

## 2023 09 17 – Creation Unleashed

**Scripture: Exodus 14:19-31** (*The Inclusive Bible*)

Over the past few weeks our news has been filled with stories of natural disasters: fires in British Columbia, the earthquake in Morocco, floods in Libya and, most recently, Hurricane Lee on the east coast of North America. These are all current examples of the destructive power of God's creation. These are also events that have been happening naturally for hundreds of millions of years, even before the existence of humankind.

In fact, the ancient Hebrew scriptures contain several examples of these type of phenomena: Noah and the flood (Genesis 7), Elijah with fire, wind and earthquake (1 Kings 19:11-12), Isaiah suggesting that God will come in the wind and the fire (Isaiah 66:15), and also today's scripture reading where YHWH swept the sea with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land.

These are all natural phenomena, but for thousands of years, humankind have tried to explain these events by suggesting that they are caused by God's actions or even God's anger at humanity. In fact, still today, our insurance policies call these events "Acts of God." I believe God, the Holy Mystery has nothing to do with natural disasters, that they are normal occurrences in creation.

And now scientists tell us that the actions of humankind have already impacted our planet in such a way that we have increased the frequency and/or the intensity of these natural events. As an example, for more than a decade,

Oklahoma has experienced an increase in [earthquakes](#) and experts tell us this escalation is directly related to gas and oil processing that is taking place in that state. This particular situation is localized, but we all know that humanity's impact on our planet is also causing climate change and that is being felt worldwide.

Climate change (or global warming) has already increased the number of [droughts and floods](#) being experienced around the world and has intensified the impact of [windstorms](#) such as hurricanes. Scientists are telling us to [get used to the smoke](#), because climate change will continue to worsen the three major factors that influence wildfires: frequent lightning strikes that start fires, having dry fuel to burn, and dry, windy weather that fans the flames. It's as if humankind, [in just the last two centuries](#), has managed to unleash the destructive power of God's creation.

It's as if we've been given the power ascribed to Moses in today's story. All Moses had to do was stretch out his hand to unleash the power of the strong east wind so the water would divide creating a dry path for the Israelites. Of course, the story tells us that this power came from God or YHWH and that through the wind, God saved the Israelites from the Egyptian army.

Some aspects of this story give me hope and some I struggle with. I will begin with the struggle. I believe in a God of love, a God of justice, a God that would certainly want the Israelites to be free from slavery in Egypt. But I don't believe

that this God of love, this God of peace would deliberately choose to destroy an entire Egyptian army by drowning them in the sea.

Therefore, I would choose to believe that the creation of a dry path across the sea was the result of a natural occurrence, not a deliberate act of God. There are [several different theories](#) about what could have happened. Some scholars suggest that the crossing was not actually in the Red Sea but rather in a shallower body of water where creating a dry path with wind was much more probable. One Internet article described it this way:

A recent computer modelling study by researchers at the US National Center for Atmospheric Research shows how the movement of wind as described in Exodus could have parted the waters. There is a bend where an ancient river is believed to have merged with a coastal lagoon. A strong wind, blowing hard all night could have pushed water into the two waterways, opening up a land bridge on the bend, and allowing people to walk across the mud flats to safety. As soon as the wind stopped blowing, the waters would have rushed back in. <https://preachingforgodsworld.org/season-of-creation-week-three/>

So far, no archeological evidence of this event has been found, so other scholars question whether the crossing even occurred as it is described. But even if this part of the Exodus story is not an historic fact, it still has value as a piece the founding myth of the Hebrew people. Founding stories, as we know, are created as a way of understanding how a particular culture or tribe came to be and how

they arrived at their current place in the world. As such they have their own intrinsic value, their own truth.

One of the things that gives me hope in this story is that Moses was given not only the power to unleash the wind, but also the power to stop it. The writers of this story believed that it was possible to reverse our actions in relation to God's creation. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we can only hope that is true, that it is possible for us to reverse some of the negative impact that we have had on our planet.

Scientists are telling us that climate change cannot be totally reversed but that we can slow down what is happening and maybe even cap global warming if we act quickly. Every action we take is important. We can change our own personal impact on the climate and we can also add our voice to those who are encouraging our political leaders and large corporations to make a difference. We can also make sure that we continue to educate ourselves about this issue.

The situation is becoming so dire that some scientists are even considering engineering a solution. One academic from Harvard University put it this way:

Although the best way to slow climate change is to reduce greenhouse emissions by switching to clean energy sources like solar, wind, water, and nuclear energy, the CO<sub>2</sub> already in the atmosphere can persist and continue to exert warming effects for centuries. Geoengineering, the large-scale modification of Earth's climate, is worth exploring because countries have been cutting their emissions too slowly to make any near-term

impact on climate change. <https://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2022/reversing-climate-change-with-geoengineering/>

This article goes on to explain that geo-engineering is both exciting and terrifying. All the climate-changing activities that they are exploring are untested and could cause as much harm as good. We cannot assume that our scientists and engineers are going to fix this problem for us. Right now, there is no quick fix, we can't just stretch out our arm and stop the wind, like Moses did.

The solution is going to mean changing aspects of how we live on this planet. It is going to mean changing the economy of provinces like Alberta and Saskatchewan so we are not as dependent on fossil fuels. It is going to mean switching to renewable energy and even reducing the amount of energy that we use. The actions of humankind have created global warming and together we will have to find a way to slow it down.

The good news is that we are not alone. The God of love, the Ground of our Being, our Maker (or Creator) is with us. So may each one of us use God's love and creativity to change how we live on this earth. May it be so. Amen.