

**Sermon: Escape to Egypt – A Time of Change (Exodus 14: 10 – end)**  
**by Rev'd Rachel Simons**

Our journey through *Genesis* and *Exodus* has moved on and three weeks ago we began to look at Moses. First his birth and his adoption by the Pharaoh's daughter; the trouble he got into as a young man and his fleeing to Midian; and then two weeks ago we looked at the Burning Bush.

Now things have moved on. Moses has confronted Pharaoh and pleaded for the people of Israel to be allowed to leave Egypt. Not surprisingly Pharaoh didn't agree to this and it took much for Pharaoh to realise that he had to say yes.

For there were the plagues, you might like to spend some time reading these in *Exodus (Chapters 7 – 11)* Plagues of blood; frogs; gnats; flies; on livestock; boils; hail; locusts; and darkness. You'd think that one of these would be enough to make Pharaoh relent, or at least after two or three?! You'd have difficulty explaining the plagues away as mere coincidence. But the presence of the people of Israel in Egypt was essential, for they were workers, to set them free would be to lose much. And so Pharaoh continues to say NO until the final plague. The plague of the death of firstborn.



And so they were able to make preparations to leave Egypt. Imagine the excitement; this is something they've been waiting for. A new life awaits, one that they will be free to enjoy.

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*Exodus 13* tells us they did not leave by the road to Philistia. This was God protecting them so that they avoid potential conflict on the way. Note that God says "If the people face war, they may change their minds and return to Egypt" (*Exodus 13 v17*) As we continue to travel with Moses and the people of Israel we'll see how true that was, how in the face of difficulty they want to turn back.



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They have a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night to guide. This leads them to the Sea of Reeds, we don't know exactly where this was but it is a place of water that prevents the onward journey of the Israelites. It was impassable and then their situation gets worse.



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In *Exodus 14* we find that Pharaoh has changed his mind. He's realised what he has given up by letting the Israelites go and so he sends 600 chariots to find them and bring them home (*Exodus 14 v5-7*) Pharaoh tries to reassert control. They catch up with them at the Sea of Reeds.

Immediately we see the response of the Israelites for they cry out to the Lord and then in their fear begin to accuse Moses.

Why did he bring them out, surely life was better in Egypt, at least then they were alive? They were fearful and so they respond by seeing their past lives as better than what now faces them.

Change is hard, it disorientates us. Like when we're unhappy at work, we want to leave but are fearful of the change so it takes us years to find something new, and then having handed in our notice we worry. Have we done the right thing? Change can leave us feeling lost and overwhelmed. Then when change encounters difficulty, our resolve can disappear; our hopes for the future fade; we become unsure who to trust. Have you ever felt like that?

What happens next shows us that in those most difficult of times there is one in whom we can trust.

Moses takes a stand and tells them – “Don’t be afraid, the Lord will deliver you!”

God tells Moses to raise his staff and stretch his hand out over the water to divide it so that the Israelites can pass through on dry ground. The pillar of cloud moves to behind the Israelites, protecting them from view and putting the Egyptians in darkness.

Moses stretches out his hand over the sea and a strong east wind drives back the water.



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It would have been warm and helped to dry the ground. Moses stretches out his hand to show that this isn’t a natural occurrence. God is at work. Hope is being provided for the future, they can trust in God. And so they cross.

As they cross the Egyptians begin to follow them but are thrown into confusion and the wheels of their chariots come off and some want to turn back. Why did the wheels fall off? A question we can ponder – just a couple of the possibilities are: the impact of more people passing over the dry passage causes it to

deteriorate or the chariots were too heavy for the ground. In all the possible reasons, what is important is that God was at work in that situation.

Once the Israelites have crossed Moses is told to stretch out his hand again so that the waters may return.

From this passage of the story of Israel and Moses we can learn that:

**Change isn't easy.** When the going gets hard we get pulled into thinking that the old life was better, like the Israelites did. Even though they were following God's plan, quickly those things that used to be problems began to feel familiar and safe. But we can know that when it gets hard and that change seems a struggle God is with us in the midst of it and we can trust in Him.

The road God takes us may not seem obvious to us. It won't necessarily be the direct route, but remember it is God's route, and that is the best route. For God sees what we cannot see and will guide us as to our journey's end.

God went with the Israelites on their journey, sending the pillars to guide them, and that is true for us today. God goes with us on our journey. And like the pillars, he provides many things to help guide us on our way:

- our Bibles to read and learn from
- the people of faith around us to counsel us
- the Holy Spirit to guide us
- Jesus as our Saviour and example.

Amen.