

Walls

Exodus 14:21-31

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I. Walls (Israelites went in) vs. 21-22

- a. Moses stretched
 - i. Moses' first act of stretching out his hand over the sea is the execution of the command of Yahweh reported in 14:16. As the text makes plain, however, it is Yahweh, not Moses, who works the wonder.
 - ii. The walls were closing in with the army coming.
- b. Swept the Sea Back
 - i. East Wind - An east wind is often seen as destructive or punishing, partly because east winds in Egypt, the Sinai, and Palestine are so often blisteringly dry and hot
 - 1. All Night
 - ii. Sea into dry Land
 - iii. Water was Divided
- c. Israelites went through
 - i. Waters were like a wall
 - 1. Right and left Wall- The term used for "wall" here, *ḥōmāh*, connotes a very large wall—not a small stone wall or retaining wall but always a massively large (usually a city) wall, towering above the Israelites, who marched on dry land with walls of water on either side of them.
 - 2. It is clear from the descriptions given that the sea through which the Israelites walked was deep water, not something shallow. A city-wall sized wall of water on either side of them implies the division of a deep body of water, not merely the drying out of a shallow one or the drying out of wet terrain. Even the use of the term *yam* ("sea") here implies the depth of the water. *Yam* is never used for swamps or mud flats but is used consistently to describe large bodies of water

II. Walls Closing In (Egyptians went) vs. 23-25

- a. Egyptians took up the pursuit
 - i. Pharoah, Chariots, Horsemen
- b. Morning Watch

- i. The Lord looked Down - The verb is regularly used simply to connote viewing something from a height, and as God towered over the Egyptians in his self-manifestation of the pillar of cloud, the verb is used in a rather routine manner in the context.
- ii. Cause confusion – to bring into motion
 - 1. Chariot wheel swerve - Yahweh demonstrates in a concrete way that he is a man of battle (15:3, **יְהוָה אֵישׁ מִלְחָמָה**), and by this act the full significance of his name continues to be revealed (cf. 15:3b). Yahweh did something to the chariot wheels that hindered their maneuverability in battle. “He bent their chariot wheels out of line” seems to catch the essence of **וַיִּסָּר אֶת אֹפְנֵי מֶרְכָּבָתָיו**. Other translations catch the point a little differently. James observes that the chariot wheel required exceptional skill in its construction. The wheels were fastened together with leather strips forming tires. Yahweh was able to render the best military technology of the day ineffective, so that it drove clumsily with great difficulty
 - 2. Drive with difficulty- despite their expertise
 - 3. Without God’s help the Egyptians might easily have caught up with the Israelites, so he “threw [the Egyptian army] into confusion.” Specifically, he bound their chariots’ wheels so that they had difficulty driving them (“made the wheels of their chariots come off” v. 25
 - 4. The horses pulling the chariots, like the Israelite goats and sheep, would have been able to get through satisfactorily; the chariot wheels, however, effectively sliced deep into the soft ground and bound so that the horses could not pull their own weight and that of the fully loaded chariots.
- c. Let us Flee
 - i. The Lord is fighting
 - 1. The Egyptians recognize too late that Yahweh, the God who was unknown to Pharaoh (5:2), is a God of battle (cf. 15:3). The mighty waters of the Reed Sea do Yahweh’s work for him, for he is in charge of the great deep (cf. Gen 1:2). Even, it appears, Pharaoh has died in the heart of the sea (14:28
 - 2. God’s purpose of revealing himself not merely to Israel but to Egypt as well had in fact been accomplished. The army, all of whom had experienced the plagues, now knew who Yahweh was, even if prior to the plagues his name would have meant nothing to them. The earlier statement “I am the LORD” had now become something they could understand. What Moses had promised the people in 14:14 (“the LORD will fight for you”) was apparent even to the enemy.

III. Walled In (The Lord went in) vs. 26-30

- a. Stretch out your Hand
 - i. So that the waters come back
 - ii. The reader/hearer of the original catches the point: the hand of Yahweh is powerful; the hand of the Egyptians was weak. All of this fulfills just what was predicted by God to Moses in 6:1 (“[By] my mighty hand he will let them go; [by] ... my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country.”)
 - iii. It becomes clear that the resources of Yahweh are unlimited, and he uses the very powers of nature that he created and owns to do his bidding to rescue and deliver his people in history. There is no power or force in the earth or above it (v. 24) that does not do Yahweh’s work; they all hasten to accomplish his purposes.
- b. The Waters Returned to Normal
 - i. At Daybreak - At daybreak, so that the Israelites could see the entire process clearly, the sea flowed into the former gap
 - 1. God is a God of timing- Daybreak and Morning watch
 - ii. Egyptians fleeing right into it-
 - 1. Yahweh’s further instruction to Moses seals the fate of the entrapped Egyptians. The waters diverted from their normal place are loosed to return to their usual channels. Too late, the Egyptians, stopped in their headlong pursuit, come to their senses and attempt to fall back.
 - 2. If they were typical of most ancients, virtually none of them could swim. If the distance of the corridor through the sea were several miles, even the best of swimmers caught miles from shore were without hope
- c. The Lord
 - i. The Lord Overthrew - The Water returned- Not one remained
 - ii. The Lord Saved- The manner of his doing it is incidental to the fact that *Yahweh* is the one who made the rescue. Not tides, not storms, not bad planning, not tactical error, not bad luck, or good luck, but *Yahweh*. This repeated declaration of the narrative is made still again in this resounding summary. *Yahweh* did it, and what is more, Israel *saw* (הִרְאָה) him do it.
 - iii. The first of these is the entrapment of the Egyptian force in the midst of a miraculously divided sea into which the Egyptians are lured by a fleeing Israel and driven (14:8, 17) by Yahweh. The second is the overwhelming of that same force by the sea rushing back to its customary place. Both these miraculous manipulations of the waters of the sea are effected by Yahweh following a signal Moses has been instructed to give. (your participation is limited in comparison to what God is doing)

- iv. All of this is for God's glory and for his goal, the simultaneous redemption and creation of a people, his people—they will be his people and he will be their God (6:7).

IV. Off the Wall (Israel Saw) v. 31

- a. Egyptians dead on the seashore
- b. Great Power
 - i. Feared the Lord- They saw the bodies of the Egyptians, washed up onto the edge of the sea. They saw Yahweh's great power (הַיָּד הַגְּדֹלָה) performed against the Egyptian force. And the inevitable result of it all was reverential awe—of Yahweh,
 - ii. Believed
 - 1. In the Lord
 - 2. Moses- The exaltation of Moses here is entirely dependent upon the prior exaltation of Yahweh, who has called Moses and given him both authority and special powers. This is true, moreover, throughout Exodus. Indeed, as we shall see in the murmurings in the wilderness and especially in the rebellion of the golden calf, Israel's confidence in Moses dissipates along with their confidence in Yahweh. And whenever confidence in Moses increases, as here and at Sinai, it is because of an action of Yahweh.