

The Red Sea Crossing: Selected Inspired Commentary

Exodus 12:37

And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children.

Spirit of Prophecy comment: On account of the superstitious veneration in which animals were held by the Egyptians, the Hebrews were not permitted, during their bondage, to present the sacrificial offerings. Thus their minds were not directed by this service to the great Sacrifice, and their faith was weakened. When the time came for Israel's deliverance, Satan set himself to resist the purposes of God. It was his determination that that great people, numbering more than two million souls, should be held in ignorance and superstition. {PP 333, 334} [Obviously, Sister White didn't fail to account for all the womenfolk in their ranks!]

Exodus 13:21

And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night.

Spirit of Prophecy comment: . . . the Son of God Who, veiled in the cloudy pillar, stood beside Moses. . . . {PP298}

Exodus 14:4, 10

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

Spirit of Prophecy comment: Moses reminds them how, on the third day of their journey, the way grew strange and perplexing, and night found them walled in right and left by ranges of impassable mountains, while directly in front was the Red Sea. They were filled with apprehension, they knew not what course to pursue; yet they had followed the leading of the cloudy pillar. In weariness and hunger, they camped beside the sea, their hearts oppressed with dark forebodings. Then, to complete their despair, they saw and heard the Egyptian host in close pursuit. {ST March 10, 1881}

Exodus 14:19

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.

Spirit of Prophecy comment: Christ was not only the Leader of the Hebrews in the wilderness—the Angel in Whom was the name of Jehovah, and Who, veiled in the cloudy pillar, went before the host—but it was He Who gave the law to Israel. {PP 366}

Exodus 14:23

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.

Spirit of Prophecy comment: In the darkness and confusion, they rush on in their pursuit, not knowing that they have entered upon the bed of the sea, and are hemmed in on either hand by beetling [overhanging] walls of water. They long for the mist and darkness to pass away, and reveal to them the Hebrews and their own whereabouts. The wheels of the chariots sink deep into the soft sand, the horses become entangled and unruly, and angels of God go through the host and remove their chariot wheels. Confusion prevails, yet they press on feeling sure of victory.

At last the mysterious cloud changes to a pillar of fire before their astonished eyes. The thunders peal, and the lightnings flash, waves roll about them, and fear takes possession of their hearts. Amid the terror and confusion the lurid light reveals to the amazed Egyptians the terrible waters massed up on the right hand and on the left. They see the broad path that the Lord has made for His people across the shining sands of the sea, and behold triumphant Israel safe on the farther shore.

Confusion and dismay seizes them. Amid the wrath of the elements, in which they hear the voice of an angry God, they endeavor to retrace their steps and fly to the shore they have quitted. But Moses stretches out his rod, and the piled up waters, hissing, roaring, and eager for their prey, rush together, and swallow the entire Egyptian host in their black depths. {ST April 1, 1880}

The Hebrews were encamped beside the sea, whose waters presented a seemingly impassable barrier before them, while on the south a rugged mountain obstructed their further progress. Suddenly they beheld in the distance the flashing armor and moving chariots betokening the advance guard of a great army. As the force drew nearer, the hosts of Egypt were seen in full pursuit. {PP283, 284}

It was not an easy thing to hold the hosts of Israel in waiting before the Lord. Lacking discipline and self-control, they became violent and unreasonable. They expected speedily to fall into the hands of their oppressors, and their wailings and lamentations were loud and deep. The wonderful pillar of cloud had been followed as the signal of God to go forward; but now they questioned among themselves if it might not foreshadow some great calamity; for had it not led them on the wrong side of the mountain, into an impassable way? Thus the Angel of God [Christ Himself, as disclosed on p. 366] appeared to their deluded minds as the harbinger of disaster.

But now, as the Egyptian host approached them, expecting to make them an easy prey, the cloudy column rose majestically into the heavens, passed over the Israelites, and descended between them and the armies of Egypt. A wall of darkness interposed between the pursued and their pursuers. The Egyptians could no longer discern the camp of the Hebrews, and were forced to halt. But as the darkness of night deepened, the wall of cloud became a great light to the Hebrews, flooding the entire encampment with the radiance of day. {PP 284, 287}

As Moses stretched out his rod the waters parted, and Israel went into the midst of the sea, upon dry ground, while the waters stood like a wall upon each side. The light from God's pillar of fire shone upon the foam-capped billows, and lighted the road that was cut like a mighty

furrow through the waters of the sea, and was lost in the obscurity of the farther shore. . . . 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. But Moses stretched out his rod, and the piled-up waters, hissing, roaring, and eager for their prey, rushed together and swallowed the Egyptian army in their black depths.

As morning broke it revealed to the multitudes of Israel all that remained of their mighty foes—the mail-clad bodies cast upon the shore. {PP 287, 288}

The children of Israel were joyful to receive the tidings of their freedom and made haste to leave the scene of their bondage. But the way was toilsome, and at length their courage failed. Their journey led them over barren hills and desolate plains. The third night they found themselves walled in on each side by mountain ranges, while the Red Sea lay before them. {4T 21}

Exodus 14:28

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.

Spirit of Prophecy comment: But it was not until Pharaoh looked upon the dead form of his firstborn that he dared no longer to resist God. Then he hastened the Israelites out of his country, both them and their substance. But notwithstanding God had wrought in the controversy by His matchless power, Pharaoh repented of this step, and with his men of war hastened after the fleeing Israelites to bring them back, and, venturing to enter the path that had been provided for the escape of God's people, he and his host perished in the Red Sea. {YI April 15, 1897}

The monarch [Pharaoh] hardened his heart, and went on from one step to another of unbelief, until throughout the vast realm of Egypt the firstborn, the pride of every household, had been laid low. After this he hurried with his army after Israel. He sought to bring back a people delivered by the arm of Omnipotence. But he was fighting against a Power greater than any human power, and with his host he perished in the waters of the Red Sea. {MS 126, 1901, in 2SAT 183}

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.

Exodus 14:29

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.

Spirit of Prophecy comment: Chapter thirteen [of Exodus] tells of the wonderful works of God in causing the Red Sea to stand up as a wall on one side, so that the waters should not overflow, and how a passage was made through the waters. Thus the whole of the vast army of more than a

million people went safely over. The cloud that went before them rose high above them, and settled down as a wall of fire between them and the Egyptians; and not one of them perished. {RH June 1, 1897} [This statement doesn't necessarily contradict that made earlier about the Israelites' numbers being more than two million, as some of them may not have survived the Passover; and of course, "more than a million" would certainly include any number greater than that.]

About Midian being in what is now Saudi Arabia and not in the Sinai Peninsula, Ellen White writes: "Moses also had his trial. God chose him to deliver Israel. He had been trained as a general, and he thought that it was by force that he was to deliver the people. One day, seeing an Egyptian smiting an Israelite, he killed the Egyptian. Then he fled to Arabia, and for forty years he kept sheep." {AUCR March 25, 1907}

About Mount Sinai being in what is now Saudi Arabia and not in the Sinai Peninsula, see Galatians 4:24, 25, where Paul writes: "Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar. For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children."

—Compiled by Jerry Stevens, October 9, 2002