

## **Exodus 15 – Victory Song concerning Salvation “from”. Serious Lordship expressed as a basis of knowing Salvation “to”.**

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The narrative:

- 1-3 The song of victory celebrating the rout of the Egyptian army. God is their protector.  
4-10 The immediate victory is rehearsed and extolled.  
11-18 The victory will now frighten their enemies – the Edomites, Moabites and Canaanites.  
19-21 Miriam, Moses sister and the women join in.  
22-25a Travelling for 3 days into the **wilderness of Shur** they come to **Marah**, a place having bitter water. Moses, prompted by the Lord throws a tree into the water; it becomes drinkable.  
25b-26 The Lord warns them to obey Him, lest He put on them the diseases He put on the Egyptians.  
27 They camp at Elim, a place of 12 springs and 70 palm trees.

### **1 - The Victory Song of Moses and the sons of Israel 15.1-3**

1. Throughout Scripture, whenever a significant triumph of the Lord is experienced in the lives of His people, they **sing a song**. Indeed, when God is promising in advance a new thing He is going to do for and with Israel then He often speaks of a “new song” which they will sing afterwards. This is very obvious in the case of the heavenly host who are gathered around the Lamb and the One who sits on the throne in Revelation 5, they sing a song of victory also.

We have already seen the revelation of the Lord [YHWH] to Moses under this new name that He has revealed [Ex 3.13-16]. On that occasion He said that this would be His memorial Name forever. Here, in this song, there is a celebration of the victory which YHWH has won over His and the Hebrews enemies.

The song gives voice to the Lord what his people have come to see about Him through His works on their behalf. It is sung by them to Him as their response to His work on their behalf; in that sense it is a song of praise and acknowledgement of His power and awesome nature.

### **2 - The Song celebrates the immediate victory over the Egyptian army. 15.4-10.**

In the current setting the works of the Lord are the occasion for learning something of His character and Person.

He has become their strength, their song because He has become their salvation. They learn that He is a warrior on their behalf in respect of the Egyptians. The overcoming of the army was a demonstration of the strength of the Lord’s “right hand”. It is an expression of his anger against the Egyptians.

The wind God used is seen as the blast of his nostrils, and his congealing of the deep waters, making them still was the instrument of judgment against the pursuing Egyptians.

### **3 - The use of the elements indicates the need for a universal perspective.**

That God has used for His purposes the elements of the physical universe, the plagues and now the wind and the sea, indicates that He is the God of the whole world. The Hebrews are celebrating a particular victory which relates to their own slavery at the hands of the Egyptians – but what they learn of God will require them to consider Him as One capable of greater and broader things. Further, they themselves will have to learn that He can turn these things against even them [verse 22-26].

### **4 - A decisive victory that now has a forward reference 15.11-18**

The Lord is compared to the other gods and no comparison can be made as to His holiness and power [v 11]. The plagues of Egypt had been a mocking of the Egyptian gods as well as a judgment on Pharaoh and his people. The rescue of God’s people as a revelation of his lovingkindness to them was the theme from their own perspective [verse 13]; but the judgment upon the gods and those who serve them is also true at the same time. We have explored this theme before, and will see it pre-eminently in the death of Jesus, that God saves through judgment.

Now a forward reference is discerned by the writer of our history [v.14]. The Philistines, the Edomites, the Moabites and the inhabitants of Canaan have seen in the Exodus at the sea a fearful omen of their own possible encounter with the God of these redeemed slaves.

The Passover of the Lord [Exodus 12.11-13] was used to describe how the wrath of God passed over the Hebrews with the protecting blood of the Passover Lamb on their doorposts. This was their deliverance in the midst of His judgment; and it showed clearly the distinction between the Egyptians and the Hebrews. So here [verse 16-18] the countries who have yet to encounter the redeemed slaves whom God has purchased [16c] on their way to the promised land will also have to

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let them pass over to their promised destination. In this sense the prior work at the Sea, has the power of a forward preparation of others; they should think twice about resisting them!

The reference to God planting the Hebrews in the “mountain of Thine inheritance”, “the place...of Thy dwelling”, the “sanctuary” implies that the writer has in mind Mt Zion; which was not captured until the time of David. That this is referred to here implies that the Exodus at the Sea was a formative and powerful event which not only fixed Israel’s sense of redemption and being a special people whose God fights for them; it also impressed the surrounding peoples as well. An understanding which the subsequent hiring of Balaam to curse Israel by Balak, the king of the Moabites, also shows [Numbers 22-24].

### **5 - Miriam, Aaron’s sister prophesies as well [15.19-21].**

The ladies are lead in the celebration of this song by Miriam who has a timbrel in her hand. Just the first lines of the song are given to indicate that the subject matter of her song is the same as we have seen already in this chapter.

### **6 – The movement from knowing the Lord as Saviour to knowing Him as a governing Sovereign. [15.22-27]**

It is at this point there is a natural transition to the exchange taking place between the people who are exulting over their salvation experience and their God. Previous to this the focus had been upon the salvation “from” the pursuing Egyptian military. The perspective was that of looking back – and the mood was one of celebration and thankfulness for past deliverance. Their knowledge of the Lord was of His power in what He had done for the salvation of his people.

Now the movement is forward, at the leading of Moses. The journey from the Red Sea into the wilderness of Shur for three days led them to the need for water. What water they found was bitter, which is why the place was called Marah in Hebrew.

Now an often-repeated movement takes place. The people grumble at Moses, he goes to the Lord, Who shows him what to do. This constant interface between a complaining people, a leader who knows God, and the bringing of small deliverances marks the pattern of the wanderings.

Moses throws a tree into the bitter water and it becomes sweet. [A similar picture is later used in the vision of Ezekiel concerning the many trees growing alongside the banks of the river of God which “heal” the water i.e. they make it sweet [Ezek.47.7-9]. This image of the trees is used in the Revelation to John [22.1-2] as well. It is of the tree of life growing beside the river of life in the heavenly setting – it is for the healing of the nations.]

At verse 25-26 there is a difference between the Septuagint [LXX] text and the Hebrew text. The LXX has it that God tested not “them” [Heb] but tested “him” i.e. Moses. The LXX continues on in verse 26 to have all the pronouns as singular; again as if referring to Moses. Most English printed texts side with the Hebrew here.

### **7 - The test to discern between mercy and injustice.**

The test God utters to the people [Moses] instructs them as to the way they shall relate to Him. They are to listen to His voice and obey it. When they obey like this, He declares that He is their Healer. By “Healer” He means the withholding of his plagues He used against the Egyptians. In other words it is a promise not to be wrathful upon them; for that is what those plagues meant. All this is consequent upon their obedience.

In this way He is teaching them that if they had taken his handling of the Egyptians as a favouring of them over the Egyptians as a partiality in His character, then they would be wrong. What they will discover is that the way He handled the Egyptians He is perfectly capable of bring upon them also. The revelation of His Character is that whether they are Israel or the Egyptians, obedience to His voice was required. For His judgment is not partial [as to persons]; it is consistent and just with reference to obedience or disobedience.

What God has done is to save the Israelites out of the hand of the oppressing Egyptians. That oppression, along with the idolatry of the land was wicked – and that wickedness was the true basis within His character for the judgments He brought against the Egyptians.

In the midst of those judgments He has saved the Hebrews who cried to Him. This is, in respect of Israel, a revelation of His mercy. In this context Pharaoh is seen as a vessel of His wrath [Romans 9.14-24] and Israel as a vessel of His mercy in the generation in which they lived.

But should Israel draw the conclusion that they are safe from such judgments of God as His discipline upon their redeemed life they should understand that He cannot be unjust in Himself; obedience to His voice will be their protection [healing] from such things.

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Within Israel, under the Old Covenant, this led to the thinking that when there is lack of health, or disaster, then there has been disobedience and so they went to God to inquire about this. And that is how they understand their circumstances throughout the Old Testament.

Under the New Testament, the persons of God's temple are, in Christ Jesus, justified and sinners both at once. They are also redeemed as to their persons but yet awaiting the redemption of the body; a body in which sin as a power still operates and yet by the resident Holy Spirit may be resisted and put to death moment by moment. Ill health and bodily weakness accompany the people of God as a sign of the tension of living in the now/not yet of God's salvation of His people.