

EXODUS FROM EGYPT

Deliverance from Bondage in Egypt

Exodus 1-14

INTRODUCTION

In Genesis 47:20-35, the text gives us important information. We are told that during the seven-year famine, the Egyptians had to sell their fields and property to buy grain. So, by the end of the famine, Joseph had bought up most of the land in Egypt for Pharaoh. Only the priests did not sell their land, because they were on a fixed income from Pharaoh. Most of the people had become Pharaoh's servants (his serfs), the keepers of his goods and temples. They now worked for him, for the state, for temples or for high-ranking officials.¹

And so, Egyptian society developed into a distinct structural hierarchy, symbolized by a pyramid. The summit of the social order was the royal family: Pharaoh, his royal wife, his mother, and his children. As Pharaoh became the owner of all the lands, quarries, and mines, he became all-powerful. He was the head of the government, the supreme commander of the army, the chief of the priesthood, and the intermediary between the gods and mankind. To govern his kingdom, Pharaoh delegated many of his powers to a small upper class: high officials, generals, military officials, and high priests. The middle class included soldiers, scribes, priests, craftsmen, and artists. The lowest social class included peasant farmers working the fields, animal breeders, fishermen, domestic servants, foreigners, slaves, and prisoners. This social class provided the labour necessary for state projects.

When Jacob and his family arrived in Egypt, they were nomadic animal breeders. As such, they would have normally become part of the lowest class in society. But because they were Joseph's family, they were given a special and privileged status. The Pharaoh invited them to live in the land of Goshen, a fertile region in the northeast Nile Delta not far from the capital city of Avaris. This was an excellent grazing area, well suited to the semi-nomadic life of the Patriarchal families.² As they settled in the land, they eventually built their own homes and towns.

The descendants of Jacob lived their lives peacefully outside the mainstream of Egyptian culture for many years (100-150 years). They were permitted to farm and to breed animals in the Nile Delta, undisturbed by any power struggles of the upper class. For the most part, they kept to themselves. Intermarriages with Egyptians were not common.

¹ Helen Strudwick, *The Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, 390.

² Readers Digest, *Great People of the Bible and How They Lived*, 67.

STUDY AND REFLECTION

The sons of Israel in Egypt (Exodus 1:1-7)

When Jacob arrived in Egypt with his family, they numbered a total of seventy people (Exodus 1:5). The number *seventy*, *seven* times *ten*, conveys the idea of completeness. Both *seven* and *ten* represent completeness, perfection, and order. Thus, the number *seventy* indicates that all of Jacob's descendants had moved to Egypt; and from this small, but complete number, God would create a whole new nation of people that will serve Him as His 'first-born' son.

In the Holy Scriptures, the number *forty* also represents completeness, perfection, and order. Any significant fullness of time is represented by forty days, or forty years, or four hundred years (*ten* times *forty*). Thus, after four hundred years (ten generations) Israel would be complete as a nation. This would be the time for them to depart from Egypt.

It is reported in Exodus 12:37 that after four hundred years, the numbers of Israel grew to 600,000 men, not counting women and children. This would imply a total population of three million. *Is this being idealized?* Yes, it is.

The total population in Egypt at the time of the Exodus (1250 B.C.) was approximately three million people.³ The author is obvious trying to make a statement. "The descendants of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong" (Exodus 1:7). They had become a nation. The Exodus would include not only the present generation, but also future generations. In time, God would raise Israel to the population, power, and status of Egypt itself.

It is believed that the name *Hebrews* was given to the Israelites by the Egyptians.

The sons of Israel are oppressed (Exodus 1:8-22)

Problems for the Israelites (Hebrews) arose sometime when a new Egyptian Pharaoh and dynasty had come into power, and a purge of foreign elements began. With the loss of their privileged status, the Israelites would have been fully integrated into the lowest class of Egyptian society: farmers, animal breeders, fishermen, foreigners, domestic servants, slaves, and prisoners.

In ancient Egypt it was normal for people of the lowest class in society to work for the Pharaoh and his state projects. He owned all the land, and they were his servants (or serfs), but not his slaves. We know, for example, that there were towns or entire cities which accommodated the workers engaged in building the tombs or temples of the pharaohs.

Seeing that the Hebrews had grown in great number and strength, and unsure of their loyalty in times of war, especially against Canaan and Syria, the new Pharaoh hoped to reduce their numbers by imposing upon them more difficult and dangerous tasks: the building of store-cities, the making of mud bricks, and heavy agricultural work

³ Helen Strudwick, *The Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, 365.

in the fields (Ex 1:13). Taskmasters were set over them, who treated them cruelly. Despite the efforts to reduce their numbers by means of hard labour, the Israelites (Hebrews) continued to flourish and multiply (Ex 1:12).

Then, the Pharaoh of Egypt devised a new plan to reduce their numbers. He commanded the midwives to the Hebrews to kill all newborn boys at birth and allow only the girls to live. “But the midwives feared God” (Ex 1:17) and would not do as the king of Egypt commanded them. They let the male children live; and reported that the Hebrew woman were vigorous, delivering their children before the arrival of the midwives.

Finally, Pharaoh gave this command to all his people: “Every son that is born of the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live” (Ex 1:22).

Even though the Israelites (Hebrews) had lived in Egypt for so many generations, the Egyptians continued to treat them as foreigners that could not be trusted. In truth, the Israelites (Hebrews) had become Egyptians. They lived according to Egyptian law, religion, culture, custom, and daily way of life. The only thing that remained was that they still believed in the God of their forefather Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom they worshipped as God Most High, and continued to practice circumcision as a sign of their covenant with Him. At the same time, they also worshipped a pantheon of Egyptian gods.

The early life of Moses in Egypt (Exodus 2)

Moses was born in Egypt. He was the son of Amram and Jochebed (see Ex 6:20; Nm 26:59). Both parents belonged to the tribe of Levi.

At first, the parents hid their son for three months. When they could no longer hide him, Jochebed took the child, placed him in an ark (a basket) covered with bitumen and pitch, and set him afloat on the river Nile, hoping that God in His Providence would take care of him. Note that the word used for “basket” is the same word that used for Noah’s ark in the Book of Genesis (Gen 6:14 – 9, 18). His sister, Miriam, followed at a distance, to see what would happen.

When Pharaoh’s daughter came to the river to bathe, she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to fetch it. When she opened the basket, she saw the baby crying. She knew that this was a Hebrew baby, condemned to death. But being merciful, she decided to keep the child as her own. Seeing her positive response, Miriam then came forward and offered to find a wet nurse for the child (the real mother). Pharaoh’s daughter agreed. After the child had been nursed, he was returned to Pharaoh’s daughter and become her adopted son. She named him *Moses*, which means *drawn from the water*.

Note that water and immersion into water will prove to be an important theme in the Book of Exodus. Keep in mind that the word *to baptize* means *to immerse*. Pharaoh had commanded that all male children be thrown into the river Nile, in other words, *to be immersed* into the river Nile and to be drowned. Moses was immersed into the river Nile, but the ark saves him from death. Later in time, Israel will be immersed into the

sea, but will not be destroyed. They will pass safely, but Pharaoh and his army will be destroyed.

As the son of Pharaoh's daughter by adoption, Moses became a member of the royal household, the highest class of Egyptian society. He would have received a formal education in palace schools, which only a privileged elite could attend. He would have received the highest education of the world at that time, offered only to the sons of senior dignitaries and officials, to royal princes and future kings.

Moses would have become knowledgeable in various important fields: physical and military training, the art of war, politics, moral education, civil law, religion, art, architecture, building construction, economics, literature, astronomy, science, technology, medicine, mathematics, and physics. The Most-High God, in His Divine Providence, was forming a leader for His people.

In time, as an adult, Moses came to know that he was not the natural son of his royal mother, but an adopted Hebrew child. His heart then turns towards the needs of his people who were being oppressed. His life in the highest class of Egyptian society ends when he commits murder. He kills an Egyptian civil servant of the middle class, while defending a Hebrew serf of the lowest class. According to law, his punishment is death.

So ends his early life in Egypt.

How old was Moses when he fled from Egypt? Well, we do not know for sure. In the Book of Exodus, the life of Moses is divided into three periods: his early life in Egypt, his life in Midian, his life as prophet and shepherd of Israel. Each period is represented by forty years. However, the number *forty* is symbolic and should not be taken literally. As Moses leaves Egypt, the first period of his life had come to an end. A new one begins.

So, where should Moses go? At that time, the Egyptian kingdom had expanded to include most of Canaan and Syrian. To evade Egyptian authorities, the only place to escape is to go further west, to the land of Midian, east of the Gulf of Aquba. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham through Ishmael, and therefore distant relatives to the Israelites, the descendants of Isaac. Moses decided to go to the land of Midian, the land of his kinsmen.

The life of Moses in Midian (Exodus 1:15-25)

When Moses arrives in Midian, he comes to a well, very much like the chief servant of his forefather Abraham, and his forefather Jacob. God is leading him to find a wife among his own kinsmen.

While resting by the well, seven women (*seven* represents fullness, completion, order, perfection) come to water their flock, but they are driven away by other shepherds. Moses comes to their defense. His clear sense of justice moves him to help, to defend, and to save the weaker side. He drives away the shepherds and allows the women to water their flock.

The women are the seven daughters of a priest of Midian. They bring Moses to their father, *Reuel*, a man who still worships and serve the one Most-High God of Abraham.

The name *Reuel* means “the friend of God.” By Divine Providence, Moses is led to a priest, a man who is a true friend of God.

Moses agrees to dwell in the house of Reuel, not as a servant or slave, but as an honored guest, and eventually, a son-in-law. Reuel give his daughter, Zipporah, in marriage to Moses. She bears him a son, to whom he gives the name *Gershom*, which means “I am a stranger in a foreign land.” He does this to show his gratitude for the hospitality shown to him as a guest and traveler in a foreign country. Zipporah then gives birth to a second son. Moses names him *Eliezer*, which means, “God is my help.” God has helped him at every moment of his life.

During his time in Midian, Moses receives a second education, one that he would not have received in Egypt. First, from the priest Reuel, he learns about the faith and the religious practices for his forefather, Abraham. Second, he learns what it means to be a good husband and a father to a family. Third, he learns what it means to be a good shepherd, amidst the hardships of grazing flocks in the wilderness, finding shelter, food, and water in unlikely places. This knowledge would save his life and the life of his people more than once, in the future years to come.

Note that in the Holy Scriptures, different names are given to *Reuel*, the father-in-law of Moses. The name *Reuel* means “friend of God.” In the Book of Exodus, he is also called *Jethro* (Ex 3:1; 4:18; 18:1), which means “His excellence, His remnant.” In the Book of Numbers, he is called *Hobab* (Num 10:29), which means “beloved” or “favoured.” In the Book of Judges (1:16; 4:11), he is called *Heber the Kenite*. The name *Heber* means “partner, togetherness”; and the *Kenites* were a nomadic tribe that were closely allied to the Hebrews. This suggests that Reuel (or Jethro) and his family clan may have followed Moses and the Israelites in their journey through the wilderness, as a faithful friend of God, a remnant, an adviser, a partner, and a personal friend of Moses.

The vision of the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-6)

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There he saw the vision of a burning bush. “The bush was burning, yet it was not consumed” (Ex 3:2).

The fire that Moses saw in the bush looked different from ordinary fire, and so Moses was intrigued by it. It was an immaterial or spiritual fire, which revealed the very presence of God. God is divine fire, infinite energy, holy, pure, and ineffable.

When Moses decided to come closer to see this great sight, God called out to him out of the bush: “*Moses, Moses... Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground*” (Ex 3:5).

God is holiness itself and must be approached with deep reverence. Only what is holy purified and consecrated may come into His Presence. Shoes carry dirt or mud. To removed them is to set aside what is unclean. Shoes are also made of leather, i.e. from dead animals and thus they are a symbol of death. God is the Author of the life and the God of the living. He is the Immortal One. Sin and death have no place in His Holy Presence. The removal of his shoes becomes a prophetic moment. In time, in the

mystery of holy Baptism (immersion into water), God will remove from us the garment of skin (a symbol of death), replace it with a garment of light, and allow us once again to live in His Holy Presence in Paradise.

Then God says to Moses: *“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob”* (Ex 3:6). He thereby confirmed that He is the God of the living. He continues to be the personal God of the living and the dead.

The Call of Moses (Exodus 3:7-10)

The Lord God then continues: *“I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians... Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt”* (Ex 3:7-10).

Moses objects. This is the first of four objections. He is not overly excited about this new vocation. He says: *“Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?”* (Ex 3:11). But God assures him, *“I will be with you.”* God will be at his side and will protect him. Moses will lead the people out of Egypt, and bring them to that very mountain, mount Horeb, where they will worship God.

Moses then raises a second objection: He does not know the name of the God who is calling him (Ex 3:13). In a polytheistic culture, the people will ask for the name of the God who spoke to him. So, God says to Moses, *“I AM WHO I AM”* (Ex 3:14). *“Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’... ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’”* (Ex 3:14-15). Unlike any other names, God’s name is an active verb. *“I AM.” “I AM WHO I AM.”* God IS. He is the One Who is. His name is a mystery. He reveals Himself, and yet he is *“ineffable, inconceivable, invisible and incomprehensible.”*⁴

Moses then raises a third objection: *“Behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice”* (Ex 4:1). So, God responds by giving him the ability to do three miracles that surpass the magic and *“secret arts”* of the Egyptians. First, Moses will be able to turn his staff into a serpent, and then restore it by picking up the serpent by the tail. Second, he will be able to make his hand leprous, and then restore it. Third, he will be able to take water from the Nile, pour it upon the ground, and turn it to blood.

Moses then raises a fourth objection: *“I am not eloquent... I am slow of speech and tongue”* (Ex 4:10). In other words, he is not a good speaker. This is strange. Moses was educated in the best schools of Egypt. His ability to communicate in the Egyptian language would have been excellent. This may be a reference to a natural speech impediment or to the fact that he does not know how to speak well in the Hebrew language and will have difficulty communicating with the elders of Israel. Whatever the case, God seems to be irritated with his response. The Lord says, *“I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak”* (Ex 4:12).

⁴ Anaphora of St. John Chrysostom.

Finally, Moses simply says: “My Lord, send, I pray, some other person” (Ex 4:14). But God does not want to send someone else. He wants to send Moses. In response, “the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses” (Ex 4:14). And the Lord said: “Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well; and behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you (finds you), he will be glad in his heart” (Ex 4:14). So, God agrees to allow Aaron, Moses’ brother, to go with him and to be his spokesman to the people.

Moses returns to Egypt (Exodus 4:18-31)

Having received the blessing of his father-in-law, Moses takes his wife and his sons, and goes to the land of Egypt. In his hand, he takes with him the miraculous staff of God.

Along the way, God appears to him in a vision and says: “I will harden (Pharaoh’s) heart, so that he will not let the people go” (Ex 4:21). How are we to understand these words? Did God directly harden Pharaoh’s heart? Why would God make him stubborn?

Some people respond to God’s word positively. Hearing the word of God, their hearts melt like wax, as they receive it in faith. Others, however, respond negatively. Hearing the word of God, their hearts harden like clay, and the word is not received. God Who is all-knowing, knows beforehand how Pharaoh will respond to His word. He will harden his heart and refuse to accept it.

When Moses arrives in Egypt, together with Aaron, they first go to the elders of Israel and explain to them what had happened, and what the Lord God has promised. The elders believe. They bowed their heads and worship the God of Israel.

The first audience with Pharaoh (Exodus 5:1-23)

Soon afterwards, Moses and Aaron are granted an audience with Pharaoh. They go to him and explain that the God of Israel has spoken. He wants His people to go out into the wilderness, to the holy mountain where He had appeared to Moses in a vision, and to serve Him there. “*Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness*” (Ex 5:2). “*Israel is My first-born son... Let My son go that he may serve Me*” (Ex 4:22).

But Pharaoh refuses to listen. He does not know, nor does he acknowledge the God of Israel, a God who does not belong to the Egyptian pantheon of gods. According to Pharaoh, the Hebrews are his servants, and they are called to serve him alone by doing the work he has given them. In response to Moses and Aaron, and to affirm his divinity as Lord and Master, Pharaoh gives orders to increase the burdens that have been placed upon the Hebrews. Their work is almost doubled. Straw will no longer be supplied. They will need to gather straw for themselves and the quota for brick making will remain the same.

The battle is between God, and Pharaoh, who sees himself as a god. In the end, whom will the people serve?

We are witnesses to this struggle even in our own day. The battle is between God, and the world. Driving us to work seven days a week, the world enslaves us with her idols: self-satisfaction, wealth, possessions, power, and the pride of life. God calls us to break free from this slavery, and to serve and worship Him alone.

The Second Audience with Pharaoh (Exodus 7)

A few days later, Moses and Aaron are granted a second audience with Pharaoh. As soon as Pharaoh sees them, he demands that they work a miracle to prove that they are really messengers of God. So, Aaron takes his rod and casts it down before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. Pharaoh then summoned his wise men and magicians, and each one of them do the same by their secret arts. But then, as a sign of God's overwhelming power and superiority, Aaron's serpent swallows up all the other serpents. This should have been enough to convince Pharaoh. Instead, he hardened his heart, and will not listen to Moses and Aaron.

Note that *Heka* was the Egyptian god of magic and secret arts. He was no power over the God of Israel. Note also that the snake was the emblem of divine majesty in Egypt. The image of the cobra was portrayed on the crown of Pharaoh, because *Wadjet*, the cobra goddess, was the protector of the Pharaoh. What happened should have been a clear sign to Pharaoh: The God of Israel is superior and more powerful than the *Wadjet*, the protector of Pharaoh, and any other Egyptian god.

The Plagues of Egypt (Exodus 7:8 to 11)

Egypt worshiped many gods. The nine plagues that follow are the result of Pharaoh's disobedience. Each plague will serve as a "show-down," in which God will reveal His overwhelming power and superiority over all the false gods of Egypt. In His patience and mercy, God gives Egypt not one or two opportunities, but nine opportunities to repent.

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| 1) The river Nile turns to into blood | <i>Hapi</i> , the god of the Nile |
| 2) The plague of frogs | <i>Hekhet</i> , frog-headed goddess of fertility
Related to the annual flooding of the Nile |
| 3) Gnats (or mosquitoes) attack men and animals | <i>Kepher</i> , beetle-god and sun-symbol |
| 4) Gadflies infest the land | <i>Uatchit</i> , a fly-god |

After the fourth plague, the heart of Pharaoh softens somewhat. He calls for Moses and Aaron and tells them, "Go, sacrifice to your God within the land" (Ex 8:25). Moses then says to Pharaoh, "*It would not be right to do so; for we shall sacrifice to the Lord our God offerings abominable to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice offerings abominable to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us? We must go three days journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to the Lord our God as He will command us*" (Ex 8:26-27). Pharaoh then agrees to allow them to go into the wilderness, but not too far; but then changes his mind and says no.

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| 5) Death of Egyptian livestock | <i>Apis</i> , sacred bull-god; god of fertility
<i>Hathor</i> , cow-goddess
Other gods represented by livestock |
| 6) Boils break into sores on man on man and beast | <i>Sekhmet</i> , lion goddess; wards off disease
goddess of medicine and healing
<i>Imbotep</i> , god of medicine |
| 7) Hail destroys all that is outdoors | <i>Nut</i> , the sky goddess
<i>Shu</i> , god of the air
<i>Tefnut</i> , goddess of rain |
| 8) The plague of locusts | <i>Senehem</i> , god of crops |
| 9) Darkness overcomes the land | <i>Amun (Amun-Ra)</i> , god of the air, “hidden one”
most powerful, creator
<i>Ra</i> , the sun-god, ruler of the day |
| 10) First-born will be killed | <i>Pharaoh himself</i> , believed to be a god
<i>Osiris</i> , god of life, resurrection
patron of Pharaoh |

At the end of the ninth plague, Moses goes to Pharaoh and warns him: *“Thus says the Lord: About midnight I will go forth in the midst of Egypt; and all the first born of Pharaoh who sits upon his throne, even to the first-born of the maidservant who is behind the mill; and all the first-born of the cattle. And there shall be a great cry throughout the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever shall be” (Ex 11:4-6).*

If Pharaoh does not let God’s first-born go (Israel), then Egypt will lose all their first-born.

The Passover (Exodus 12-13)

God tells Moses and Aaron, that from now on, for Israel, the month of Nissan (March-April), will be for them the first month of months, the beginning of the year. (Each month begins with the appearance of a new moon). In preparation for the final plague, the people are commanded to do the following.

- 1) On the tenth day of Nissan, they are to take a lamb from their flock, one for each family and household. The lamb must be without blemish, a male, a year old.
- 2) From the tenth to the fourteenth day of Nissan, they are to inspect the lamb, to ensure that it is without blemish.
- 3) Near the end of the fourteenth day (around 3:00 pm) they are to sacrifice the lamb. Blood from the lamb is to be drained into a basin; then, using hyssop, the blood is to be sprinkled onto the doorposts and lintel of every entrance.
- 4) The flesh from the sacrificed lamb is then to be roasted and eaten by the family that night (the fifteenth of Nissan), with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. None of it is to remain until the morning. Anything that remains until morning must be burned. They are to eat with loins girded, sandals on their feet and staff in hand, ready to depart from Egypt.

That night is to be called the Lord's Passover, because the Lord will pass over the homes of the Israelites that are marked with the blood of a sacrificed lamb. He will protect these homes, and the firstborn of these household shall live.

The people did everything as the Lord God had commanded. At midnight, on the fifteenth day of Nissan, the Lord took the lives of all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. And by morning, the people of Israel were free to depart from Egypt.

A New Testament Connection

The events of the Passover are a type. They prefigure and foreshadow a New Passover that will take place in the future. Note the following New Testament connections.

It was the tenth day of Nissan, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. This was the same day that the people were choosing their sacrificial lambs for the Passover. Jesus is the Lamb of God, chosen by God the Father.

From the tenth to the fourteenth day, the lamb was inspected to ensure that it was without blemish. During those days, Jesus, the chosen Lamb of God, was also inspected. The leaders of Israel tested Jesus with various questions, to see if there are any blemishes in him.

Near the end of the fourteenth day, at 3:00 pm, the lambs were sacrificed in the Temple. At the same time, Jesus is sacrificed for the life of the world.

In baptism, we are immersed into the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, and we are washed by His Precious Blood, which redeems us and set us free. The Lord passes over protects us from the dominion of sin and death. We are no longer slaves to sin (under the power of the evil one) but set-free to live as children of God.

Through the celebration of the Eucharist, we participate in His Paschal Sacrifice, becoming one with His sacrifice, which redeems us and sets us free.

The Annual Celebration of the Passover

Finally, God commanded that Israel keep the Passover feast each year, in remembrance of their deliverance from bondage; and to teach their children what God had done for them. Each new generation was to be formed by the Passover. It would become their identity as a chosen people, saved from slavery and oppression, to serve and worship Him.

By participating in the annual Passover, each generation would become actual participants in the original Passover event.

The Exodus and the Crossing of the Sea (Exodus 14)

As the people of Israel leave Egypt, the Lord God goes before them: by day, in the form of a pillar of cloud to show them the way; and by night, in the form of a pillar of fire to give them light. Thus, they continue their march by day and by night (see Ex 13:21-22). Both the cloud and the fire are symbols of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord God continued to lead them, until they came to the sea. They encamp between *Migdol* and the sea, by *Pi-ha-hiroth*, in front of *Baal-zephon*.

Meanwhile, in Egypt, Pharaoh's heart hardens again. He changes his mind, saying: "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" So, he made ready his chariot and took his army with him, together with all the chariots of Egypt. Then then pursued the people of Israel, and overtook them encamped at the sea, by *Pi-ha-hiroth*, in front of *Baal-Zephon*.

When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted-up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them; and they were in great fear.

At that moment, the pillar of cloud that went before them moved and went behind them, coming between the Egyptian army and the people of Israel.

The Lord then says to Moses, "*Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go on dry ground through the sea*" (Ex 14:16). Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided" (Ex 14:21).

This indicates that the waters did not separate immediately, but over course of the night. When a path had been created, the people of Israel went through the midst of the sea as if on dry ground. They had no difficulties going across because they did not take with them any heavy burdens. They had left Egypt in haste and took only what was essential.

When the pillar of cloud moved away, the army crossed through the sea in pursuit. As they passed through, they encountered great difficulties. Their heavy chariots and horses began to sink into the soft seabed and were stuck. When the water began to return, the soldiers were overcome with fear and panic. Chaos and confusion ensued; and the soldiers drowned in the waters, which had returned and covered them.

A foreshadowing of the New Passover

The crossing of the sea in some way is also a "Passover" – the Passover of Israel from bondage and slavery, across the sea of death and destruction, to freedom and new life with God. The whole event becomes of foreshadow of something greater yet to come.

Pharaoh – represents the evil one (the serpent, who brought about the fall of humanity) and his dominion over the fallen human race.

Egypt – represents the state of bondage to sin and death; separation from God; the enslavement of all descendants of Adam and Eve.

Moses – is represents "Christ" the Anointed One that is to come: Jesus, the New Moses.

The Staff with uplifted hands – foreshadows the death of Christ upon the cross; it is by death on the cross and resurrection on the third day, Jesus will pass through death. He will then become the WAY, through which all must pass, from this life into the next.

The Sea – symbolizes death. By being immersed into water in Baptism, we are united to Christ's death and resurrection, and thus pass through death to live a new life in Christ.

The People of Israel – foreshadow the Church, the New People of God, who by means of Baptism pass through the waters of death, to new life in Christ.

The forty years in the wilderness – is a fullness of time, the time between Christ's first and second coming; the history of the Church and its pilgrimage upon the earth.

The Promised Land – foreshadows the Kingdom of God, and kingdom that will have no end. The Church will fully enter the Kingdom of God only at the end of this age.

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