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A Study of Exodus 14

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Most people believe that it was God who drowned Pharaoh and the Egyptian army in the Red Sea, and for some, this belief has turned them away from God. For those who believe in an ever-merciful, tender and loving God who does not kill His children, this story in the Bible does pose some challenges. But does a close reading of Exodus 14 really support that idea that God drowned the Egyptians, or does the text allow for another possibility? That is the question that is explored here.

We will begin at verses 1 to 3.

Exodus 14:1-3

- 1 *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,*
- 2 *Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea.*
- 3 *For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.*

We can see from these verses that, under the direction of God, the Children of Israel were directed to encamp in a dead-end position. The Red Sea was in front of them and mountains enclosed them on their two sides. There was only one way in and that was also the only way out. When Pharaoh found out where they were heading, he knew they were trapped. He gloated, *They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.*

Exodus 14:4

*And I will **harden** Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be **honoured** upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so.*

There are two points to consider here.

Firstly, how did God harden Pharaoh's heart? Well, as the story of the plagues showed, Pharaoh continually resisted God's warnings thereby preventing God from saving him. Bible commentator Adam Clarke explained extremely well the process of how God hardens the hearts of men in his commentary on Exodus 9:35.

*In consequence of his [Pharaoh] sinning yet more, and **hardening his own heart against both the judgments and mercies of God**, we need not be surprised that, after God had **given him the means of softening and repentance**, and he had in every instance **resisted and abused them**, he should **at last have been left to the hardness and darkness of his own obstinate heart**, so as to fill up the measure of his iniquity, and rush headlong to **his own destruction**.*

This is the process whereby men and women commit the unpardonable sin. They so continually reject the urgings of the Holy Spirit that eventually, in absolute grief, God has to give His precious children up to the desires of their own hearts and suffer in silence as they destroy themselves. This is the lament of God in Hosea 13:9.

*O Israel, **thou hast destroyed thyself**; but in me is thine help.*

In the book "Conflict and Courage", a compilation from the writings of Ellen White, we read the following on page 89.

*How does the Lord harden the hearts of men? **In the same way in which the heart of Pharaoh was hardened. God sent this king a message of warning and mercy, but he refused to acknowledge the God of heaven, and would not render obedience to His commands. He asked, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?"** {CC 89.2}*

*The Lord gave him evidence of His power by working signs and miracles before him. The great I AM acquainted Pharaoh with His mighty works, showing him that He was the ruler of heaven and earth, **but the king chose to defy the God of heaven. He would not consent to break his proud, stubborn heart even before the King of kings, that he might receive the light; for he was determined to have his own way, and work out his rebellion. He chose to do his own will, and set aside the command of God, and the very evidence given him that Jehovah was above all the gods of the nations, above all the wise men and magicians, only served to blind his mind and harden his heart.** {CC 89.3}*

Secondly, what did God mean when he said he will *be honoured* upon Pharaoh? According to Gesenius, the sense of the Hebrew word translated as “honour” in this verse is reflective and means “*to show oneself great or glorious*”.

NIPHAL—(1) pass. of PIEL No.1, *to be honoured, to be held in honour*, Gen. 34:19; 1 Sa. 9:6; 2 Sa 23:19, 23. **שָׁמַיִם נִכְבָּר** a glorious name, Deut. 28:58 Pl. **נִכְבְּרוֹת** things done gloriously, Ps. 87:3.

(2) reflect. *to shew oneself great or glorious*, Hag. 1:8; followed by **אֵל** in any thing, Exod. 14:4, 17, 18; Lev. 10:3; Eze. 39:13.

Even after having shown Pharaoh and the Egyptians through the plagues *that Jehovah was above all the gods of the nations, above all the wise men and magicians* as Ellen White said above, verse 4 tells us that God intended to again demonstrate and make clear to the Egyptians that He was *great or glorious* – that hopefully they would realize who they were dealing with. According to Gesenius, this word carries the same meaning in verses 17 and 18 of Exodus 14 where God again says that He will have honour upon Pharaoh.

Notice that God did not define what showing himself great or glorious would look like. There is no record anywhere in Exodus 14 of God describing what He would do to cause the Egyptians to know that He was the Lord, the existing One, Jehovah. He simply said He would *be honoured* meaning He would show Himself to be great or glorious to the Egyptians.

How did the story unfold?

Exodus 14:5-7

- 5 *And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of 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 *And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him:*
- 7 *And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them.*

This is described in the book "Patriarchs and Prophets" on page 283.

*In Egypt the report was spread that the children of Israel, instead of tarrying to worship in the desert, were pressing on toward the Red Sea. Pharaoh's counselors declared to the king that their bondmen had fled, never to return. **The people deplored their folly in attributing the death of the first-born to the power of God. Their great men, recovering from their fears, accounted for the plagues as the result of natural causes.** "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" was the bitter cry. {PP 283.3}*

Pharaoh collected his forces, "six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt," horsemen,

*captains, and foot soldiers. The king himself, attended by the great men of his realm, headed the attacking army. To secure the favor of the gods, and thus ensure the success of their undertaking, the priests also accompanied them. **The king was resolved to intimidate the Israelites by a grand display of his power. The Egyptians feared lest their forced submission to the God of Israel should subject them to the derision of other nations**; but if they should now go forth with a great show of power and bring back the fugitives, they would redeem their glory, as well as recover the services of their bondmen. {PP 283.4}*

Notice there is a clue in this statement by Ellen White that points to the nature of the “honour” which God would gain on Pharaoh. Here are those words again:

*The king was resolved to **intimidate** the Israelites by a grand display of his power. PP 283.4*

God speaks to men in language they understand. As we will see, it was through a display of unanswerable power causing the Egyptians themselves to be intimidated that God gets Himself honour on the Egyptians. We notice also, and more importantly, that Pharaoh did not intend to kill the Israelites but rather take them back as slaves. The display of power by the Egyptians was only to intimidate the Israelites into submission. This was the language that the Egyptians understood.

In the passage above, we also have insight that shows us just how hardened were the hearts of the Egyptians towards the God of heaven. God had tried over and over again to reach the heart of Pharaoh and soften him that he and his people might be saved. The Egyptians' tender Father in heaven wanted his Egyptian children to love Him and receive salvation. The Egyptians had experienced the love of God through Joseph. They had been saved from starvation by the love of God through Joseph's wise stewardship over Egypt. However, the ruling Hyksos dynasty, favourable to the Israelites, was replaced by the kings of the 18th dynasty, native Egyptians, who viewed the Israelites with suspicion and hatred because the Hyksos were favourable to them (refer SDA Bible Commentary on Exodus 1:8-10). This resulted in the enslavement of the Israelites.

Thus began the Egyptians' continual rejection of God which resulted in layers of God's blessings and protections being forfeited and ultimately exposing the Egyptians to the plagues and the deaths of their firstborn. The destruction that came upon Egypt was particularly severe due to the light they had rejected and scorned, causing increased removal of protection and Satan gained more and more access, for Satan declared that he was to rule them since they had rejected God.

God had allowed the plagues to happen in a way that showed that He had power over the plagues, and was permitting them to happen. The "land was vomiting them up" (Lev 18:25), nature was collapsing, but it was because of sin and God being pushed away that it was happening (for in Jesus "all things hold together" Col 1:17) – that was what God was trying to show the Egyptians by

foretelling the plagues and allowing it to occur when Moses raised his rod.

Initially, the Egyptians had attributed the deaths of their first-born to the power of God but now they deplored that idea as folly. However, because they had thought it was God who destroyed their land with the plagues and then destroyed their firstborn, it is not surprising they believed they had been forced into submission to God. But God does not force anyone. The use of force is contrary to the principles of God's government as stated in the book "The Desire of Ages".

*The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. **This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government;** He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. {DA 22.1}*

Instead, Pharaoh and the wise men of Egypt had *accounted for the plagues as the result of natural causes*. Any recognition they may previously have had of the power of God was now obliterated. They had completely taken God out of the picture. Their rejection of God was complete and under the complete delusion Satan had cast over them they followed the Israelites into the sea.

Exodus 14:8-14

8 *And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of*

- Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand.*
- 9 *But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baalzephon.*
- 10 *And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.*
- 11 *And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?*
- 12 *Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.*
- 13 *And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and **see the salvation of the LORD**, which he will shew to you to day: **for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.***
- 14 *The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.*

In verse 13, Moses has now defined what *the salvation of the Lord* will look like. Moses said: *for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to*

day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. Where did Moses get that idea? As discussed above, God did not define what getting honour upon Pharaoh looked like. Has Moses placed his own interpretation on what God meant when He said He would be honoured on Pharaoh? Could there be something in the heart of Moses towards the Egyptians that caused him to think this way about them, that he wanted to see them destroyed? Consider this in the context of Exodus 10:28, 29.

28 *And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die.*

29 *And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, **I will see thy face again no more.***

There is no record that God told Moses he would never see Pharaoh's face again. Could it be that Moses is reacting to Pharaoh's anger towards him in making this statement? Does Moses, in fact, harbour a deep hatred towards the Egyptians because of the terrible slavery they made his people endure and is a glimpse of it being shown here? This was not a prophetic statement given him by God because Exodus 12:31 says:

And he [Pharaoh] called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said.

This tells us that Pharaoh relented on his refusal to see Moses again and that Moses and Aaron were called into the presence of Pharaoh (see also SDA Bible Commentary on Exodus 12:31).

That being the case, Moses' statement in Exodus 10:29 cannot be a statement given him from God because it failed to be true. Another clue that this statement came from the heart of Moses is found in Exodus 11:8.

*And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh **in a great anger.***

If Moses is simply delivering a message from God to Pharaoh, why is he so angry? Is there deep emotion in the heart of Moses towards Pharaoh and the Egyptians that is manifesting here?

These thoughts give some foundational insights into a possible alternative explanation of the remainder of Exodus 14.

Exodus 14:15, 16

15 *And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:*

16 *But **lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it:** and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.*

Now the method of Israel's deliverance has been made known! The waters will be divided *and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.* In verse 13, Moses had defined the salvation of the Lord as being that they would never

see the Egyptians again, but in verse 16 it is clear that God's plan to save Israel is by opening the sea for them to cross on dry land.

Here is a point to ponder. God might have told Moses that He would destroy the army of the Egyptians right where they were. Why create more stress for Israel by allowing the Egyptians to follow them into the sea? Why not destroy the Egyptians by the brightness of the fiery cloud or by some other means?

Also, God could have simply opened the waters without any involvement by Moses, but instead Moses was permitted to exercise the power of God to divide the sea. There is no question that it was the power of God that opened the sea and saved Israel. However, if the faith of Moses had failed at that point and he had not raised his rod as commanded, would the sea have still opened? Hebrews 11:29 says that it was *By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land*. So, the only way the sea could open was by Moses raising his rod by faith in the word of God and this invoked the power of God. What a test of faith!

Exodus 14:17, 18

17 *And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.*

18 *And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.*

Again, God says he will get honour upon Pharaoh and his army, his chariots and horsemen. As shown earlier, according to Gesenius, this means only that God would show Himself great or glorious to the Egyptians. There is no definition of what that looks like. Furthermore, God said the Egyptians – the Egyptians who “shall follow them” – are going to know that He is the Lord when that happens. So, something will happen that will cause the pursuing Egyptians to clearly acknowledge the greatness of God. That is most unlikely to happen when they are drowning, so it must happen before then.

Exodus 14:19-25

19 *And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and **the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them:***

20 *And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and **it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these:** so that the one came not near the other all the night.*

21 *And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and **made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.***

22 *And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.*

23 *And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.*

24 *And it came to pass, that in the morning watch **the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians,***

25 *And **took off their chariot wheels,** that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, **Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians.***

There are some amazingly powerful evidences here of the greatness of God and the Egyptians witnessed it and, evidently, ignored it. Here is a description of what happened from "The Spirit of Prophecy", Volume 1.

*The Egyptian host was triumphing through that night that the children of Israel were again in their power. They thought there was no possibility of their escape; for before them stretched the Red Sea, and their large armies were close behind them. In the morning, as they came up to the sea, lo, there was a dry path, the waters were divided, and stood like a wall upon either side, and the children of Israel were half way through the sea, walking on dry land. **They waited awhile to decide what course they had better pursue.** They were **disappointed and enraged,** that, as the Hebrews were almost in their power, and they were sure of them, an unexpected way was*

opened for them in the sea. They decided to follow them. {1SP 209.1}

*The Egyptians dared to venture in the path God had prepared for his people, and **angels of God went through their host and removed their chariot wheels**. They were plagued. Their progress was very slow, and they began to be troubled. They remembered the judgments that the God of the Hebrews had brought upon them in Egypt, to **compel them to let Israel go, and they thought that God might deliver them all into the hands of the Israelites. They decided that God was fighting for the Israelites, and they were terribly afraid, and were turning about to flee from them...** {1SP 209.2}*

The Egyptians were now in full rebellion against this God who they thought had forced and compelled them to release the Israelites from slavery. They had been in full rebellion to his warnings given before each plague. Now, they were in full rebellion against this God who had opened a path through the sea, something of which they had never even heard, let alone seen, before. Surely this was the time to acknowledge that the God of Israel was too powerful for them and turn back. But no, their rebellion blinded their judgement and they went in after the Israelites. They were impervious to God's warnings. So, God directly intervened with one final warning, certainly to stop their advance – but could it also have been to encourage them to flee for their lives and be saved? When did God give this last warning? Before the sea closed up again.

We are told in Psalm 77:16-18 how God troubled the Egyptians.

16 *The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled.* 17 *The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad.* 18 *The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.*

That this passage is speaking of the Red Sea crossing is evident from verse 20.

Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

This account from “Patriarchs and Prophets” expands upon the statements from the Psalmist.

*"The Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians." **The mysterious cloud changed to a pillar of fire before their astonished eyes. The thunders pealed and the lightnings flashed.** {PP 287.3}*

*The Egyptians were seized with confusion and dismay. Amid the wrath of the elements, in which **they heard the voice of an angry God**, they endeavored to retrace their steps and flee to the shore they had quitted. {PP 287.4}*

They were certainly troubled. The cloud changed to fire. The elements broke out against them. The thunder sounded like the voice of an angry God. In addition to this, the wheels were pulled from their chariots by unseen hands.

Is this not a final warning for them to stop and escape while they still can? Certainly, it is an action to stop the Egyptians' advance, but is it also a warning to them? Why not just cause the water to come back over them while they are charging forward? There is a strong case here that God was warning the Egyptians to get out.

Finally, the Egyptians acknowledged: *Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians.*

At that moment, does God have his honour upon Pharaoh and the Egyptian army? Has he shown himself to be *great or glorious* in their sight? Have the Egyptians acknowledged his greatness? Do the Egyptians know that God is Lord? Well, all of the fight and rebellion has gone out of them at this point and has been replaced with fear and terror for their very lives. The intimidator has become the intimidated. It certainly looks like God has his honour upon the Egyptians. They are in retreat, a panicked retreat. They are beaten. They have acknowledged that the God of the Hebrews is far too great for them. Sadly, there is no repentance in this acknowledgement of God's greatness; just fear and terror because he is too powerful for them. God has his honour upon the Egyptians. How else can we read this?

That makes what happens next very thought provoking.

Exodus 14:26

*And the LORD said unto Moses, **Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.***

What is happening here? Has God now pronounced a death sentence on the Egyptians immediately after He had demonstrated amazing power to show His greatness to them? Has God now pronounced a death sentence on the Egyptians immediately after He had stopped their progress? Has God now pronounced a death sentence on the Egyptians immediately after He had brought an acknowledgement of His greatness from them? Has God now pronounced a death sentence on the Egyptians immediately after they began fleeing in terror for their lives?

It certainly looks like it on a first reading, but there is another possibility. In making this statement to Moses – *Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen* – has not God just placed the lives of Pharaoh and all of his army into the hands of Moses? All Moses has to do now is raise his hand holding the rod and the Egyptians, who are already beaten and in full retreat, will be drowned. The Hebrew verb translated as *stretch out* is in the imperative tense, so surely God is commanding it, isn't He?

But, is it possible that this is a test to show Moses what is in his heart? If he has the love of Jesus in his heart for those Egyptians despite the horrible, nasty, cruel, vindictive, murderous way they had treated his people, surely, he is not going to willingly raise the

rod to destroy them – not if he truly loves them. However, if he is holding hatred in his heart for the Egyptians for the way they have treated his people, then he will unquestioningly raise his rod and bring about their destruction. Here is also a test for us. What do we feel in our hearts towards Pharaoh and his army when we read this story? Are we brought to tears over this tragic loss of lives? Or do we think they got what they deserved?

Here is another time the lives of people are put into the hands of Moses. What was his reaction then?

Exodus 32:10, 11

10 *Now therefore **let me alone**, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.*

11 ***And Moses besought the LORD his God**, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?*

This was when God was about let the Israelites be destroyed for worshipping the golden calf. It is noteworthy that the words “*let me alone*” are also in the imperative – it is seemingly a command – just as are the words, “*Stretch out thine hand over the sea*”. But Moses did not obey when he was told *let me alone*. Why not? Because Moses loved his people. Verse 11 says, *And Moses besought the LORD his God*. Moses didn’t unquestioningly obey God here, but rather he took it as an opportunity to plead with God on their behalf. Why didn’t Moses beseech the Lord his God on behalf of the Egyptians?

A few verses on, in verses 30 to 32 in the same chapter, we read this.

Exodus 32:30-32

30 *And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.*

31 *And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, **Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.***

32 ***Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.***

The language shows that Moses is uncertain whether God is even able to forgive the people because their sin is so great – peradventure [i.e. perhaps] *I shall make an atonement for your sin*. In verse 32, Moses cannot finish his sentence because it may be asking too much – *Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—*. In the face of this uncertainty, Moses offers himself – *and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written*. Here again, Moses shows that he is well able to plead with God for the lives of others when he has love for them – even to the point of offering himself in their stead.

Where was this same beseeching of God on behalf of the Egyptians? Why did Moses, apparently without hesitation, raise his rod bringing about the death of the whole Egyptian army? When it comes to it, there is no record that neither Moses, nor Aaron, nor Mirriam, nor any of the princes of Israel, nor any

Israelite ever pleaded for the life of the Egyptians. The conclusion must be drawn that they all hated them. Moses felt very differently towards the Egyptians compared to the way he felt for his own people. There is evidence of this.

Exodus 2:11-13

*11 And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, **and looked on their burdens**: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.*

*12 And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, **he slew the Egyptian**, and hid him in the sand.*

*13 And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, **Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?***

Moses saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite and so he killed the Egyptian. The next day he saw one Israelite beating another but he did not kill the aggressive Israelite. He told him to stop. So, it was not the fact that one person was beating up on another that offended Moses; it was the nationality of the person. Now, what position did Moses hold in Egypt at this time?

*At the court of Pharaoh, Moses received the highest civil and military training. **The monarch had determined to make his adopted grandson his successor on the throne**, and the youth was educated for his high station. "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was*

mighty in words and in deeds." Acts 7:22. His ability as a military leader made him a favorite with the armies of Egypt, and he was generally regarded as a remarkable character. {PP 245.1}

Given the position Moses held in Egypt as the king's adopted grandson and a leader in the Egyptian army, could he not have simply commanded the Egyptian to stop beating the Israelite? Possibly, but instead he killed him. What emotion in a man causes him to kill another man? Hatred. What does the Bible say about hatred?

1John 3:15

Whosoever **hateth his brother is a murderer:** and ye know that **no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.**

Let us look at the facts. Moses murdered an Egyptian through hatred when he was forty. Remember, it was not that particular Egyptian he hated. It was the fact that an Egyptian was beating one of his people. Now he is eighty and his hatred for the Egyptians (or any nation that hurt his nation, as seems evident during the wilderness wanderings) is still in him, as evidenced by his lack of compassion for them when they were helpless in the middle of the Red Sea. Could it be that Moses had held onto this hatred, perhaps unknowingly, and God needed to reveal to Moses what was in his heart? *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* God wanted to save Moses. No man with hatred in their heart has eternal life, which God wanted to give to Moses, so He

had to show Moses what is in his heart – God had to bring it out – so that Moses may confess it and repent of it.

We know that God teaches us through His great moral looking-glass, His law (James 1:23-25). He reflects our thoughts and intents back onto us in the hope that, under the influence of his Spirit, we are able to discern those things of which we need to repent and which need to change in our characters.

This reflection can even be God commanding those things that His people think He should command, to give us the choice of whether we will be merciful or not. If God had just let the Egyptians run away, would that have bothered Moses? God will not force His ideas of mercy upon His people; thus, He brought up the matter with Moses in the form of a command.

The reader here may think, but how would Moses be expected to question, negotiate, or think the command was the beginning of a discussion? Because we have proof that that is how Moses related to God. Remember that Moses in the past didn't immediately do what God said. When Moses didn't want to do something, he didn't consider it a settled matter when God commanded it. At the very beginning of His service for God, notice his reaction to God's command:

Exodus 3:10-11

¹⁰ Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

11 And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

Moses thought it was permissible to negotiate with God, so he persistently refused to do the task God asked of Him and this refusal got him more concessions to make the task easier (read all of Exodus 3 into Exodus 4). So why didn't Moses try to negotiate with God on this matter of destroying the Egyptians?

What did Jesus say about the attitude that we should adopt towards our enemies?

Matthew 5:44

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

This is what Jesus demonstrated in His life. This is His character and therefore this is the character of His Father. Was this evident in the character of Moses? No, it was not, else he would have pleaded for the life of the Egyptians if he thought God was commanding their destruction. The sad reality is that Moses did not love his enemies. He did not bless them that cursed him. He did not do good to them that hated him. He did not do any of these things. The character of God had not yet been formed in Moses.

As noted above, the Hebrew presents the command of God in Exodus 14:26 in the imperative – *Stretch out thine hand over the*

sea. This would seem to suggest God commanded it. Christ issued an imperative command in the New Testament.

John 2:19

Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'

Jesus seems to be commanding them to destroy the temple, meaning His body-temple. Was this something Jesus desired, or was Jesus revealing the inner desires of the men to whom He was speaking. The latter must surely be the case. So could this principle also apply to the command given to Moses? Was God revealing to Moses the deeper desire in his own heart against the Egyptians? Was God telling Moses what to do or was God telling him what would be the result of what Moses desired to do.

So then, did God really command Moses to lift up his rod and destroy the Egyptians, or did God tell Moses what would happen when he lifted up his rod and Moses, desiring the destruction of the Egyptians, saw that as a command? The King James Version allows for both readings. Interestingly, this is how Young's Literal Translation renders Exodus 14:26.

And Jehovah saith unto Moses, 'Stretch out thy hand toward the sea, and the waters turn back on the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen.'

How do we read this? Is this a command to kill the Egyptians or a statement of fact, albeit in the imperative, to reveal to Moses what was already in his heart? Is God commanding Moses to lift up his rod and drown the Egyptians, or is he telling Moses what will

happen when Moses does what he deeply desires to do? Just as the sea would not separate until Moses lifted up his rod, so the waters would not return until Moses lifted up his rod. The lives of Pharaoh and all of his army were in Moses' hand right at that moment. Is it not the case then that it is Moses, not God, who determined whether the Egyptians lived or died?

What did Moses do?

Exodus 14:27

*And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; **and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.***

Notice the language used here. If God drowned the Egyptians, why doesn't the record say as much? The text says, *and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea*. The Hebrew word translated as *overthrew* means *to shake out*. According to Gesenius, the literal reading of Exodus 14:27 is, *and the Lord shook out the Egyptians into the midst of the sea i.e. he shook them from the land and cast them into the sea*. This would indicate that this passage should be understood similarly to the words *I will harden Pharaoh's heart* where it is not God doing the hardening but the rejection by Pharaoh of God's saving grace. In like manner, it was not God doing the casting into the Red Sea but the Egyptians cast themselves into the Red Sea when they disregarded the darkness of the cloud against them, disregarded the water heaped up on both sides of them and followed the Israelites into the sea. Thus, it was not the action of God that *shook*

them from the land and cast them into the sea, but their own actions in rebellion against God. The same word is used in Psalm 136:15.

*But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea:
for his mercy endureth for ever.*

The Bible teaching about the fate of the wicked is clear. The wicked entrap and destroy themselves.

Hosea 13:9

*O Israel, **thou hast destroyed thyself**; but in me is thine help.*

Psalm 9:15-17

*15 The heathen are sunk down in the pit that **they made**: in the net which **they hid** is their own foot taken.*

*16 The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: **the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands**. Higgsion. Selah.*

17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.

What is the judgment by which the Lord is known which He executes? The Psalmist says that *the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands*. Israel ultimately destroyed itself. The heathen are sunk down in the pit they made. Their foot is trapped in their own net. *The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands*. This can only mean that the Egyptians found themselves in trouble in

the Red Sea because of their own actions. The destruction of the Egyptians was not decreed by God. God is known by the judgment which He executes which is, according to the Psalmist, that *the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands*. Ellen White clearly understood this point.

*I must impress upon you to **note the agency by which the soul is destroyed**. The soul's destruction cannot be laid to the charge of God. It cannot be said that he has made a decree against any man. He does not cast darkness before the eyes of him who would see light. **The condition of the soul is in accordance with the seed sown. If we recklessly cast seed into the soil, whatever may be its character, the harvest will be after the kind of seed cast into the soil.** {YI December 7, 1893, par. 2}*

Whose work was it that put the Israelites into bondage? The Egyptians. Whose work was it that treated the Israelites so abominably? The Egyptians'. Whose work was it that caused the Israelites to hate the Egyptians? The Egyptians'. Whose work was it to disregard all of God's warnings and pursue the Israelites into the sea? The Egyptians'. So, when they found themselves in big trouble in the middle of the sea, was it not the work of their own hands? It must be then that the work of the Egyptians' own hands, being the hatred they caused to exist in the hearts of the Israelites, was the snare that destroyed them. It was the sin of hatred in the hearts of Moses and all of the Israelites, caused by the Egyptians' treatment of them, the work of the Egyptians' own hands, that destroyed the Egyptians.

Like that of the Amalekites, the cup of the Egyptians was full. Of that there is no doubt. Despite all the warnings from God, they repented not. Their cup was full. As we have seen, Moses and the Israelites held hatred in their hearts towards the Egyptians. When God told Moses what would happen when he raised his rod against the fleeing Egyptians, the hatred in his heart, and in the hearts of all Israel, manifested – and he raised his rod without hesitation and wiped out the Egyptian army to the last man. God visited the iniquity of the Egyptians, who hated Him, by the sin of hatred held in the hearts of Moses and the Children of Israel. A train of circumstances arose that punished sin with sin.

Consider the case of David.

*David had neglected the duty of punishing the crime of Amnon, and because of the unfaithfulness of the king and father and the impenitence of the son, the Lord permitted events to take their natural course, and did not restrain Absalom. When parents or rulers neglect the duty of punishing iniquity, God Himself will take the case in hand. **His restraining power will be in a measure removed from the agencies of evil, so that a train of circumstances will arise which will punish sin with sin.** {PP 728.1}*

Is this what happened to the Egyptians? Did a train of circumstances arise which punished sin with sin?

There was no pleading for the life the Egyptians from Moses or any Israelite. There was no mercy shown for the Egyptians by

Moses or the Israelites. How might the story of the journey to the Promised Land have turned out if Moses had spared the lives of the Egyptians? What positive impact might that have had on the Children of Israel? Was it God's will for there to be so many widows and orphans in the land of Egypt when so many husbands and fathers perished in the sea? Wouldn't it have been better for them to go back to Egypt and testify to the demonstration of the glory of God that they saw?

The chapter concludes as follows:

Exodus 14:28-31

28 And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.

29 But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

*30 **Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.***

How did the Lord save Israel out of the hand of the Egyptians? Was it by destroying them or was it by showing such unanswerable power that they fled in terror?

*31 And Israel saw that **great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians**: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant*

Moses.

What was *that great work* which the Lord did upon the Egyptians?
Psalm 77:11-20 lays it out clearly.

Psalm 77:11-20

11 *I will remember **the works of the LORD**: surely I will remember **thy wonders of old**.*

12 *I will meditate also of **all thy work**, and talk of **thy doings**.*

13 *Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?*

14 *Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people.*

15 *Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.*

16 *The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled.*

17 *The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad.*

18 *The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.*

19 *Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.*

20 *Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.*

Verses 11 and 12 are clear that the Psalmist is speaking only of God's works and wonders and doings. From verse 16 he is speaking of the Red Sea crossing. Since the Psalmist is meditating on all of God's work in the Red Sea crossing, whatever is not included, is not the "works", "wonders" or "doings" of God. It is significant then, that verses 16 to 18 speak only about the opening of the sea and the great demonstration of power over the elements that resulted in the stopping of the progress of the Egyptians, bringing from them the acknowledgement of the greatness of God and putting them to flight. These are the works of God. These things then must be *that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians* in Exodus 14:31. There is no mention in Psalm 77 of closing back the waters and destroying the Egyptians. The conclusion drawn then is that this work of destruction was not part of *that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians*.

When the Egyptians acknowledged the greatness of God and fled in fear and panic, God's "great work" was done. His "doings" were done. His "wonders" were done. His "honour" upon Pharaoh was complete. So then, whose work was the drowning of the Egyptian army? Was it the work of God, or was it the manifestation of the sin of hatred held in the hearts of Moses and all of Israel towards the Egyptians?

Who was responsible for the drowning of the Egyptian army, God or Moses? This is a question that requires each person to judge God, and a person can only judge God through the lens by which they understand Him. Jesus said:

Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that

hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? John 14:9

When we look at the Red Sea crossing through the lens of the life of Jesus, how do we understand the imperative statement *Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen?* Is this a death sentence or this a mirror? Who drowned the Egyptian army in the Red Sea, God or Moses? Is it Christ who has hatred and murder in His heart, or is it us fallen humans? That is a question for each to answer for themselves.

Who Drowned the Egyptian Army in the Red Sea?

A study of Exodus 14

Who really drowned the Egyptian army in the Red Sea? Why were the Egyptians permitted to follow the Children of Israel into the sea? Why didn't the sea close in behind the Children of Israel as they crossed, providing a natural barrier to the Egyptians? Why did Pharaoh, his army and his horses all lose their lives in the Red Sea?

There are many perplexing questions about the Red Sea crossing for those who believe, or want to believe, in the loving character of God. Others see swift and sure divine justice in the destruction of Pharaoh and the Egyptian army.

Does the drowning of the Egyptian army reveal what is in the heart of God towards unrepentant sinners, or does it reveal what is in *our* hearts towards those who abuse and mistreat God's people? Does it perhaps reveal what *we* think should be done to those who directly and unfairly mistreat us or those we love?

This book seeks to provide answers to these questions by looking at Exodus 14 through the lens of the life of the Son of God, who came to reveal the true character of His Father and who did no harm to anyone.

If you have ever wondered what really happened at the Red Sea, this book is for you.