

Comments on Exodus 15

The text is poetical praise for the Lord wherein Israel gives thanks for the divine delivery from Egypt. The historical context is that the Lord made Egypt into a world power through the fertility of the Nile and the inspiration of Joseph. After Egypt became great it forgot the Lord and what He and the children of Israel did to make it great. Egypt then enslaves Israel out of envy and fear. The Lord reacts by taking His people out from Egypt and striking Egypt's pride down.

The song which Israel sings after its extraction from Egypt is intended to praise and magnify the Lord's power, but it also has political overtones. Egypt and the surrounding nations are reminded Israel is God's chosen nation. Egypt was the greatest political and military nation at that time, and the Lord has just struck it down with little effort. What then will He do to the weaker nations (e.g., Palestina, Edom, Moab, and Canaan per v. 14-15) who oppose Him and His people?

1 THEN sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying,

I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. 2 The LORD [is] my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he [is] my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. 3 The LORD [is] a man of war: the LORD [is] his name.

4 Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea. 5 The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone.

6 Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. 7 And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, [which] consumed them as stubble. 8 And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, [and] the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.

9 The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. 10 Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.

11 Who [is] like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who [is] like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful [in]

praises, doing wonders? 12 Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. 13 Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people [which] thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided [them] in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.

14 The people shall hear, [and] be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. 15 Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. 16 Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be [as] still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, [which] thou hast purchased.

17 Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, [in] the place, O LORD, [which] thou hast made for thee to dwell in, [in] the Sanctuary, O Lord, [which] thy hands have established. 18 The LORD shall reign for ever and ever. 19 For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry [land] in the midst of the sea.

v1-19 A song to the Lord in praise of the miraculous deliverance from Egypt. The song is poetical and highly stylized, and follows a structure which emphasizes the blessing of Israel and the cursing of Egypt, as follows:

The Lord strikes Egypt (v. 1-10)

A - (v. 1-3) The Lord, the God of Israel, is praised

B - (v. 4-5) Egyptians cursed

A - (v. 6-8) The Lord is praised

B - (v. 9-10) Egyptians cursed

The Lord curses His enemies while blessing Israel (v. 11-19)

A - (v. 11-13) The Lord is praised

B - (v. 14-16) Enemies cursed

C - (v. 17-19) Israel blessed while enemies cursed

The first stanza (v. 1-10) present the Lord as the heavenly victor over Egypt, the world's greatest power, with a repeating pair of refrains intended to emphasize how easily the Lord overcame. The second stanza (v. 11-19) then presents a similar theme but transitions into a climax where Israel is blessed and lifted up in the eyes of all nations while the greatest power of those nations is debased.

v18-19 While the Lord will reign forever (v. 18) the most powerful ruler of the earth has been struck down (v. 19). The

Lord has defeated this "god" Pharaoh thereby proving Himself in the eyes of Israel and Gentiles alike.

20 And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. 21 And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

v20-21 In parallel to the song of v. 1-19, Miriam leads the women of Israel in praising of the Lord with music and dance. These two verses suggest the song of v. 1-19 was sung by the men of Israel as led by Moses, and they were apparently accompanied by the women of Israel.

22 So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. 23 And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they [were] bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. 24 And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?

25 And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, [which] when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, 26 And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I [am] the LORD that healeth thee.

27 And they came to Elim, where [were] twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters.

v22-27 Conditional covenants start being imposed upon Israel. The connection between the two incidents of the water and the "statute and...ordinance" suggests the statute is reactionary to the murmuring. In v. 22-24 the people are murmuring, yet the Lord blesses them in v. 25. But, Israel is given a statute and ordinance at that point telling them if they obey the Lord then they will not be cursed.

The Exodus from Egypt was based solely upon covenants made with Abraham. Now the Lord is imposing individual and corporate covenant relationships upon Israel and they are conditional upon their own merits not Abraham's.

This brief warning foreshadows the imminent Sinaitic covenant and the subsequent imposition of the Law of Moses as a result of continuing rebellion.

v26 The warning of plagues upon them, similar to those which

Egypt suffered, is typical covenant rhetoric. See how Lev. 26 and Deut. 28, the two prominent covenant blessing and curse chapters, use these plagues.

v27 The description of Elim as having twelve wells, convenient for twelve tribes, and seventy palms indicates this was no mud hole, but had a good supply of fresh water. That they came to such a well-watered place suggests they heeded the Lord's warning in v. 26 and were therefore blessed for it.

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