

## Camping with God

Shortly after our youngest daughter was born we went camping. Abbie was born in march, and so like all good parents who wanted to pass on good experiences to their children we took a new born to the mountains in June. The first night the temperatures dropped below freezing, which complicated sleeping as we hung over our baby's crib with a blanket to make sure she was warm.

Typically, my normal camping experience was not a lot of sleep, this time it was no sleep, which left us on the weary side, after a few days. Then when we arrived home Dianne stepped off the edge of our 'converted ups camper' onto uneven ground, and broke her ankle. For some reason my children grew up saying that they loved 'not camping.'

From my mother's side of my heritage Russians don't seem very fond of camping; they say, *"What's so special about living like you're homeless?"*

Maybe it would have been different if we had been *camping with God*.

Exodus 14 takes place just after the children of Israel left Egypt to go camping with God.

17 Now when Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, "The people might change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt."

18 Hence God led the people around by the way of the wilderness to the Red Sea; and the sons of Israel went up in martial array from the land of Egypt.

19 Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones from here with you."

20 Then they set out from Succoth and camped in Etham on the edge of the wilderness.

21 The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.

22 He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people. (Ex 13:17-22)

### 1. Experience and celebrate God's deliverance in your life.

We pick up the story as the children of Israel were allowed by Pharaoh to leave Egypt.

"Now the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years." (Ex. 13:40)

The first task was training Israel concerning the worship of God. During their time in Egypt they had become slaves and endured great hardship under Pharaoh's

rule. God had answered their cries by sending Moses, who as God's instrument had afflicted Egypt with ten plagues over the previous year.

Looking back to the tenth plague, the death of the firstborn, we see that it was the final stroke that shattered all resistance to Israel's departure. Moses had delivered a message to Pharaoh to "Let My people go!" to which he had stubbornly refused until this point. Finally, he allowed them to worship the Lord. (Ex. 12:29-33)

The children of Israel left Egypt and were even paid wages from the people, who were glad to see them go. It seemed as if all was well: Israel was on its way to the Promised Land, being led of the Lord. Israel had a brief time in which all of them obeyed the Lord by circumcising all the males, and then celebrating the Passover.

(Ex. 12:50-51)

Then everything seemed to go downhill; just as Israel was leaving Egypt, God hardened Pharaoh's heart again in order to demonstrate His power.

Ex. 13:17-22

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This is a difficult time: Whys is it that even when people are led by the Lord they encounter great difficulties? (:1-4)

It seems like they were led to a place of extreme vulnerability with no where to run from the Armies of Egypt.

It is also evident by the text that it was God who had hardened Pharaoh's heart against the children of Israel. (:5-9)

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<sup>1</sup> *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update.* (1995). (Ex 13:17–22). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

Now God had led Israel to a place with no way out.

(Ex. 14:1-9)

- 1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
- 2 **“Tell the sons of Israel to turn back and camp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you shall camp in front of Baal-zephon, opposite it, by the sea.**
- 3 “For Pharaoh will say of the sons of Israel, ‘They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.’
- 4 **“Thus I will harden Pharaoh’s heart**, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD.” And they did so.
- 5 When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his servants 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?”
- 6 So he made his chariot ready and took his people with him;
- 7 and he took six hundred select chariots, and all the *other* chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them.
- 8 **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 <sup>b</sup>boldly.
- 9 Then the Egyptians chased after them *with* all the horses *and* chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, <sup>2</sup>and they overtook them camping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.<sup>2</sup>

God was interested in teaching Israel about Himself by their experience of complete deliverance from Egypt – a type if salvation from sin, death, and Satan. How big is your experience of God?

Israel had seen ten plagues against Egypt. They had grown into a vast multitude. (12:37-38)

They also left with the visible presence of the Lord protecting them – a pillar of fire by night and cloud cover by day. Now they were being led into a place where they needed God’s deliverance from Pharaoh’s army. They would see God’s deliverance as they walked on dry ground through the Red Sea, as the Egyptian army pursued them, they would see them be completely destroyed.

Approximately 2 million Israelites were camped at Pi-Hahiroth, behind them was the Red Sea.

Most of the areas where Egyptians expected to fight were flat with hard ground—perfect for chariot warfare. Since the Israelites were still within Egypt proper when they were encamped at Pi-Hahiroth, they must have seemed easy prey for Pharaoh’s chariot-based army. The total number of chariots is not given but must have numbered well over a thousand. The fact that six hundred were “choice” or “first-rate” (*baḥûr*) and that all of the chariots had chariot officers over

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<sup>2</sup> *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*. (1995). (Ex 14:1–9). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

them indicates that the heart of the well-trained, well-equipped army was engaged in pursuit of the Israelites, not merely a small contingent or token force.<sup>3</sup>

### Israel's Attitude in the face of danger

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."<sup>4</sup>

Israel's attitude strangely lacked faith as they faced the battle. It is significant that the Lord recognized their hearts as mentioned in the previous chapter:

"Now when Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, "The people might change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt."  
(Ex. 13:17)

The peoples' response was first to fearfully cry out to God;  
but then they grumbled against Moses.  
In reality they lacked faith and were speaking against God.

In the New Testament God warned us not to be like these people,  
"...let us [not] grumble as some of them did ..." (1 Cor. 10:10)  
– **grumble** – speak in a low discourse, murmur, complain.

Their prayers were faithless -more of a panic, pessimism, and complaining.

"...Were there no graves in Egypt? ... why would you bring us out here to die?"

Negative thinking patterns are hard to lose - "*reconstructed hindsight*".

When hardship is encountered the miserable past suddenly looks like the *good old days*. This is the way most people think of the past when the present seems unbearable.

**Moses' Answer:** Moses knew that God would harden Pharaoh's heart.

Their circumstances: If God doesn't come through...

<sup>3</sup> Stuart, D. K. (2006). *Exodus* (Vol. 2, pp. 333–334). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>4</sup> *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*. (1995). (Ex 14:10–12). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

this will be the shortest prison-break on record.

- 13 But Moses said to the people, “Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation 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.
- 14 “The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent.”

This represents Moses’ finest hour yet in the leadership of Israel. When it seemed certain to all that they would die in the wilderness, it was in fact, when God fights for his people while they are silent.

### **Moses’ D-Day [Deliverance Day] Speech:**

1. Don’t fear
2. God delivers
3. God’s people trust in the Lord
4. God removes the danger.
5. God is a warrior against the forces of evil.

“The Egyptians you see today you will never see again!”

*“Just enjoy the army you see attacking you!”* (break out the popcorn)

### **God speaks to Moses:15-18**

- 15 Then the LORD said to Moses,  
“Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward.

In saying “Tell the Israelites to move on,” God was asking for a breaking of camp, rounding up of animals, packing of belongings, an orderly departure by ranks. All this would take many hours, and, indeed, the remainder of that day and almost the entire evening were used in the process of getting the Israelites out of their encampment and into and across the sea (vv. 19–22).<sup>5</sup>

- 16 “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.

**14:16** Again the staff of God plays an important role in a miracle, symbolizing God’s power and presence and reminding all concerned that it was not Moses but God who performed the supernatural. Again as well, the language of stretching out the hand refers to using the staff. As the staff had affected the Nile in first plague, turning water to blood (esp. 7:17–20), and in the second, producing frogs from the Nile (8:1–15), now it would affect an even greater body of water, the Red Sea, causing it to divide. With God’s words in this

<sup>5</sup> Stuart, D. K. (2006). *Exodus* (Vol. 2, p. 338). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

verse Moses and the Israelites learned how it was that they could escape the Egyptians: they would take the direction they had assumed was the most impossible, away from the Egyptians, right into the ocean. Since nothing is impossible with God (Matt 19:26; Luke 1:37), what they had not been able to imagine as a direction in which to flee was now their escape route.<sup>6</sup>

- 17 “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.
- 18 “Then the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD, when I am honored through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen.”
- 19 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.
- 20 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.

In these verses God shows himself a protector of his people through the pillar, not merely a guide to them. That God should lead his people through the wilderness is important; that he should protect them from harm on the way is equally as important. Once the Israelites could see the Egyptian chariots approaching them, it was only a matter of minutes until they would be overtaken. Something therefore had to prevent the Egyptians from surrounding and reenslaving the Israelites, to allow God’s people the many hours they needed to break camp, form ranks, and cross the Red Sea. The NIV interpretation of v. 20 may be correct, but the verse appears to suffer from ancient copying errors. The Hebrew reads, literally, “It came between the Egyptian camp and the Israelite camp, and the cloud was, and the darkness, and it lit up the night, and neither came near each other all night.” The LXX reads the key portion differently still: “And there was darkness and blackness, and the night passed.”<sup>54</sup> In other words, it is not possible from the state of the received text to be sure if the cloud lit up the night for both sides, gave light to one side and darkness to the other, or simply provided a dark barrier between the two opposing groups. What *is* clear is that it **kept the Egyptians from getting near the Israelites** (and any Israelites from accidentally straying into the Egyptian encampment) and provided the Israelites with all the time they needed to escape into the sea.

- 21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD swept the sea *back* by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided.
- 22 The sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters *were like* a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.
- 23 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.
- 24 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.

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<sup>6</sup> Stuart, D. K. (2006). *Exodus* (Vol. 2, pp. 338–339). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

- 25 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.”

(lit.) “Let us flee from Israel because the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt.”  
 What Moses had promised the people in 14:14 (“the LORD will fight for you”) was apparent even to the enemy.

- 26 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.”  
 27 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.  
 28 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.  
 29 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.  
 30 Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.  
 31 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.

They knew little of who God was, but had seen His mighty acts of deliverance.

It’s so easy to forget. Salvation – Many Deliverances...

Today’s problems erase our memories of yesterday’s victories, of God’s provisions, of how faithful He has been.

Yet God’s faithful provisions in the past are proof that He will more than provide for our futures. So, why do we worry? Why are we afraid? Why do we anticipate our needs in the future as if they are beyond God’s ability to provide?

**End result** of God’s deliverance is a **faithful Fear** and a **Fearless Faith**.

Moses’ Victory Hymn -- Chapter 15 - Time to celebrate!

**Experience and celebrate God’s deliverance in your life**

We might add:

That was some camping trip to remember!