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Then Moses and the Israelites Sang This Song **15: 1-18**

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song DIG: Pharaoh boasted: I will pursue the Hebrews, and I will overtake them. I will divide the spoils and I will gorge myself on them. I will draw my sword and my hand will destroy them (15:9). Read Psalm 50:3 and contrast it with Psalm 50:21, Isaiah 42:14 and Exodus 15:13 and 16. What moves God from silence to action?

REFLECT: How is God's wrath compatible with His unfailing love? How else could God have achieved His loving purpose for Isra'el, other than destroying the Egyptians? What would be the most effective means for God to deal with the evil threatening *your* life? For whom would that be painful? Fearful? Troublesome? Loving?

Hebrew poetry is not based upon rhyme or rhythm, but is based upon parallelism. If you have two lines of poetry, the second line would refer back to, or complete, the first line. If you have line number three, line number four refers back, or completes the thought of line number three. In addition, Hebrew poetry is not divided up into verses, but is divided up into what are called strophes. **There are three strophes in the Song of Moses, verses 2-6, verses 7-11, and verses 12-16.** ADONAI appears at the end of each strophe. It should also be noted that a simile appears at the end of each strophe: **like a stone** at the end of **verse 5**; **like lead** at the end of **verse 10**; **as a stone** at the end of **verse 16**, to describe the destruction of **the Egyptians**. These three strophes are followed by an **epilogue** in **verses 17 and 18.**²⁷⁷



Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to God. After seeing the bodies of **the Egyptians lying dead on the shore of the Red Sea (14:30)**, it seems that the people immediately and spontaneously broke into **song**. Before **the Israelites** joined in with **Moses** to **sing** their **song** of redemption, they were singing the blues, the desert blues. Before crossing **the Red Sea**, they sang the blues long and hard, and they would return to the desert blues again because it will be their theme **song** as they travel throughout the desert for forty years. But for a time, however, they would **sing** this song of redemption.²⁷⁸

I will sing to ADONAI, for His is highly exalted. The horse and the rider He has hurled into the Red Sea (15:1). This was the introduction, which contained the theme of the **song**. The phrase: **I will sing**, frequently begins hymns of victory and praise in the Bible (**Judges 5:3; Psalms 89:1, 101:1, 108:1**).²⁷⁹ It was a hymn of praise and honor to **God**. Hymns of the ancient Near East commonly open with such adoration, but usually they are in praise of an earthly king; but here, only **God** was honored. Sung by the men, it was repeated by the women led by Miriam (**15:20-21**).

The first strophe is in verses 2-6 and emphasizes the strength of God.

The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise Him, my father's God, and I will exalt Him (15:2). Divine **strength** and spiritual **song** are inseparable. In a future time, **Nehemiah** would say: **The joy of ADONAI is my strength (Nehemiah 8:10)**. He was the same **God** that appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This verse is quoted in **Psalm 118:14** and **Isaiah 12:2**.

ADONAI is a warrior; ADONAI is His name (15:3). This is the first overt statement of **God** as a man of war in the Bible, but the theme of **God** as a **warrior** will be repeated throughout the Hebrew Scriptures (see the commentary on **Genesis, to see link click Ec - During the Night Abram Divided His Men to Attack**). **He upholds those who cling to Him, and He aids them against their enemies. He fights not with weapons of war, but by means of His name (Second Samuel 17:45)**. Because **He** is holy, **He** hates sin; because **He** is righteous, **He** must punish it. This is something that we should rejoice in.²⁸⁰

Pharaoh's chariots and his army, He has hurled into the Red Sea. The best of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea (15:4). The fate of **the Egyptian** army is detailed here.

The deep waters have covered them; they sank to the depths like a stone (15:5). **The deep** is the same word found in beginning of the Bible. **Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep (Genesis 1:2)**.

Your right hand, ADONAI, was majestic in power. Your right hand, ADONAI, shattered the enemy (15:6). The second line aids our understanding of the first line. As a result, **God's** destruction of **the Egyptian** army explains what is meant by **His right hand** being **majestic in power**. The Jewish culture places great importance in the **right hand**. It symbolizes power, superiority and strength. The Hebrew word **ADONAI** appears at the end of each strophe. This serves as a transition to the second strophe.

The people of **Isra'el** were celebrating **their** deliverance. **The Egyptians** represented the world, slavery and hopelessness to them, but they had been redeemed. That is what their **song** was all about.

The second strophe is in verses 7-11 and emphasizes the power of God.

In the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who oppressed you. You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble (15:7). The second strophe begins in much the same way as the first. In fact, the term **majesty** is a noun derivative of the verb *to rise up*, which is translated as: **I will exalt Him (15:2)**. The simile, **it consumed them like stubble**, is a frequent saying in the TaNaKh describing the end of the wicked (**Isaiah 40:24, 41:2; Jeremiah 13:24; Psalm 83:12**). What makes this figure so moving is the fact that **stubble** was what **the Hebrews** had to gather to make bricks in **Egypt. So the people scattered all over Egypt to gather stubble to use for straw (5:12)**. Now **the Egyptian** army was consumed like **stubble!**²⁸¹

By the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up. The surging waters stood firm like a wall; the deep waters congealed in the heart of the Red Sea (15:8). The word **blast** is actually a common Hebrew word for *wind*. Surely it refers to the east wind from **14:21**. The division of **the waters** was not a natural phenomenon, it came from the **nostrils of God**.

The enemy boasted, 'I will pursue, I will overtake them. I will divide the spoils; I will gorge myself on them. I will draw my sword and my hand will destroy them' (15:9). The **Ruach ha-Kodesh** gives us some insight into the thinking and feelings of **the Egyptians**. In **their** boasting, **five verbs** appear in rapid succession. You can sense that **they** believe that **their** pursuit would be payback for the horror of the plagues and the loss of **their** first-born sons. The confidence of **the Egyptians** as they pursued the people of **Isra'el**, oozing of vengeance and anger, was very striking indeed. **Their** violent intentions, however, were never realized as **God** stopped **them** cold in the water.

But you blew with your breath, and the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the

mighty waters (15:10). With one breath of **His** mouth **God** overthrew the proud **foe** in the waves of **the sea**.²⁸² The verb **sank** is a *hapax legomenon* (a word occurring only once in the Scriptures). It is possibly related to the verb from the same root that means *to be or to grow dark*. **Darkness** in the TaNaKh can represent being near death (**Psalm 102:11, 109:23**); therefore, the phrase could be translated: *They sank into the darkness of the abyss*. **The waters** are described as being **mighty**. The word actually means *majestic or magnificent*. As a result, the waters reflect the character of **the Creator (Psalm 18:1, and especially Psalm 99:3-4)**.

The rabbis teach that the name Maccabee is an acronym of the verse: Mi kamokha ba'elim ADONAI, "Who is like You, ADONAI, among the mighty," the Maccabean battle-cry to motivate the troops (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ HJ - Then Came Hanukkah at Jerusalem, and It Was Winter** for the background on Hanukkah). **Who is like you - majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders (15:11)?** The gods of **Egypt** had been defeated; none of the gods of other nations could do what **He** had done. As a result, the second strophe ends in the same way as the last verse in the first one, with praise and worship of **God**. The parallel nature of the two verses is seen in the fact that the word **majestic** is the focal point of both. Although two rhetorical questions are asked, no answer is really expected. **God** has no rivals. **ADONAI** appears at the end of each strophe. This serves as a transition to the third strophe.

The third strophe is in verses 12-16 and emphasizes the consequences of Isra'el's deliverance by God.

You stretch out your right hand, and the earth swallowed them (15:12). **God** had commanded **Moshe** to **stretch out his right hand over the sea (14:16)**, and now **He** does the same. Since it was actually **the sea** that **swallowed up the Egyptians**, the word **earth** sometimes means she'll or the place of the dead (**Psalm 63:9, 71:20; Isaiah 14:9, 29:4 and Jonah 2:6**). So the end result of **God's** work was that **He swallowed** the snakes of **the Egyptian magicians (7:14)**. Literature of the ancient Near East often uses the act of **swallowing** to be a sign of death.

In Your unfailing love You will lead the people You have redeemed. In Your strength you will guide them gently to Your holy dwelling (15:13). To be **redeemed** is to be given a second chance, when a second chance is impossible. As a result of **His unfailing love**, **God** would lead **His people to His holy dwelling**. The Hebrew word for **unfailing love** points to **God's** covenant loyalty. **He is the Promise Keeper**, and **He** will keep **His** promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It was as if they were already in the

Promised Land, and as far as **God** was concerned, **they** were there because **He** was going to take **them** there. **God's holy dwelling** would first be built at Shiloh in central Canaan (**Jeremiah 7:12**), but would eventually be the Temple in Jerusalem (**Psalm 76:2**), the **place He** would **choose** through the sacrifice of Isaac (**Genesis 22:14**).

**The nations will hear and tremble;
anguish will grip the people of Philistia.**

The chiefs of Edom will be terrified,

the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling,

The people of Canaan will melt away (15:14-15). Here **Moses** taught **the Israelites** to look at **their** circumstances from **God's** point of view, rather than **their** own. The battle is **the Lord's**; hence, there is no struggle (**Psalm 2**). The end is never in doubt.²⁸³ The nations named here are listed roughly in the order along the route that **Isra'el** would eventually follow on their way to the Promised Land. All four nations became infamous enemies of **Isra'el**. But here, we are told of **their** reaction when **they** heard what **God** did to **the Egyptian** army. **The Canaanites** never forgot how **God** rescued **the Israelites** through **the Red Sea (Joshua 2:9-11, 24, 5:1)**. After forty years of wilderness wanderings, when **Joshua** and the nation of **Isra'el** crossed over into **the Canaanite** territory, **they** still feared **God**. Rahab was an example of godly fear of **ADONAI**, as she became a convert to Judaism.

Terror and dread will fall upon them.

By the power of your arm they will be as still as a stone;

Until your people pass by, ADONAI,

until the people you bought pass by (15:16). How utterly futile **their** efforts would be. And how equally futile it is for *our* enemies, be they human or demonic, to **separate us from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 8:38-39)**. **ADONAI** appears at the end of each strophe. This serves as a transition to the epilogue.

The three strophes are followed by a short epilogue in verses 17 and 18.

You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance, the place, ADONAI, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, ADONAI, your hands established (15:17). What confidence do these words bring! The epilogue looks even further into the future when **God** will bring them into the Land, the place where **He** will establish **His** own **sanctuary**. **The mountain** is obviously Mount Zion, where the temple will ultimately be built. What **God** had accomplished at **the Red Sea** was the guarantee to **Isra'el** that **He** would finish what **He** had started.²⁸⁴

ADONAI will reign, for ever and ever (15:18). The song ends where it began, with **God** being lifted up. **He** is the center of the hymn. Everything begins and ends with **Him**. **In the future, all will acknowledge His kingdom.**

After crossing **the waters**, the victorious **people** of **Isra'el** stood **on the shore** of **the Red Sea** and **sang a song** of deliverance and triumph. That event was a foreshadowing of the victory of **God's people** at the end of time. In the book of **Revelation**, the apostle **John** saw a vision, saying: **I saw in heaven another great and marvelous thing: seven angels with the last seven plagues - the last, because with them God's wrath**, or the Great Tribulation, **is completed. And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb:**

**Great and marvelous are Your deeds.
ADONAI, God of heaven's armies.
Just and true are Your ways,
King of the ages.
Who will not fear You, ADONAI,
and bring glory to Your name?
For You alone are holy.
All nations will come
and worship before You,
for Your righteous acts have been revealed (Revelation 15:1-4).**

Thus **John** sees a **sea of glass mixed with fire**, and on that seashore stands a **victorious** multitude. They are playing **harps** and singing **the Song of Moses**. Certainly this vision is based on the story of the drowning of **Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea**. It is exciting to note that the substance of **the song** is the same in **Exodus** as it is in **Revelation**: the glorification of **God**. **He** is worthy of our honor and praise because of who **He** is, and because of **His** great work of redemption.

The song of Moses was a **song of** victory and deliverance for the righteous, and at the same time of judgment and wrath on the enemies of **God**. Thus, in the last days, the righteous of the TaNaKh and the Tribulation saints will stand together before the throne of **God on the sea of glass** and will sing the same **song** of deliverance sung long ago by the people of **Isra'el**. The blood of **Christ** has redeemed all believers, and they will all gather together at **the sea of glass** (see the commentary on **Revelation Dz - The Seven Angels**



with the Seven Last Plagues). There, **they** will receive **an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade (First Peter 1:4a).**²⁸⁵