

The Egyptian Red Sea Crossing – Almost
By Ambassador Philip

Anamun did not want to leave his home when he got Pharaoh's summons, his heart was to remain and comfort his grieving wife over the death of their first born son; but orders were orders and they were not to be disobeyed.

With Anamun being the captain of a portion of Pharaoh's army, Anamun's chariot was positioned in front of the host waiting for Pharaoh to start his speech. Just looking at Pharaoh, Anamun could see that Pharaoh had one thing on his mind, and that was to bring back the Hebrew slaves.

Not long before, Pharaoh was more than eager to get the Hebrews to leave Egypt at the demands of Moses.

Anamun looked over the vast army of Egyptians that waited upon Pharaoh's command to pursue the Hebrews. Many of the soldiers in their chariots had lost their relatives in the previous plagues, but the worst one was the unexplained death of their first born children and relatives.

Finally, Pharaoh Neferhotep I gave his speech to rally together the Egyptians. "Remember your first born," he shouted. "Remember Moses who brought the plagues upon you. Today we go to avenge the death of your children. Today we go to bring death to Moses and his God! And we will bring the Hebrew slaves back to the bondage of brick making. They will build again the Egypt they have so wantonly destroyed!"

Pharaoh continued his speech instilling into Anamun the lustful desire to meet Moses at the point of his sword. Oh yes, Anamun knew Moses, for he and Moses were the best of friends until that fateful day when Moses killed his uncle. It was after that day that Anamun desired to have revenge over his uncle's death, and now today was going to be that day.

Anamun's driver, Sutam thumbed the reins of the chariot horses waiting for Pharaoh to finish his speech, for he was anxious to get going on the journey, but Anamun could tell that there was something that troubled the driver, but the driver remained silent.

Finally, Pharaoh turned in his chariot and with his spear he pointed it ahead of him. "Forward!"

With that one word, hundreds of chariots advanced into a gallop with the morning sun in their faces. Men shouted, horses whinnied and squealed, and the noise of the advancing army raised the dust high into the air obscuring the city of Succoth behind them.

Being captain of part of Pharaoh's army had its advantages; he didn't have to eat the dust of the charioteer in front of him, but it also meant that he would be the first one to be in battle, and if that meant that he would be the first to meet Moses, then he was willing to accept it.

"Captain," Sutam shouted over the din of the passing wind, "how are we going to find the Hebrews? More than twenty days have passed since they left; surely the sands have covered their trail."

Anamun couldn't help but to smile. "The Hebrews will be traveling slowly on Philistine Road for Canaan. We will catch up with them in a few days. Besides they

took with them all their livestock, and animals always leave something behind for us to follow.”

To the amazement of Anamun the trail of the Hebrews left the Philistine Road and took a southern direction along the eastern portion of the sea. At this point, Pharaoh raised his hand to bring the army to a halt.

“What is Moses doing?” Sutam queried, “Canaan isn’t that direction, and he can’t get anywhere going that way. The farther he goes, he will be trapped against the sea in the south, and he will come across our other army bases at the copper mines. Moses is a poor leader to take the people down there; he has led his people down there to die in the wilderness.”

“You don’t know Moses,” Anamun returned, “he and I use to be best of friends, and we use to explore this part of the peninsula in our teenage years, so he knows this part of the land like the back of his hand. That is what bothers me; he is up to something and I don’t like it, and he probably scouted out what way he needed to go during those 40 years of absence after my uncle’s death.”

Pharaoh had sent out a scout to make sure that it was the path that the Hebrews had taken, and upon the scout’s return, Pharaoh gave the command to follow the trail.

Hours went by as the chariots followed the trail of livestock droppings which had dried out in the hot sand. If they had waited any longer the droppings would have dissolved in the wind and blown away. Occasionally, pottery would be found, or coals from campfires signifying that the Hebrews had made camp.

“This is the third campsite we had found so far,” the driver observed, “we are catching up to them.”

“Yes,” Anamun mused, “but they are far and few between. I’m thinking that they must be doing some of their traveling at night, but how can they tell where to go at night?”

Pharaoh’s army continued south along the sea, but this time there wasn’t any trail to follow, and Pharaoh brought the host to a halt when the scouts reported that the trail did not continue along the sea any longer.

Returning back to the vacated camp, the trail was picked up again but this time the trail led them in the eastern direction across the peninsula.

Sutam tapped Anamun on the shoulder. “Elath. That is where they are going!”

“I won’t count on it,” Anamun returned, “he should have headed east in the first place before leaving the Philistine Road. We may be going into an ambush.”

Now the sun was close to setting, but Pharaoh was still full of the fervor to catch up with the Hebrews before they left Egypt. Torches had to be lit in order to see their way and illuminate the trail in front of them.

Soon it was too dark for the Egyptians to continue any farther, so camp was made in the middle of the desert, and fodder was given to the chariot horses.

Sutam stroked the long manes of the two horses as they ate grain from their pails.

“You boys have worked hard today,” the driver spoke, “it won’t be long now until we had head back to Egypt where you can eat the green grass of the Nile; that is if there is any left from the locust plague.”

Anamun was amused by Sutam talking to the horses as though they were able to understand his speech.

“You would have liked Hatal,” Anamun spoke knowing that it would amuse the driver, “he was high spirited, and black as coal, but he was strong and willing. With him and Thoth, they made a perfect team. In fact, they could even outrun Pharaoh’s horses.”

“Did he die in the plague?” Sutam questioned.

“Strange as it was,” Anamun went on, “I didn’t know that he was a first born horse, it was like he was healthy one minute and dead the next. It was like Anubis sucked the life right out of him.

“Thoth and Faraj are the only two horses I have left, so that is the reason they make a poor pair especially with the mismatching colors.”

“Did you ever beat any of Pharaoh’s horses in any chariot races?” Sutam queried.

Anamun rolled his bed roll out beneath his tent. “Of course not! If I did, Pharaoh would have gotten Hatal and Thoth, and I would have lost them. But in the end, I lost Hatal anyway.”

The remainder of the night was spent without an alarm, although guards were posted at the edges of the camp in case of any sudden attack – if the Hebrews were nearby.

Before the rising of the sun, Anamun and his driver were standing in their chariot awaiting the orders to continue the pursuit of the Hebrews.

The trail of the Hebrews began to fade which only slowed the Egyptians down in the pursuit, only to find scant remains of any droppings the Hebrew’s animals had left behind. With this slow pursuit, Anamun knew that they could be spending another night in the desert before they would finally meet up with the Hebrews.

Soon, the mountains began to close in on the Egyptian army which made Anamun more relieved for the trail they were following was now clearer to follow because of the absence of the blowing sand.

Anamun glanced up ahead to see an Egyptian scout coming from out of the mountains.

“Great One!” he announced when he came within ear of Pharaoh. With Anamun in the next chariot over from Pharaoh, he was able to hear every word.

“Great One,” the scout continued, bowing, “it appears that the Hebrews have turned down some narrow wadi which can only lead to the sea, or to be forever lost amongst the mountains.”

Pharaoh’s eyebrows rose on his brow, and Anamun knew what the Pharaoh was thinking. If six hundred thousand Hebrews should be in a narrow river bed, then they would be strung out in a line so long that it would be easy pickings for his army. Moreover, if the Hebrews made through the wadi, then the Hebrews would be trapped between the Egyptians and Yam Suph.

“Pihahiroth,” Pharaoh breathed, “Mouth of the Gorges. That is where they are at. Why would he lead them there?”

The army followed the scout to the wadi, but the gorge of the wadi was so narrow that the army was strung out into a thin line as well. Anamun looked about himself expecting to see a Hebrew standing high upon a ledge ready to hurl a stone upon him. As far as Anamun was concerned, this was a perfect place for the Hebrews to set up an ambush. Even when he was friends with Moses, he never had been out this far with him, so how did Moses find this narrow river bed.

The wadi was like a snake creating turns so tight that Anamun thought for sure that he was doubling back, but then the gorge would make another tight turn sending them another direction. Many times it looked as though the wadi would end abruptly against some wall, but the trail of the Hebrews continued.

Just before the sun set, Anamun rounded the final turn of the wadi and ahead was the picturesque view of Yam Suph and the mountains of Midian beyond. Furthermore, a vast rising of smoke ascended into the air blocking most of view to the sea.

“What type of bonfire do the Hebrews have, going there?” Sutam asked. “Where would they get the wood for a bonfire of that size?”

Anamun squinted to study the smoke more closely. “I don’t think it is smoke, because I don’t think smoke behaves in that fashion. If it is smoke wouldn’t the bottom portion stay in the same spot? For this one moves from top to bottom.”

Nonetheless, the excitement of pursuing the Hebrews escalated to where the Egyptians charged down the remainder of the wadi before Pharaoh could give the command.

Thoth and Faraj were in full gallop trying to keep ahead of the rest of the galloping horses, and as Anamun and Sutam came closer to the end of the wadi, they saw that it opened up to a very wide beach that appeared to jut out into the sea. However, they also saw that the smoke pillar also moved toward them and parked itself right at the mouth of the wadi.

Sutam reined hard to pull Thoth and Faraj to a stop. There was something about that pillar of smoke that he didn’t want to pass through. It behaved as though it had a mind of its own, and how it behaved was not to the Egyptian’s advantage.

The sudden stop from the front of the troop caused a shock wave of collisions and near misses as other chariots came to a chaotic halt. Anamun nearly was trampled as a horse behind him put its front feet on the floor of his chariot.

With the chariots now at a complete halt, Anamun was able to study the smoke-cloud more closely. It was like a pillar that reaches high into the sky, and on occasion he could see a break in the cloud and observe a faint light as if the cloud contained a tremendous fire, but mostly the cloud created a darkness that was similar to one of the plagues that had been on Egypt.

“We will camp here,” Pharaoh commanded, “For there is no way for us to get around this pillar of cloud.”

“Camp here?” Sutam squeaked, “this is no place for an army to camp. If this cloud moves then we will all be consumed by it!”

“Hold your tongue!” Anamun barked, but Pharaoh was already looking their direction.

“Soldier!”

Sutam froze, of all the times that he needed to hold his tongue, now would have been the time, but Sutam dismounted from the chariot and approached the chariot of Pharaoh and bowed.

“If you so believe that there is a better place to camp,” Pharaoh suggested with a stern voice, “perhaps you may scale the rocks, and get around the cloud pillar in *search for one!*”

Sutam said nothing as he left Pharaoh to scale the side of the gorge to get around the cloud.

All Anamun could do was to hold the horses' reins as he watched his driver climb the side of the cliff face to find a ledge to where he could get a view beyond the cloud. At the height of twenty cubits, Sutam found a ledge to stand on and he began creeping toward the cloud pillar. With the intense heat of the cloud, Sutam covered his face with his arms, and then disappeared from sight.

Anamun's eyes staid fixed upon the spot where he last saw his driver, he hated to have something happen to the man for he was a very likable fellow. Maybe Sutam did get on the other side, or maybe he was consumed by the cloud.

A long silent moment went by before Sutam was finally spotted working his way back along the rock face still with his arms covering his face, but it still was a longer time before he was able to climb back down the cliff face to the ground.

"Report!" Pharaoh commanded when Sutam finally reached the ground.

Anamun approached Sutam since he wanted to hear the report as well, but from the look in the driver's eyes, he could tell that he saw more than he really wanted to see.

"The heat was unbearable," Sutam began, "I thought for sure I would die there on the ledge, my feet were exceptionally hot as if my sandals were on fire, and it wasn't until after I removed them that everything started to cool, but it wasn't much. On the other side of the cloud is a vast fire twisting and burning which created a bright light that lit up the whole shore.

"From the brightness of the pillar, I was able to see that the Hebrews are gathered near the shore. I couldn't make out any people, but only the torches they carried, then the sea opened up and all the Hebrews walked down inside."

Upon Sutam finishing his report, there was a moment of silence but the silence was soon broken by laughter from the surrounding captains, but it was only Pharaoh that refrained from laughing.

"Do I look like a fool?" he said.

"No, Great One," Sutam replied sheepishly. "May Ra strike me down if I should lie. I told all the truth I know."

"If you do lie," Pharaoh returned with a hiss, "you will be left out here for the vultures to eat."

Hours went by, and the Egyptians waited. Soon, the cloud began to fade which left the end of the gorge open for the army to continue onto the beach, but what was found was that there wasn't a Hebrew in sight, only an open chasm in the sea.

Without any thought for their own safety, the Egyptians charged into the water canyon intent in catching up with the escaping Hebrews for the Egyptians knew that the Hebrews would have left Egypt if they got to the other side.

Anamun was a little leery about charging between the walls of water. What was keeping the water to stand in such a manner like a wall? Why was it not collapsing? When would it collapse?

The sea bed declined gradually giving the horses perfect footing in the firm sand during their gallop, but the interesting thing was that the chariot was kicking up dust as if there were no water in the sand beneath them.

The farther Anamun traveled along the seabed, the higher the walls of water reached until the sky above was only seen as a dark slit.

"How long is this going to last?" Sutam was worried. "If this is the creation of the Hebrew's God, we know that He will do everything for the Hebrews. He brought the

plague, He blocked us at the mouth of the wadi, and He certainly can end our lives here in the sea.”

Anamun remained silent sharing the same fear as his driver. Grabbing the reins from Sutam, he shouted at his horses to increase their speed. He didn't care if they outran Pharaoh's horses, all that mattered now was to get to the other side while life was still in him.

Thoth and Faraj increased their speed with little coxing, and they soon left Pharaoh's chariot behind as well as the rest of the army. Pharaoh may have thought that Anamun wanted to be first in battle, but on the contrary, Anamun was fearful for his life and wanted to get to higher ground above the water.

“We must have traveled an iteru [6.5 miles] by now,” Sutam observed, “and we are still in the depths of the sea.”

“We are making an incline, though,” Anamun returned. “We will be soon out of this water grave.”

Sutam looked back toward the army, and then touched Anamun's shoulder. “Captain, we are no longer kicking up any dust. The ground has become wet!”

No sooner than the comment left Sutam's lips when the chariot suddenly dropped on its right throwing Sutam and Anamun out onto the ground. Anamun watched as their chariot wheel bounded up the slope on its own momentum and splash into the wall of water.

Wiping the sand from off his uniform as best he could Sutam got up from where he had fallen and ran after the chariot wheel.

Thoth and Faraj were struck with fear and Anamun ran after them as they drug the damaged chariot behind them.

“This is not the place to break down!” Anamun shouted. “Sutam get that chariot wheel and let us get out of here!”

Sutam knelt at the wall of water and forced in his arm into the wall, but he instantly started screaming.

“Get that chariot wheel!” Anamun shouted.

“Captain, I cannot,” Sutam returned, “the water is like the weight of the pyramids, and the wheel is beyond my reach!”

Anamun looked back to the rest of the army and saw the reason why they didn't pass him up, for they had also lost the wheels from their chariots. Pharaoh himself had been thrown from his chariot and was cursing his driver for his carelessness.

“Sutam!” Anamun shouted, “help me with the horses! We've got to get them unhooked from the chariot! Maybe we can ride out of here!”

Thoth and Faraj were still madly running here and there dragging the damaged chariot behind them which only increased their fear all the more. In Anamun's pursuit of the horses, he came to Pharaoh's overturned chariot.

“Great One,” Anamun pleaded, “Let us flee from the Hebrews, for their God fights for them and against the Egyptians.”

Pharaoh remained silent as he looked ahead, so Anamun turned to where Pharaoh was looking and beheld a man a great distance away clad in Hebrew garments standing upon a stone above the depths of the sea. The man had his hands raised above his head and in one hand he held a staff. Behind the man, Anamun could see that the morning sun was breaking upon the rock that the man stood upon.

“Moses,” Pharaoh breathed. “Their God, Yahvah is too great for the Egyptians to master. We are defeated.”

“We aren’t dead yet,” Anamun returned, “Maybe some of us will get out of here if we run.”

With that said, Anamun began running toward the man on the rock, with Sutam close behind.

Suddenly a fierce wind began to blow nearly knocking Anamun off his feet. Anamun looked above him and saw the water began to fall inward like unto a huge wave, thus was the last thing Anamun ever saw for his body was buried amongst the wave.

However, Anamun’s body can still be seen amongst the corral as well as the chariot wheel he lost as it is still remains in depths of the Gulf of Aqaba even to this day.

As for the Hebrews, they never saw the Egyptians again, but continued their journey through the wilderness for the next forty years. They also received plenty of hardships themselves, but that is another story.