

Bible Background

This event took place about 1300 B.C. At this time, the Israelites were slaves in Goshen, Egypt. They were being mistreated and asked God to have mercy on them. God chose Moses to speak to the Pharaoh (king of Egypt) and ask for permission for them to return to their homeland, Canaan, which is today called Israel. Pharaoh refused. Moses said that something terrible would happen to Egypt. After this "plague" happened, Pharaoh still refused. This happened 10 times. Finally, Moses said that the firstborn of each Egyptian family would die. When this happened, Pharaoh told them to leave.

Exodus 13

¹⁷ Pharaoh let the people go. The shortest road from Goshen to Canaan went through the Philistine country. But God didn't lead them that way. God said, "If they have to go into battle, they might change their minds. They might return to Egypt." ¹⁸ So God led the people toward the Red Sea by taking them on a road through the desert. The Israelites were prepared for battle when they went up out of Egypt.

Exodus 14

⁵ The king of Egypt was told that the people had gotten away. Then Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them. They said, "What have we done? We've let the people of Israel go! We've lost our slaves and all of the work they used to do for us!" ⁶ So he had his chariot made ready. He took his army with him. ⁷ He took 600 of the best chariots in Egypt. He also took along all of the other chariots. Officers were in charge of all of them...

¹⁰ As Pharaoh approached, the people of Israel looked up. There were the Egyptians marching after them! The Israelites were terrified. They cried out to the Lord. ¹¹ They said to Moses, "Why did you bring us to the desert to die? Weren't there any graves in Egypt?..."

¹³ Moses answered the people. He said, "Don't be afraid. Stand firm. You will see how the Lord will save you today. Do you see those Egyptians? You will never see them again. ¹⁴ The Lord will fight for you. Just be still." ¹⁵ Then the Lord spoke to Moses. He said, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the people of Israel to move on..."

¹⁸ "The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord. I will gain glory because of what will happen to all of them." ...

²¹ Then Moses reached his hand out over the Red Sea. All that night the Lord pushed the sea back with a strong east wind. He turned the sea into dry land. The waters were parted. ²² The people of Israel went through the sea on dry ground. There was a wall of water on their right side and on their left...

²⁶ Then the Lord spoke to Moses. He said, "Reach your hand out over the sea. The waters will flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen." ²⁷ So Moses reached his hand out over the sea. At sunrise the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians tried to run away from the sea. But the Lord swept them into it. ²⁸ The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen. It covered the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the people of Israel into the sea. Not one of the Egyptians was left. ²⁹ But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground. There was a wall of water on their right side and on their left. ³⁰ That day the Lord saved Israel from the power of Egypt. Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. ³¹ The Israelites saw the great power the Lord showed against the Egyptians. So they had respect for the Lord. They put their trust in him and in his servant Moses.

40 years later

Deuteronomy 34

⁹ Joshua, the son of Nun, was filled with wisdom. That's because Moses had placed his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to Joshua. They did what the Lord had commanded Moses.

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Paintings_with_biblical_themes.

THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA circa 1541-1542

Artist: Agnolo Bronzino

Location: fresco on chapel of "Eleanora of Toledo" at Palazzo Vecchio, Florence



In this fresco, the artist includes two parts of the Exodus story (the safe escape of the Israelites and the drowning of the Egyptians) and the appointing of Joshua to replace Moses, 40 years later.

1. Look at each portion of the painting. What are the various expressions of the people in each of the three scenes?
2. Read the story. How is the painting similar to the story?
3. How is the painting different than the story?
4. It is impossible to know every reason why the Lord does things. However, the Lord tells Moses some of his reasons for this. What are they? (v 13, 14, 18, 31)
5. If you were an Israelite at that time, how would you respond to this event?
6. If you were an Egyptian (either one that died or survived), how would you respond to this event?
7. How do you respond to this event today?
8. What does this story tell us about God in the Bible?
 - His power?
 - His mercy?
 - His justice?