

August 2, 2020

## Exodus 14:26-15:20

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

<sup>26</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers.” <sup>27</sup> So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. <sup>28</sup> The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. <sup>29</sup> But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

<sup>30</sup> Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. <sup>31</sup> Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

<sup>1</sup> Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord:

“I will sing to the **Lord**, for he has triumphed gloriously;  
horse and rider he has thrown **into the sea**.

<sup>2</sup> The **Lord** is my strength and my might,  
and he has become my salvation;  
this is my God, and I will praise him,  
my father’s God, and I will exalt him.

<sup>3</sup> The **Lord** is a warrior;  
the **Lord** is his name.

<sup>4</sup> “Pharaoh’s chariots and his army he cast **into the sea**;  
his picked officers were sunk in the Red Sea.

<sup>5</sup> The floods covered them;  
they went down into the depths like a stone.

<sup>6</sup> Your right hand, O **Lord**, glorious in power—  
your right hand, O **Lord**, shattered the enemy.

<sup>7</sup> In the greatness of your majesty you overthrew your  
adversaries;  
you sent out your fury, it consumed them like stubble.

<sup>8</sup> At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up,  
the floods stood up in a heap;  
the deeps congealed in **the heart of the sea**.

<sup>9</sup> The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake,  
I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them.  
I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.’

<sup>10</sup> You blew with your wind, **the sea** covered them;  
they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

**Exodus 15** In his seminal book, *The Spirituality of the Psalms*, Hebrew Scripture scholar Walter Brueggemann offers a framework for understanding the whole book of Psalms. While not every psalm can be fit into a neat category, the majority of the psalms can be viewed in one of three ways:

**1. Psalms of Orientation** (e.g. Psalm 8, 24, 33, 104, 133, 145). These are the psalms we are most comfortable with, of gratitude for God’s ordering of life. These psalms reflect life the way it is expected to be: full of blessing for the saints.

**2. Psalms of Disorientation** (e.g. Psalm 13, 35, 74, 86, 95, 137). These psalms are the reaction of the faithful to God when the world they knew was broken. These are psalms of lament that move and deepen the faith of the worshiper. When Jerusalem, the city of God, falls to Babylon, you don’t sing Psalm 23—you respond with the virulence of 137.

**3. Psalms of New Orientation** (e.g. Psalm 29, 47, 93, 97, 98, 99, 114, 148, 150). These are deeper versions of the orientation psalms. Disorientation is now past and the singer praises God for salvation. This category includes the victory hymns of Yahweh. ***Miriam’s song in Exodus 15, although not part of the book of Psalms, is a great example.***

**Lord** יהוה or YHWH [Yahweh] God’s name is almost always translated LORD (all caps) in the English Bible. But the Hebrew would be pronounced something like “Yahweh,” and is built on the word for “I am.” Impossible to translate exactly it means I am who I will be, or I was who I will be, it transcends time pointing to the vast presence, power and purpose of God. Today’s psalm is punctuated with this name of great power, loving kindness, and liberating presence.

**the sea** יָם pronounced [yam] sea. In ancient Middle Eastern cultures the sea was the embodiment of the forces of chaos and disruption that threaten the

<sup>11</sup> “Who is like you, O **Lord**, among the gods?  
 Who is like you, majestic in holiness,  
 awesome in splendor, doing wonders?  
<sup>12</sup> You stretched out your right hand,  
 the earth swallowed them.

<sup>13</sup> “In your **STEADFAST LOVE** you led the people whom you  
 redeemed;  
 you guided them by your strength to your holy abode.  
<sup>14</sup> The peoples heard, they trembled;  
 pangs seized the inhabitants of Philistia.  
<sup>15</sup> Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed;  
 trembling seized the leaders of Moab;  
 all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away.  
<sup>16</sup> Terror and dread fell upon them;  
 by the might of your arm, they became still as a stone  
 until your people, O **Lord**, passed by,  
 until the people whom you acquired passed by.  
<sup>17</sup> You brought them in and planted them  
 on the mountain of your own possession,  
 the place, O **Lord**, that you made your abode,  
 the sanctuary, O **Lord**, that your hands have established.  
<sup>18</sup> The **Lord** will reign forever and ever.”

<sup>19</sup> When the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his  
 chariot drivers went into the sea, the **Lord** brought back  
**the waters of the sea upon them**; but the Israelites  
 walked **through the sea** on dry ground.

<sup>20</sup> Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine  
 in her hand; and all the women went out after her with  
 tambourines and with dancing. <sup>21</sup> And Miriam sang to them:

“Sing to the **Lord**, for he has triumphed gloriously;  
 horse and rider he has thrown **into the sea.**”

#### QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

- What part of today’s psalm grabs you?
- What is new orientation or reality that the Moses and Miriam (and the Israelites through them) are entering?
- How might they have felt leaving their slavery & oppression behind? What did they know of their liberation? What did they not know of what would transpire?
- In our time of great change, we look to a promised land of deliverance. Yet it isn’t coming how we thought? How does this psalm speak to our day? To you?
- What invitation to act, speak, be or become to you hear in today’s psalm?

created order – the natural orders – desired by YHWH or the gods. Here we see Pharaoh - who was thought of as a god who brought order – destroyed by the chaos created by YHWH the true God of order. Creation itself seems to be against Pharaoh.

*At the blast of your nostrils | You stretched out your right hand, here we see the bodily images and physical metaphors common in Hebrew. Think of a horse blasting its nostrils as a display of irritation or power. Think of a soldier who strikes and vanquishes an enemy with a hand holding a sword.*

**STEADFAST LOVE** טוֹן pronounced [cheched] goodness, kindness, faithfulness. In the Hebrew Scriptures this word is a profound one used for God’s loving grace and mercy. **CHESED** means to love as God loves, unflinching in a covenantal relationship. It is the gracious forgiveness that comes from love that is so enduring that it persists beyond any sin, always seeking to forgive. **CHESED** also describes unmerited kindness that seeks to actively intervene to help a loved one. It is love in action, not just in our heads. Without a word for this, translators needed to invent the word “loving-kindness” or sometimes just “kindness.”

The way in which creation sides with YHWH against the forces of Pharaoh are echoed elsewhere in scripture, such as in:

<sup>20</sup> The stars fought from heaven,  
 from their courses they fought against  
 Sisera (the kings of Canaan opposing the  
 Israelites]. - *Judges 5:20-21*

<sup>25</sup> To whom then will you compare me, or  
 who is my equal? says the Holy One.

<sup>26</sup> Lift up your eyes on high and see:  
 Who created these? He who brings out their  
 host and numbers them, calling them all by  
 name; because he is great in strength, mighty  
 in power, not one is missing. - *Isaiah 40:25-26*

<sup>28</sup> We know that all things work together for  
 good for those who love God, who are called  
 according to his purpose. - *Romans 8:28*