

Exodus: Operation Fire Fly; The Miracle: Ph 1, Cloud & Fire FLOT Line

To be delivered from Pharaoh's army and Egyptian slavery these Jews must faith-rest in their souls and then physically move into the breach.

Moses ends his oratory with two promises and one final mandate in Exodus 14:13 and Exodus 14:14:

1. You will never see Pharaoh's army again.
2. The Lord will fight for you today.
3. You are to keep quiet!

J. The Lord Executes Operation Fire Fly

This is a corny play on words but the idea is to create a mental image that communicates. A firefly—one word—is a winged nocturnal beetle that produces a bright intermittent light by oxidation of luciferin. An enzyme acts as a catalyst for this oxidation process.

We are familiar with the principle of theophany, a visual appearance of deity in the Old Testament. Revealed deity is always the second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ. Prior to His Incarnation, such revelations are called theophanies, after the Incarnation they are referred to as Christophanies.

We have also learned of the Jewish term assigned to the presence of Jehovah Elohim when He takes on the appearance of a phenomenon of nature. This term is the Hebrew euphemism, *Shekinah Kabod*, which literally means “*the presence of the glory*.” We simply say the Shekinah Glory. But the “*glory*” is the visual manifestation of the divine “*presence*.” (The *kabod* is what reveals the Shekinah of the Lord.)

The Old Testament reveals three instances of this glorious presence:

1. The Burning Bush
2. The Pillar of Cloud
3. The Pillar of Fire

During the Exodus, the Jewish nation is led to the Bitter Lakes by the Pillar of Cloud and Fire, alternating, intermittently, between day and night. This presentation of the Shekinah Glory had to have been tremendous in size in order for two-million Jews to utilize it as a guidon from Etham to the Bitter Lakes.

We can better understand the cloud and the fire if we take a look at the isagogics of travel in the second millennium

B.C. I quote from:

Keil, C. F. and F. J. Delitzsch. "The Pentateuch." Vol. 2 of Biblical Commentary on The Old Testament. Translated by James Martin. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968; pp. 40-41:

To this sign of the divine presence and guidance there was a natural analogon in the caravan fire, which consisted of small iron vessels or grates, with wood fires burning in them, fastened at the end of long poles, and carried as a guide in front of caravans, and, in trackless countries in the front of armies also, and by which the direction of the road was indicated in the day-time by the smoke, and at night by the light of the fire. But the pillar of cloud and fire must not be confounded with any such caravan and army fire. The Cloud was not produced by an ordinary caravan fire, nor was it "a mere symbol of the presence of God ...," but it had a miraculous origin and a supernatural character. We are not to regard the phenomenon as consisting of two different pillars, that appeared alternately, one of cloud, and the other of fire. There was but one pillar of both cloud and fire; so that it was a cloud with a dark side and a bright one, causing darkness and also lighting the night. Consequently, we have to imagine the cloud as the covering of the fire, so that by day it appeared as a dark cloud in contrast with the light of the sun, but by night as a fiery splendor. When this cloud went before the army of Israel, it assumed the form of a column; so that by day it resembled a dark column of smoke rising up towards heaven, and by night a column of fire, to show the whole army what direction to take.

Our section title is not the one word "firefly," but two words: "fire fly"—Operation Fire Fly. The word "fly" means, according to Webster's Ninth, "to move or spread quickly; to flee or escape from."

Two million Jews are going to fly from the cul-de-sac that entraps them through a breach in the Sea of Reeds, their escape lighted by the pillar of fire, the Shekinah Glory of the God of Israel and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Operation Fire Fly begins with a rhetorical question from the Lord followed by a command:

Exodus 14:15 - Then the Lord said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the Israelites to go forward!"

Exodus 14:16 - And as for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the Israelites shall go through the breach in the water on dry ground.

Exodus 14:17 - And as for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen.

Exodus 14:18 - Then the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord, when I am honored through Pharaoh, and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen."

The Jews are to stop their useless praying and move out. Moses is to use his staff to initiate the breach in the water. The Lord will harden the hearts of Pharaoh's soldiers. What happens next is finally the culmination of the incident mentioned in the title of paragraph 3 of our study of the Exodus: "Miracle at Little Bitter Lake."

K. The Miracle in Three Phases

1. Phase One: The Cloud and the Fire Exodus 14:19

And the angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them.

Exodus 14:20 - So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was a cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night.

When the Lord gave Moses the command to initiate the parting of the water, He, as the pillar of cloud, moved from between the camp of Israel and Little Bitter Lake and positioned Himself behind them between the camp of Israel and the camp of Pharaoh.

This column was enormous and obviously very plastic, in the sense that it could take on various configurations as well as appearances. According to Exodus 14:24, the column was both cloud and fire with the cloud actually forming a covering for the fire.

In the daytime it appeared in contrast to the sun as a cloud-like column of smoke. But at night the light shone through and took on a fiery glow. The shape of the cloud took on different configurations:

1. A burning bush.

Exodus 3:2 - The angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed.

2. As a column, appearing alternately as a cloud and as fire. Beginning with the Exodus and continuing throughout the 40 years of wandering in the *Jornada*, this column served as a guidon, leading the nation from one encampment to another.

Exodus 13:21 - The Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the wheel-track, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.

3. When positioned over the Tabernacle it apparently took on an orbicular or spherical shape.

Exodus 40:34 - Then the cloud covered the tent of the meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.

Exodus 40:35 - And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.

Exodus 40:36 - And throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the Tabernacle; the sons of Israel would set out;

Exodus 40:37 - but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up.

Exodus 40:38 - For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of the Lord was on the Tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.

4. Finally, there was the capacity to spread out laterally forming a barrier or wall of separation between the Egyptian Army and the Israelite encampment at Little Bitter Lake.

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Exodus 14:20 - So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night.

In this maneuver, the Lord Jesus Christ became a FLOT Line for the Israelites.

FLOT is a military acronym meaning 'Forward Line of Troops' used as an acrostic for the divine defense line of problem-solving devices formed from Bible doctrine circulating in the soul's stream of consciousness. The FLOT Line is God's protection for the believer against invasion by all the insidious enemies of the spiritual life.

At Little Bitter Lake, Jesus Christ formed a literal FLOT Line as He spread the cloud over the broad expanse of the valley between Pi-hahiroth (Py-ha-HY-roth) and Baal-zephon (BAY-el-se-PHON).

The Lord so arranged the cloud that it formed a haze which created zero visibility and thus immobilizing the Egyptian army. On the Israelite's side of the cloud, the fire of the Shekinah Glory shown through thus lighting up the night for the preparation and crossing of Little Bitter Lake. This FLOT Line of the cloud held the Egyptians in place throughout the night while the Israelite Exodus proceeded by the light of the fire.

An excellent synopsis of this first phase of the Miracle at Little Bitter Lake can be found in the writings of:

Wood, Leon J. "Life in Egypt." In A Survey of Israel's History, revised by David O'Brien, 106. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986.

A shift in position of the cloud ... stopped the Egyptians, settling down on them like a fog so that they could not see, and it provided light on the Israelite side so that the people there could see better. The cloud's normal lighting property was at this time confined to one side only. This illumination enabled the people to make preparations for crossing the water.

The Israelites will not be crossing the water but instead will transverse the lake's bed on dry ground, which brings us to: