



"Every experience God gives us, every person He puts in our lives is the perfect preparation for the future that only He can see."

—Corrie ten Boom

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Moses, Psalmist (Part 3)

We frequently perceive characters in books as one-dimensional, and if we are an imaginative and comprehensive reader, perhaps in two dimensions. Unfortunately, this tendency arises in our perception of biblical characters as well. Previously, we saw [Moses](#) as a writer of psalms of praise to [God](#), as shown in Psalms 90 and 91. However, his songs, like his life, are more multifaceted than this. Though they also praise God, those recorded in Exodus 15 and Deuteronomy 32 exhibit Moses also performing in verse the functions of historian and prophet.

Exodus 15 ("I Will Sing to the Eternal," p. 116 in *The Bible Hymnal*) opens with the word "then," showing that the context of chapter 14 provides the background for this first "Song of Moses." Since Exodus 14 relates the crossing of the Red Sea and the drowning of the Egyptian army in it, the song exalts God's victory over Pharaoh and Egypt. Much of it records in triumphant, descriptive poetry the details of that miraculous deliverance of the Israelites.

The song falls into three parts: verses 1-5, 6-10, and 11-18. This division can be seen by the concluding words in the first two sections: "They sank [into

the sea]." The first section introduces the subject matter generally, giving the credit for the victory to God and explaining what it meant to the Israelites. This latter point appears plainly in verse 2: "The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him. . . ." The wording shows a progression of results: God acts strongly in His people's behalf, they praise or thank Him, and He saves or delivers them (either physically or spiritually) as their God.

This is indeed how God always works. He first reveals Himself, often by doing something for us that we cannot do for ourselves. Then, once we become aware of Him, we praise and thank Him and begin to develop a relationship with Him. At that point, the real work of salvation commences in and for us, and He becomes our God. Moses, in a few quick clauses, maps the salvation process!

The middle section amplifies the generalities of the first section by detailing the events of the Red Sea crossing, emphasizing God's participation. It was God's right hand that "dashed the enemy in pieces" (verse 6). In His burning fury, He "consumed them like stubble" (verse 7). At "the blast of [God's] nostrils," the sea parted and formed walls through which Israel could pass (verse 8). Finally, when the Israelites were through, God's "wind," His breath, pushed the waters back into place, covering and destroying the Egyptian army (verse 10). There can be no doubt who receives the credit for this astounding miracle!

Verse 9 captures the Egyptians'—particularly Pharaoh's—vengeful blood-lust against the Israelites. Their words, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil," pictures them almost breathlessly running or riding after their fleeing former slaves with dogged determination. Contrary to Moses' claim that God would prevail, they say, "My desire [for vengeance] shall be satisfied on them. *I* will draw *my* sword, *my* hand shall destroy them." In the end, it is very clear who was right—and who was dead!

The final section begins with a phrase repeated multiple times throughout Scripture: "Who is like you, O LORD . . .?" (verse 11; cf. [Isaiah 40:18](#)). The question is rhetorical; the answer obvious: No one! No other Being in the universe is so excellent in [holiness](#), so awesome and praiseworthy, and so able to work such wonders!

In verses 13-18, Moses puts on his prophet's mantle and predicts the results of God's tremendous act. The nations along Israel's route to the Promised Land would be terrified, panic-stricken, paralyzed with fear that they would follow the Egyptians into total destruction (verses 14-15). In fact, Moses literally says, "They will be petrified!" (verse 16).

Moses sees the entry of Israel into the Promised Land as a foregone conclusion (verse 17). Why would he not? He had just witnessed God bring them through the Red Sea and defeat the greatest army on earth! It would be a little thing for God to guide and protect them through the wilderness and lead them over Jordan. In the flush of victory, he cannot imagine the 40 years and the tremendous struggle it would take until that occurred. Moses even foresees a sanctuary "in the mountain of Your inheritance," which some scholars believe refers to Mount Moriah, where Abraham sacrificed [Isaac](#), and where the Temple was eventually built.

Finally, verse 18 trumpets the perpetuity of God's reign. It is hard to believe that it took 65 chapters for the Bible to refer to God as a king, but indeed, this is the first instance. It does it in grand style, as the triumphant conclusion to a marvelous psalm of praise and victory!

Next time, we will examine Moses' song in Deuteronomy 32.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Israel left Egypt with a high hand, and with Moses at their head, they made quickly for the wilderness of Sinai. But it was God who was really leading them—and He led them into a box canyon with the Egyptian army nipping at their heels! In this way, God forced Israel either to trust Him completely for their deliverance or to return to their slavery in Egypt.

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