

Exodus = EK-suh-duhs

Proclaim the Lord's words with urgency and firmness.

Read with an informative tone.

As you continue to proclaim the story of Moses and the sea, let the assembly hear more energy and urgency in your voice.

### READING III Exodus 14:15—15:1

#### A reading from the Book of Exodus

The LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me?  
**Tell** the Israelites to **go** forward.

And **you**, **lift up** your **staff** and, with hand outstretched  
over the sea,

split the sea in two,  
that the Israelites may **pass through** it on **dry** land.

But **I** will make the **Egyptians** so obstinate  
that they will **go** in after them.

Then I will receive glory through Pharaoh and **all his army**,  
his chariots and charioteers.

The Egyptians shall know that **I am the Lord**,  
when I **receive glory** through Pharaoh  
and his chariots and charioteers."

The angel of God, who had been leading Israel's camp,  
now moved and went around behind them.

The column of **cloud also**, leaving the **front**,  
took up its place **behind** them,  
so that it came between the camp of the **Egyptians**  
and that of **Israel**.

But the cloud **now** became **dark**, and **thus** the night passed  
**without** the rival camps coming **any** closer together all  
night long.

**Then** Moses **stretched** out his hand over the **sea**,  
and the **LORD** swept the sea  
with a strong east **wind throughout** the night  
and so **turned** it into dry land.

When the water was thus divided,  
the Israelites **marched** into the **midst** of the sea on **dry** land,  
with the water like a wall to their right and to their left.

than Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt, powerful over nature and over intractable evil. When God shows forth glory, even the Egyptians will know that the Lord is God. When God saved the people, they feared him, and they believed in the Lord and his servant Moses. The joy and celebration of the whole people follows the story, both in the book of Exodus and in this liturgy. The responsorial psalm is the poetic complement to the narrative in which the Lord accomplishes the wondrous pas-

sage through the sea, showing forth majestic glory.

**READING IV** **Isaiah 54:5-14**. When the people of Israel were in exile in Babylon, the words of divinely inspired prophets gave them hope that God had not abandoned them. Today's fourth reading comes near the end of the exile in the sixth century bc, in a part of the book of Isaiah usually referred to as Second Isaiah. Whoever the author was, he continued the tradition that was begun by Isaiah of

Jerusalem long before the exile. Faced with the apparently powerful gods of Babylon, particularly Marduk, the exiles needed a deeper understanding and relationship with their God. The prophet thus gives them a rich and personal collection of images for God: Lord, God of hosts, your maker, your husband, the Holy One of Israel, your Redeemer. The guiding image in this passage is God as husband, and Israel, as well as Jerusalem itself, as the wife. In the verses just before today's reading, Isaiah offered astounding words of hope:

The Egyptians followed in pursuit,  
all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and charioteers went  
after them

**right** into the midst of the sea.

In the night watch just before **dawn**  
the **LORD cast through** the column of the fiery cloud  
upon the Egyptian force a glance that threw it into a panic;  
and he **so clogged** their chariot wheels  
that they could **hardly** drive.

**With** that the Egyptians sounded the **retreat** before Israel,  
because the **LORD** was fighting **for** them against the Egyptians.

Then the **LORD** told Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea,  
that the water may flow back upon the **Egyptians**,  
upon their **chariots** and their **charioteers**."

So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea,  
and at **dawn** the sea flowed **back** to its **normal** depth.

The Egyptians were **fleeing** head on **toward** the sea,  
when the **LORD** hurled them into its midst.

As the water flowed **back**,  
it covered the chariots and the charioteers of Pharaoh's  
whole army

which had **followed** the Israelites into the sea.

**Not a single one** of them escaped.

But the Israelites had **marched on dry land**  
**through the midst** of the sea,  
with the water like a wall to their right and to their left.

**Thus** the **LORD** saved Israel on **that day**  
from the **power** of the Egyptians. >>

Build the intensity as you read about the fate  
of the Egyptians.

Pause before you say this line.

Proclaim as one sentence—no break.

"Enlarge the space for your tent, spread out your tent cloths unsparingly" (54:2). The prophet was telling Israel, portrayed as the once abandoned wife, that she will again have a tent to live in, and she will even need to enlarge it for her numerous offspring. Once shamed because of sin, she was like a wife forsaken and grieved, cast off like the wife of a man's youth. We can well imagine the collective shame felt by the people, who regarded their exile as punishment for their betrayal. Their idolatry in particular was akin to adultery, blatant

unfaithfulness to the covenant they had with their God.

Because of Israel's faithlessness, God abandoned her in wrath, but only for a moment. In contrast to the brief punishment, God's compassion will be everlasting, his steadfast love will never depart, and his covenant of peace will not be removed. Divine compassion (*rehem*) appears three times in this passage, emphasized as an abiding characteristic of God toward Israel. Rooted in the word *raham*, "womb," it signifies a deep, inti-

mate, unshakable feeling, like the love of a mother for the child in the womb. Along with *rehem* is another repeated divine quality, *hesed*, love that is everlasting and steadfast, often associated with God's covenant fidelity. *Hesed* is love that is manifest in action.

Finally, the prophetic promise presents to the people still in exile a vision of a renewed city. The prophecy has an immediacy about it; this isn't a vision of some far-distant future, but reveals something that God is about to do. Their exile will soon

When Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the seashore and **beheld the great power** that the LORD had shown **against** the Egyptians, they feared the LORD and believed in him and in his servant Moses.

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:  
I will sing to the LORD, for he is **gloriously triumphant; horse and chariot** he has cast into the sea.

Pause before you read the song. Smile.

For meditation and context:

Tiberius = tĪ-BEER-ee-uhs; Caesar = SEE-zer  
Judea = jŪQ-DEE-uh  
Ituraea = ih-too-REE-ah  
Trachonitis = trak-uh-NĪ-tis  
Lysanias = lĪ-SAY-nee-uhs  
Annas = AN-uhs  
Caiaphas = KĪ-uh-fuhs  
Zechariah = zek-uh-RĪ-uh

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Exodus 15:1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 17–18 (1b)

**R. Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered himself in glory.**

I will sing to the LORD, for he is  
gloriously triumphant;  
horse and chariot he has cast into the sea.  
My strength and my courage is the LORD,  
and he has been my savior.  
He is my God, I praise him;  
the God of my father, I extol him.

The LORD is a warrior,  
LORD is his name!  
Pharaoh's chariots and army he hurled into  
the sea;  
the elite of his officers were submerged  
in the Red Sea.

The flood waters covered them,  
they sank into the depths like a stone.  
Your right hand, O LORD, magnificent  
in power,  
your right hand, O LORD, has shattered  
the enemy.

You brought in the people you redeemed  
and planted them on the mountain of  
your inheritance—  
the place where you made your seat,  
O LORD,  
the sanctuary, LORD, which your  
hands established.  
The LORD shall reign forever and ever.

READING IV Isaiah 54:5–14

**A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah**

The One who has **become your husband** is your **Maker**;  
his **name** is the LORD of hosts;  
your redeemer is the **Holy One** of Israel,  
called **God** of all the earth.

Isaiah = Ī-ZAY-uh

Proclaim with good volume and eye contact.  
Speak with authority.

end. No longer in ruins, Jerusalem will shine with precious stones from the foundations to the pinnacles, with jewels embedded in the walls and on the gates. It is almost as if Jerusalem itself is a bride bedecked with myriad treasures that a loving bridegroom can bestow. All of the oppression, fear, and terror of the present will be transformed. In newly re-created Zion, the Lord himself will teach the children, and all will once again experience God's bountiful prosperity.

**READING V** **Isaiah 55:1–11.** Like the fourth reading, from Isaiah 54, the reading from Isaiah 55 is a prophecy of hope and fulfillment. While Isaiah 54 promises a renewed Jerusalem to the exiles in Babylon, the assurances in the next chapter are more expansive, directed to "everyone who thirsts." The wide-open invitation to come and receive water and bread without cost is applicable to all individuals and nations, and in every historical circumstance. It resonates with the invitation of Wisdom to be guests at her feast:

"Come, eat of my food, and drink of the wine I have mixed" (Proverbs 9:5). The biblical writers develop the imagery of food and drink with multivalent possibilities. Some rabbinic commentators interpreted water as a metaphor for Torah, and in the Wisdom tradition, bread and water together symbolize wise teaching: "She will feed him with the bread of learning, and give him the water of understanding to drink" (Sirach 15:3). Thirsting for water is also a metaphor for people yearning for a relationship with God: "Those who drink of me will thirst for