

The Red Sea

'The Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, so they may come up on the land of Egypt and eat all the vegetation of the land, all the hail has left." Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt and the Lord brought an east wind upon the land all that day and all that night. When it was morning the east wind brought the locusts. The locusts came up over all the land of Egypt and settled down on the whole country of Egypt, a very dreadful mass of them. Never before were there such locusts as these, nor will there ever be again. Locusts covered the whole land so the ground was darkened and they ate every bit of vegetation of the land and all the fruit of the trees the hail had left. There remained not a green thing of the trees or the plants of the field in all the land of Egypt. Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron in haste. He said, "I have sinned against the Lord your God and you. Now therefore forgive my sin, I pray you and entreat the Lord your God so He may remove from me this plague of death. Moses left Pharaoh and entreated the Lord. The Lord turned a violent west wind, which lifted the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea. Not one locust remained in all the country of Egypt' (Exodus 10:12 to 19).

This was the first mention of the Red Sea in the Bible. The Red Sea was part of the route God chose for the Israelites. The neighbouring Philistines were a warlike group and were giants, so God was concerned, if the Israelites saw war ahead of them, they would want to turn back to Egypt. 'When Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near, for God said, "Lest perhaps the people (Israelites) change their minds when they see war and they return to Egypt." So God led the people around by the way of the wilderness by the Red Sea. The Children of Israel went up armed out of the land of Egypt' (Exodus 13:17 & 18).

The Red Sea was the body of water that saved the Israelites from being recaptured by the Egyptian army. 'Pharaoh king of Egypt pursued the Children of Israel, for the Children of Israel left Egypt defiantly. The Egyptians pursued them using all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army. He overtook them and camped by the Red Sea ... When Pharaoh drew near, the Children of Israel looked up and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them and they were very afraid. The Children of Israel cried out to God ... Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord which He will work for you today, for the Egyptians you have seen today you will never see again. God will fight for you and you will be at peace." God said to Moses, "Tell the Children of Israel to go forward. Lift up your rod and stretch out your hand over the Sea and divide it. The Children of Israel will go into the midst of the Red Sea on dry ground ... Moses stretched out his hand over the Red Sea and the Lord caused the Red Sea to go back by a strong east wind all night and made the Red Sea dry land and the waters were divided. The children of Israel went into the midst of the Red Sea on the dry ground and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the Red Sea with all of Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen. In the morning watch, God looked out on the Egyptian army ... and He confused the Egyptian army. God took off their chariot wheels and they drove them heavily so the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel for God fights for them against the Egyptians!" God said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the Red Sea so the waters may come again on the Egyptians, on their chariots and on their horsemen." Moses stretched out his hand over the Red Sea and the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared and the Egyptians fled against it. God overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the Red Sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, all Pharaoh's army that went in after them into the Red Sea. There remained not so much as one of them. The Children of Israel walked on dry land in the midst of the Red Sea and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore' (Exodus 14:8 to 10; 13 to 16; 21 to 30).

The Red Sea was once a border for the Israelites. 'I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea and from the wilderness (desert) to the River Euphrates' (Exodus 23:31; Genesis 15:18). 'By faith, the Children of Israel passed through the Red Sea as on dry land. When the Egyptians tried to do the same they were swallowed up by the Sea' (Hebrews 11:29). The parting of the Red Sea was one of the greatest miracles witnessed by the Children of Israel. The enormity of that miracle is astounding. The number of Israelites plus the mixed multitude who left Egypt with them would have been between two and three million people. There were six hundred thousand Israelite men plus all of their wives and children (Exodus 12:37 & 38). The mixed multitude of people would have been Egyptians plus people from other nations who were living in Egypt at that time. In the aftermath of the ten plagues, these people realised the Pharaoh and the idols they worshipped were utterly powerless to save them from the plagues so they joined up with the Israelites and fled with them, enjoying the fruits of God's mighty power. The miraculous parting of the Red Sea and the Israelites walking through on dry land is the pinnacle of this story. It proves God's faithfulness to His covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:18), Isaac (Genesis 17:21) and Jacob (Exodus 2:24) and all of their descendants. The Israelites passed through the Red Sea and arrived at Mount Sinai where

they received the Laws of God, which included the Ten Commandments and the written covenant. That same covenant given to Abraham is the one all Messianic Christians abide by.

Moses and the Israelites crossed the Red Sea at the Gulf of Suez, from Egypt into the Sinai Desert. The Red Sea is situated at the very southern tip of Israel at the city of Eilat where there is a busy port and a very popular resort, known in Israel as the Gulf of Eilat. The Red Sea today is a narrow, almost inland sea between the Arabian Peninsula and Africa, 1,930 kilometres long, beginning at Suez in Egypt near the Mediterranean Sea and flowing down to the Gulf of Aden, Yemen, and out into the Arabian Sea. The sea separates the coasts of Egypt, Sudan and Eritrea to the west, and Saudi Arabia and Yemen to the east. The depth varies from 50 metres deep to 3,040 metres deep in some areas. The Red Sea is the saltiest sea that flows into an ocean, anywhere in the world. The salt discourages algae and makes the water crystal clear. It is called the Red Sea because of a cyanobacterium that turns the water a reddish-brown, which is harmless. The sea has a beautiful, colourful coral reef and the area is great for scuba diving, snorkelling, fishing and other water sports. It contains more than 1,200 fish species, 44 shark species, 250 species of coral and toxic fish like the stonefish, scorpion fish, stingrays, jellyfish and sea urchins, however due to the saltiness of the water, no sea snakes can live there. It is a vibrant place now, much different from the time when God parted the waters for His people to cross. The story of the Israelites walking through the midst of the Red Sea as though they were on dry land is famous throughout the world. 'To God Who divided the Red Sea, His loving kindness endures forever. He made Israel to pass through its midst, for His loving kindness endures forever' (Psalm 136:13 & 14).

Amen and God bless you.

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