

They Were Very Afraid

Exodus 14:1-10, “Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2 “Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea. 3 For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, ‘They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.’ 4 Then I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.” And they did so. 5 Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people; and they said, “Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?” 6 So he [a]made ready his chariot and took his people with him. 7 Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them. 8 And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness. 9 So the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon. 10 And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.”

Dear heavenly Father, we thank You for this passage You have us in today. Thank You that You cause events to happen. Thank You that they bring You glory and honor. I pray that You would help us to exalt You and honor You for who You are. Pray that You will help us to hear Your word, help us to be sanctified by the preaching of Your word. Amen.

We’re in the midst of the children of Israel leaving Egypt. I thought as we considered this that it was worthwhile to consider what the people were like because we are told later what the people are like that were the Israelites that were leaving Egypt. It’s really easy to look at them and say they were a group of godly people, but that’s not what’s recorded in Scripture. If you want to turn to Ezekiel 20, I want to talk about six verses and as you turn there just remember you have Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and God has confirmed His covenant with them, but then you look at the sons of Jacob and they weren’t all that great. Most of them were very disobedient to God, they weren’t men of faith. Obviously Joseph was, but the other ten of his brothers sold Joseph to Egypt, that’s how they got down there. They sold him as a slave, this isn’t a pattern of great righteousness among the Israelites so when you think of the patriarchs, don’t think their children are much different than the ten. Ezekiel 20:5-11, “you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your

son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." So this is God's attitude towards the Israelites in Egypt, He wants to wipe them off the face of the earth because they aren't righteous people, they are very unrighteous people. As we have been going through Exodus we keep hearing how God hardened Pharaoh's heart so he wouldn't respond, but at the same time understand there's a group of people whose heart is as hard as the Egyptian's heart that He chose to reveal Himself to so they would leave, not so they would have faith. God knew. In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul writes that they didn't have faith. God didn't give enough of a revelation to them so they would repent and turn, but He gave enough of a revelation to them so they would leave the land of Egypt. It's really easy to say here's the wicked Egyptians and the Israelites are the good people. The answer is, that's not right. There are the Egyptians who are the wicked people that God turned over to their wickedness, and then there are the Israelites who are still wicked, but He is constraining them even though their hearts are the same, they went after the same abominations and idols. The righteous one in the story is Moses not the other millions. I'm not saying there weren't any righteous, but in general all the other millions were idolaters just like the Egyptians. That's really the reason I'm talking about this here, as we go forward and we see what happens and we go through all the rebellion in the wilderness and we talk about those stories, let's remember it's because God didn't change them when they were in Egypt, He wanted to wipe them out in Egypt just like He wanted to wipe out the Egyptians. They deserved the same fullness of fury, He just stayed His hand because He didn't want His name to be profaned before the Gentiles. As we think of this it's really easy for us to say the Israelites were the faithful ones, but they weren't faithful when they went into the Promised Land. You need the Holy Spirit to be faithful, you don't just need a people who call themselves the people of God. You actually have to repent and believe the gospel. There is no hint in any of this that the Israelites actually believed the gospel. We shouldn't be surprised when they see Pharaoh's army standing in front of them and they are filled with fear. The fear of Isaac is not their fear, God is not their fear, they fear the world. Through them suffering through the first three plagues, it's written that Egypt was already destroyed and they suffered those plagues. Goshen was destroyed, but yet that wasn't enough to cause them to fear God. They still feared Pharaoh more than God. It's important as we consider them going out into the wilderness that God already knew their heart, they weren't a faithful people. They already knew that all those who were over twenty years of age were going to be killed in the wilderness. He wanted to kill them in Egypt but He chose not to kill them in Egypt because He didn't want His name to be profaned among the Gentiles so He was going to take them out in the wilderness and kill them all out in the wilderness. Remember this is a picture of salvation and a picture of putting to death the old man and all these other pictures, but none of us should think we are different than the Egyptians because the Israelites weren't any different. It's just that God changes them. God made Himself known to them so they would obey and that they would go out from the Egyptians so He could kill them where He wanted to kill them, in the wilderness where people wouldn't say His name was profaned. He separates them in the plagues not so they can repent and believe, He separates them in the plagues so He can take them out. You have this one side where He is fulfilling the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but on this other hand He is going to kill all these people who are

the covenantal people. When they go out with boldness, understand that boldness is boldness that comes from pride.

Verses 1-4, "Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, 'They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.' Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord." And they did so." "Now the Lord spoke to Moses." It seems to happen after they come to the edge of the wilderness so it's worthwhile to kind of understand the geography of the region. We hear these cities and we don't know exactly where they are, we know where cities have been in Egypt and we know the Egyptian terrain. Basically the Nile river runs to the north and south and dumps into the Mediterranean. Even today when there are almost a hundred million people in Egypt, almost everybody lives in the Nile basin because if you live outside of the Nile basin there is no water and no place to grow decent crops. If you go on Google you see that there is nobody that lives except in the Nile basin or right along the Red Sea because the rest of it's not inhabitable. When you think about this, and the distance between the narrowest part of this is thirty miles and then it gets to a hundred miles, but they are going along the Nile where is the only place with cities, they go down and they reach the end of the wilderness. Most people don't then turn off and go into the mountains because it's really easy to get lost in the mountains. There are mountains between the Nile and Red Sea and this is really the Gulf of Suez. The Red Sea splits in two pieces and you have the Sinai peninsula between the two pieces and the one that goes up the one side is the Gulf of Suez. When it goes to a hundred miles it's at the lower tip of the Gulf of Suez. The Red Sea itself is like a hundred miles wide so it's almost certainly when the Red Sea was parted it was down the Gulf of Suez because it was twenty miles and a trip you could make overnight. So at the top it's thirty miles from the Nile to the Red Sea and at the bottom it's about a hundred miles between the Nile so somewhere in that path they are going South and they cut through the mountains. There's really only two places you can do that and if you look at the geography it narrows down where they were. All that to say, they're probably on the Nile in the river basin and God speaks to Moses there. God gives direction to Moses "saying: "Speak to the children of Israel" even as they are following the pillar of cloud and fire. God is letting them know ahead of time what He's going to do. He's telling him ahead of time to understand what the Egyptians are going to do. He's telling them where He's going to lead them and He wants the Israelites to understand this isn't that they're afraid because they don't know what is going to happen, they are afraid even though they know what's going to happen. That's a pretty distinct difference because the one is if God says He is going to destroy the Egyptians and you are filled with fear and scared to death of the Egyptians army, that means you don't have faith because you don't believe the testimony of God. Through this we see the faithlessness of the Israelites so God is testifying to that before He has the army of Egypt come up to them. He is telling them, understand why they are coming up to you, they are coming up to you so I can overthrow them, so I can show that I am great, so that I can destroy the army so the Egyptians fear the Lord. The net of it is that He is testifying to the faithlessness of the Israelites. He tells them "that they turn."

So they are going south of the Nile and that word 'turn' there usually means 'to retreat'. It doesn't mean to return necessarily as much as it means to retreat so it probably to them felt defensive when they made the turn when they did. They went into a position where at first it looks like a good defensive position because it's a gap between mountains. And they are to "camp before Pi Hahiroth," which literally means 'the mount of gorges'. So they are going to a place with mountains on both sides of them. So if you look at a map of Egypt, granted this was 3,400 years ago, but it really narrows down where this could be because there is really only one place that looks like this, where there are two mountains on both sides of it. The place where there is this pass through it, which oddly enough that's where the road is that goes from the Nile delta to the Red Sea, because of course just where they likely would have gone is where they would have built a road because you wouldn't want to go over a four thousand foot mountain when you can go through a twelve hundred foot gorge between the mountains. So that's probably where they went so they would have had a three or four hundred foot mountain on either side of them and they would have gone through the valley between them where you could take several million people through as an army. That 'Pi Hahiroth' means 'the mouth of the gorge' so they were to head to that spot between the mountains. "Between Migdol and the sea." 'Migdol' means 'tower' so the Egyptians probably had a tower where it was the edge of their territory so they would have something that would be able to see if there were armies coming up, so Migdol was probably a fortified tower. It seems that it's probably in the Nile River basin, where Egypt considers the end of their territory, the end of where they were defending so they would have a tower there to watch for armies coming up the logical place to attack Egypt, which is up the Nile River basin. So they had a tower there and so the Gulf of Suez would be on the East side, Migdol would be on the West side at the river basin and then there's the gorge that goes between the two. So that's where they were supposed to turn and that's where they were supposed to camp, "opposite Baal Zephon." The valley that goes through the mountains were probably guarded by Migdol and on the eastern side it was guarded by Baal Zephon, which Baal means 'lord' and Zephon means 'north'. The name basically means Lord of the North because it is pretty far up north of the Gulf of Suez. That's probably where they were guarding because you might go up the Suez and go further north to where the Suez Canal goes up because the land gets easier and you can go to Cairo and invade Egypt. If you want to watch for someone coming that would be a logical place to put them, you put them at the edge of the Nile and at the Gulf of Suez and that would be the defense of Egypt. They were supposed to camp opposite Baal Zephon. You should think of this as a wilderness outpost like we used to have forts on the outskirts of the United States on the western edge of the US so we could see if the Indians were doing anything, and that's probably what these were. They were the wilderness outposts that Egypt had to make sure there wasn't an army trying to come up from Ethiopia or something to attack them. So there you are, you are at Baal Zephon and all of a sudden three million people show up outside your little fort, this was probably quite a shock to them because that would be a very large number of people for the wilderness. So they are to "camp before it by the sea" by fortified work. When you think about this, they probably thought they were retreating through this and taking a defensive position to go through these mountains and now they are through the mountains, there are mountains to the right of them, mountains to the left of them and then they have the Red Sea behind them. A really dumb defensive position because in army movements what you want to do is give a path of escape and where God has taken the Israelites there is no

path for escape. They are camping in front of a fort where they have mountains to the north of them, mountains to the south of them and a big impassible sea behind them. So that's what Pharaoh probably knew about all this because when you think of these cities, these are Egyptians forts. They come down to Migdol and they turn off and they go into the mountains and the people of Migdol, what's the first thing they are going to do? They're going to go tell Pharaoh. The people at Baal Zephon, what is the first thing they are going to do? They're going to go tell Pharaoh. Pharaoh is hearing where these people go so then He is going to respond in a certain way. "For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel." When he hears about what's going on, we don't know how long it is between this, but we know when they are on the other side of the Red Sea it talks about what happens on the 15th of the second month which would be thirty days later. We know what happens thirty days later, but one of the theories is that when God gives them names of places to camp that this is the Sabbath day that they would move and then sleep at night, but they would only camp for a place on the Sabbath day. It seems reasonable, it's definitely not guaranteed, but it's reasonable that this is a couple weeks after the angel passed through Egypt and killed the firstborn sons. This could easily be a couple weeks. If you think about it, Pharaoh lost his son, it takes him a while to recover and mourn his son. Then he finds out what is happening to the Israelites and he sees them go off into the mountains and it makes perfect sense that Pharaoh would get a handle on himself after he grieves the death of his firstborn son and then what do you usually want to do? You want to do something to forget your grief. Pharaoh hears what they are doing and he says, "They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in." Why would they do such a stupid thing? They don't understand what they are doing, they have set themselves up to be recaptured. If they wanted to go to Canaan they should have headed south instead of north, and if they wanted to go where the Promised Land was they should have headed north instead of south. Then they turned off from where the water supply was to head towards the mountain. His response is that they are a confused people, they will be easy to capture and take back. His response is not the God who destroyed his country, the God who killed the firstborn of both man and beast throughout the whole country, he's not confused. He didn't just get to this point and say he didn't know what to do and he should have thought it through. Pharaoh doesn't think of God as directing them, instead he says the people are confused. He's not saying that God is still directing these people, with all the testimony He still doesn't believe in the sovereign God who would guide a people. Instead he says they are making their situation worse, they're going in the wrong direction and then they leave their water supply to head out into the mountains and the wilderness closes them in, they are trapped. The word for 'wilderness' there is really 'pasture land' so the path they were taking was not crop land, it was pasture land. From Pharaoh's perspective, who knows the land and where the Israelites are going, they are going to the Red Sea and there's one pass through the mountain. He knows, he is looking and saying they will have mountains to the north of them, they will have mountains to the south of them and they will have the sea behind them. Now is a good time, they have been trapped by the land. When the Egyptian army comes right behind them there is nowhere they can go and they can easily capture them. "Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart." Lest we forget even as Pharaoh hardened his heart and did this, he still could have remembered this is the God that destroyed my country, this is the God that caused us to have the famine, this is the God who sent a darkness so we couldn't stand up for three days. He didn't say that, instead he says the people

made a stupid mistake and we can capitalize on the stupid mistake. God hardened his heart even with all the testimony, God wouldn't let him see what it meant that there was not a chance for them. God didn't do all this just so He could kill them in the desert. Pharaoh doesn't think that, he thinks He did that so he could recapture them. He did what God said and he let them go, but now he is going to try to get them back. "So that he will pursue them." He is going to chase them down. Even though they have a significant head start and are moving like an army, they still have small children with them, they are still traveling on foot. We know that because they were carrying their provision on their shoulder, it talked about how they had their kneading bowls on their shoulders. They're walking on foot so a disciplined army of men can move a lot faster than this army and they're trapped so where can they go without ships? If he sends horses and chariots he can catch up with them. God says why He will do it, "And I will gain honor over Pharaoh." God let them catch the Israelites so the Egyptians would realize. That word 'honor' means the weightiness, they would realize the weightiness of rejecting God. They would realize the seriousness of pretending like God doesn't judge, that God is not directing all events. Here it says He will gain honor over Pharaoh and I think in this case it includes killing Pharaoh. I know on Tuesday we had this conversation about whether Pharaoh was there or not and we definitely don't know for certain from this passage. I think from Psalm 136:15, "But overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, For His mercy endures forever;" That overthrowing really means to tumble, like to toss around, exactly what would happen if you were drowning. I think that this is saying that He did to Pharaoh what He did to Pharaoh's army. So even though I don't think it's required from this text, he could have organized everything and sent the army on their way, but I think from the verse in Psalm that he went with his army and drowned at sea. God had Pharaoh send his army and I think Pharaoh went with them so that He could teach the Egyptians how serious it is to rebel against God, how serious it is to rebel against Him by saying He's not sovereign, by saying that He can't deliver His people. "And over all his army." Along with all his army. In the next passage you get organizational details, but Pharaoh sent forth not just six hundred chariots, he sent forth his whole army and all of them died in the Red Sea. The chariots and horses may have gone ahead to stop them, but the rest of the army follows, the rest of the army were also raising themselves up against God by going after the people that God had freed. God is doing it, God is causing Himself to be honored "that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord." Pharaoh and his army were going to be destroyed, but God is killing them so the rest of the Egyptians, the other people that remain in the land see that this is the true God. This isn't like the idols they worship or the other abominations they do, this is the true God who controls all things. Even after they go through the nine plagues and even after they go through the plague of the death of the firstborn son, even after they see the mighty hand of God over and over, God says He is going to show it again by destroying all the people that are powerful, all the army of Egypt. "And they did so." The Israelites, Moses is told this by God, Moses is commanded by God, and Moses told the people so they do what he said. Even though they have the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, they still turn and go through this mouth of gorges.

Verses 5-8 "Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people; and they said, "Why have we done this, that we

have let Israel go from serving us?" So he made ready his chariot and took his people with him. Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them. And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness." "Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled." The king of Egypt is still Pharaoh, but when we read this I don't think we should say that he now found out that they left. No, he knew they had left. They asked permission and he sent his servant to tell them to leave. They took all the silver and gold from everyone so when it says the king of Egypt was told that the people had left, the word 'that' shows a causal relationship. I think it would be better translated, 'how they fled'. Now he finds out they went through the river basin, through the mountain gorge, so this is why his thought is that they have been closed up in the wilderness. It's not just that he knew they fled, but he is told how they fled. He was probably also told they went out in great order because it's a miracle that three million people, with all their children and stuff, that they could move out in a day. He probably heard how they were moved in a very organized manner. We don't know if the Egyptians could see the pillar of cloud and fire or not because we know later that it's darkness to them. We don't know if he heard about that, but either way he didn't go, 'Wow, they are marching forth like an army', he just said they made a mistake. He heard what he wanted to hear because God hardened his heart. So he wouldn't have considered the things miraculous, how could they have moved like that and gone forth like that. Instead he sees what he wants to see, they have gone into the mountains and they are trapped. "And the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people." They had been very generous, remember this is only a couple weeks before where they are giving them silver and gold. They come and they ask and the Egyptians give them whatever they want, they plunder the people simply by asking. Anything to get them out of their country because they saw themselves with the death of their firstborn son and they said they were all dead. Because of that their hearts are towards the Israelites because they are just trying to get them out of the land, but how quickly they forget. So all the hearts of the people, they turn against the Israelites "and they said, "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" When you think about it the answer is pretty obvious. They did this because of what it says in Exodus 12:33, "And the Egyptians urged the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste. For they said, "We shall all be dead." They did this because they thought God would kill them all if they didn't. So less than a month before, maybe two weeks, they knew the answer to 'why have we done this?'. Understand this happens all the time, people see something where they say it's God's hand moving and then a week later they will talk themselves out of it. This is really common. You go and you witness to somebody and they're saying, 'Oh! You're right!' and then a week later they say, 'I don't know why I was saying that.' This is really really normal because a man who does not want to believe in God, they will always come up with excuses as to why they don't have to. At that moment after they have seen their own sons die and they go, 'God is going to judge us and kill all of us', they start to say maybe it was a plague that came through quickly because none of the rest of us have died since two weeks ago. They start to explain away the supernatural as natural. This is why Jesus Christ said even if someone rose from the dead and went and told them, they still wouldn't believe. When they saw the person that rose from the dead and when they spoke to them they would believe, but then they would try to find a way to explain it. This is what natural man always does. We shouldn't be surprised that the Egyptians

did this because this is what people always do and if you reject that there is a God who is ruling in heaven and earth, then what you have to do is come up with another explanation. This is why, in every science book in the public school of America, they have evolution. Not because evolution makes sense at all, it's a dumb theory that doesn't make any sense at all, talking about macro evolution not micro evolution, it doesn't match any known facts whatsoever, by it's so widely taught. Why is it so widely taught? Because the other choice has a Creator that you have to answer to. People will always make up natural explanations for the supernatural because they can't accept the fact that there is a God that created them and that they have a duty to answer to. So the Egyptians do what all unbelievers do. At first they say they see God's hand and they are scared to death, then it's gone for two weeks and they're asking why they let them go, they weren't going to die because of that. That's what it looks like to be tossed to and fro, Christians are not supposed to be like that, they're not supposed to be tossed to and fro like the sea, that's a sign of unbelief because unbelief is you see something and you interpret it one way then you decide to believe something else so you keep changing your mind. We're not supposed to be like that. Why have we done this that we have let Israel go from serving us? When they let them go they were thinking they were going to receive the judgement of God if we continue to do this to the Israelites. Now they're not thinking about that anymore, they're thinking that they had these servants that were working for us, these people that we could tell what to do, look at how good they are at serving. Moses tells them to line up into armies and they line up into armies and they are marching like an army. These are very submissive, obedient people. How could we have let such good slaves go? "So he made ready his chariot and took his people with him." Pharaoh personally got his army together to chase the Israelites. When you think of this in the midst of mourning his son, this is what mourning frequently looks like. At first you are overwhelmed and you can't do anything and then you want to do something so you don't think about it all the time. So this matches what the human experience looks like with mourning. So Pharaoh personally gets his chariot and personally goes out and he takes his people with him. That word translated 'people' really means 'tribe'. Such as when God says in Exodus 6:7, "I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians." The idea here is more these are people that are related to one another, these are people that have connection to one another. It's interesting that going through Exodus, up to this point, there's not a single time that this word is used in relationship to the Egyptians, it's always used in relationship to the Israelites. The Israelites are to be one people, they are one tribe. When it says he took his people with him, these are probably the people he would consider the ruling people, the people that were related to him, the people that were associated with him, not the people that were slaves, but the people that were His people. "Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them." As you read this I don't think that it makes much sense the way it's translated. Did he take all the chariots and there were only six hundred or did he take the choice chariots and then there were only six hundred? I think the right interpretation is that Pharaoh took six hundred of the best chariots and he put captains in every one of the best chariots. You should think of this as he had six hundred troops that he is taking so the six hundred best chariots he appoints a captain over them and then all the other chariots go up with them, but it's organized that there are six hundred organized captains. It's organized quickly into six hundred units basically, where there is a captain over every unit.

When you think about it, they're going to approach three million people and it's interesting how with all the protests and riots going on in the streets in America it's easy to see how the police get overwhelmed. It's really easy for them to get overwhelmed unless they just want to start killing people. In America there's a lot of people with guns so that's not a good choice, but they're trying to bring these people back and to get three million people to come back with you, he's not sending a small army, you can't do that with a small army. You have three hundred protesters going against fifty police officers and they can't control three hundred people, it's very difficult for them to control three hundred people. So consider the number of people Pharaoh would have needed to get the Israelites back. So he is organizing a lot of people to go and get them back because it's going to take everybody. This is a bunch of people and just the mass of people means it takes a lot more so the first thing he does is go and get six hundred choice chariots and he appoints captains over each chariot so they can organize a massive army that will go out after the Israelites. We don't know how many, but it has to be a large army to try to bring two to four million people. We don't know the exact number, but we know it's 600,000 men of fighting age. In the six hundred, they're consistent in their translation when they say all the chariots of Egypt, but that word 'chariot' also can mean 'cavalry' so it has a broader meaning in it's usage. So they're translating it parallel, but it could be that six hundred are going up in chariots and other people are going up that are riders and basically anyone that was part of the cavalry, they're all going up and not just those chariots. It makes sense to organize your chariots and your horsemen first because they can move faster and even move to organize the troops from Egypt first. It starts with Pharaoh, he gets everyone organized and they go organize everyone else and then the whole army of Pharaoh, the whole army of Egypt comes down to chase after the Israelites because "the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt." God wants us to remember, when we see these events, to not be like the Egyptians, to not be like the Israelites. Moses is saying the reason this is happening is because this is what God is doing. The Israelites say this isn't God's doing, the army is out there. The Egyptians are saying this isn't God's doings that are firstborn are dead, let's go take our servants back. We're supposed to interpret this and say this is what God is doing, God is the first cause of all things. Even though this matches in a way with normal unbelievers' behavior, we're still supposed to remember this is because God is choosing to do these things and God has judged Egypt in a very unusual way. There's a point where they would remember the judgement and be afraid, even with unbelief like Christ talks about in Matthew 11:21-22, "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you." God's not saying Tyre and Sidon were saved, what He is saying is they would have repented, they would have not been so blinded to continue to do the same things if they saw the miracles of Christ. Here's Egypt, they've seen the miracles of God, they've seen the judgement poured out so God hardens their heart because they're still people that walk in fear of God even though they don't believe in God, they don't have salvific faith. "And he pursued the children of Israel." He organized his army and followed after them as quickly as he could."And the children of Israel went out with boldness." To me this is very interesting where the statement is thrown in because it doesn't make sense that they went out with great boldness if you really understand what it means because the word there is really two words which means, 'high hand'. They went out

with high handedness, which in a sense is boldness, but if you remember God keeps saying it's with My mighty hand, with My mighty arm that I am going to bring you out of Egypt. That's not what the Israelites are thinking, they're thinking it's with their high hand and their mighty hands that they deliver themselves even though they had nothing to do with the plagues. When you think of them going out with great boldness, they are going out thinking a lot of themselves. They didn't go out in the middle of the night, they went out in the middle of the day. They didn't go out empty-handed, they went out by knocking on people's doors asking for things and they gave it to them. They are looking at themselves and thinking how great they are. The Egyptians were pleading with them to take whatever they had, just leave so that puffs up the Israelites. The same language is only used in a couple other places, but one of them is in Deuteronomy and the song of Moses that uses exactly the same language. We know what this is talking about because in Romans 11, Paul uses this to say it's about Israel being judged. Deuteronomy 32:21-27, "They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God;

They have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled in My anger, And shall burn to the lowest hell; It shall consume the earth with her increase, And set on fire the foundations of the mountains. 'I will heap disasters on them; I will spend My arrows on them. They shall be wasted with hunger, Devoured by pestilence and bitter destruction; I will also send against them the teeth of beasts, With the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword shall destroy outside; There shall be terror within For the young man and virgin, The nursing child with the man of gray hairs. I would have said, "I will dash them in pieces, I will make the memory of them to cease from among men," Had I not feared the wrath of the enemy, Lest their adversaries should misunderstand, Lest they should say, "Our hand is high; And it is not the Lord who has done all this." '

" Understand that's the same thing He says in Ezekiel 20, I'm not going to destroy all them even though they are like this, because I don't want the Gentiles, I don't want the Egyptians to look at them and say God can't deliver His people. Unless they should have a high hand like the Israelites had a high hand. If Israel got destroyed, the Gentiles, the Romans would say to look at how great they are, we have a high hand. This is not a compliment to Israel when it says they went out with boldness. They went out with a high hand saying how great they were just like the Gentiles would if God had completely destroyed all of Israel. Then they follow on and say it's not the Lord who has done all this. They have a high hand because they are saying it's not God who did this, which explains why when the army appeared, their response is they were scared to death because they didn't say it's God who freed them, they said it was them who freed them. It was by their mighty hand they had been delivered from Egypt. To have a high hand is not just to have boldness, there's a very valid Christian boldness. We're supposed to have humble boldness, we're supposed to be willing to say we know truth and have been given truth. We're supposed to have that boldness, but we're never supposed to say it's not God who has done this, we are always supposed to say it is God who has done this. To have a high hand is to say it's our hand that did this. That's what the Israelites were saying. They're no different than the Egyptians, their hearts are the same. God is just showing mercy to the one and He's not showing mercy to the other. It's a difference in treatment, not the difference in their faith, not a difference in their understanding of who God is. The Israelites are leaving Egypt thinking nobody

can stop them and they're not considering it's the Lord who has done all this anymore than the Egyptians are thinking it's the Lord who has done all this. Notice also they're going with high handedness and saying to look at what they have done. Moses is saying, understand Pharaoh is going to come and try to kill you, but God is going to exalt Himself, He is going to show His honor on Pharaoh and his army and still they hear that from Moses and what's their response? It is by our strength that we've done this, not by God's strength. The Egyptians and the Israelites are no different. Here in their pride, both parties, the Israelites and Egyptians, both of them have forgotten that it's God who is doing all this, that God's name is being exalted.

Verses 9-10, "So the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon. And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord." "So the Egyptians pursued them" just as Moses had said. The Egyptians saw they were trapped, they had mountains on two sides and the Red Sea on their back. They thought they could trap them and take them back as slaves. "All the horses and chariots of Pharaoh." All the leaders of the army, all the people because the leaders are usually on horses and chariots, especially the wealthy would be the ones who had the horses after the plague of pestilence, the plague of hail, the firstborn of all the horses would have died. They would have had a lot of livestock to die, but there is still a group with horses and chariots. They wouldn't have been as numerous as they were before, but there would have still been enough. "His horsemen and his army," so it wasn't just those that had chariots, but also had horses and all the foot soldiers, everybody participated, everybody in the army was going so God could show the completeness of His judgement on Egypt by having their whole army swallowed up. "And overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon." Again, Pi Hahiroth is the gap between the mountains so he catches them camping there with the Red Sea. You have the mountains on either side, they had done what Moses told them, they had gone through the gap and now they are camping with their back towards the Red Sea. They don't see it as a trap because they are looking at it with a high hand and asking what Egypt can do to them. "And when Pharaoh drew near." They are thinking very highly of themselves until Pharaoh draws near and they see the entire Egyptian army in front of them. Even though they were told this by Moses and what God was going to do but they didn't believe. The Israelites here do not have faith, they don't believe God and what He said. So when they see the Egyptian army they don't say this will be fun to watch, God is going to prove to Himself that He has honor over Pharaoh and his whole army. If they had faith they could have sat there and said this was a good thing, it's coming to pass just as God has told us. Instead that's not their response. When Pharaoh draws near, "the children of Israel lifted their eyes." Their hands were high but their eyes were down and they lifted their eyes "and behold." That word 'behold' means they are very surprised. God told Moses, Moses told Israel, but yet the Israelites are very surprised that it's coming to pass just as God said it would. They shouldn't have been surprised, they were told, but they were surprised because of their lack of faith. They were surprised because they didn't believe the promises of God, they were surprised because even though they had seen the ten plagues, even though they were released, even though everything came to pass that Moses had said,

they still didn't believe. Just remember the difference between them and Moses. Moses believed because he sees the burning bush that isn't consumed. They see all these plagues and they don't believe, that's because it's not by reason we believe, it's by the gift of God. They're surprised. Do you believe God and His word or do you have to see before you respond? We're supposed to seek God in His word and take that. That's what it means to walk by faith and not by sight. They were walking by sight. It's clear we are to take God's word, do God's word, and not say, 'But wait, can He cause this to happen?' If we're surprised when things happen that God says in His word will happen, that means we are walking by sight and not by faith. We need to obey not to see what the results will be, we need to obey and have peace because we know God is sovereign over all things and in control of all things. Behold, "the Egyptians marched after them." That word translated 'march' isn't inherently military, it's more that they drew near to them. They see the army in the distance and it keeps coming towards them. They're surprised and "they were very afraid." God had said He was going to have them come after them, He was going to prove His might against them. That's why they are coming and their response isn't to trust God, their response is to be very afraid. Granted, they are an unarmed people, but they can't remember what Moses just told them and they couldn't remember it but they didn't believe it in the first place. Knowing God's word isn't enough, you have to believe it and trust it, you have to trust that God can cause what He says will come to pass to come to pass. Their fear was not of God. If their fear was of God they would have obeyed. Their fear was of the Egyptians. They didn't remember what was going to happen because they didn't say God was the one they should fear and instead they said they should fear the Egyptians. Don't fear the world, that's a sign of faithlessness. Fearing God is what's necessary. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. They didn't fear God. They didn't need to wait until they were out in the wilderness grumbling and complaining. You don't need to wait until then, you know now that even though they had these ten plagues, even though they marched out and pillaged the Egyptians, they didn't have faith because God said this is what's going to happen and they said it couldn't happen then they were surprised when it came to pass. "And the children of Israel cried out to the Lord." No longer were they saying they had a high hand and how powerful they were, now they are saying they need God. No longer are they trusting in their own strength because their strength couldn't match the strength of Pharaoh and his army. Remember what God did, He didn't have them go the shorter way and the way that made sense because it was headed to the Israelites and they would have gotten scared and begun to flee. If they got confronted by the Philistines they would have fled back to Egypt and God knew their heart. God puts them in the place where there are mountains to the north of them, mountains on the side of them and the Red Sea behind them. He puts them in a place where they can't flee anywhere and God knows their heart and knows they don't fear God, they fear the Egyptians. Notice that they cried out. That's the book of Judges, things go really bad and they cry out. That's a sign of unbelief. If that's the only time you cry out to God is when things are going really bad, don't think that's a sign of faithfulness, that's a sign of unbelief. If you only say God matters when you are in trouble then God is your servant, you are not a servant of God. You have it flipped upside down. The Israelites were fine when things were going well, they said they didn't need God and when things go badly they say they need God. They're unbelievers, don't be like them. Don't cry out just in time of need, that's the testimony of Israel and it causes great judgements to come on them over and over and over again. Instead we should cry out to God continually.

Applications:

1. We need to be a people that are willing to be led by God. I don't mean that by saying it's some bizzare feeling you have in your heart and you pursue that and say you're being led by God. In Nigeria you should hear the things people are being led to do. I hear people being led to sin all the time because they say it's God. The way you know it isn't of God is that God doesn't contradict Himself. The Holy Spirit came so that He could say and teach the things that Christ said so we can always check every spirit, whether it's of God, by asking if it lines up with the commandments of God. Let's not go too far the other way and say God doesn't lead His people. God still leads His people through convicting us of sin, through guiding us towards truth, through all kinds of things God, through His Spirit, guides His people. We need to be a people that are willing to be led by God. Do you read His word and don't say it's interesting, but ask how you practice it? It's the difference between being a hearer and a doer. They didn't really want to be led by God, they just didn't really have a choice. That's not what we are supposed to be like. We're supposed to desire for God to show us what to do, we're supposed to cry out in our prayers for God to show us what to do.
2. We need to be a stable people, not a people who change their minds frequently. Ephesians 4:11-15, " And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—" The Egyptians were like children, they see their firstborn son die and they tell the Israelites to take whatever they want, just go. Then a couple weeks later and they wonder why they let them go. That's what it looks like to be tossed to and fro. The Israelites were no better, they were like children too. One minute they're following God with great boldness saying how powerful they are, and then the next minute the army appears and they are saying they're all going to die. Both of those are signs of unbelief. When we're tossed around in our doctrine like children, when we are tossed around with a new thing we hear and we follow after that, if we keep anchored and grounded on the word of God and His commandments and doing them as it says in the Sermon on the Mount, then we won't be tossed to and fro. This is what it means to be a believer, it's that you don't get tossed to and fro. The Israelites were unbelievers, the Egyptians were unbelievers. Do you think Moses was there crying out about the armies being there? No. There is no reason to think he did that when God tells him to stick his staff in the Red Sea and the sea will split because there is no testimony that Moses is saying he's so scared because God had already told him and he believed. He had faith so he didn't get tossed around. Faith means you stop getting tossed around. We're supposed to ever be increasing in our understanding of God's truth which makes us ever more stable. That's why He gave teachers, that's why He gave

preachers, apostles, evangelists. That's why He causes the church to build up, so we become more and more stable.

3. Recognize that given enough time, everybody will come up with natural explanations about everything that happens. Our firstborn son died, that was God moving through the camp and two weeks later they said God couldn't have done that, it must have just been some weird disease. We don't know that that happened, but we know they completely changed their position which means they must have been thinking about the problem. This always happens, when you have those conversations and the next week they come back and they're in the same place. I got them to agree and now they're back to the same place. Understand that's a sign of unbelief because you can always create other explanations. Evolution, the reason it is taught everywhere is because people are trying to explain why there isn't a Creator because then they have to say sodomy is wrong. They don't want to say there is a Creator that created them with certain responsibilities and duties so what they have to do is come up with some other theory. People will always explain the supernatural with the natural if given enough time.
4. Where's your fear? God was the fear of Isaac, Isaac had faith. Pharaoh's army was the fear of the Israelites, the Israelites did not have faith. Who you fear is a testimony of what you truly believe and who you truly believe is God. If you're fearing sickness then you think God is sickness and that He is not over sickness. If you fear growing old, you think that growing old and time is God and not God. If you fear, whatever, put it in the place, if you fear anything other than God, you are exalting that above God. When God is sovereign above all those things, there is not one of them that is not outside of His control. The Israelites' fear was of Pharaoh's army and that testified to their unbelief. What is your fear?
5. Related to that, if you wait to say that you fear God when things are going badly, don't think He is your fear. He's just the emergency chute that you wear on your back that you pull when you need it. If He is your fear you fear Him all the time and you don't wait until things are going wrong. Make sure He is your fear and you cry out to Him, not just when things go badly in your eyes. That's the picture of instability, you cry out to God when things are going bad, you forget about Him when things are going well, that's Israel and they were unbelievers. Make sure you're not doing that. That's what we are warned about in the book of Judges, make sure you're not doing that.
6. Remember that regardless of what odds look like in human terms, the majority of the power is always in God's hand. God plus one is always the majority, even without the one. The whole world can rise up against God and it can do nothing, nothing unless God directed it to. When you go and you look and say, 'There's a million man army about to attack us', you're not supposed to say, 'Oh no! What are we going to do?' You say God means it for good and that's what He has said in His word. It is good for His church, good for His people and He will cause it to work for good, always. God is always the majority. The infinite God beats out anyone that rises up against Him. They couldn't remember that. Make sure that you remember that, that's how people persist in the

midst of persecution, is that they are always on the majority side if they are following God, they're always on the winning side.

Oh Lord God we do thank You for this passage. We pray that You give us wisdom for the things we are to take from it and apply to our lives. You give us Your words so we learn and grow. You give us Your word so we become more stable in these things and we're not tossed to and fro. Even as we see the Israelites and their response, let us make sure that we're not like them. Work in our hearts so You make us more stable, so You make us not fearing the world and the things of the world, but fearing You, for that is where peace and joy are, trusting that even if there is an army standing in front of us that wants to kill us, obedience to You is the side that will be victorious. Lord we pray that You work in us to understand these things, internalize them so we practice them. In Jesus Christ's name we pray, amen.