

CROSSING THE RED SEA



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IF YOU were going somewhere and there were two ways to go—one a very easy way, and the other very difficult—which way would you choose? I think we would all choose the easy way, especially if the other way was so difficult that we would hardly be able to reach our destination at all. However, we should remember that the easier way is not always the better way. Sometimes God wants us to do things and go to places that may seem very difficult, but he knows what is best. So we should always do what he wants us to do! That is how it was when the Israelites left the land of Egypt. It was Gods' mighty power that delivered them from being slaves in Egypt, and God continued to do wonderful things for them. God had

promised to bring his people into the land of Canaan—the land he had given to their father, Abraham. When they left Egypt there were two ways they could have traveled in order to reach Canaan. One way seemed to be quite easy, but God did not want them to go that way. He led his people the difficult way, and he had a very good reason for it.

I suppose you are wondering how God led his people, and how they knew which way he wanted them to go. Moses was their leader; but besides, as they left Egypt God caused a large cloud to float in the air right in front of them, and they were to follow that cloud.

Wherever that cloud went, that is where they were to go. At night that cloud was lighted up almost as though it were a large ball of fire. If it hadn't been for that they could not have seen the cloud at night. They traveled long distances by night, so it was necessary for them to see the cloud at night as well as in the day.

After the Israelites left their homes in Egypt, they traveled for some time until they reached the edge of a large body of water. They had to stop there because they had no boats in which to cross over to the other side. This body of water was called the Red Sea. Some day when you are studying your geography lesson in school, you will find out more about the Red Sea. This sea is at the edge of the land of Egypt.

Now, how do you suppose the Israelites got across the Red Sea? There were no airplanes in those days, so they couldn't fly across. It was because the Red Sea was in their pathway that this route was the difficult one. Had God's cloud led them in another direction it would not have been necessary for them to cross the Red Sea. But God knew best.

The Israelites were also having other troubles. Pharaoh, the wicked king of Egypt, began to feel sorry that he had let them leave. He discovered the direction in which they marched, and he knew that they would have to stop when they reached the sea; or at least, so he thought. So what do you suppose he did? He got his army together and went out after the Israelites to bring them back into slavery.

The Bible says that Pharaoh had six hundred chariots. A chariot was a little wagon with two wheels, pulled by horses. Soldiers rode in those chariots. When an army in those days had a great many chariots and horses they were able to fight much better. It was something like having plenty of tanks in an army today. So, you see, Pharaoh had a very great army, and plenty of chariots. He was sure he would have no difficulty in capturing the Israelites, because they had no army and, of course, no chariots.

While they were wondering what they should now do to continue their journey into the wilderness, they suddenly discovered that Pharaoh and his army were coming after them, either to capture them or to kill them. My, but they were frightened! But even though the Egyptian chariots and soldiers were frightening, they should have remembered how powerful God is, and that he would take care of them.

But they were afraid just the same, and they complained to Moses. They told Moses that they wished they had stayed in Egypt. Poor Moses, how badly he must have felt! Of course when they complained to Moses, it was just like complaining to God, for it was he who had instructed Moses to lead them this way.

So what do you suppose Moses did? Well, he did two things which were very important. He told the Israelites that God would fight for them, and that they were not to worry. Then Moses prayed to God for help and for instructions.

That was very important.

Then God said to Moses that he should tell the people to go forward. That was strange, wasn't it? How could they go forward when the sea was right in front of them? It was dark by this time, and something very remarkable occurred. That wonderful cloud I told you about, which guided the Israelites while they were marching, now moved in between the Israelites and the Egyptian army. The Egyptian army by this time had almost reached the Israelites, and something had to be done. So God took care of his people.

On that particular night only one side of the cloud was bright like fire, and the other side, which was next to the Egyptians, was just as black as any thundercloud you have ever seen. It kept the moonlight and the starlight from helping the Egyptians. It must have been the darkest night they had ever experienced. Don't you think so?

Meanwhile, God was doing other things for the Israelites. He told Moses to hold his rod over the sea, which Moses did. That was the same rod which Moses had in the beginning. God certainly made very good use of it. Of course the rod couldn't do anything by itself, but God wanted Moses to remember that he had promised to help him. So when God told Moses to hold the rod over the sea, Moses knew God would do something wonderful.

And what do you suppose God did?

God caused a strong wind to blow over the water, and it blew all night until the water was blown aside far enough to make a passageway of dry ground over which the Israelites could march. Wasn't that unusual! God certainly knows how to do things, doesn't he? We can understand how this was, because if you put water in a saucer and blow hard on it from the side, you can keep the water all over on one side of the saucer. You just try it some time. Well, God knew what a strong wind would do with the water of the Red Sea, and that is how he made a pathway for the Israelites so they could march right through to the other shore. And the remarkable thing about it was that they didn't even get their feet wet!

The Egyptians soon found out what had occurred. They decided that if the Hebrews could cross over that way, they could, also; so they started to follow. But they were very badly mistaken. As soon as the Hebrews were safely on the other side, God caused the wind to stop blowing, and the water rushed back into its regular place. But that wasn't all.

The Egyptians had started across, and when the water came back into place, all the men and horses in the entire Egyptian army were drowned. In this wonderful way God completely delivered his people from their former masters.

When the Israelites learned how God had saved them from the Egyptian army, and had brought them through the Red Sea to safety, they were very happy. The Bible tells us that then they believed God, and also believed Moses. Then Moses and all the children of Israel, or the Hebrews, whichever name you wish to call them, sang a wonderful song of praise to God. Part of the song was:

“The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation. He is my God.”

Wouldn't it be nice for us all to learn at least this much of that wonderful song, sung by Moses and the children of Israel after they had passed safely through the Red Sea?

QUESTIONS

- Was there more than one route by which the Israelites could leave Egypt on their way to the Promised Land, and why did God direct them to go by way of the Red Sea?
- What was it that went before the Israelites to lead them in the way they should go, and how did it protect them from the Egyptian soldiers?
- How did God make it possible for the Israelites to cross over the Red Sea without boats, and why could not the Egyptians get across in the some way?