

Exodus 14:19-31ⁱⁱ

The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. At the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt." Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the LORD tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

ii About Exodus 14:19-31

This reading recounts the most exciting and dramatic event in the exodus story. It also demonstrates as no other event both God's power over our world and God's care for the covenant people.

Having departed from Egypt, the Hebrews joyously begin their trek to the new land. Pharaoh, however, changes his mind about letting them go and leads his army and chariots in pursuit. Pinned between the sea ahead and the Egyptian chariots behind, the Hebrews cry to God for help.

God comes to their aid first by sending a cloud to hide them and then by empowering Moses to part the waters of the sea. The Hebrews are "saved" by passing on dry ground through the wall of waters. When the Egyptian army follows, they bog down in the mud and, when the waters return to normal, are all drowned.