

true follower of Jesus. The pitiful sum that he requested as the price of his perfidy could be represented as a mere token payment, designed to suggest that he really acted against Jesus by motives of patriotism to the state rather than pecuniary advantage. Having made the payment, the elders and priests could hardly move against him as a disciple of the Lord, as evidently they intended to do against the other apostles, for he could retaliate by accusing them of bribery.

We read in John 13: "And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him . . ." (v. 2). At the beginning of the last supper Judas was present, his feet were washed, he heard the fearful words, "ye are clean, *but not all*" (v. 10). Jesus quoted from Psalm 41:9: "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me" (v. 18). Reclining near Jesus, Judas heard him tell the disciples, "One of you which eateth with me shall betray me" (Mk. 14:18).

The disciples were unaware who the traitor was, and looked upon each other to see any telltale signs that would mark the guilty. They failed to grasp the significance of the sign when

Jesus gave the sop to Judas (Jno. 13:23-26). Sorrowfully they asked in turn, "is it I?". Judas did the same: "is it I?" (Mt. 26:22,25). Then Jesus said to him, "That thou doest, do quickly" (Jno. 13:27).

Judas cleverly concealed his treachery from the disciples. He knew the garden to which Jesus and the disciples had often resorted, and came, accompanied by a band of officers and servants, and revealed his Master by a kiss (Mt. 26:47-49; Mk. 14:43-45; Lk. 22:47,48), a salutation normally reserved for those who command great affection. Jesus received the kiss with the words of stern, sad reproach (Lk. 22:48), revealing his voluntary submission to his Father (Jno. 6:38).

Judas stands as the supreme traitor for all time. He was against the bonds of discipleship and friendship, against light, against mercies, affection and trust, and opposed to the Divine will. Judas stands as a type of all betrayers of the Lord. The steps of his decline are so gradual that they are hardly discernible, until the full fact of betrayal is revealed. Let us take heed: "Be not highminded, but fear" (Rom. 11:20); "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

(To be concluded)



Exposition

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The Exodus

A commentary on Exodus 1–15

H. Victory at the Red Sea (Exodus 14–15)

Part 2: The Song of Moses—15:1-21 (i)

Mark Vincent

Introduction

MOSES' SONG of triumph following the miraculous deliverance at the Red Sea is justly famed. This has arisen for several reasons: its exuberance, its overflowing praise, its literary qualities; but also for its complexity, its antiquity, and the surprising nature of some of its content.

I shall not dwell long on the linguistic aspects, but suffice it to say that Exodus 15 contains so many rare and archaic grammatical features, and so much unusual vocabulary, that it has attracted considerable attention from linguists, and is considered by many to be the oldest text in the Old Testament (the surrounding narrative would be understood to have been subjected to an editorial process during its

The format of the commentary

The narrative has been broken down into several **major sections**, of a chapter or two each; some of these will be covered in one month, others will take longer. An **Introduction** is provided for each of these major sections, which sets out the major events and themes dealt with in those chapters.

Each major section is broken into **sub-sections** or **episodes** (these are typically between five and twenty verses each). For each the **AV text** is followed by a **Comment**, which draws out the major lessons and items of interest from the text. The AV text also contains **Footnotes**, in which additional 'one-off' points are made for those wanting to work through Exodus more slowly.

history, while the poem's antiquity has been preserved untouched). Exodus 15 is certainly one of the oldest poems or songs in the Bible; only Lamech's ditty in Genesis 4 and Jacob's blessing in Genesis 49 precede it.

The distinctive use of the verbal system, the absence of the definite article, along with some unusual word endings, are some of the grammatical peculiarities of the piece, but it has one or two other features which are rather easier to spot for the English reader:

- 1 Use of climactic or repetitive parallelism, in which two or more lines begin in the same way and gradually build up a complete sentence, such as: "Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: / Thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy" (v. 6); and: "Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods? / who is like Thee, glorious in holiness . . . ?" (v. 11).
- 2 A tendency to group things into threes:
 - (a) waters gathered, floods stood up, depths congealed (v. 8)
 - (b) blew with wind, sea covered them, they sank as lead (v. 10)
 - (c) glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders (v. 11)
 - (d) in the mountain, in the place, in the Sanctuary (v. 17)
 - (e) the horse, the Lord, the children of Israel (v. 19).
- 3 A great richness of expressions to refer to the enemy whom God has destroyed. God has destroyed the lot, and here is a complete list:

- (a) the horse
- (b) his rider
- (c) Pharaoh's chariots
- (d) his host
- (e) his chosen captains
- (f) them that rose up against thee
- (g) the enemy
- (h) the horse of Pharaoh
- (i) his chariots
- (j) his horsemen.

Whoever, and whatever, the enemy is, God can defeat it. Call it what you will, there is no obstacle resistant to the might of His hand. He can take them all on.

One famous study^a divides the song into two parts, verses 1-13 and verses 14-19. Ultimately this may not be the ideal analysis, but it is a valid candidate,^b and though the two stanzas end up quite unequal in length under such a scheme, there does emerge a set of links between them which are quite attractive:

Stanza 1 (vv. 1-13)	Stanza 2 (vv. 14-19)
They sank as a stone (v. 5)	They will be still as a stone (v. 16)
Thy holy habitation (v. 13)	The Sanctuary (= holy place, v. 17)
Redeemed (v. 13)	Purchased (v. 16)
Thy right hand (v. 6)	Thine arm (v. 16)
The horse (v. 1)	The horse of Pharaoh (v. 19)

Under such a breakdown, the first stanza looks primarily to the past and deals with the wonder of what God has done for His people and to His enemies. The second stanza looks forward to the impact this will have for the surrounding peoples and ultimately for the whole world. It takes God's plan with His people forward, showing how He will lead those He has redeemed to His holy dwelling, and that there they will live and reign with Him.

It is this latter aspect of the Song which is particularly intriguing, and which has caused

a. Brevard Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (Old Testament Library; Louisville: Westminster, 1974).
 b. Another possibility is verses 1-10, verses 11-19. This way both stanzas end with a reference to the sea.

some consternation in the scholarly world. For the Song is programmatic, or, to use our more usual terminology, prophetic. It sets out what God will do, it maps out His purpose with His people, showing that His plan from Exodus to Conquest to establishment of the sanctuary in Zion is one seamless whole. He does not bring them through the Red Sea only to dump them on the other side and say, as it were, "There you are, the hard bit has been done for you; now off you go and fend for yourselves". Instead He reveals His unfolding purpose; the end is always in view. Scholars balk at the idea that a poem apparently so old should predict a future sanctuary in Zion, so in many cases they resort to the assumption that this part of the poem was added later! Yet there is quite clearly a natural progression through the various parts of the Song that is integral to it, as we shall see.

It is interesting, then, that what begins as the Song of the Sea becomes, in effect, the Song of the Mountain. Moses is not content merely to celebrate the past, but, under the hand of inspiration, looks forward to the time when God, in perfect contrast to Pharaoh, shall reign for ever and ever with His Son installed as King in the holy centre of Jerusalem.

Moses' Song, Stanza 1

- 15:1 Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for He hath triumphed gloriously:¹ the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.
- 15:2² The LORD³ is my strength and song,⁴ and He is become my salvation: He is my God,⁵ and I will prepare Him an habitation;⁶ my father's God, and I will exalt Him.
- 15:3 The LORD is a man of war:⁷ the LORD is His name.
- 15:4 Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath He cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea.
- 15:5 The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone.
- 15:6 Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: Thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.
- 15:7 And in the greatness of Thine excellency⁸ Thou hast overthrown them that rose up against Thee: Thou sentest forth Thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.

- 15:8 And with the blast of Thy nostrils⁹ the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.
- 15:9 The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust¹⁰ shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.
- 15:10 Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.
- 15:11 Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods?¹¹ who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?
- 15:12 Thou stretchedst out Thy right hand, the earth swallowed them.
- 15:13 Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed:¹² Thou hast guided¹³ them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation.¹⁴

Comment

Because of the highly concentrated poetry found here, the commentary to Exodus 15 will be forced to proceed on a more verse-by-verse basis than previously.

The first verse of the song, along with the last (v. 19), provides closure for the whole song, each mentioning, as it does, the Lord, the sea and the horse. This is no paltry triumph which God has achieved in a corner; it is a glorious one, unparalleled and splendid. Who ever 'threw' a horse anywhere?—it is horses that throw men if there is any throwing to be done. Yet here God casts the horse into the sea, of all places, and his rider to boot! He does not politely ask the rider to dismount first; both of them are hurled into the sea.

Verse 2 manifests an elaborate structure which draws out the implications of the foregoing in three sets of pairs:

First element	Second element
He is my strength and song	And is become my salvation
He is my God	I will prepare Him a habitation
He is my father's God	I will exalt Him

The first element of each pair states what God is; it defines Him. The second states what is to be

done about it. This is clearer in examples 2 and 3 (I will make a home for Him so that He will stay near to me, and I will exalt Him in order to memorialise just how great He is and how far above me). This suggests that “He is become my salvation” has more to do with how I perceive Him—what I will allow Him to be, and what I will make Him in my life—than it is a bland statement that God has just saved me. God might have saved me, but I have to make this true for myself, to enthrone Him as my saviour. He is only my saviour if I act to receive His salvation, if I take Him to myself in that sense. “He is become my salvation” thus describes a process in which I must crucially participate.

Verse 3 partners verse 2 in developing God’s identity and its meaning, such a key theme in Exodus. He is defined as a ‘mighty man/man of war’ (see [footnote 7](#)), the One Whose Name is YHWH. This emphasis on God’s Name is both powerful and natural, in view of the wonderful revelations of God’s Name that have been given in Exodus 3 and 6. The meaning of those insights from God, encapsulated in His Name, has not been lost on Moses.

Verses 4 and 5 explore the fate of the Egyptians in more detail, reprising the image of them being cast by God into the sea. The language of drowning, so common a metaphor for suffering and even death in the Psalms, finds its origin here in a context which is one-hundred-per-cent literal. Like a stone they sink in their watery grave.

Verses 6-8 examine the implements whereby God has achieved His victory, the text enumerating various body parts and attributes which are marshalled in vengeance upon the Egyptians:

- Thy right hand
- Thy right hand
- Thine excellency (see [footnote 8](#))
- Thy wrath
- The blast of Thy nostrils/anger.

Each of these God directs to fulfil His purpose; there is no part of Him which somehow has a mind of its own and does something different. Notice how personification takes place as each attribute contributes to making His will a reality. His hand becomes glorious as well as dashing in pieces; His wrath is ‘sent forth’ like an agent to consume. His angry blast makes the waters stand to attention and congeals the depths; by means of his ‘excellency’ (as though it were a tool) He overthrows His enemies.

In verse 9 the poem switches back again to the enemies, flashing back in time to their aggressive intent which God has overthrown, picturing them in conference together, spurring one another on with their evil plan. This is done very effectively by patching in some staccato dialogue, all part of a quotation, citing the words of the enemy:

- I will pursue
- I will overtake
- I will divide the spoil
- My lust shall be satisfied upon them
- I will draw my sword
- My hand shall destroy them.

Notice that this is a group of six, a doubling of the usual pattern of threefold groupings found in the Song and noted in the introduction. There is no mistaking the intent of these phrases; and their very rapidity, hot on the heels of one another,^c indicates the intensity of the desire. The Egyptians simply do not find space in their minds for anything else; it has become an obsession.

Verse 10 lays that intensity of the Egyptians, all huff and puff and foaming at the mouth in their eagerness to annihilate, against the calm response of God. All He has to do is ‘blow’, and the sea ‘covers’ the opposition. In contrast to the language of the Egyptians, and in contrast to the language used of God’s destruction elsewhere in the Song, here the verbs chosen are measured and serene. God blows, but no noise is recorded; this is no hurricane, for God does not need to raise one in order to defeat paltry human enemies. The sea, often so tumultuous, simply ‘covers’ the Egyptians, just like covering a bed with a blanket. A far more dramatic verb could have been chosen, but the calm and the understatement appears deliberate. The sea simply glides back into place as a result of God’s blowing, and they sink as lead, all as if this were the most natural thing in the world. The uproar of Egyptian clamour and ambition to be in God’s stead is wafted aside and sunk forever with God’s measured blowing.

Verse 11 therefore erupts into a pair of questions which celebrate His matchlessness. Who is like Him, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? The juxtaposition in the first

c. The clauses are not linked with ‘and’, as one might have expected; this adds to their staccato impact. They also employ alliteration.

two of these is perhaps unexpected. Holiness does not, or should not, imply repression; it is a glorious thing, something splendid which speaks out for itself and shines forth. Praise is likewise coupled with fear; the abandonment of self, so crucial to fulsome praise, does not give way to an abandonment of the sense of Who and How God is, of the fearfulness of His presence. He is incomparable. The Israelites had experienced a culture which had an incomparable number of gods (“Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods?”), but in the end there was and is only One.

Verses 12 and 13 now drive this home in a final set of statements about what God has done which round out the stanza and bring it to a logical conclusion. By His actions over Passover night and over this night, God has redeemed His people and led them out of certain death. But there are two paradoxes buried within the simple statements of these verses that deserve to be unpicked.

Verse 12 states that, when God stretched out His right hand, the *earth* swallowed the Egyptians, when we would surely have expected the sea. Why this transposition? One possibility is that it is to call to mind imagery of the grave. One is normally buried in the earth, not the sea, so the idea of the earth swallowing people perhaps links more naturally to this concept. Another is that the ‘earth’ is the sea bed on which the Egyptians were crossing. Quite literally the chariots were bogged down in it, and in that sense perhaps poetically ‘swallowed’. The earth held them prisoner whilst the seas came crashing down upon them, only to release them, now dead, to float to shore. Another possibility, favoured by some, is to take this verse as evidence that some kind of cosmic upheaval such as an earthquake was involved at the Red Sea crossing. Other than this verse (which seems to me insufficient of itself), there appears to be fairly scant evidence for this.

The second paradox is in verse 13. This states that God has led His people to His holy habitation, when it is clear that, at the point when Moses composed the piece, He has not, for He has only just taken them across the other side, and here they are, the desert stretching out before them. This is resolved most straightforwardly through the concept of God calling things that are not as though they were. His purpose is sealed, and in that sense as good as done. His people will come to His holy habitation, just as

surely as He is God. That one seamless purpose is in that sense as complete at the first step as it will be at the last.

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1. **v. 1 triumphed gloriously.** Literally, “triumphing He has triumphed”; there is no word for “gloriously” in the original, this is the AV’s attempt to convey the meaning of the Hebrew emphatic double-verb idiom (‘dying thou shalt die’ = ‘thou shalt surely die’, and the like). In other words, God has triumphed to excess; His triumph is matchless, and the word ‘triumph’, though an emphatic term of itself, is insufficient on its own to capture the extent of God’s victory. There are many terms of elevation/exaltation and depression in the Song, a theme which is introduced in the double verb here.
 2. **v. 2 [first half of verse].** The words “The LORD [Yah] is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation” are used again in Isaiah 12:2 (Yah YHWH, a most unusual combination) and Psalm 118:14 (Yah).
 3. **v. 2 LORD.** Though capitalised, the usual AV technique for YHWH, the Hebrew here is Yah. The term is used exclusively in poetry, and can be taken as a contraction of YHWH.
 4. **v. 2 song.** A *double entendre*, for *zimrah* could also mean ‘might’ (the evidence being cognate words in other Semitic languages). This sits well with “strength” earlier in the clause. “Song” also fits the context, of course.
 5. **v. 2 God.** The first “God” is the Hebrew *el* (a singular term, whose plural is used in verse 11), the second *elohim*.
 6. **v. 2 I will prepare Him an habitation.** This translates a single verb in Hebrew, one which may be taken in three senses. It might derive from *naweh*, used later in verse 13 (see [note 14](#)) and denoting pasture, a shepherd’s camp or tent. Or it might derive from the verb ‘be beautiful’, giving the sense of “I will beautify Him”. Another option is to derive from *nawah*, ‘be high’, giving the sense, “I will exalt/elevate Him”. Any of these meanings would be appropriate enough in the context, but a sound play with *naweh* (‘habitation’) in verse 13 would seem to be deliberate, even if a different sense is ultimately to be understood here.
 7. **v. 3 man of war.** A quite literal rendering of the Hebrew *iysh milchamah*, which might more neatly be translated “the LORD is a warrior”. To use such language of God is striking in a modern context, though it would have been more normal in the ancient Near East. Compare what

- is said in 14:14, “The LORD shall fight for you”, and 14:25, “The LORD is fighting against Egypt”. In Isaiah 42:13 God is referred to as “a man of wars” (using the plural of the term for ‘war’ here). It has been argued with some cogency that one should read the whole sentence in Exodus 15 as ‘YHWH Man of War is His name’, rather than as two clauses: “The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is His name”; compare Hosea 12:5.
8. **v. 7 excellency.** This term, *ga’own*, comes from the same root as ‘triumph’ in verse 1, *ga’ah*, ‘to rise’, ‘conquer’, ‘lift up’. *Ga’own* means ‘majesty’, ‘pride’, ‘triumph’. Just as *ga’ah* was doubled in verse 1, so here *ga’own*, an emphatic word by itself, is insufficient. It is coupled with the word ‘great’, “in the greatness of Thy majesty” or “in Thy great majesty/pride”.
 9. **v. 8 nostrils.** The reference to nostrils may be taken as an idiom for anger (some translators render the term in just this way, and the AV renders it such 170 times). The dual form here might support the “nostrils” translation, and there are a number of texts that describe God’s nostrils, for instance Psalm 18:8, which pictures smoke billowing forth from them. It is certainly graphic imagery.
 10. **v. 9 lust.** Hebrew *nephesh*, usually translated ‘soul’. ‘Lust’ works as a translation; the equivalent term in cognate languages, and indeed *nephesh* itself, can carry the sense of ‘throat’, ‘gullet’, ‘appetite’.
 11. **v. 8 among the gods.** “Gods” is *elim*, the plural form of *el*, used earlier of God Himself in verse 2. Sometimes it can carry the sense, ‘heavenly beings’, and might refer to angels, for instance. But here the easiest reading would seem to be a reference to other ‘gods’ whom others might worship (as the Egyptians most certainly did). The question is rhetorical, and in no sense implies that such gods do actually exist.
 12. **v. 13 redeemed.** The verb *ga’al*, ‘redeem’, has been used twice before in the Pentateuch, once in Genesis 48:16, and once in Exodus 6:6 of God’s redemption of the Israelites. Further comment will be made when we come to the word ‘purchased’ in [verse 16](#).
 13. **v. 13 Thou hast guided.** The verb ‘guide’ comes from a shepherding background, implying that Israel are God’s flock. It is used of leading sheep to a watering place. See the following footnote.
 14. **v. 13 habitation.** The Hebrew term denotes ‘pasture’ or an ‘abode of shepherds’, whereas the translation ‘habitation’ is somewhat misleading as it inclines one to think more of buildings and temples. The shepherding metaphor began earlier in the clause with the term ‘guide’ (see previous footnote, and compare, for instance, Psalm 78:52). The debate about which ‘habitation’ is referred to is taken up in the comment, but here are one or two additional details: (1) the reference in Psalm 78:52,54 might be brought to support that Sinai is referred to (the holy mountain follows the Red Sea but precedes the conquest account); (2) one might argue that the pastureland refers to the entire land of Israel (so a number of mediaeval Jewish commentators).

Milestones 2003

The latest edition of Brother Don Pearce’s annual survey of the signs of the times is now available. To quote from the rear cover: “2003 will go down as the Year of the Divide! The deep-rooted divisions between Europe and Britain and America were on prominent display throughout the year. The leaders of France, Germany and Russia stood shoulder-to-shoulder in opposition to the actions of America and Britain against Iraq. At the heart of these Middle East events lies the conflict between Jew and Arab in Israel. Already the downfall of Saddam’s evil régime, together with his capture, are beginning to affect the actions of other Middle East leaders normally hostile to Israel. Is the stage being set for a time of peace before the great invasion? The return of the Master is surely very close”. The main topics covered are: the latter-day development of Daniel’s king of the north and king of the south, and how this fits with other end-time prophecies • Europe uniting • Britain, America and Australia in Iraq and the Middle East • Israel’s increasing isolation • the Vatican’s drive for influence in Europe.

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