

The Exodus

Israel Leaves Egypt

Thus the children of Israel were liberated from the yoke of their oppressors on the fifteenth day of Nissan in the year 2448 after the creation of the world. There were 600,000 men over 20 years of age, with their wives and children, and flocks, crossing the border of Egypt that day - a free nation.

Many Egyptians and other non-Israelites joined the triumphant children of Israel, hoping to share their glorious future. The children of Israel did not leave Egypt destitute. In addition to their own possessions, the terrified Egyptians had bestowed upon them gifts of gold and Silver, and clothing, in an effort to hasten their departure. Thus G-d made His promise to Abraham, that his descendants would leave their exile with great riches, come true in every detail.

Leading the Jewish people on their journey during the day was a pillar of cloud, and at night there was a pillar of fire, giving them light. These Divine messengers not only guided the children of Israel on their way, but also cleared the way before them, making it both easy and safe.

http://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/282280/jewish/The-Exodus.htm

In Hot Pursuit

The shortest route for the children of Israel to the Promised Land, would have been straight across the land of the Philistines.

However, G-d wanted to give the newly-born Jewish nation the opportunity to throw off the remnants of Egyptian influence, and to educate them in the new ways of a holy life, through the Divine Torah which was to be given to them on Mount Sinai.

Furthermore, the shortest way to the Holy Land would have involved the people in a war with the Philistines, and it was doubtful whether the children of Israel, who had just left centuries of continuous slavery behind, would be strong enough to fight like free men;

they might decide to return to Egypt rather than face a bloody war.

Therefore, G-d led the Jewish people in a round-about way. Instead of following the coast of the Mediterranean Sea all the way to the Promised Land, they were led southwards through the desert.

After three days, Pharaoh received word of the progress of the children of Israel. The unexpected direction of their march made him think that they had gotten lost in the desert. Pharaoh now regretted that he had permitted them to leave. He immediately mobilized his army and personally took the lead of his choicest cavalry and war-chariots in hot pursuit of his former slaves. He reached them near the banks of the Red Sea, and pressed them close to the water, in an effort to cut off their escape.

Fear gripped the children of Israel as they saw the pursuing hosts of their enslaver. Some groups among them were ready to fight the Egyptians; others preferred to drown in the floods of the sea than risk defeat and return to slavery. A third group of frightened and feeble people began to complain against Moses, fearing that he had lured them out of the safety of Egypt to die in the desert.

"Because there were no graves in Egypt," they exclaimed, "hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou done this to us, to lead us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we spoke to thee in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it is better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.' "

But Moses, calm and firm in one of the most trying moments of his life, said: "Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show you today: for as you have seen the Egyptians today, you shall see them again no more forever. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall keep yourselves quiet."

Then Moses led the Israelites onwards until they came to the very borders of the Red Sea. The pillar of cloud now changed its position; for, retreating from the front to the rear of the Hebrew hosts, it floated between the two armies; over the Israelies it shed a brilliant light, while it spread a veil of darkness over the Egyptians.

But the Israelites seemed now helplessly hemmed in by overwhelming dangers: the Egyptians were close behind them, and the waves of the Red Sea were breaking at their feet.

http://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/1664/jewish/In-Hot-Pursuit.htm

The End of the Egyptian Army

Then G-d spoke to Moses: "Lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thy hand over the sea and divide it; and the children of Israel shall go into the midst of the sea on dry ground."

Moses did as G-d ordered him. He raised his staff, and stretched his hand over the sea; a strong east wind rose and blew the whole night.

The waters of the Red Sea were immediately divided and gathered into a wall on either side, leaving a dry passage in the midst. The Israelites marched at once along that dry path which extended from shore to shore, and gained the opposite side in safety.

http://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/1665/jewish/The-End-of-the-Egyptian-Army.htm

Israel's Song of Praise

Then Moses and the entire congregation sang this Song of Praise to G-d for their miraculous rescue.

- 1. "I will sing unto the Lord, for He is highly exulted; The horse and its rider has He thrown into the sea.*
- 2. The Lord is -my strength and song, And He is become my salvation; This is my G-d and I will glorify Him; MY father's G-d, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is the lord of war, The Lord is His name.*
- 3. Pharaoh's chariots and his host has He cast into the sea. And his chosen captains are sunk in the Red Sea. The deeps cover them they went down into the depths like a stone.*
- 4. Your right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power, Your right hand, O Lord, dashes in pieces the enemy.*
- 5. And in the greatness of Your excellency You overthrow them that rise up against Thee;*

You send forth Your wrath; it consumes them as stubble.

6 And with the blast of Your nostrils the waters were piled up, the floods stood upright as a heap; The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea.

7. 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.'

8. You did blow Your wind, the sea covered them. They sank as lead in the mighty waters.

9. Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the mighty? Who is like -unto Thee, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders? You stretch out Your right hand, the earth swallowed them.

10. You in Your love have led the people that You have redeemed; You lost guided them in Your strength to Your holy habitation.

11. The Peoples have beard, they trembled; Pangs have taken hold on the inhabitants of Philistia. Then were the chiefs of Edom affrighted; The mighty men of Moab, trembling taketh hold upon them; All the inhabitants of Canaan are melted away.

12. Terror and dread falleth upon them. By the greatness of Your arm they are as still as a stone; Till Your people pass over, O Lord, Till the people Pass aver that You have gotten. You bringest them in, and plantest them in the mountain of Your inheritance. The place, O Lord, which You have made for Thee to dwell in, The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever."

As the last words of the song died away, Miriam seized her timbrel, and followed by a multitude of Hebrew maidens and women, went forth in procession dancand proclaiming:

"Sing again to the Lord, for He is gloriously exalted; The horse and its rider has He thrown into the sea."

http://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/1666/jewish/Israels-Song-of-Praise.htm