

## The Red Sea

Cain Felder, an African American Theologian at Howard University Divinity School, stresses the importance of finding your own story in your sacred book. He emphasizes that for African Americans, the “parting of the waters” at the Red Sea, is a critical symbolic event. It represents the journey out of slavery toward freedom. He would probably agree that the Red Sea experience is just as important for people leaving prison. When one walks out of the prison door he/she now has to come to terms with what is left behind and what lies ahead. It is the dividing line between the radical dependence of oppression and the unlimited potential of freedom in the wilderness of the street. It is when our future hope becomes severely tested.

Nelson Mandela comments on this in “Long Walk to Freedom:”

When I walked out of prison, that was my mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor both. Some say that has now been achieved. But I know that is not the case. The truth is that we are not yet free; we have merely achieved the freedom to be free, the right not to be oppressed. We have not taken the final step of our journey, but the first step on a longer and even more difficult road. For to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others. The true test of our devotion to freedom is just beginning.

In the Exodus Concept we find our story in the Biblical record of Israel’s journey. We talk about Egypt, Wilderness, and Promised Land. Egypt being the prison experience, where a person is radically dependent and bound. The Wilderness is the street where one may be a wanderer and lost. The Promised Land is our hope for the future, found in our life-giving goals. Perhaps we should insert the “Red Sea experience” between Egypt and Wilderness. It is where we are reminded that “the struggle is painful and deep.” We also need to remember Mandela’s final words in “Long Walk to Freedom:”

I have taken a moment here to rest...to look back on the distance I have come. But I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities, for my long walk is not yet ended.