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*Parting the Red Sea.* During the year oceanographers from Florida State University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem proposed an explanation of the biblical description of the “parting” of the Red Sea during the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt. The Bible describes a strong wind prior to the event, receding water, and then the crossing in the midst of the sea.

The researchers showed that a strong wind will slowly cause the water at the edge of the sea to recede. Owing to the sea’s unique geometry, even a moderate storm can cause the sea level to recede more than one kilometer (0.62 mi) and to drop more than 2.5 m (8.2 ft). When the storm stops, the water returns to its prewind conditions with a wave that floods the entire zone within minutes. For the event to have occurred as proposed, the wind would have to have been about 72 km/h (45 mph) and blown for 10 hours – not an impossibility. The Israelites may have crossed while the water receded, and the drowning of the Egyptians could have been a result of the rapidly returning wave. The event would not be a common one but was certainly plausible from a scientific point of view.

*D. James Baker*