

Exegetical Notes, Exodus 15:1-21
“Let the Praises Ring”

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Exodus 15:1-21

Verse 1

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to YHWH:

*“I will sing to YHWH,
for he is highly exalted.*

*The horse and its rider
he has hurled into the sea.”*

- This is an ancient hymn attributed to Moses and sung by him and the people of Israel to celebrate God’s victory over Pharaoh at Yom Suph.
- In Exodus 14:17 God said, “I will gain GLORY THROUGH Pharaoh and all his army.” In Exodus 14:31 we are told that Israel feared/respected God because of Pharaoh’s defeat and that they trusted him as a result thereof. This verse declares the fulfillment of both of these verses. Through this act God is glorified and Israel gives him respect and trust.

Verse 2

*“YHWH 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.”*

- This verse declares the obvious. God is Israel’s strength because he defeated Pharaoh and his army. By destroying them, God is Israel’s salvation. Since he has proven himself by this act, Israel worships/exalts him.

Verse 3

*“YHWH is a warrior;
YHWH is his name.”*

- God has shown himself to be a warrior by defeating Pharaoh and Egypt’s army.

Verse 4-5

*“Pharaoh’s chariots and his army
he (YHWH) has hurled into the sea.
The best of Pharaoh’s officers
are drowned in the Red Sea.
The deep waters have covered them;
they sank to the depths like a stone.”*

- The song repeats the historical facts.

Verse 6-8

*“Your right hand, O YHWH, was majestic in power.
Your right hand, O YHWH, shattered the enemy.
In the greatness of your majesty
you threw down those who opposed you.
You unleashed your burning anger;
it consumed them like stubble.
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 sea.”*

- Again, the details of God’s intervention are recalled and God is exalted because he defeated the enemy who opposed him.

Verse 9-10

*“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.’*

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

- The arrogance of Egypt’s attitude is reflected here and compared with the ease with which God destroyed them. Egypt made such fuss. God simply blew and Egypt was gone.

Verse 11-12

*“Who among the gods is like you, O YHWH?
Who is like you --*

*majestic in holiness,
awesome in glory,
working wonders?
You stretched out your right hand
and the earth swallowed them.”*

- Not only does YHWH rival the power and majesty of mighty Pharaoh, but no other god can match him. Not only did YHWH defeat Pharaoh at Yom Suph, he also defeated all of the gods of Egypt as well. These other gods could not match him. It was as if they were swallowed up by the earth itself. They are proven to be pitiful and without power.

Verse 13

*“In your unfailing love you will lead
the people you have redeemed.
In your strength you will guide them
to your holy dwelling.”*

- This verse is a declaration of faith and trust. As surely as God delivered Israel, so surely will he now lead them and bring them to the place he has prepared for them.

Verse 14-16

*“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;
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, O YHWH,
until the people you bought pass by.”*

- The assumption is that now every nation will fear YHWH and his people, Israel. Of course, this was not the case.

Verse 17-18

*“You will bring them (Israel) in and plant them
on the mountain of your inheritance --
the place, O YHWH, you made for your dwelling,
the sanctuary, O YHWH, your hands established.
YHWH will reign for ever and ever.”*

- The assumption is that, since YHWH defeated Egypt, YHWH will destroy all of Israel's foes and easily establish them as a nation in the Promised Land. The correct understanding is that God will do as he has promised, since he is faithful. However, his plan will involve Israel in specific ways for which she is unprepared. The Promised Land will not drop in her lap like a plum, even though it is God's plan for her to occupy that land.
- The concluding line of the song is the bold declaration that YHWH reigns over the entire earth then, now, and forever. It is so, and it shall always be so. Amen!

Verse 19

When Pharaoh's horses, chariots and horsemen went into the sea, YHWH brought the waters of the sea back over them, but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground.

- This is a simple reiteration of the basic facts. These facts are repeated several times here in Exodus and then throughout the Biblical record. The repetition of these facts indicates how greatly they influenced Israel's faith in God. YHWH had broken into history and redeemed them when they were helpless and could not defend themselves against insurmountable odds. This act proved his love and his faithfulness.

Verse 20-21

Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang to them:

***"Sing to YHWH,
for he is highly exalted.
The horse and its rider
he has hurled into the sea."***

- Miriam, who is Aaron's sister and therefore Moses' sister, with all the women of Israel began to dance and sing the chorus of Moses' song. The entire Israelite camp was full of praise for God because he had delivered them from their enemy, Egypt.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Let the Praises Ring*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)