
EXODUS 14:1 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

The Israelites are commanded to encamp before Pi-hahiroth, Exo 14:1, Exo 14:2. God predicts the pursuit of Pharaoh, Exo 14:3, Exo 14:4. Pharaoh is informed that the Israelites are fled, and regrets that he suffered them to depart, Exo 14:5. He musters his troops and pursues them, Exo 14:6-8. Overtakes them in their encampment by the Red Sea, Exo 14:9. The Israelites are terrified at his approach, Exo 14:10. They murmur against Moses for leading them out, Exo 14:11, Exo 14:12. Moses encourages them, and assures them of deliverance, Exo 14:13, Exo 14:14. God commands the Israelites to advance, and Moses to stretch out his rod over the sea that it might be divided, Exo 14:15, Exo 14:16; and promises utterly to discomfit the Egyptians, Exo 14:17, Exo 14:18. The angel of God places himself between the Israelites and the Egyptians, Exo 14:19. The pillar of the cloud becomes darkness to the Egyptians, while it gives light to the Israelites, Exo 14:20. Moses stretches out his rod, and a strong east wind blows, and the waters are divided, Exo 14:21. The Israelites enter and walk on dry ground, Exo 14:22. The Egyptians enter also in pursuit of the Israelites, Exo 14:23. The Lord looks out of the pillar of cloud on the Egyptians, terrifies them, and disjoints their chariots, Exo 14:24, Exo 14:25. Moses is commanded to stretch forth his rod over the waters, that they may return to their former bed, Exo 14:26. He does so, and the whole Egyptian army is overwhelmed, Exo 14:27, Exo 14:28, while every Israelite escapes, Exo 14:29. Being thus saved from the hand of their adversaries, they acknowledge the power of God, and credit the mission of Moses, Exo 14:30, Exo 14:31.

EXODUS 14:2 "Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn back and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, before Baal Zephon. You shall encamp opposite it by the sea.

Verse 2

Encamp before Pi-hahiroth - פי ההירת pi hachiroth, the mouth, strait, or bay of Chiroth. Between Migdol, מגדל migdol, the tower, probably a fortress that served to defend the bay. Over against Baal-zephon, בעל צפן baal tsephon, the lord or master of the watch, probably an idol temple, where a continual guard, watch, or light was kept up for the defense of one part of the haven, or as a guide to ships. Dr. Shaw thinks that chiroth may denote the valley which extended itself from the wilderness of Etham to the Red Sea, and that the part in which the Israelites encamped was called Pi-hachiroth, i.e., the mouth or bay of Chiroth. See his Travels, p. 310, and his account at the end of Exodus.

EXODUS 14:3 Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, 'They are entangled in the land. The wilderness has shut them in.'

Verse 3

They are entangled in the land - God himself brought them into straits from which no human power or art could extricate them. Consider their situation when once brought out of the open country,

where alone they had room either to fight or fly. Now they had the Red Sea before them, Pharaoh and his host behind them, and on their right and left hand fortresses of the Egyptians to prevent their escape; nor had they one boat or transport prepared for their passage! If they be now saved, the arm of the Lord must be seen, and the vanity and nullity of the Egyptian idols be demonstrated. By bringing them into such a situation he took from them all hope of human help, and gave their adversaries every advantage against them, so that they themselves said, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.

EXODUS 14:4 I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will follow after them; and I will get honour over Pharaoh, and over all his armies; and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD." They did so.

Verse 4

I will harden Pharaoh's heart - After relenting and giving them permission to depart, he now changes his mind and determines to prevent them; and without any farther restraining grace, God permits him to rush on to his final ruin, for the cup of his iniquity was now full.

EXODUS 14:5 It was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled; and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was changed towards the people, and they said, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?"

Verse 5

And it was told the king - that the people fled - Of their departure he could not be ignorant, because himself had given them liberty to depart: but the word fled here may be understood as implying that they had utterly left Egypt without any intention to return, which is probably what he did not expect, for he had only given them permission to go three days' journey into the wilderness, in order to sacrifice to Jehovah; but from the circumstances of their departure, and the property they had got from the Egyptians, it was taken for granted that they had no design to return; and this was in all likelihood the consideration that weighed most with this avaricious king, and determined him to pursue, and either recover the spoil or bring them back, or both. Thus the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we let Israel go from serving us? Here was the grand incentive to pursuit; their service was profitable to the state, and they were determined not to give it up.

EXODUS 14:6 He prepared his chariot, and took his army with him;

EXODUS 14:7 and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over all of them.

Verse 7

Six hundred chosen chariots, etc. - According to the most authentic accounts we have of war-chariots, they were frequently drawn by two or by four horses, and carried three persons: one was charioteer, whose business it was to guide the horses, but he seldom fought; the second chiefly defended the charioteer; and the third alone was properly the combatant. It appears that in this case Pharaoh had collected all the cavalry of Egypt; (see Exo 14:17); and though these might not have been very numerous, yet, humanly speaking, they might easily overcome the unarmed and encumbered Israelites, who could not be supposed to be able to make any resistance against cavalry and war-chariots.

EXODUS 14:8 The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel; for the children of Israel went out with a high hand.

EXODUS 14:9 The Egyptians pursued after them: all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen, and his army; and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baal Zephon.

EXODUS 14:10 When Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them; and they were very afraid. The children of Israel cried out to the LORD.

Verse 10

The children of Israel cried out unto the Lord - Had their prayer been accompanied with faith, we should not have found them in the next verses murmuring against Moses, or rather against the Lord, through whose goodness they were now brought from under that bondage from which they had often cried for deliverance. Calmet thinks that the most pious and judicious cried unto God, while the unthinking and irreligious murmured against Moses.

EXODUS 14:11 They said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you treated us this way, to bring us out of Egypt?"

EXODUS 14:12 Isn't this the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians?' For it were better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness."

EXODUS 14:13 Moses said to the people, "Don't be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today: for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you shall never see them again.

Verse 13

Moses said - Fear ye not - This exhortation was not given to excite them to resist, for of that there was no hope; they were unarmed, they had no courage, and their minds were deplorably degraded.

Stand still - Ye shall not be even workers together with God; only be quiet, and do not render yourselves wretched by your fears and your confusion.

See the salvation of the Lord - Behold the deliverance which God will work, independently of all human help and means.

Ye shall see them again no more - Here was strong faith, but this was accompanied by the spirit of prophecy. God showed Moses what he would do, he believed, and therefore he spoke in the encouraging manner related above.

EXODUS 14:14 The LORD will fight for you, and you shall be still."

Verse 14

The Lord shall fight for you - Ye shall have no part in the honor of the day; God alone shall bring you off, and defeat your foes.

Ye shall hold your peace - Your unbelieving fears and clamours shall be confounded, and ye shall see that by might none shall be able to prevail against the Lord, and that the feeblest shall take the prey when the power of Jehovah is exerted.

EXODUS 14:15 The LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward.

Verse 15

Wherefore criest thou unto me? - We hear not one word of Moses' praying, and yet here the Lord asks him why he cries unto him? From which we may learn that the heart of Moses was deeply engaged with God, though it is probable he did not articulate one word; but the language of sighs, tears, and desires is equally intelligible to God with that of words. This consideration should be a strong encouragement to every feeble, discouraged mind: Thou canst not pray, but thou canst weep; if even tears are denied thee, (for there may be deep and genuine repentance, where the distress is so great as to stop up those channels of relief), then thou canst sigh; and God, whose Spirit has thus convinced thee of sin, righteousness, and judgment, knows thy unutterable groanings, and reads the inexpressible wish of thy burdened soul, a wish of which himself is the author, and which he has breathed into thy heart with the purpose to satisfy it.

EXODUS 14:16 Lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go into the midst of the sea on dry ground.

Verse 16

Lift thou up thy rod - Neither Moses nor his rod could be any effective instrument in a work which could be accomplished only by the omnipotence of God; but it was necessary that he should appear in it, in order that he might have credit in the sight of the Israelites, and that they might see that God had chosen him to be the instrument of their deliverance.

EXODUS 14:17 Behold, I myself will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall go in after them: and I will get myself honour over Pharaoh, and over all his armies, over his chariots, and over his horsemen.

EXODUS 14:18 The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten myself honour over Pharaoh, over his chariots, and over his horsemen.”

Verse 18

Shall know that I am the Lord - Pharaoh had just recovered from the consternation and confusion with which the late plagues had overwhelmed him, and now he is emboldened to pursue after Israel; and God is determined to make his overthrow so signal by such an exertion of omnipotence, that he shall get himself honor by this miraculous act, and that the Egyptians shall know, i.e., acknowledge, that he is Jehovah, the omnipotent, self-existing, eternal God.

EXODUS 14:19 The angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them, and stood behind them.

Verse 19

The angel of God - It has been thought by some that the angel, i.e., messenger, of the Lord, and the pillar of cloud, mean here the same thing. An angel might assume the appearance of a cloud; and even a material cloud thus particularly appointed might be called an angel or messenger of the Lord, for such is the literal import of the word מלאך malach, an angel. It is however most probable that the Angel of the covenant, the Lord Jesus, appeared on this occasion in behalf of the people; for as this deliverance was to be an illustrious type of the deliverance of man from the power and guilt of sin by his incarnation and death, it might have been deemed necessary, in the judgment of Divine wisdom, that he should appear chief agent in this most important and momentous crisis. On the word angel, and Angel of the covenant, See Clarke's note on Gen 16:7; See Clarke's note on Gen 18:13; and See Clarke's note on Exo 3:2.

EXODUS 14:20 It came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud and the darkness, yet gave it light by night: and the one didn't come near the other all the night.

Verse 20

It was a cloud and darkness to them, etc. - That the Israelites might not be dismayed at the appearance of their enemies, and that these might not be able to discern the object of their pursuit, the pillar of cloud moved from the front to the rear of the Israelitish camp, so as perfectly to separate between them and the Egyptians. It appears also that this cloud had two sides, one dark and the other luminous: the luminous side gave light to the whole camp of Israel during the night of passage; and the dark side, turned towards the pursuing Egyptians, prevented them from receiving

any benefit from that light. How easily can God make the same thing an instrument of destruction or salvation, as seems best to his godly wisdom! He alone can work by all agents, and produce any kind of effect even by the same instrument; for all things serve the purposes of his will.

EXODUS 14:21 Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

Verse 21

The Lord caused the sea to go back - That part of the sea over which the Israelites passed was, according to Mr. Bruce and other travelers, about four leagues across, and therefore might easily be crossed in one night. In the dividing of the sea two agents appear to be employed, though the effect produced can be attributed to neither. By stretching out the rod the waters were divided; by the blowing of the vehement, ardent, east wind, the bed of the sea was dried. It has been observed, that in the place where the Israelites are supposed to have passed, the water is about fourteen fathoms or twenty-eight yards deep: had the wind mentioned here been strong enough, naturally speaking, to have divided the waters, it must have blown in one narrow track, and continued blowing in the direction in which the Israelites passed; and a wind sufficient to have raised a mass of water twenty-eight yards deep and twelve miles in length, out of its bed, would necessarily have blown the whole six hundred thousand men away, and utterly destroyed them and their cattle. I therefore conclude that the east wind, which was ever remarked as a parching, burning wind, was used after the division of the waters, merely to dry the bottom, and render it passable. For an account of the hot drying winds in the east, See Clarke's note on Gen 8:1. God ever puts the highest honor on his instrument, Nature; and where it can act, he ever employs it. No natural agent could divide these waters, and cause them to stand as a wall upon the right hand and upon the left; therefore God did it by his own sovereign power. When the waters were thus divided, there was no need of a miracle to dry the bed of the sea and make it passable; therefore the strong desiccating east wind was brought, which soon accomplished this object. In this light I suppose the text should be understood.

EXODUS 14:22 The children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand, and on their left.

Verse 22

And the waters were a wall unto them on their right and on their left - This verse demonstrates that the passage was miraculous. Some have supposed that the Israelites had passed through, favored by an extraordinary ebb, which happened at that time to be produced by a strong wind, which happened just then to blow! Had this been the case, there could not have been waters standing on the right hand and on the left; much less could those waters, contrary to every law of fluids, have stood as a wall on either side while the Israelites passed through, and then happen to become obedient to the laws of gravitation when the Egyptians entered in! An infidel may deny the revelation in toto, and from such we expect nothing better; but to hear those who profess to believe this to be a Divine revelation endeavoring to prove that the passage of the Red Sea had nothing

miraculous in it, is really intolerable. Such a mode of interpretation requires a miracle to make itself credible. Poor infidelity! how miserable and despicable are thy shifts!

EXODUS 14:23 The Egyptians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea: all of Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

EXODUS 14:24 In the morning watch, the LORD looked out on the Egyptian army through the pillar of fire and of cloud, and confused the Egyptian army.

Verse 24

The morning watch - A watch was the fourth part of the time from sun-setting to sun-rising; so called from soldiers keeping guard by night, who being changed four times during the night, the periods came to be called watches. - Dodd.

As here and in 1Sam 11:11 is mentioned the morning watch; so in Lam 2:19, the beginning of the watches; and in Jdg 7:19, the middle watch is spoken of; in Luk 12:38, the second and third watch; and in Mat 14:25, the fourth watch of the night; which in Mar 13:35 are named evening, midnight, cock-crowing, and day-dawning - Ainsworth.

As the Israelites went out of Egypt at the vernal equinox, the morning watch, or, according to the Hebrew, באשמרת הבקר beashmoreth habboker, the watch of day-break, would answer to our four o'clock in the morning - Calmet.

The Lord looked unto - This probably means that the cloud suddenly assumed a fiery appearance where it had been dark before; or they were appalled by violent thunders and lightning, which we are assured by the psalmist did actually take place, together with great inundations of rain, etc.: The clouds Poured Out Water; the skies sent out a Sound: thine Arrows also went abroad. The Voice of thy Thunder was in the heaven; the Lightnings Lightened the world; the earth Trembled and Shook. Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters. Thou leddest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron; Psa 77:17-20. Such tempests as these would necessarily terrify the Egyptian horses, and produce general confusion. By their dashing hither and thither the wheels must be destroyed, and the chariots broken; and foot and horse must be mingled together in one universal ruin; see Exo 14:25. During the time that this state of horror and confusion was at its summit the Israelites had safely passed over; and then Moses, at the command of God, (Exo 14:26), having stretched out his rod over the waters, the sea returned to its strength; (Exo 14:27); i.e., the waters by their natural gravity resumed their level, and the whole Egyptian host were completely overwhelmed, Exo 14:28. But as to the Israelites, the waters had been a wall unto them on the right hand and on the left, Exo 14:29. This the waters could not have been, unless they had been supernaturally supported; as their own gravity would necessarily have occasioned them to have kept their level, or, if raised beyond it, to have regained it if left to their natural law, to which they are ever subject, unless in cases of miraculous interference. Thus the enemies of the Lord perished; and that people who decreed that the male children of the Hebrews should be drowned, were themselves destroyed in the pit which they had destined for others. God's ways are all equal; and he renders to every man according to his works.

EXODUS 14:25 He took off their chariot wheels, and they drove them heavily; so that the Egyptians said, "Let's flee from the face of Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians!"

EXODUS 14:26 The LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come again on the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen."

EXODUS 14:27 Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it. The LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

EXODUS 14:28 The waters returned, and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even all Pharaoh's army that went in after them into the sea. There remained not so much as one of them.

Verse 28

There remained not so much as one of them - Josephus says that the army of Pharaoh consisted of fifty thousand horse, and two hundred thousand foot, of whom not one remained to carry tidings of this most extraordinary catastrophe.

EXODUS 14:29 But the children of Israel walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand, and on their left.

EXODUS 14:30 Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.

Verse 30

Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore - By the extraordinary agitation of the waters, no doubt multitudes of the dead Egyptians were cast on the shore, and by their spoils the Israelites were probably furnished with considerable riches, and especially clothing and arms; which latter were essentially necessary to them in their wars with the Amalekites, Basanites, and Amorites, etc., on their way to the promised land. If they did not get their arms in this way, we know not how they got them, as there is not the slightest reason to believe that they brought any with them out of Egypt.

EXODUS 14:31 Israel saw the great work which the LORD did to the Egyptians, and the people feared the LORD; and they believed in the LORD, and in his servant Moses.

Verse 31

The people feared the Lord - They were convinced by the interference of Jehovah that his power was unlimited, and that he could do whatsoever he pleased, both in the way of judgment and in the way of mercy.

And believed the Lord, and his servant Moses - They now clearly discerned that God had fulfilled all his promises; and that not one thing had failed of all the good which he had spoken concerning

Israel. And they believed his servant Moses - they had now the fullest proof that he was Divinely appointed to work all these miracles, and to bring them out of Egypt into the promised land.

Thus God got himself honor upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and credit in the sight of Israel. After this overthrow of their king and his host, the Egyptians interrupted them no more in the journeyings, convinced of the omnipotence of their Protector: and how strange, that after such displays of the justice and mercy of Jehovah, the Israelites should ever have been deficient in faith, or have given place to murmuring!

1. The events recorded in this chapter are truly astonishing; and they strongly mark what God can do, and what he will do, both against his enemies and in behalf of his followers. In vain are all the forces of Egypt united to destroy the Israelites: at the breath of God's mouth they perish; and his feeble, discouraged, unarmed followers take the prey! With such a history before their eyes, is it not strange that sinners should run on forwardly in the path of transgression; and that those who are redeemed from the world, should ever doubt of the all-sufficiency and goodness of their God! Had we not already known the sequel of the Israelitish history, we should have been led to conclude that this people would have gone on their way rejoicing, trusting in God with their whole heart, and never leaning to their own understanding; but alas! we find that as soon as any new difficulty occurred, they murmured against God and their leaders, despised the pleasant land, and gave no credence to his word.

2. Their case is not a solitary one: most of those who are called Christians are not more remarkable for faith and patience. Every reverse will necessarily pain and discompose the people who are seeking their portion in this life. And it is a sure mark of a worldly mind, when we trust the God of Providence and grace no farther than we see the operations of his hand in our immediate supply; and murmur and repine when the hand of his bounty seems closed, and the influences of his Spirit restrained, though our unthankful and unholy carriage has been the cause of this change. Those alone who humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, shall be lifted up in due season. Reader, thou canst never be deceived in trusting thy all, the concerns of thy body and soul, to Him who divided the sea, saved the Hebrews, and destroyed the Egyptians.