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The LORD Will Fight For You, You Need Only To Be Still

14: 1-14

The LORD will fight for you, you need only to be still **DIG**: Why did God have the people backtrack from Migdol so soon after their departure? What was the strategy behind that? How does Pharaoh end up showing his true colors? How equipped are the Egyptians? The Israelites? How did the Israelites react?

REFLECT: We sometimes chide the Egyptians for not believing in the God of the Israelites even after all they had seen Him do. It seems incredible to us that they were so stubborn. Yet, how stubborn can we sometimes be, even after all we have seen God do in *our* lives? Has this been true for you? How so?

At the end of **Chapter 13** we see **the Israelites** quickly fleeing from **Egypt**. They have reached the very edge of the wilderness and are about to enter it for **their** final escape from the land of death to go to the Land of promise. They were carrying **Joseph's bones** with them as a reminder that the promise of **Genesis 50** had been fulfilled. Not only that, **God** was leading them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, **His Sh'khinah glory**. **The Hebrews** had all the evidence **they** needed to believe that **God** was protecting **them** and that **they** would soon succeed in **their** escape from **Egypt**. But soon that assurance would be shattered!²⁵⁵

They were on the brink of escape when **ADONAI** said to **Moses**, "**Tell the Israelites to turn back** (that is northward toward Rameses, or the general direction that they had come) **and encamp near Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the Sea of Reeds, directly opposite** (or east of) **Baal Zephon (14:1-2)**. Archeologists have discovered the remains chariot wheels at Ezion-Geber at the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba (**to see link click Cf - Moses Took the Bones of Joseph With Him**). King Solomon also built ships at Ezion-Geber, which is near Elath in Edom, on the shore of **the Sea of Reeds (First Kings 9:26)**. **Amenhotep**

He had **his** spies looking on the scene to see where **the Israelites** were going and **he** expected them to move up the coastal route and through the land of the Philistines. But when **the Jews** doubled back, **Pharaoh** must have thought that **Isra'el's God** was a poor general because **He** took them to a place where there was no retreat. **Pharaoh** thought that **the Israelites were wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert (14:3)**. **Pharaoh** concluded that **he** had the advantage and **he** decided to attack.

To add fuel to the fire, **God** said that **He** would **harden Pharaoh's heart**, so that **he** would **pursue the Hebrews** for revenge. Why did **God** do that? Because **He** wanted to **gain glory for Himself through Pharaoh and all his army**, so that **the Egyptians will know that He is God (14:4a)**. **God** was not through with **the king of Egypt**. **So the Israelites turned back** and were trapped **(14:4b)**. Escape seemed out of the question and **Pharaoh** smelled **his** revenge, but **God** was still in control of the situation. It was **He** who exposed **Isra'el** to attack, and it was **He** who had hardened **Pharaoh's heart**. Like a master chess player, **God** induced **Pharaoh** to move as a **king** into checkmate, and **he** didn't even realize it.²⁵⁹

The scene now changes to **the Egyptian** palace. **Pharaoh** was probably informed immediately of **the Israelites'** departure from Rameses on the fifteenth day of the month. But no doubt **he** did not react immediately because **the Egyptians** were burying **their** dead **(Numbers 33:3-4)** and because **Moses** had repeatedly referred to a three-day journey **(3:18, 5:3, 8:27)**. **But on the twenty-first of Nisan, the seventh day of the Passover, he** realized **the Israelites** departure was not temporary. Therefore, **Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds** and pursued **the fugitives**.²⁶⁰ **When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials** (the very **ones** who urged **Pharaoh** to **let the people go** in **10:7**) **changed their minds about them** and said: **What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services (14:5)!** **They** began to realize the sudden economic disaster that the loss of **the slaves** would bring. Memories are short, aren't they?

So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. He took six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them and pursued the fugitives **(14:6-7)**. The word **officers** literally means *third men*. Usually each **chariot** carried two men, the charioteer and the warrior. Sometimes, however, there was a third man, who directed the two others. The strength of **Pharaoh's** chariot force is seen in the fact that besides the usual pair of men, **he** had a *third man* in each **chariot**. Thus one

might act as a charioteer, one as a warrior, and one as shield-bearer.²⁶¹ According to the TaNaKh, six hundred was a standard military unit (**Judges 18:11-17; First Samuel 13:15, 14:2**). **ADONAI hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites, who were marching out boldly (14:8)**. Things were progressing according to **God's** plan.

The Egyptians - all Pharaoh's horses, chariots, charioteers and troops - pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the Sea of Reeds near Pi Hahiroth, opposite of Baal Zephon (14:9). The rabbis teach that Baal Zephon was the only Egyptian idol that God did not destroy, and that Pharaoh was deluded enough to think that the *Baal of the North* could take on God. Satan is always lurking behind those who think they can **take on God** and win. He lied to the angels in heaven who rebelled and tried to **take on God (Revelation 12:7-9)**. Before the Flood, he tried to **take on God** by having demon-possessed men marry women to produce a contaminated human race that could not be saved (**Genesis 6:1-6**). He tried to **take on God** in the desert (**Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13**), and on the cross, where seven times he chided **Christ** through others to come down and save **Himself (Matthew 27:40, 42, 44; Mark 15:20; Luke 23:35, 37, 39)**. Never giving up, he will even try to **take on God** during the Great Tribulation (see the commentary on **Revelation Ex - The Eight Stage Campaign of Armageddon**). And even after the thousand year millennial Kingdom, he will deceive **the nations of the earth** for the last time before being **thrown into the lake of burning sulfur to be tormented for ever and ever (Revelation 20:7-10)**. None of these attempts work any better than charging through the **Sea of Reeds** did for **Pharaoh**. But it is amazing that humans, directed by Satan, continue to try to **take on God**.

As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them as a single, unified force. Contrary to **God's** plan, **the Israelites** were expecting a carefree trip out of **Egypt**. The last thing they expected was to pause for a moment **by the Sea of Reeds**, and then turn around and see **the Egyptians** in hot pursuit.²⁶² **They were terrified and cried out to ADONAI (14:10)**. I suppose it is hard to put ourselves in their shoes. **They** had seen **God** do so much for **them**, and it is hard not to be very impatient with **them**. Didn't **they** realize **He** had brought **them** that far and would see it through? Isn't that smug and comfortable from our vantage point? And yet at the same time, it must have been terrifying to see the most powerful army in the world bearing down on **them**. **They** were unarmed and hardly ready for battle.

Then **they** sarcastically recalled what **they** had **said to Moses** earlier: **Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die?** The great pyramids stood as monuments to the burial places of kings. And mummies were all over **Egypt**; it was the great burying ground.²⁶³ **What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt?** During the year of the plagues, **didn't we say to you, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'?** **It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert (14:11-12).** **Their** response was more of a temper tantrum than a cry for help. At the first sign of trouble, **they** were willing to march straight back **to Egypt**, ignoring the mighty acts of **God** that had brought them out of it in the first place. With **Pharaoh** in hot pursuit, **they** did not give a second thought to the promises that **God** had made to **Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**. **They** still had not learned **God's** purpose for bringing them out of **Egypt** was not merely to save *them*, but to save *all* mankind, past, present and future.²⁶⁴ It is sobering to realize that we have the same fallen nature within us also.



Perhaps one of the most important verses in the Scriptures is found in **Exodus 14:13**. This is **the Lord's** introduction to one of the greatest and most famous miracles in the Bible. The rest of the TaNaKh abounds with references to this miraculous crossing of the Sea of Reeds. Every year **the children of Isra'el** and Jewish and Gentile Messianic believers celebrate **the Passover**. It is also alluded to several times in the B'rit Chadashah. It is the event that is coupled with the slaying of the Passover lamb, which together, make up **Irsra'el's** redemption (see **Bz - Redemption**). Both compliment each other. Both are necessary to complete any discussion concerning redemption.

Moses' response was **threefold**: First, **he** said: **Do not be afraid**. **Moses** was not saying, "There, there. Don't worry. **God** will take care of you. You'll see. Be calm." Rather, this is a terse, impatient command on **Moses'** part. In Hebrew, the last part of the verse is only two words, which are best translated as: *Be quiet!* Or even

better: *Shut up!* This was not a word of comfort but an angry denouncement of **Isra'el's** paper-thin faith.²⁶⁴ The only cure for fear is to remain fixed on **God**. To be occupied with our circumstances and surroundings is fatal to our peace. Look at **Peter** when **he** tried to walk on the water to **the Messiah**. While **he** kept **his** eyes on **God** **he** was safe, but as soon as **he** became occupied with the winds and waves, **he** began to sink.²⁶⁵

Secondly, **stand firm and you will see the salvation** (Hebrew: *yeshuah*), **ADONAI will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again (14:13). Moses** ignored the murmurings of **Isra'el** and refused to go along with it. **He** was saying, "Hold your ground." **Moses** was probably telling **the Hebrews** to choose between **God** and **Amenhotep II**. How long would they waver between the two? This is also our challenge. We need to remember that **He** will supply our every need (**Philippians 4:19**), make a way of escape from every temptation (**1 Cor 10:13**), and do for us exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.²⁶⁶

Lastly, **ADONAI will fight for you**. A major feature of **the Exodus** from **Egypt** is the fact that it was carried out totally by **YHVH**. All **Isra'el** had to do was simply to walk in **it**. **He** would **fight for them** because it was a Holy War (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Ag - The Problem of Holy War in the TaNaKh**). Holy War differed from other kinds of war in that Ha'Shem Himself led the nation into battle. In this case, the **only** thing **the Israelites needed** was to **be still (Exodus 14:14, 15:3; Nehemiah 4:20; Ps 25:1)**. What did **the Israelites** contribute to **their** salvation? Nothing. **They** were not called upon to prepare defenses or to organize to fight. **They** applied the blood to the door frames of **their** houses and stood back (**12:22**). **They** were mere spectators and **God** would take care of the rest. It is the same for us. All attempts at self-help must end, and all activities of the flesh must stop. I know it is easy to say, but hard to do.

These are three things that you and I should still be doing today. First, we should not be afraid. It is with fear that Satan tries to get the upper hand in your life. Secondly, **stand firm** by putting **on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand (Ephesians 6:13)**. And lastly, you need to understand the incredible news that **God** has for you today. **God will fight for you; you need only to be still**. Oh, the amazing comfort of it, and yet the amazing frustration of it. How often do we want to help? To draw our sword and get



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where the action is. Then **God** just has to unravel the mess we've gotten ourselves into.