciplined for their unfaithfulness by dying without entering Canaan. Many theologians claim this proves the wilderness generation of Israelites was unsaved, but that is not what the text reveals. Instead, this highlights the difference between justification and sanctification and helps us understand the difference between those two tenses of the salvation process. The fact they believed, meaning they were justified, did not prevent the imposition of temporal discipline, death in the wilderness, for their subsequently unfaithful walk which is their sanctification. It also did not mean they forfeited the eternal life that was granted them the mo-

ment they believed. They remained saved even though they were temporally disciplined for their disobedience concerning entering the land God promised them.

Numbers 14:20-23 proves they were saved but temporally disciplined for their unfaithful walk.

Numbers 14:20–23 <sup>20</sup>So the LORD said, “I have pardoned *them* according to your word; <sup>21</sup>but indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the LORD. <sup>22</sup>“Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, <sup>23</sup>shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it.

Only those who have believed in the Lord have their personal sins pardoned which is a fellowship issue and not a justification issue. The Israelites believed in Yahweh and were eternally saved, but their rebellion against Him as saved people resulted in the forfeiture of their physical lives and the promise of entry into the land.

These are powerful arguments for Free Grace Theology and for the distinction between justification and sanctification.