

# **EXPLORING EXODUS**

**BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK SERIES**

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**EXPLORING EXODUS**

by

**Wilbur Fields**

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**College Press, Joplin, Missouri**



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Second Printing 1986

**Lovingly Dedicated**  
  
to  
  
the staff, students, and alumni  
  
of  
  
**OZARK BIBLE COLLEGE**  
**Joplin, Missouri**

## **PREFACE**

### **EXPLORING EXODUS**

#### **FIVE LAYERS OF HELP FOR STUDY**

**EXPLORING EXODUS** is a chapter-by-chapter study of Exodus. To guide you in the exploration of Exodus, five layers of help are provided:

1. A set of **QUESTIONS** on each chapter is provided. These may be used for group or individual study. Almost all the questions can be answered from the Bible.
2. Several **OUTLINES** on each chapter follow the questions. These are designed to help you in teaching the material, or to assist you in gaining quick comprehension of the chapters.
3. Extensive **NOTES** on the Bible text and related material are given. These notes are introduced by questions which should draw the mind to the point of the passages under consideration.

These notes are comprehensive. They have been prepared after consulting commentators with many points of view. The Hebrew and Greek texts of Exodus are referred to very often. The Bible text used is the quite-literal American Standard Version (1901).

4. Numerous photographs, charts, and original **MAPS** are included.
5. Several **SPECIAL STUDIES** on such topics as the Ten Commandments, the Red Sea, and the Sabbath Day are given in the introductory sections and at various places in the text.

We present this book with many prayers that it will help you to explore Exodus with joy and to discover its innumerable blessings.

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## LET'S EXPLORE EXODUS!

### INTRODUCTORY SECTION I

## LET'S EXPLORE EXODUS!

Consider the greatness of Exodus.

“Nearly all the foundations of which JEWISH life is built—the Ten Commandments, the historic festivals, the leading principles of civil law—are contained in the book of Exodus.”<sup>1</sup>

The importance of Exodus is not confined to the Jews alone. CHRISTIANS recognize the events in Exodus as having been written “by way of example” for *our* learning (I Cor. 10:11). The bondage in Egypt illustrates our former bondage in sin. Moses is like unto Jesus Christ in many respects (Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22; 7:37). Israel’s deliverance across the Red Sea was a “baptism unto Moses” and illustrates our “baptism into Christ” (I Cor. 10:2; Gal. 3:27). Israel’s failures in their wilderness journey were recorded that we might not fall into the same example of disobedience (Heb. 4:11). The tabernacle, which is so prominent in Exodus 25-40, was a “figure for the time present” (Heb. 9:9).

The greatness of Exodus radiates benefits and life-changing truth to ALL HUMANKIND. From no other book have men learned so much of the character and work of the LORD God, a “God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth; . . . and that will by no means clear the guilty” (Ex. 34:6, 7). From no other book has mankind learned laws more beneficial, comprehensive, and succinct than the ten commandments in Exodus.

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<sup>1</sup>J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1969), p. 205.



## INTRODUCTORY STUDY II

### Themes of Exodus: REDEMPTION AND NATIONHOOD

A. The theme of REDEMPTION sums up much of the history and message of the book of Exodus. Numerous authors (e.g., Pink, Van Dooren) have felt that this term was a good one to express the theme of the book.

1. The theme of REDEMPTION, or redemption followed by God's leading, is stated in the book of Exodus itself:

"I will REDEEM you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgment: and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God" (Ex. 6:6-7).

"Thou in thy lovingkindness hast LED the people that thou hast REDEEMED" (Ex. 15:13). (This statement strikes us as a key verse in Exodus.)

"He hath sent REDEMPTION unto his people; He hath commanded his covenant for ever: Holy and reverend is his name" (Psalm 111:9).

2. What does REDEMPTION mean?

The Hebrew verb (*ga'al*) translated *redeem* in Ex. 6:16 and 15:13 means to free by avenging or buying back.

The Greek word (*lutroo*) translated *redeem* in 15:13 in the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint, or LXX) means to release on receipt of a ransom.

The Greek word (*ruomai*) translated *redeem* in 6:6 means to draw to one's self.

Thus, REDEMPTION basically means a buying back, but its meaning has been broadened to mean releasing or deliverance generally.

3. Christians have REDEMPTION in Christ from God (Eph. 1:7). To understand the way God REDEEMED Israel from Egypt will help us understand the nature of our redemption.

For example, though Israel was redeemed from Egypt with mighty miracles and God's special favor, still out in the wilderness they suffered countless hardships and tests and temptations. Similarly, though we have been wondrously and miraculously redeemed from sin and from

## REDEMPTION AND NATIONHOOD

impossible burdens, still we must face many tribulations, tests, and temptations. We are not promised immediate deliverance from all difficulties.

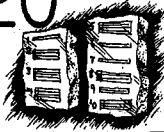


4. The development of the theme of REDEMPTION in Exodus can be outlined as follows:
  - a. Need for redemption (chs. 1—6)
  - b. Might of the redeemer (chs. 7—11)
  - c. Method of redemption (chs. 12—18)
  - d. Duties of the redeemed (chs. 19—24)
  - e. Provisions for the redeemed (chs. 25—40)(Adapted from Arthur Pink, *Gleanings in Exodus* [Chicago: Moody, n.d.] p. 8.)

### B. NATIONHOOD



Various authors have selected the topic of Israel's becoming a nation as the theme of Exodus. They have worded it in various ways.

1. "The Making of a Holy Nation." See Ex. 19:6. We have used this heading on the end sheets of this book (the pictures inside the covers). Israel became God's holy nation when God provided them a leader (Ex. 1—6), liberation (Ex. 7—12), leading (Ex. 13—18), laws (Ex. 19—24), and divine worship (Greek, *latreia*) (Ex. 25—40).
2. "The commencement of Israel as a covenant nation." (G. L. Archer, *A Survey of O.T. Introduction* [Chicago: Moody, 1964] p. 209.)
3. "The beginning of a separate national existence." As Genesis records the beginning of religious life in Israel, so Exodus records the beginning of national life. (John Raven, *Old Testament Introduction* [New York: Revell, 1910], p. 136.)
4. "From a Family to a Nation." When Jacob Israel came into Egypt, he came only as a large family (Ex. 1:15). But in fulfillment of the promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:2), Israel became a *nation*. This transformation was effected by stages: a. Population; b. Liberation; c. Legislation; d. Organization. All of these stages can be observed in Exodus.

# EXODUS-CHAPTER TOPICS

GOD'S MAN	PLAGUES	PATHWAY	COVENANT
1 NEED FOR GOD'S MAN (Transition)	7 THE CONFLICT BEGINS ! (PLAGUE #1)	13 DEMANDS AND DIRECTION TO THE REDEEMED	19 PREPARATIONS TO RECEIVE COVENANT
2 PREPARATION OF GOD'S MAN	8 PLAGUES 2, 3, 4	14 BAPTIZED UNTO MOSES	20 
3 CALL OF GOD'S MAN 	9 PLAGUES 5, 6, 7	15 FROM SONG TO BITTERNESS	21
4 HESITANCY OF GOD'S MAN	10 PLAGUES 8, 9 	16 BREAD FROM HEAVEN	22
5 RESISTANCE TO GOD'S MAN	11 THE LAST WARNING !	17 TWO TESTS: WATER AND WAR	23
6 STRENGTHENING OF GOD'S MAN	12 PLAGUE 10 OVER AND OUT !	18 JETHRO AND JUDGES	24 COVENANT RATIFIED

GOD'S COVENANT ORDINANCES

TABERNACLE INSTRUCTIONS	GOLDEN CALF	TABERNACLE CONSTRUCTION
<p>25</p> <p>TABERNACLE INSTRUCTIONS (Ark, table, lampstand)</p>	<p>32</p> <p>RUPTURE OF COVENANT</p>	<p>35</p> <p>OFFERINGS AND WORKMEN</p>
<p>26</p> <p>ENCLOSINGS (Curtains, boards, bars, veil, screen)</p>	<p>33</p> <p>GOD AND ISRAEL IN TENSION</p>	<p>36</p> <p>ENCLOSINGS</p>
<p>27</p> <p>ALTAR AND COURT</p>	<p>34</p> <p>RENEWAL OF COVENANT</p>	<p>37</p> <p>INSIDE FURNITURE</p>
<p>28</p> <p>PRIESTS GARMENTS</p>		<p>38</p> <p>OUTSIDE FURNITURE</p> <p>Total Cost</p>
<p>29</p> <p>PRIESTS CONSECRATION</p>		<p>39</p> <p>PRIESTS' GARMENTS, FINISHED WORK PRESENTED</p>
<p>30</p> <p>INCENSE, etc.</p>		<p>40</p>  <p>ALL SET UP ! GLORY OF LORD</p>
<p>31</p> <p>CRAFTSMEN, SABBATH</p>		

## EXPLORING EXODUS

### INTRODUCTORY SECTION III

#### NAMES and OUTLINE of Exodus

##### The NAMES of the book of Exodus

1. In the Hebrew Bible it is called *Shemoth*, meaning *names*. This is taken from the opening words of the book, *We'elleh shemoth*, which mean "These are the names."
  2. In the Greek Bible (Septuagint, or LXX) it is called *Exodos*, meaning "going out" or "departure." This word actually appears in the Greek of 19:1: "In the third month of the departure (Gr., *exodos*) of the sons of Israel . . . ." This name applies more accurately to the first half of the book than to the second half.
  3. The Latin Bible used the title *Exodus*, a slightly-changed form of the Greek title. In our English Bibles we have used the Latin title.
- 

#### OUTLINE(S) OF EXODUS

We can outline the book of Exodus according to the PLACES where the events occurred.

##### I. ISRAEL IN EGYPT; Chs. 1—13 (1:1—13:16)

1. Population growth and bondage; Ch. 1.
2. Preparation of Moses; Chs. 2—6.
3. Plagues; Chs. 7—11.
4. Passover and departure; Chs. 12—13.

##### II. ISRAEL FROM EGYPT TO SINAI; Chs. 13—18 (13:17—18:27).

1. Deliverance at the Red Sea; (13:17—15:21).
2. Journey to Sinai; (15:22—Ch. 17).
3. Visit of Jethro; Ch. 18.

##### III. ISRAEL AT SINAI; Chs. 19—40.

## NAMES AND OUTLINE OF EXODUS

1. Law (covenant) given; Chs. 19—24.
  2. Tabernacle instructions; Chs. 25—31.
  3. Rebellion and renewal (golden calf); Chs. 32—34.
  4. Tabernacle construction; Chs. 35—40.
- 

We can outline Exodus according to the EXPERIENCES shared by God's people Israel. Exodus itself emphasizes the theme of God's doings with His PEOPLE. (Note 3:7; 5:1; 6:7; 7:4; 15:13; 19:5, 6.)

- I. GOD'S PEOPLE DELIVERED; Chs. 1—13 (1:1—13:16)
  - II. GOD'S PEOPLE LED; Chs. 13—18 (13:17—18:27)
  - III. GOD'S PEOPLE MADE A COVENANT NATION;  
Chs. 19—24.
  - IV. GOD'S PEOPLE RECEIVE TABERNACLE INSTRUCTIONS; Chs. 25—31.
  - V. GOD'S PEOPLE SIN (golden calf); Chs. 32—34.
  - VI. GOD'S PEOPLE CONSTRUCT THE TABERNACLE;  
Chs. 35—40.
- 

### Detailed OUTLINE of EXODUS

- I. GOD'S PEOPLE DELIVERED; 1:1—13:16.
  1. Jacob's family in Egypt; 1:1-7.
  2. Afflictions upon the children of Israel; 1:8-22.
    - a. Labor; 1:8-14.
    - b. Genocide; 1:15-22.
  3. Early life of Moses; 2:1-25.
    - a. Birth and adoption; 2:1-10.
    - b. Rejection and flight; 2:11-15.
    - c. Moses in Midian; 2:16-22.
    - d. God's knowledge of Israel; 2:23-25.
  4. Call of Moses; 3:1—4:17.
    - a. The burning bush; 3:1-6.
    - b. God's commission to Moses; 3:7-10.

## EXPLORING EXODUS

- c. Objections by Moses; 3:11—4:17.
  - (1) "Who am I?" 3:11, 12.
  - (2) "What is thy name?" 3:13-22.
  - (3) "They will not believe." 4:1-9.
  - (4) "I am not eloquent." 4:10-12.
  - (5) "Send someone else." 4:13-17.
- 5. Moses' return; 4:18-31.
  - a. Obedience tested during return; 4:18-26.
  - b. First meeting with Israel; 4:27-31.
- 6. Confrontation with Pharaoh; 5:1—11:10.
  - a. Failure of first request; 5:1-5.
    - (1) Pharaoh refuses; 5:1-5.
    - (2) Burdens increased; 5:6-14.
    - (3) Israelites' appeal rejected; 5:15-21.
    - (4) Moses' remonstrance and the Lord's reply; 5:22—6:1.
  - b. Prelude to successful action; 6:27:13.
    - (1) Reassurance for the people; 6:2-9.
    - (2) Command to return to Pharaoh; 6:10-13.
    - (3) Review of fathers' genealogies; 6:14-27.
    - (4) Commission to Moses renewed; 6:28—7:7.
    - (5) Second meeting with Pharaoh (rods to serpents); 7:8-13.
  - c. Plagues; 7:14—11:10.
    - (1) River to blood; 7:14-24.
    - (2) Frogs; 8:1-15.
    - (3) Lice (gnats); 8:16-19.
    - (4) Swarms (flies); 8:20-32.
    - (5) Death of animals; 9:1-7.
    - (6) Boils; 9:8-12.
    - (7) Hail; 9:13-35.
    - (8) Locusts; 10:21-29.
    - (9) Darkness; 10:21-29.
- 7. Passover; 11:1—12:33.
  - a. Warning of the last plague; 11:1-10.
  - b. Instructions for the passover in Egypt; 12:1-13.
  - c. Direction for passover in future; 12:14-20.

## NAMES AND OUTLINE OF EXODUS

- d. The passover kept; 12:21-28.
- e. Death of firstborn; 12:29-33.
- 8. The departure (exodus); 12:34-42.
- 9. Three final directives; 12:43—13:16.
  - a. Who may eat the Passover; 12:43-50.
  - b. Keep the ordinance of unleavened bread; 13:3-10.
  - c. Sanctify the firstborn; 12:51—13:2, 11-16.

### II. GOD'S PEOPLE LED: 13:17—18:27.

- 1. The route of the journey; 13:17-22.
- 2. Victory at the Red Sea; 14:1—15:21.
  - a. Encampment by the sea; 14:1-4.
  - b. Pursuit by the Egyptians; 14:5-9.
  - c. Fear and reassurance; 14:10-14.
  - d. The Lord's exhortation; 14:15-18.
  - e. The angel's protection; 14:19, 20.
  - f. Deliverance across the sea; 14:21, 22.
  - g. Destruction of the Egyptians; 14:23-31.
  - h. Song of triumph; 15:1-21.
    - (1) By Moses and Israel; 15:1-19.
    - (2) By Miriam; 15:20, 21.
- 3. Experiences in the journey; 15:22—18:27.
  - a. Bitter waters (Marah); 15:22-26.
  - b. Springs of Elim; 15:27.
  - c. Food (manna) provided; 16:1-36.
    - (1) Murmuring; 16:1-3.
    - (2) God's promise; 16:4-12.
    - (3) Quails sent; 16:13.
    - (4) Manna given; 16:14-21.
    - (5) Manna and Sabbath; 16:22-30.
    - (6) Memorial of the manna; 16:31-36.
  - d. Waters of Meribah; 17:1-7.
  - e. War with Amalek; 17:8-16.
  - f. Visit of Jethro; 18:1-27.
    - (1) Reunion with family; 18:1-12.
    - (2) Jethro's advice to appoint judges; 18:13-27.



III. GOD'S PEOPLE MADE A COVENANT NATION;  
Chs. 19—24.

1. Preparations for the covenant; 19:1-25.
  - a. Instructions to the people; 19:1-15.
  - b. Coming of the Lord upon Mt. Sinai; 19:16-25.
2. The Ten Words; 20:11-17.
3. The book of the covenant (rules for the covenant people); 20:18—23:33.
  - a. Ritual regulations; 20:18-26.
  - b. The covenant ordinances; 21:1—23:19.
    - (1) The Hebrew slave; 21:1-11.
    - (2) Capital offenses; 21:12-17.
    - (3) Injuries and non-capital offenses; 21:18-32.
    - (4) Property rights; 21:33—22:17.
    - (5) More capital offenses; 22:18-20.
    - (6) Care for the poor and needy; 22:21-27.
    - (7) Reverence to God and rulers; 22:28-31.
    - (8) Justice and goodness to all; 23:1-9.
    - (9) The sacred seasons; 23:10-19.
  - c. Promises about conquering the land; 23:20-33.
4. The covenant ratified; 24:1-18.
  - a. Call to worship; 24:1, 2.
  - b. Covenant sealed with blood; 24:3-8.
  - c. Leaders eat with God; 24:9-11.
  - d. Moses called onto the mount; 24:12-18.

IV. GOD'S PEOPLE RECEIVE TABERNACLE INSTRUCTIONS; Chs. 25—31.

1. An offering to be taken; 25:1-9.
2. Ark and mercy-seat; 25:10-22.
3. Table of showbread; 25:23-30.
4. The menorah (lampstand); 25:31-40.
5. Tabernacle curtains; 26:1-14.
6. Tabernacle boards (26:15-25) and bars (26:26-30).
7. Veil (26:31-35) and screen (26:36, 37).
8. The altar of burnt-offering; 27:1-8.
9. Court; 27:9-19.

## NAMES AND OUTLINE OF EXODUS

10. Oil for lamp; 27:20, 21.
11. Garments of priests; 28:1-43.
  - a. First directions; 28:1-5.
  - b. Ephod; 28:6-14.
  - c. Breastplate; 28:15-30.
  - d. Robe of ephod; 28:31-35.
  - e. Golden plate; 28:36-38.
  - f. Coat; 28:39.
  - g. Coats, girdles, turbans; 28:40, 41.
  - h. Linen breeches; 28:42, 43.
12. Consecration of priests; 29:1-37.
13. The continual burnt-offering; 29:38-46.
14. Altar of incense; 20:1-10.
15. Atonement money with censuses; 30:11-16.
16. Laver; 30:17-21.
17. Anointing oil (30:22-33) and incense (30:34-38).
18. Tabernacle workmen; 31:1-11.
19. The Sabbath; 31:12-17.

### IV. GOD'S PEOPLE SIN BUT ARE RENEWED; Chs. 32—34.

1. Sin; 31:18—32:29.
  - a. Calf made and worshipped; 31:18—32:6.
  - b. God's anger and Moses' prayer; 32:7-14.
  - c. Moses' anger; 32:15-20.
  - d. Moses and Aaron; 32:21-24.
  - e. Three thousand slain; 32:25-29.
2. God and Israel in tension; 32:30—33:23.
  - a. Moses' prayer for forgiveness; 32:30-35.
  - b. Jehovah withdraws His presence; 33:1-6.
  - c. Jehovah and Moses; 33:7-11.
  - d. Moses prays; 33:12-17.
    - (1) For God's acceptance of the nation; 33:12-17.
    - (2) To see God's glory; 33:18-23.
3. Renewal of covenant; 34:1—35:3.
  - a. New tablets; 34:1-4.
  - b. God proclaims Himself; 34:5-9.
  - c. Terms of the covenant; 34:10—35:3.

V. GOD'S PEOPLE CONSTRUCT THE TABERNACLE;  
35:4—40:38.

1. Call for offering of materials; 35:4-8.
  2. Call for workmen; 35:10-19.
  3. Abundant offering; 35:20-29.
  4. Workmen commissioned; 35:30—36:7.
  5. Curtains made; 36:8-19.
  6. Boards (36:27-30) and bars (36:31-34) made.
  7. Veil (36:35, 36) and screen (36:37, 38) made.
  8. Ark and mercy-seat made; 37:1-9.
  9. Table made; 37:10-16.
  10. Menorah (lampstand) made; 37:17-23.
  11. Altar of incense made; 37:25-29.
  12. Altar of burnt-offering made; 38:1-7.
  13. Laver made; 38:8.
  14. Court made; 38:9-20.
  15. Sum of materials used; 38:21-31.
  16. Priests' garments made; 39:1-31.
  17. Work finished and presented to Moses; 39:32-43.
  18. Erection of tabernacle; 40:1-33.
    - a. Directions from God; 40:1-15.
    - b. Rearing up the tabernacle; 40:16-33.
  19. Glory cloud fills the tabernacle; 40:34-38.
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## WHO WROTE EXODUS?

### INTRODUCTORY SECTION IV

## WHO WROTE EXODUS?

We believe that Moses was the author of the entire book, except for possibly a few lines that may have been added by Joshua or someone else living shortly after Moses' time. (Note Ex. 16:35.)

### I. EVIDENCE THAT MOSES WAS THE AUTHOR OF EXODUS:

#### A. Testimony in the book itself.

1. Ex. 17:8-16 (the story of the attack by Amalek) is said to have been written by Moses. See 17:14.
2. Ex. 20:22—23:32 (the book of covenant ordinances) is said to have been written by Moses. See 24:4.
3. Ex. 34:10-26 (the ordinances of the renewed covenant) was written by Moses. See 34:27.
4. Numbers 33:2 says that "Moses wrote their (Israel's) going out according to their journeys by the commandment of Jehovah." While this may apply primarily to the brief record in Num. 33, it may also apply to the record of their journey in Ex. 12-19.
5. From these passages, which are the only ones specifically ascribed to Moses in the book, we can project (extrapolate) Mosaic authorship to the entire book, because the book is a unit and tells a continuous story.

#### B. Testimony in other parts of the Old Testament.

1. Joshua 8:31—"As it is written in the book of the law of Moses," (referring to Ex. 20:25).
2. Joshua 8:32—"He wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses."
3. Joshua 23:6—"Do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses."
4. Judges 3:4—"which he commanded their father by (Heb., by the hand of) Moses."

## EXPLORING EXODUS

5. I Kings 2:3—"Keep his testimonies, as it is *written* in the law of Moses."
  6. I Kings 8:56—"which he promised by (Heb., by the hand of) Moses."
  7. II Chron. 25:4—"As it is written in the law in the books of Moses."
  8. II Chron. 35:6—"According to the word of the Lord by (Heb., by the hand of) Moses" (concerning the Passover).
  9. Ezra 6:18—"As it is written in the book of Moses."
  10. Nehemiah 10:29—"which was given by Moses" (Heb., by the hand of Moses).
  11. Malachi 4:4—"Remember ye the law of Moses my servant."
- C. Testimony of the New Testament.
1. Mark 7:10—"Moses said, Honor thy father and mother."
  2. Mark 12:26—"Have ye not read in the book of Moses?" (referring to Ex. 3:6)
  3. Luke 24:44—"All things . . . which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me." (By these expressions Jesus referred to the entire Old Testament.)
  4. John 1:17—"The law was given through Moses."
  5. John 5:46, 47—"For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me (Jesus); for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"
  6. Compare also these passages, which attribute other parts of the Pentateuch to Moses: Matt. 8:4; 19:7; 22:24; Mark 1:44; Luke 2:22; 16:29; 20:28; John 7:19; Acts 3:22; 26:22; Romans 10:5, 19; I Cor. 9:9.
- D. Testimony of ancient Jewish writers.
1. From the Jewish Talmudic tract *Baba Bathra*, 14b-15a:  
"Who wrote the Scriptures? — Moses wrote his own book and the portion of Balaam and Job. Joshua wrote the book which bears his name and [the last]

## WHO WROTE EXODUS?

eight verses of the Pentateuch." (The Talmud was put into writing in the second and third centuries after Christ.)

2. From the Jewish Talmudic tract *Aboth* (Fathers), chap. I:

"MISHNAH: 1. Moses received the Torah at Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua." The commentary (Gemara) on the term "Torah" says, "Scripture and its complementary Oral Instruction, with special reference to the latter."

3. Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1,8.

(Of our books) "five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death." (Josephus wrote about 80 A.D.)

The view that Moses was author of Exodus was the unanimous view of Bible writers and the ancient Jews. So strong and consistent was this testimony that even those who do not accept Moses as the author of the whole book will credit him as being the author of parts.

There were very few men living in ancient times who had the knowledge, the training, the literary skill, the time, and the motivation to write such a marvelous book as Exodus. As a participant and eye-witness of the events, Moses had the necessary *knowledge*. Having been educated in all the wisdom of Egypt, he had adequate *training* and literary skill. Because he was with Israel for forty years during the wilderness wanderings, he had abundant *time* to write. Being a man fully dedicated to God and to the people of God, he had the *motivation* necessary for the big task of writing this book and also the other books of the Pentateuch. Most important of all, the Spirit of God motivated him and assisted him. How many other men of ancient times (or modern either!) possessed this combination of qualities needed by any author of a book like Exodus?

## II. CRITICAL<sup>1</sup> THEORIES ABOUT THE AUTHORSHIP OF EXODUS:

1. Martin Noth expresses the view of the majority of Old Testament "critics" in the following statement:

The intensive work on the Pentateuch which has been carried on by scholars for many generations has shown that the completed Pentateuch, as it now stands in the Old Testament, cannot be explained as the work of one "author" and that the attribution of the Pentateuch to Moses as author, of which we find traces only after the Old Testament period, does not hold true.<sup>2</sup>

2. Those who reject the Mosaic authorship of Exodus and the rest of the Pentateuch maintain that at first the stories and other parts of these books were stories about real or imaginary people and events, which were transmitted orally over a long period.<sup>3</sup>
3. These oral (word-of-mouth) traditions were "shaped by usage in worship centers throughout the era of conquest and settlement."<sup>4</sup>

Supposedly the oral traditions clustered themselves into collections of traditions at different places—Shechem, Jerusalem, Hebron Gilgal, or other places, so that in time different sections of what we now have in Exodus were chiefly known primarily in specific areas. Thus (according to the theory) there developed a

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<sup>1</sup>The term "critical" has unfortunately come to have a bad connotation to many people. The term is derived from the Greek word meaning "to judge." All students of the Bible must form some judgments concerning the Biblical text; so in a way all Bible students are "critics." However, so many Biblical "critics" have expressed skeptical, negative, views about the Bible, that the very expression "Bible critic" has become synonymous to many with "destructive critic."

<sup>2</sup>Martin Noth, *Exodus* (Phila.: Westminster, 1962), p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Roy L. Honeycutt, Jr., *Exodus*, in *Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Broadman, 1969), p. 308. (This particular edition of the *Broadman Bible Commentary* was withdrawn from publication and sale by the Southern Baptist Convention because of the "liberalism" expressed by certain of its authors.)

<sup>4</sup>Honeycutt, *ibid.*

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body of traditions at one place about the exodus event; at another place a group of traditions about the wilderness wanderings; at yet another area a collection of traditions about the Sinai events. The sections about the covenant (Ex. 20—23) and the tabernacle (25—31, 35—40) were also independently circulated.<sup>5</sup>

4. The first "author" who wrote some of the traditions down is commonly called "J." "The 'Jahwist,' i.e. the author of this particular narrative stratum in the Pentateuch, is probably to be dated in the time of David or Solomon."<sup>6</sup> He is thought to have lived in the southern kingdom (Judah). Sections of Exodus attributed to J include 1:8-12; 4:1-16; and many others.
5. The next "author" is called "E," (because he used the Hebrews name '*elohim*' for God, rather than Jehovah). He is usually placed after J in time, and located in the northern kingdom. "The question whether J or E is the earlier is disputed; E is usually taken to be the less ancient, but this cannot be proved for certain."<sup>7</sup>
6. Some time near the fall of the northern kingdom the writings of J and E were combined into a single work, often called JE.
7. Skeptical critics assume that the book of Deuteronomy was written during the latter years of the kingdom of Judah. It is often associated with the reformation of Josiah in 621 B.C., although many now date it back to the time of Hezekiah (about 700 B.C.) The "Deuteronomistic" writers supposedly also added many moralistic insertions into other books (Judges, Kings, Exodus, etc.). The initial "D" is often applied to the Deuteronomistic author(s).
8. During or after the Babylonian exile (586-536 B.C.) priestly writers added a great amount of written material

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<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 309-311.

<sup>6</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 15.



to the JE and D material that came to them. The priestly writers specialized in ceremonial and ritualistic writings, in statistics, genealogies, and introductory expressions ("these are the generations of . . ."). Most of the book of Leviticus is attributed to P, as is the material about the tabernacle and related matters in Exodus. The priestly writers supposedly rewrote much of the history which they found in JE to promote their own priestly privileges and position.<sup>8</sup>

9. Some time after the Babylonian captivity JE, D, and P were combined into what we now know as the Pentateuch, or Torah. This leaves Moses out of the picture.
10. These separate "sources" only exist in the minds of the critics who believe in them. The oldest Bible manuscripts we have betray no trace of J, E, D, or P.
11. No two critics who dissect the Old Testament into these sources come up with quite the same analysis. They have broad agreement, but when it comes to assigning particular passages to particular sources, every critic has his own analysis.<sup>9</sup>
12. We do not accept the "source" theories about the origin of the Pentateuch. In our commentary we frequently refer to the critics' views of various passages. When these views are weighed, they are found to be unproven speculations based upon an unwillingness to accept the supernatural inspiration of the Bible.

For further study of the critical theories, see Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963); or Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*

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<sup>8</sup>See Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup>For examples of way that Exodus is divided up verse by verse (or in larger units) and attributed to J, E, or P, see S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Meridian, 1958), pp. 22-42; and W. O. E. Oesterly and Theodore H. Robinson, *An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament* (New York: Meridian, 1958), pp. 36-37.

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(Chicago, Moody, 1964); or Merrill F. Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1951).

If you desire to check some books favoring the source (documentary) analysis of the Old Testament, see James King West, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), Martin Noth, *Exodus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962); S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Meridian, reprinted 1958).

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Head of Thutmose III, king of Egypt 1502-1448 B.C. From his mummy at the Cairo museum. He was probably pharaoh of the oppression. (Ex. 1:15; 2:15).



Head of Amenhotep II,\* king of Egypt 1448-1422 B.C. He was probably pharaoh at the time of the exodus.

\*From J. H. Breasted, *A History of Egypt* (New York: Scribner's, 1924), p. 326.

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### INTRODUCTORY SECTION V

#### THE DATE OF THE EXODUS

By the date of the "exodus" we are referring to the date of Israel's departure from Egypt, rather than the date of composition of the book of Exodus.

#### I. THE EARLY DATE FOR THE EXODUS—1446 B.C.

1. The exodus from Egypt occurred 480 years before the start of Solomon's temple, in the fourth year of king Solomon. See I Kings 6:1. The reign of Solomon is dated 970-931 B.C. by Edwin R. Thiele,<sup>1</sup> and 961-922 by Wm. F. Albright.<sup>2</sup> Using Thiele's dates, Solomon's fourth year would be 966 B.C. Adding 480 years to this gives us 1446 B.C. This figure could be a year or two off, depending on whether a part of a year is to be regarded as a whole year when adding up the totals. But the 1446 B.C. figure should be regarded as extremely close to the date. It is the date adopted in this textbook.
2. According to Judges 11:26, three hundred years (which we accept as a round number) elapsed between Israel's conquest of the land east of Jordan and the time of Judge Jephthah. Between the time of Jephthah and the reign of King David (1010-970 B.C.), several events occurred: the judgeships of Samson, Eli, and Samuel, and the reign of King Saul. The time span of these events is somewhat uncertain, but it probably was sixty to eighty years. If we start at 1010 B.C. (David's reign), and go back sixty (or more) years to Jephthah, and then back 300 years to the conquest of the land east of Jordan, and then back forty more years for the wilderness wanderings, we have a total of 400 years, and are back to 1410 B.C. This is quite close to the statistic in

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<sup>1</sup>*Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 55.

<sup>2</sup>*The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra* (New York: Harper, 1963), p. 53.

## THE DATE OF THE EXODUS

### I Kings 6:1.

If we date the exodus as late as 1290 B.C. (which many do), there is simply not enough time between 1010 and the exodus for all the events to have occurred, if we take the scriptural statistics literally at all.

3. The 1446 B.C. exodus date allows time for the events in the period of judges. If we add up all the periods whose lengths are given in the book of Judges, we get a total of 410 years! All Bible students admit that there is some overlapping in the periods. The scripture itself indicates this. (See Judges 10:7; 15:20.) If we adopt the early date of the exodus, we find enough time for all of the events in the period of judges, when we have allowed for some overlapping. If we date the exodus as late as 1290, so much overlapping and telescoping of time is required that there is at least a fifty percent adjustment needed!
4. Queen Hatshepsut (1501-1480 B.C.)<sup>3</sup> ruled at the correct time to be a possible candidate as the "daughter of Pharaoh" who saved the baby Moses. If the exodus was in 1446 B.C., Moses was born in 1526 B.C., eighty years before. Hatshepsut would then have been a youthful "daughter of Pharaoh," not yet queen. We feel that she was the woman referred to, but there is no way to be certain.
5. Thutmose III (1502-1448 B.C.) fits well as the Pharaoh of the oppression.
  - a. He came to power very near the time when Moses fled to Midian (about 1486 B.C.). Thutmose III was both step-son and son-in-law of Hatshepsut, and was a bitter rival to her during the latter part of her reign. He made seventeen military campaigns into Canaan and Syria.

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<sup>3</sup>Using the dates of Siegfried J. Schwantes, *A Short History of the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965). His dates are used for all the Egyptian kings mentioned in this article.

## EXPLORING EXODUS

- b. His personality (militaristic and bragging) fits well as the "pharaoh of the oppression."
- c. A model and a painting of slaves making bricks comes from the time of his reign.<sup>4</sup> Compare Ex. 1:14.
- d. He died shortly (one or two years) before Moses returned to Egypt from Midian. See Ex. 4:19; 2:23.
- 6. Amenhotep II (1448-1422 B.C.) fits well the Pharaoh at the time of the exodus.
  - a. The dates agree. Amenhotep II seems to have been unable to carry out any invasions or extensive military operations after his fifth year.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps this was caused by the Red Sea disaster.
  - b. His personality fits well. He was strong, athletic, and insufferably boastful.<sup>6</sup> See pp. 132-133 in this book.
  - c. He was succeeded by a non-firstborn son, Thutmose IV.<sup>7</sup> All the firstborn of Egypt died at the passover time.
  - d. The chief problem with adopting Amenhotep II as pharaoh of the exodus is that Ex. 14:28, Psalm 136:15, and other passages seem to say that the Pharaoh perished in the sea. This is a problem. See notes on 14:28.
- 7. The fact that there were eleven generations from Aaron (Israel's first high priest) to Zadok (a priest in the time of king David, about 1000 B.C.) surely places the date of Aaron (and therefore also the death of the exodus) back as far as 1400 B.C. Even in the time available after that date, there would have been hardly forty years available for each generation. See I Chronicles 6:3-8.

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<sup>4</sup>Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964), p. 122 (picture); D. J. Wiseman, *Illustrations from Biblical Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), pp. 42, 44, 45.

<sup>5</sup>G. L. Archer, Jr., *Survey of Old Testament Intro.* (Chicago: Moody, 1965), pp. 215, 217, 204-207.

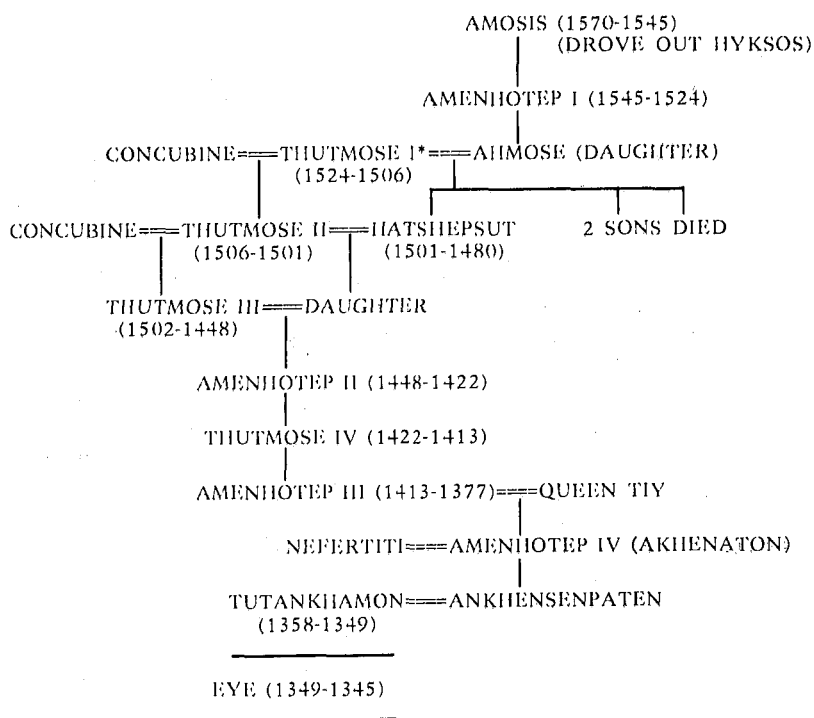
<sup>6</sup>*Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1955), p. 244.

<sup>7</sup>Schwantes, *op. cit.*, p. 86. G. L. Robinson, *Bearing of Archaeology on the Old Testament* (New York: American Tract Society, 1944), p. 54.

# THE DATE OF THE EXODUS

## CHART OF KINGS OF EGYPTIAN EIGHTEENTH DYNASTY

(Double lines indicate marriage.)



\*Observe that neither Thutmose I, nor Thutmose II, nor Thutmose III actually had royal blood, but their wives and daughter did.

8. The fact that Israel could subdue almost all the land east of the Jordan river in only two battles (at Jahaz and Edrei; Num. 21:23, 24) shows that this area was sparsely populated at the time near the exodus. Archaeological surveys have shown that this was the case between 1850-1300 B.C.,<sup>8</sup> which would include the time forty years after the exodus. After 1300 B.C. it became more heavily populated. (It is incorrect to allege, however, that this area had NO settled population before 1300 B.C. See p. 27.)
9. The Amarna letters (clay tablets sent from kings in Canaan to the Egyptian kings around 1400-1375 B.C.) tell of great alarm in Canaan because they were being invaded. Among the invading peoples, they mention the 'Apiri (also spelled Habiri, Habiru, 'Apiru, Hapiri, Khapiri). This name may very well refer to the Hebrews.<sup>9</sup> If the 'Apiru invasion was, even in part, the Hebrew invasion, then we would need to date the exodus some forty-five or fifty years before the Amarna letters, which would give us a date quite close to 1446 B.C.

It is remarkable that among all the letters sent to the Egyptian king Akhenaton (at Amarna), there are no letters from Jericho, Shiloh, Mizpah, Gibeon, Hazor, or Shechem. These places had probably either been conquered already by the Habiri (as the Bible indicates), or had already allied themselves with them.<sup>10</sup>

One of the Amarna letters from the Egyptian envoy in north Palestine contains this note to the reigning Pharaoh: "Let my lord the king recall what *Hazor* and its king have already had to endure."<sup>11</sup> Hazor was one of the cities destroyed by Joshua. (Joshua 11:10-13)

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<sup>8</sup>Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1959), pp. 10, 11.

<sup>9</sup>Wm. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Garden City, New York: Anchor, 1957), p. 240, says that the name *Hebrew* may "perfectly well reflect an adjectival form 'Apiru.'"

<sup>10</sup>G. L. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 58. John Garstang and J. B. E. Garstang, *The Story of Jericho* (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1948), p. 126.

<sup>11</sup>Sir Charles Marston, *The Bible is True* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1937), p. 145.

The king of Megiddo wrote one of the "Amarna letters," saying that he was being attacked by one Lab'ayu, ruler of Shechem. He asks for reinforcements. Lab'ayu also wrote, protesting his innocence. Lab'ayu is said (by his enemies) to have turned Shechem over to the 'Apriu.<sup>12</sup> This may explain how the Israelites could conduct their big mass meeting at Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerezim without interference from the Canaanites.

The identification of the Habiri of the Amarna letters has caused much controversy. Some say they were the Hebrews. But the Habiri spoken of seem to have been a much more inclusive group of people than just the Hebrews, although the Hebrews were probably regarded as Habiri by the Canaanites. Consult the *Biblical Archaeologist*, Feb. 1960, for a detailed discussion. See also G. E. Wright, *Biblical Archaeology* (Phila.: Westminster, 1962), p. 75.

10. A destruction layer at Hazor in northern Israel is dated about 1400 B.C. (close of the Late Bronze I period). This is probably the debris of the destruction referred to in Joshua 11:11, 13. This would fit very well with the 1446 exodus date.<sup>13</sup>

At Hazor there are three destruction layers on the plateau (or enclosure) below the tell (acropolis). One is the 1400 B.C. destruction. The next above it is from the end of Late Bronze II A, and is probably the destruction by the Egyptian king Seti I, 1318 B.C. The third is LB II B (1300-1260/30 B.C.), and is possibly the destruction debris caused by the battle of Deborah and Barak (Judges 4:2, 24).

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<sup>12</sup>Chas. F. Pfeiffer, *Tell El Amarna and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963), p. 50. *Biblical Archaeologist*, Feb. 1960, p. 19. G. E. Wright, *Shechem* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 18.

<sup>13</sup>*Bibliotheca Sacra* #129 (1972), pp. 42-46; (Reprinted in the *Bulletin of the Near East Archaeological Society*, #2, 1972, pp. 8-17). See Yigael Yadin (and others), *Hazor II* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1960), plate CXVI for many illustrations of LB I pottery from Hazor. See also *Hazor III-IV*, plates CCXL-CCLIII for similar material.



11. The discovery of a jar handle bearing three very ancient Hebrew letters (found at the ruins of Raddana, a site about ten miles north of Jerusalem) has led Dr. Y. Aharoni of Tel Aviv University to date the Hebrew occupation of this site as no later than 1300 B.C.<sup>14</sup> The letters resemble the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions found in the Mt. Sinai area, and dated approximately 1500 B.C.

If the Hebrews were at Raddana in 1300 B.C., this forces the exodus back to near 1400 (counting the years of wandering, the years of conquest, and the occupation during the period of judges). This is much nearer to the 1446 date we have proposed than it is to other suggested later dates.

The excavators of Raddana, Dr. Joseph Callaway and Dr. Robert E. Cooley, do not concur with Aharoni's conclusion, and maintain that the site of Raddana was first occupied about 1200 B.C., and that it was probably occupied by non-Israelites, who had a sophisticated architecture that was destroyed and later crudely rebuilt by Israelite invaders about 1100 B.C. (Information from personal correspondence with Robert E. Cooley.)

The Biblical information gives a rather definite date for the exodus. The archaeological data, though valuable, seems incomplete, inconclusive, and contradictory.

## II. THE LATE DATE FOR THE EXODUS—1290 B.C.

1. Because of some conclusions from archaeology, most scholars do not accept the 1446 B.C. date that we have proposed for the exodus. Most date it around 1290 B.C.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Y. Aharoni, "Khirbet Raddana and its Inscription," *Israel Exploration Journal* #21, pp. 130-135.

<sup>15</sup>Many of the arguments for a late date or against the early date can be read in J. A. Thompson, *The Bible and Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), pp. 55-63; Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 117-121; K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1966), pp. 52-72. Rebuttals to most of their arguments can be found in Gleason Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1965), pp. 214-223.

## THE DATE OF THE EXODUS

Some, like Joseph Callaway, have proposed dates as low as 1100 B.C.

2. Those dating the exodus late generally regard the great notorious king *Raamses II* (1301-1234) of the Egyptian nineteenth dynasty as the pharaoh of the oppression, and his son *Merneptah* (1234-1220 B.C.) as the pharaoh of the exodus. Others regard *Seti I* (1317-1301 B.C.) as the pharaoh of the oppression and Raamses II as the pharaoh of the exodus.

We feel that the very lack of certainty and unanimity among advocates of the later dates shows the weakness of the view.

Merneptah in his fifth year of reign prepared a stele (an upright inscribed stone monument), which contains boastings about his victories (real or unreal). In this stele he mentions Israel. (It is the only such stele known that actually names Israel. He writes (in part) . . .

Carried off is Ashkelon; seized upon is Gezer;  
Yanoam is made as that which does not exist;  
Israel is laid waste, his seed is not.<sup>16</sup>

If Israel was in its land, and had suffered a raid by Merneptah in his fifth year (1230 B.C.), the exodus could not have been later than about 1280.<sup>17</sup>

3. One of the principal arguments for the later date of the exodus is the mention of Raamses in Ex. 1:11. This name of a city is thought to link the exodus to Raamses II, rather than to the XVIII dynasty kings like Thutmose III.<sup>18</sup> Some authors have asserted that the name Raamses

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<sup>16</sup>From *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (translation by John A. Wilson) (Princeton Univ. Press, 1955), p. 378.

<sup>17</sup>Some recent scholars have held that the word on the Merneptah stele usually translated "Israel" may not actually mean Israel, but refers to a town, possibly "Jez-reel." If so, then the Merneptah stele would not by itself prove Israel as a nation was settled in the land by that time. J. H. Hertz, *Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1969), p. 395.

<sup>18</sup>Finegan, *op. cit.*, pp. 118, 119.

just does not appear before the nineteenth dynasty of Egypt.

Admitted: We have no definite proof outside the Bible that the city which was called Raamses or Per-Raamses, or any other city in the area, was called by that name before the nineteenth dynasty. It was the royal residence city in the Egyptian delta during the XIX and XX dynasties, when eleven kings wore the name of Raamses.

Nonetheless, we now know that the name *Raamses* was certainly used before the XIX dynasty, and there is no conclusive proof that it was not used as a city name then, as the Bible says it was. Pierre Montet says that the founder of the XIX dynasty, Raamses I, belonged to a family of the eastern delta, where for generations all the men had been called Seti or Raamses.<sup>19</sup> Gleason L. Archer, Jr. documents the appearance of the name Raamses (with the slightly variant spelling Ramose) as the name of a nobleman during the XVIII dynasty (time of Amenhotep III).<sup>20</sup> Also Donovan Courville gives the Sothis list of the kings of Egypt, which lists at least six kings that *preceded* the Hyksos who had the name Raamses in various forms.<sup>21</sup>

Genesis 47:11 says that the Israelites settled "in the land of *Rameses*" during the time of Jacob. The use of the name *Rameses* here might be a later name applied to the site before it was actually called that. But it could very possibly indicate that the area was called by that name way back in the time of Jacob, about 1875 B.C.

A problem for those who assume that Ex. 1:11 refers to a city called Raamses existing in the time of Raamses II is that Raamses II did his building right in Wadi Tumilat (Goshen), where the Israelites lived. But the

<sup>19</sup>*Lives of the Pharaohs* (Cleveland: World, 1968), p. 164.

<sup>20</sup>Mimeographed article, Dec. 1973.

<sup>21</sup>*The Exodus Problem*, Vol. I (Loma Linda: Challenge, 1971), pp. 118-122.

## THE DATE OF THE EXODUS

Egyptians and the Israelites were not mixed together.<sup>22</sup>

4. Another argument for the late date is the view that there were NO settled habitations east of Jordan in Moab, Ammon, Edom, or Gilead in the fourteenth century. Therefore the exodus could not have occurred near then, because the Bible relates that the Israelites encountered these peoples.<sup>23</sup>

As stated in this article (I, 7), there were indeed very few residents east of Jordan in Moses' time. But the discovery of a small temple at Amman, Jordan, and large family tombs at Amman and Naur,<sup>24</sup> dated before 1400 B.C., shows that the area did have a population in the time of Moses, as the Bible indicates.

5. An argument against the early (1446 B.C.) date is that the capital of Egypt during the XVIII dynasty was at Thebes, and not up in the delta. Thutmose III did not build buildings in the delta area, where Israel lived, and therefore he could not be the pharaoh of the oppression.<sup>25</sup>

Rebuttal: Though the capital was indeed at Thebes far to the south, Thutmose III calls himself Lord of Heliopolis (which was in the delta). His son Amenhotep II was born at Memphis, near the delta. Thutmose III erected two granite obelisks at Heliopolis.<sup>26</sup> It is hardly conceivable that the densely populated delta region would not be developed by the XVIII kings, since it was the gateway to their conquests in Canaan and Syria.

6. A frequently-used argument for the late exodus date is that the remains of Palestinian cities—Lachish, Debir, Jericho, Hazor, Ai—prove that the conquest

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<sup>22</sup>Archer, *op. cit.*, pp. 218-219.

<sup>23</sup>Nelson Glueck, *River Jordan* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), pp. 41, 101, 102, 104.

<sup>24</sup>G. Lancaster Harding, *The Antiquities of Jordan* (New York: Crowell, 1959), p. 17. See also *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 167.

<sup>25</sup>Finegan, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

<sup>26</sup>Archer, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

was later than 1400 B.C., and hence the exodus was later than 1446.<sup>27</sup>

a. *Lachish* was apparently destroyed about 1230 B.C. But this was not the work of Joshua, who destroyed the inhabitants of Lachish, but not the city itself. (Joshua 10:31, 32; 11:13). The 1230 destruction may be the work of Merneptah.<sup>28</sup>

b. *Debir*. Tell Beit Mirsim, SW of Hebron, was formerly thought to be the site of Debir. It was destroyed about 1220 B.C. This could have been the result of Merneptah's raid, but was certainly not part of the Israelite conquest referred to in Josh. 10:38, 39 and Judges 1:11-13. No destruction of the site accompanied the Israelite slaughter of the inhabitants.

More recent researches have quite convincingly indicated that Tell Beit Mirsim was not the ancient site of Debir. More likely Debir was the site now known as Tell Rabud, five miles south of Hebron.<sup>29</sup>

c. *Jericho*. The excavations of John Garstang at Jericho (1930-36) seemingly proved that City IV of Jericho was destroyed about 1400 B.C., which would confirm the Biblical exodus date. Double walls were found fallen, and these were thought to be the walls that fell in Joshua's time. However, subsequent excavations by Kathleen Kenyon indicate that the walls Garstang thought fell in 1400 B.C. were actually from the Early Bronze period five hundred years earlier; and the two walls were themselves not even contemporary.<sup>30</sup> There is an obvious destruction and burn layer at Jericho. This layer has usually been dated

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<sup>27</sup>J. A. Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>28</sup>Archer, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

<sup>29</sup>A. F. Rainey, "The Location and History of Biblical Debir." *Newsletter of the Near East Archaeological Society*, Winter 1974.

<sup>30</sup>See Charles Pfeiffer, *Biblical World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), pp. 308, 309.

about 1580 B.C., at the end of the Canaanite Middle Bronze II period, and attributed to an Egyptian attack in Palestine following the expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt. But the evidence that the Egyptians destroyed Jericho or other Palestinian cities then is very weak. More probably the Middle Bronze culture in Palestine continued until Joshua conquered Canaan about 1400 B.C. The walls of Jericho that Joshua destroyed have probably been visible all along, but the remains have been dated wrongly.<sup>31</sup>

d. *Hazor*. The excavators of Hazor have maintained that the destruction layer there dated after 1300 was that of the Israelite conquest.<sup>32</sup> This is an unnecessary conclusion, because there is at Hazor another destruction layer dated about 1400. (See p. 23.)

e. *Ai*. Excavations have been made at a large mound named Et-Tell located twelve miles north of Jerusalem since 1933 because this has generally been regarded as the location of Ai. But no remains have been found there that can be dated between 2300 and 1200 B.C.

At any place where people have ever lived in Palestine broken pieces of pottery can be found and dated by their forms. If Et Tell is the location of Ai, why are there no remains there datable to near 1400 B.C., when Joshua destroyed Ai?

The author of this book has been involved in excavations at a small mound named Khirbet Nisya ten miles north of Jerusalem. (The excavation director is Mr. David Livingston.) Khirbet Nisya lies on the east side of a high hill, just as the Bible says Ai did (Gen. 12:8). There pottery from the Canaanite period (Middle Bronze II), Israelite (Iron age), Persian, and other periods has been

<sup>31</sup> John Bimson, *Redating the Exodus and Conquest* (Sheffield, England; Univ. of Sheffield, 1981), pp. 110-132.

<sup>32</sup> Y. Yadin, and others, *Hazor II* (Jerusalem, 1960), p. 165.

<sup>33</sup> *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Sept. 1968, p. 314.

found, the very periods in which the Bible indicates Ai was inhabited. (Note Isa. 10:8; Ezra 2:28). No remains from these periods have been found at Et-Tell. We think Nisya will prove to be the true site of Ai, and the historical precision of the Bible will be demonstrated again.

7. Another objection is that the Habiri who captured(?) Jerusalem about 1400 B.C., and who are named in the Amarna letters, could not have been the Hebrews, since the Hebrews did not capture Jerusalem.<sup>35</sup>

Rebuttal: Neither the Amarna letters nor the Bible declare that the Habiri/Hebrews captured Jerusalem, but only that they threatened it.<sup>36</sup> The fear of the king of Jerusalem, as indicated by Joshua 10:1, 2, is similar to that expressed by Abdi-Khepa, king of Jerusalem in the Amarna letters.

8. Yet another objection to the early date is that Joseph (son of Jacob) does not fit into the Hyksos period by the early dating.<sup>37</sup>

There is absolutely no proof that Joseph lived during the Hyksos period. Joseph came into Egypt during the Egyptian Middle Kingdom (before the Hyksos), and the later Hyksos kings were probably persecutors of the Israelites, not allies.<sup>38</sup>

9. Another argument against the 1446 B.C. exodus date is that the 480 years in I Kings 6:1 cannot be regarded as expressing the precisely literal chronology that we Western-world people expect our statistics to express.<sup>39</sup>

Those holding this view allege that the authors of the

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<sup>34</sup> *The Exodus Problem*, Vol. 1 (Loma Linda: Challenge, 1971), pp. 70-73, 77.

<sup>35</sup> Finegan, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

<sup>36</sup> Charles Pfeiffer, *The Biblical World* (Baker, 1966), p. 36.

<sup>37</sup> Finegan, *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Archer *op. cit.*, 215, 204-207.

<sup>39</sup> James Moyer, "Date of the Exodus" (Springfield, Mo.: Duplicated notes, 1974).

## THE DATE OF THE EXODUS

Old Testament generally dealt in "round" numbers. For example, the "four hundred" years in Gen. 15:13 refers to the same period described as 430 years in Ex. 12:40. Also the number *forty* occurs seven times in the book of Judges (3:11; 5:31; et al); the number *twenty* appears three times (Judges 4:3; et al); *eighty* appears once (Judges 3:30).

It is further argued that the Israelites did not keep precise statistics up until the time of the monarchy (about 1000 B.C.), and neither did her neighboring nations.

The statistics and "generations" of the Old Testament are said to show "schematization" very often. This term means that in giving statistics and lists of names the authors often gave some approximate number that could be easily remembered or associated with another similar group. Thus in the genealogy of Christ (Matt. 1), the generations are schematized into three groups of fourteen generations, although this required omission of some known names.

By this argument the 480 years of I Kings 6:1 could be interpreted to mean twelve generations (or tribes) of approximately forty years each, but it would not be the precise number.

In reply to these arguments we observe that the ancient Egyptians, as far back as 2500 B.C. were meticulous record keepers. At least seven very long genealogical lists are known, each spanning many generations.<sup>40</sup> One list covers about 600 years, and another some 1300 years, naming sixty generations of the family and at intervals giving the names of contemporary kings.

Inasmuch as Moses grew up in Egypt and was trained in the ways of the Egyptians, it is reasonable to assume

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<sup>40</sup>K. A. Kitchen, "Transmission of Family Records for Long Periods," *Tyndale House Bulletin*, April 1960, pp. 14-18.



that his approach to statistics and family records would be like that of the Egyptians.

As for the use of round numbers, it simply is not true that all Old Testament statistics are round numbers. Very many are obviously specific. For example, Judges 3:8 gives "eight"; Judges 3:14 has "eighteen"; Judges 6:1 reads "seven." Even the multiples of ten may be the actual numbers, and not approximations. We surely agree that the Old Testament gives some round numbers; but it is wrong to assume that all numbers are questionable because some are "round."

Likewise, schematization may have been employed in a few cases. But this is not adequate cause to assume that it was used in every list of names or every statistic. What may appear to us to have been schematized may have been a reality.

For generations scholars had difficulty trying to harmonize the numbers given in the books of Kings concerning the years the various kings reigned. Many gave it up as hopeless. When Edwin R. Thiele began his study of the numbers associated with the Hebrew kings, he began with the assumption that the numbers might be correct when they were understood as the ancient people wrote them.<sup>41</sup> His investigations demonstrated that the numbers were correct. It was our lack of understanding of them that caused the problems. We should look upon the statistics in the scriptures with the same kind of respect that Jesus had for the scriptures generally.

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<sup>41</sup> *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, pp. v-vii.

## ISRAEL'S ROUTE FROM EGYPT TO SINAI

### INTRODUCTORY SECTION VI

## ISRAEL'S ROUTE (JOURNEY) FROM EGYPT TO SINAI

SEE NUMBERS 33:5-15; Ex. 12:38—19:1)

### I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES guiding us in our attempt to trace Israel's route:

MANY uncertainties confront anyone who tries to trace Israel's route precisely. A check of commentaries and atlases will show how extremely varied are the proposed routes. Several principles have helped us to decide what was their probable journey route.

1. All *Scriptural* information about Israel's travels must be accepted as accurate and final authority. Our Lord Jesus said that the scriptures cannot be broken (John 10:35).
2. Israel's journeys had to be through places where they had LOTS of room. With 603,550 men (Num. 2:32) and a probable total population of over two million, their total encampment area would probably cover six miles square (36 square miles).<sup>1</sup> Even in this much area there would be over 50,000 people in every square mile.
3. The natural geographic features of the Red Sea and the Sinai peninsula are presently very similar to those that existed in the time of Moses. The wadies<sup>2</sup> between the granite mountains of Sinai are in the same places that they were long ago. The traffic routes in Moses' day passed through the same valleys that modern caravans follow.

The Red Sea, or Sea of Reeds, occupied in Moses'

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<sup>1</sup>J. W. McGarvey, *Lands of the Bible* (Nashville, Tenn.; Gospel Advocate, 1966), pp. 346-347.

<sup>2</sup>A *wady* is a usually-dry brook-valley. They flow with water during the occasional winter rains.

time almost exactly the same bed it now occupies. There is no indication that any neck of water once connected the Bitter Lakes with the north tip of the Gulf of Suez. Archaeologist Wm. F. Albright tells of finding an archaeological site inhabited in the fifteenth century B.C. (the very time of MOSES!) which lies only a little over a hundred meters from the Red Sea shore, and is less than five meters above the present average Red Sea level.<sup>3</sup> Obviously the shore line of the Red Sea is now about where it has been for 3500 years. (See note, p. 43.)

4. We do not regard the encampments named in Num. 33:5-15 as necessarily all being just one day's journey apart. In fact, we are told that it was a three days' trip from Pihahairoth to Marah, although this trip is presented as just one stage (Num. 33:8). Probably the "encampments" are only the more prominent locations they passed through, or their longer stopover points.

## II. SITES (or stages) IN ISRAEL'S JOURNEY

1. From *Rameses* to *Succoth* (Num. 33:5).

Most scholars now locate Rameses at Tanis in the northeast Nile delta area.<sup>4</sup> Another site that has been proposed is at modern Qantir ("bridge"), which is fifteen miles south of Tanis.<sup>5</sup> We have selected Qantir as the site of Rameses on our map, because it is nearer the Land of Goshen (Wadi Tumilat area), where Israel's main population lived, than Tanis is.

*Succoth*, meaning booths or temporary dwellings, is probably the hill ruin named Tell Maskhuta<sup>6</sup> near the eastern end of Goshen, about ten miles west of Lake Timsah.

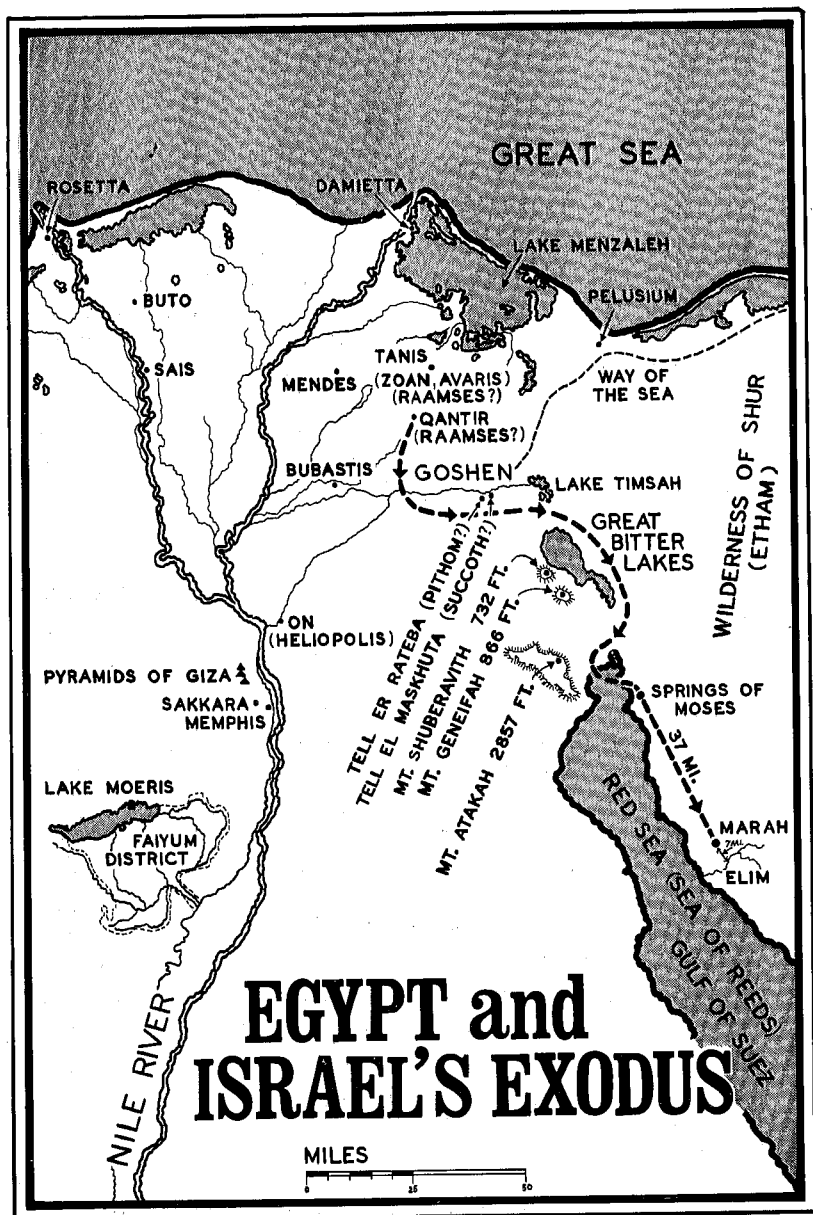
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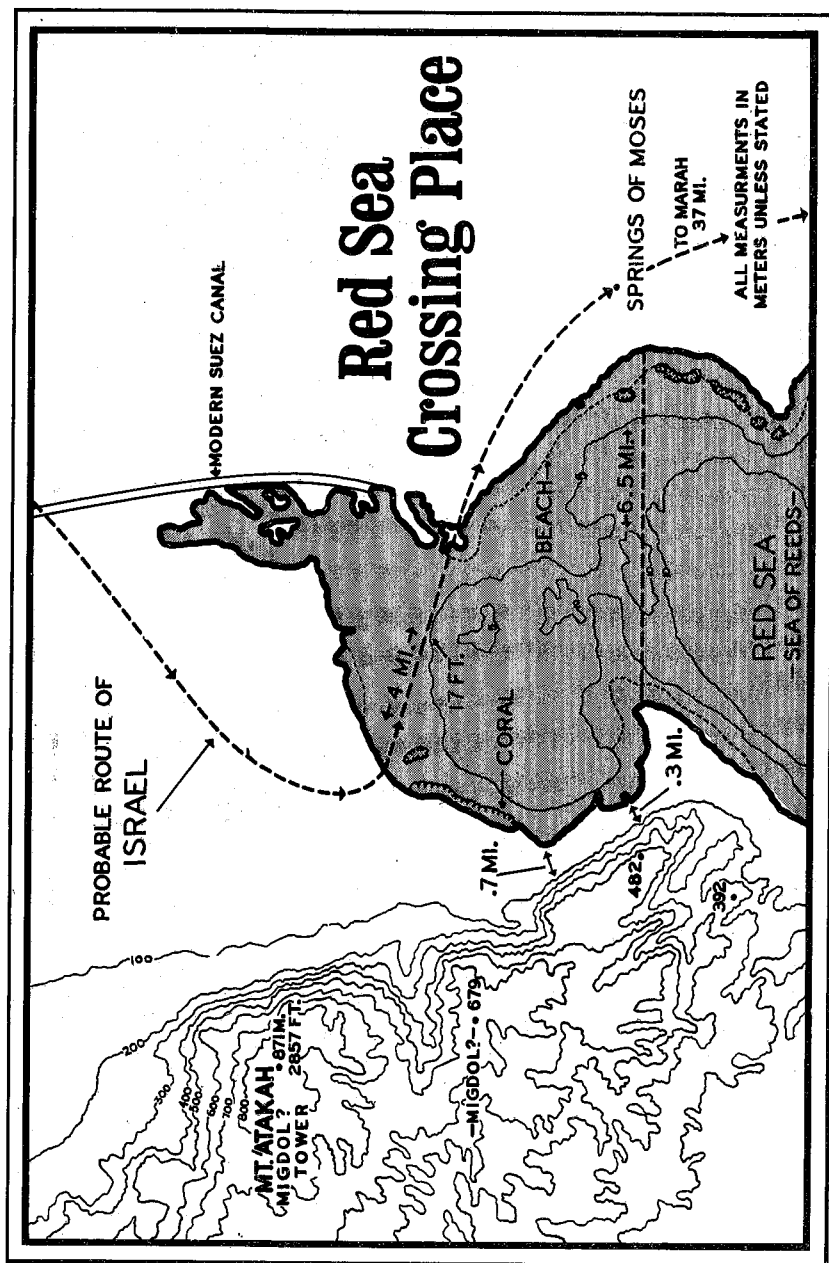
<sup>3</sup>"Exploring in Sinai with the Univ. of Calif. African Expedition," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 109 (Feb. 1948), p. 15.

<sup>4</sup>"Rameses," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*.

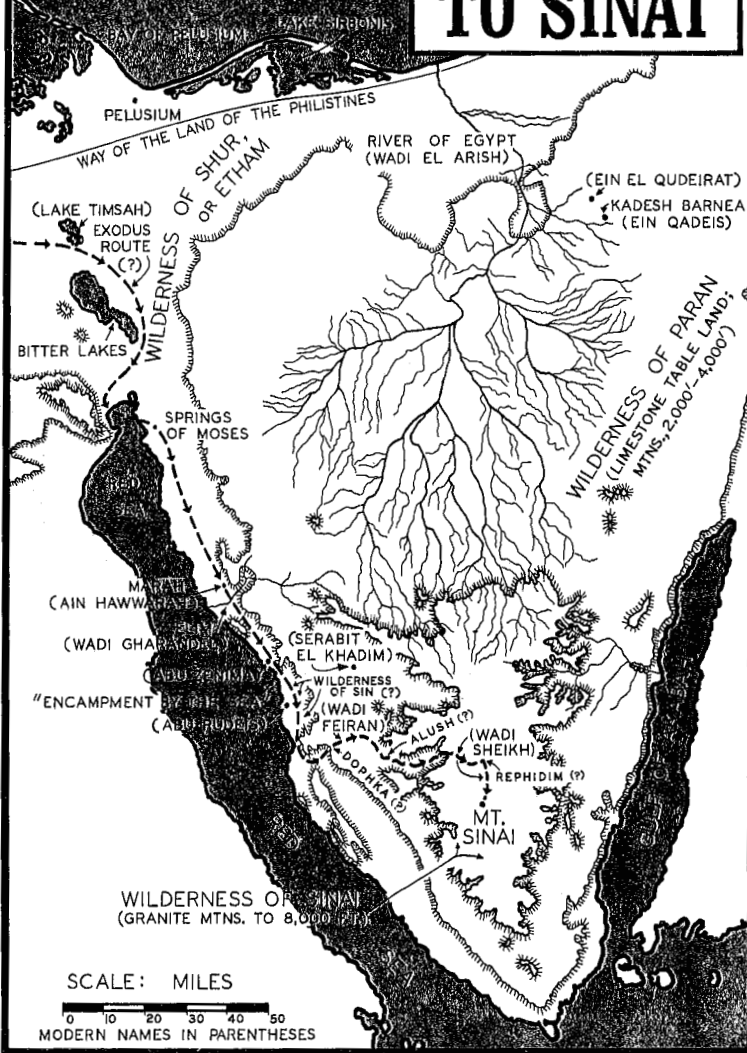
<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>G. Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology* (Phila.: Westminster, 1962), p. 61.

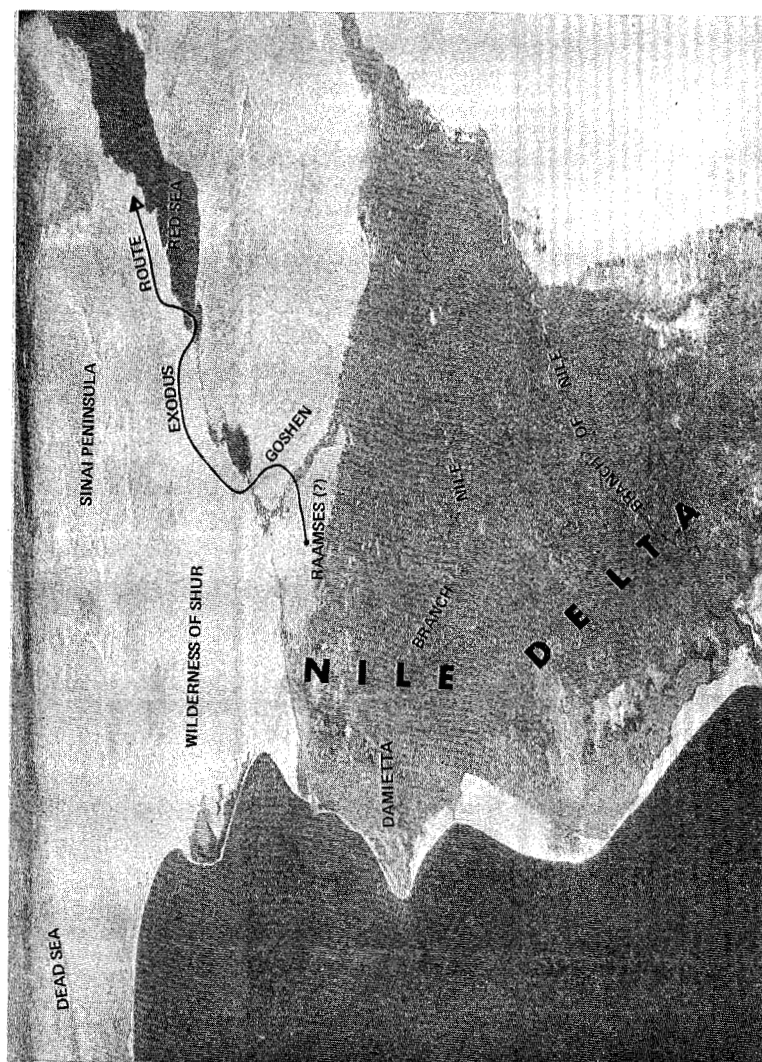




# JOURNEY TO SINAI



## EXPLORING EXODUS



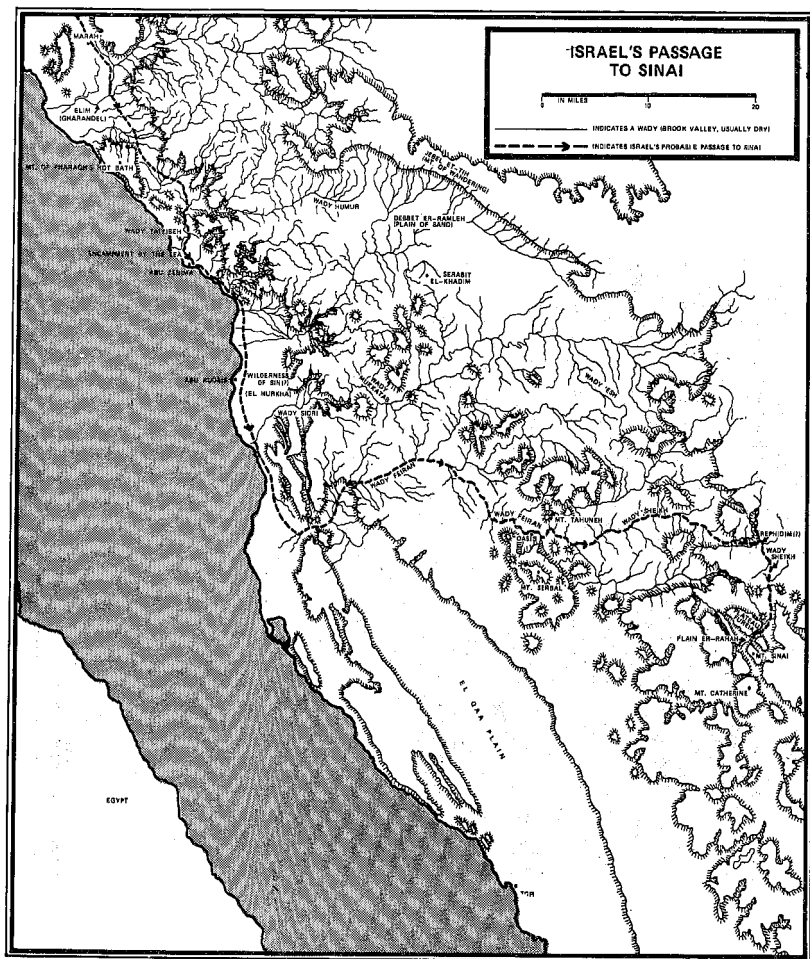
## SINAI PENINSULA



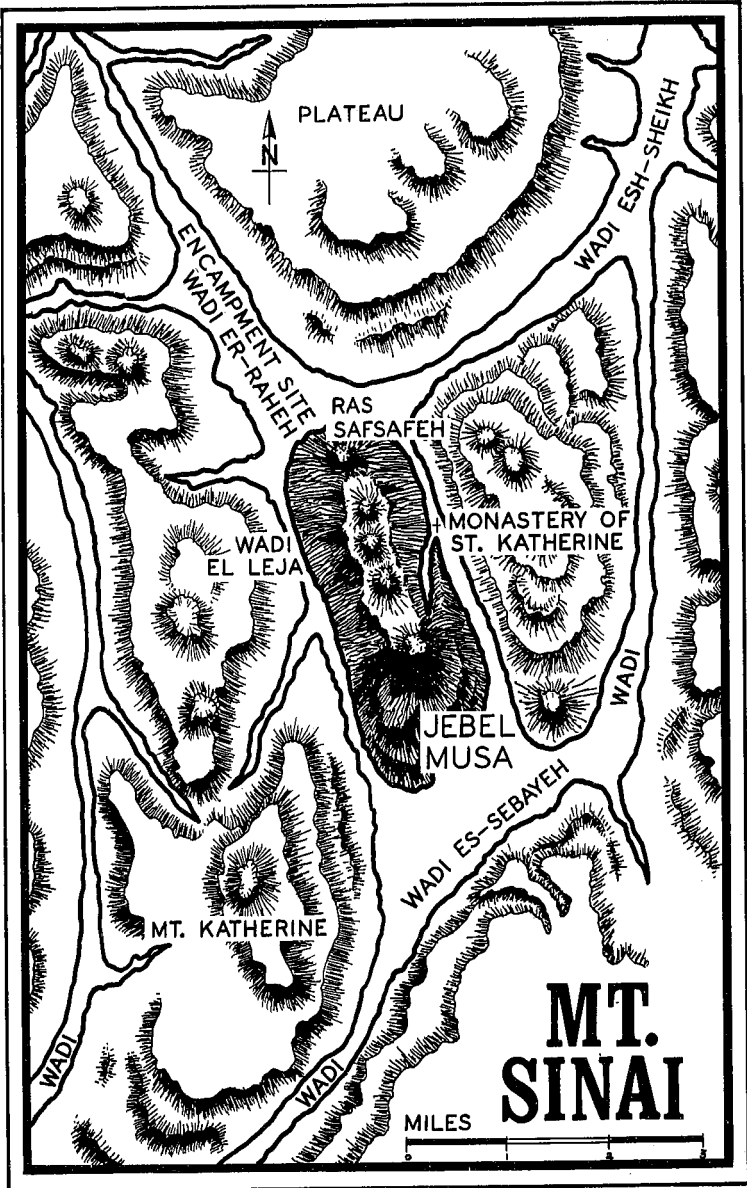
Sinai Peninsula (satellite view). (Picture courtesy NASA)



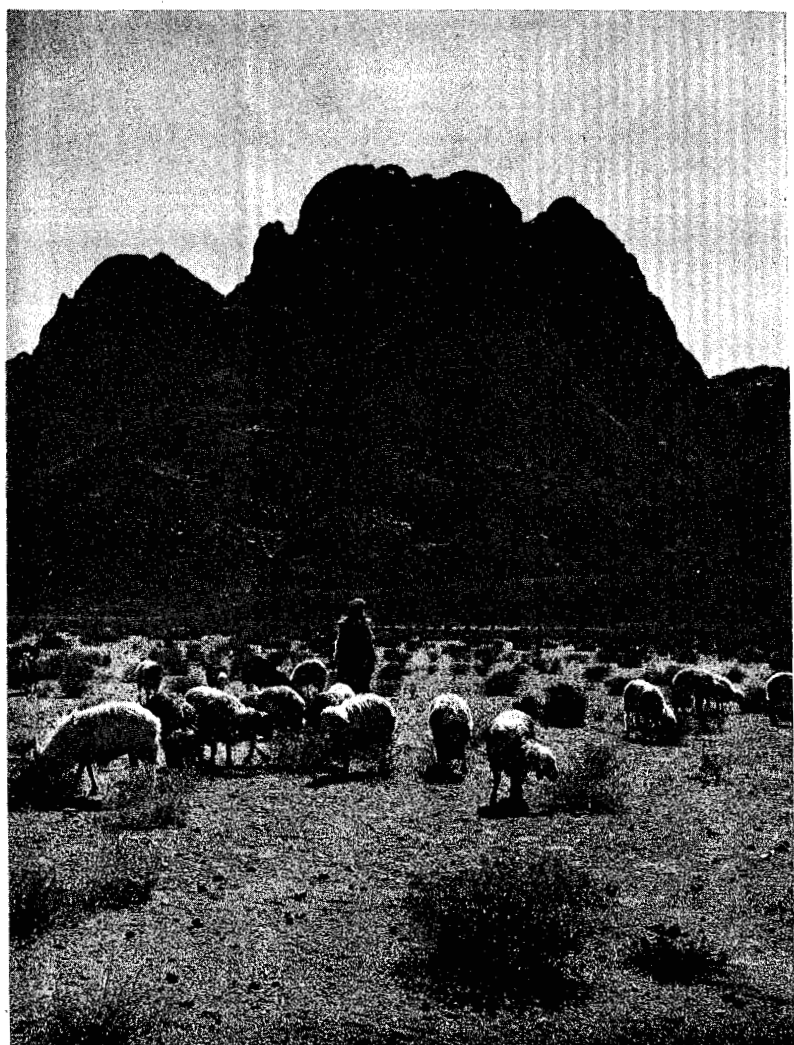
## EXPLORING EXODUS



MT. SINAI



EXPLORING EXODUS



Shepherd before Mt. Sinai. (Matson photo)

## ISRAEL'S ROUTE FROM EGYPT TO SINAI

### 2. From *Succoth* to *Etham* (Num. 33:6).

The site of Etham is not yet identified. Num. 33:6 says it is "in the edge of the wilderness." We therefore feel that to reach Etham, Israel must have travelled on eastward a few miles beyond Lake Timsah (probably passing just south of Timsah), going into the Sinai peninsula just east of the present Suez canal. The fact the Wilderness of *Etham* is the same area that is also called the Wilderness of *Shur* (Num. 33:8; Ex. 15:22), and that we know that Shur lay just east of the delta of Egypt in the Sinai wilderness, confirms our belief that Etham was somewhere southeast of Lake Timsah.

### 3. From *Etham* to *Pihahairoth* (Num. 33:7).

To reach Pihahairoth Israel had to "turn back." (The Hebrew verb may simply mean *turn*, as well as *turn back*.) Many interpreters seem to overlook this command about turning.<sup>7</sup>

We feel that Israel travelled southward after they entered into the Sinai desert, travelling along the east side of the Bitter Lakes, toward the Gulf of Suez. There is hardly room along the west side of the Bitter Lakes for a mass of people as great as Israel to have passed through, because mount Shuberavith and mount Ginefah lie only about three miles from the west shore of the Bitter Lakes.

Having gone on south of the Bitter Lakes, Israel was then instructed to "turn back and encamp before *Pihahairoth*" (Ex. 14:2). Since *back* to the Hebrews often meant *west*, a turn to the west would fulfill this command. A westward turn would bring them to the

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<sup>7</sup>Wright, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-62, presents a map suggesting that Israel turned to the north, and there crossed the southern tip of Lake Menzaleh, which he identifies as the Reed Sea (Red Sea). This is much too far north for Israel to have reached Marah in three days (Ex. 15:22-23). Wright identifies Marah with 'Ain Hawwarah, as we do also. Wright's map of Israel's proposed travel route shows Israel travelling along the east side of the Bitter Lakes, as does ours.

northwest side of the Gulf of Suez tip.

Pihahairoth is said to have been between *Migdol* and the sea, and before (east of?) *Baal-zephon* (Ex. 14:2). The name *Migdol* means *tower*. We suggest that the tower may have been on one of the summits of Mt. Atakah, just west of the Gulf of Suez tip only four or five miles.<sup>8</sup>

*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* says that Pihahairoth cannot now be identified with any known town or city in the east *delta* region (emphasis ours). It seems to us that the obvious reason for this is that Pihahairoth was NOT in the Delta area, but at the north tip of the Suez Gulf. The meaning of *Pihahairoth* is not certain, but the Egyptologist A. H. Gardiner said that it may mean the "house of Hathor." Hathor was the Egyptain cow-goddess, the "mother" principle of deity, who provided nourishment for the soul in the other-world.

*Baal-zephon* means *Lord-of-the-North*. The name seems to refer to a Canaanite idol in Egypt, or one of the places which bore its name. The location of Baal-zephon is not known.<sup>9</sup> G. E. Wright<sup>10</sup> tells of a Phoenician letter which associates a place called Baal-zephon with Tahpanes (Jer. 43:7-9), also called Daphnae. This is located between Lake Menzaleh and Lake Timsah. Possibly one place called Baal-zephon was that far north of the Gulf of Suez, but the Biblical Baal-zephon seems to have been near the north tip of the Gulf of Suez, only three days' journey from Marah. See notes on 14:1, 2.

4. From *Pihahairoth* (Hahairoth) across the *sea* (Num. 33:8).

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<sup>8</sup>*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. III, p. 2936, says, "Migdol must be *Ras 'Atakah*, or some other high point. . . ." We agree.

<sup>9</sup>Baal-zephon is placed by Josephus (*Antiquities* II, xv, 1) on the Red Sea. We do not know what his authority was for doing this, but we feel he was correct.

<sup>10</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 62.

## ISRAEL'S ROUTE FROM EGYPT TO SINAI

We are persuaded that Israel crossed the Red Sea, or Sea of Reeds (Weeds), near the north tip of the Gulf of Suez. See map. The distance across the sea there would be about four miles, and the greatest water depth about twenty feet. God may have blown the path dry across the sea a mile wide, or even wider. Concerning the problem of what sea is meant by the Red Sea, or Reed Sea, see the following Introductory Section VII. We feel that these are two names for the same body of water.

An alternate spot on the Gulf of Suez where Israel may have crossed lies about five miles south of our proposed crossing point. Here they would enter the sea from the sandy cape *Adabiya*. This is just south of the "hump" on the west coast of the Gulf of Suez' tip. This cape has features that would make it an ideal crossing place. The sea is about six and a half miles across at this point, and has a gently sloping sand bottom both into it and out of it on the east side. The greatest water depth there is about thirty feet.<sup>11</sup>

However, it seems to us that the corridor to reach this cape is too narrow for all the Israelites to have passed through without requiring too much time and trouble. There is less than one-half mile between the sea and the steep slopes of *Mt. Atakah* to the west. This very narrow level passage between sea and mountain would really be a bottle-neck for Israel.

Near the place of Israel's exit on the east side of the sea are the '*Ayun Musa*, the Springs of Moses. This name was given long after Bible times to seven rather insignificant springs. A few palms grow near the water, which is brackish.<sup>12</sup> The scripture does not mention these springs.

5. From the sea to *Marah* (Num. 33:8).

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<sup>11</sup>This is the crossing-place proposed by J. W. McGarvey, *op. cit.*, p. 441ff.

<sup>12</sup>*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. V., p. 3066.

The way from the Springs of Moses to Marah is over hard compacted sand, sprinkled with gravel and small boulders. It took Israel three days to go from the Red Sea to Marah (Ex. 15:22), through the Wilderness of Shur (also called Etham). It is about thirty-seven miles from the Springs of Moses to Marah, which is generally considered to be 'Ain Hawwarah, a spring now completely buried in sand. Only a cluster of date palms and a damp spot nearby tell of its existence.<sup>13</sup> The water is still bitter. The spring Marah must have been much greater in Moses' time. (See notes on Ex. 15:23.)

If the Red Sea crossing place were farther north than the north end of the Gulf of Suez, it would have required more than three days travel to reach Marah, assuming that Israel could travel about twelve miles a day. John J. Davis admits this difficulty,<sup>14</sup> even though he places the crossing of the sea at the south end of the Bitter Lakes.

6. From *Marah* to *Elim* (Num. 33:9)

Elim is generally considered to be the *Wady Gharandel*. It is about seven miles from Marah. It is a small brook fed by springs of water better than that of Marah.<sup>15</sup> (See notes on Ex. 15:27.)

7. From *Elim* to the encampment by the *Red Sea* (Num. 33:10).

Mountains right up against the east shore of the Gulf of Suez separate the road south from Elim from the shore. (One of these mountains is now called *Jebel Hamman Far'aun*, the mountain of Pharaoh's Hot Bath.) But after going about twenty miles southeast from Elim, the shoreside mountains end and the roadway comes to the Red Sea shore, near modern Abu Zenima, near the mouth of the Wady et-Taiyibeh. It is

<sup>13</sup>Beno Rothenberg, *God's Wilderness* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1961), p. 94.

<sup>14</sup>*Moses and the Gods of Egypt* (Grand Rapids: Baker 1971), p. 117. We recommend Davis' book very highly.

<sup>15</sup>*Inter. Stand. Bib. Ency.*, Vol. V, p. 3066.

## ISRAEL'S ROUTE FROM EGYPT TO SINAI

a comparatively long march of eight hours from Elim to this sea-side encampment.

8. From the Red Sea shore to the *Wilderness of Sin* (Num. 33:11)

The exact location of the Wilderness of Sin is uncertain. About six miles south of the sea-side encampment a large sandy plain begins. It is five miles wide and thirteen miles long (on its north-south axis), with the Red Sea shore on its west. Modern Abu Rudeis is in this area. This place seems to correspond well to the scriptural location of the Wilderness of Sin, which was the place where Israel first received the manna. (In this dry place manna surely could not have grown on trees or bushes!) The Arabs call this plain El Murkha.

9. From the Wilderness of Sin to *Dophka* (Num. 33:12).

We think that Israel travelled south out of the Wilderness of Sin about ten miles, traveling alongside mountains near the coast. Then they turned east up into the valley of *Wady Feiran*. We think that *Dophka* was an oasis on the Wady Feiran (there are several).

The Wady Feiran is one of the largest and most famous wadies in Sinai. It is a little over eighty miles long, and starts in the region of Mt. Sinai, where it is called the Wadi Esh-Sheikh.<sup>16</sup> The Wady Esh-Sheikh is the upper (or northern) branch of the Wady Feiran.

E. H. Palmer in the *Desert of the Exodus* (1872)<sup>17</sup> wrote:

From this plain [the Wilderness of Sin] it was necessary for Israel to ascend through the rugged granite mountains to the elevated plain in front of Sinai; and there is only one pass through and up by which it is practicable for such a caravan to make the ascent. This is Wady Feiran, . . . This wady is wide and smooth, washed in winter by a stream of

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<sup>16</sup>Rothenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 135, 167.

<sup>17</sup>Quoted in McGarvey, *op. cit.*, p. 447.



water, and possessing several beautiful oases very pleasant to a traveler who is wearied with the almost uninterrupted barrenness of the desert. It leads to a narrow and short pass, by which is reached the plain immediately in front of [N.W. of] Mt. Sinai, called by the Arabs Er-Rahah. Instead of reaching this plain by this pass, the Israelites might have gone a little farther east [via Wady Esh-Sheikh] and compassed the mountain on the left of the pass; but this is the only divergence that they can have made from the route which we have followed.

The name *Dophka* is thought by some to mean "smeltery," and to refer therefore to nearby copper smelting operations. But this is not certain. Some authorities (ISBE; Gesenius' *Hebrew Lexicon*) say *Dophka* means "overdriving of flocks" or "drovers."

Many modern writers have felt that *Dophka* is to be identified with *Serabit el-Khadim*, a site northeast of the plain which we have identified as the Wilderness of Sin. At *Serabit el-Khadim* are the ruins of an Egyptian temple to Hathor, ancient turquoise mines, and numerous inscriptions, some in an extremely ancient Hebrew-like alphabet.<sup>18</sup>

We feel that it is extremely unlikely that *Serabit el-Khadim* is the site of *Dophka*. Why should the Israelites travel toward a center of Egyptian idolatry? Egyptian troops were stationed at *Serabit* at various times before and after Moses' time. The wady leading to *Serabit* is a more difficult passage than the Wady Feiran, and is a somewhat longer route to Sinai. Even if the name *Dophka* does mean smeltery (and indeed there are remains of smelting works around *Serabit*), there are other copper-mining locations in the wilderness of Sinai besides those near *Serabit*.

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<sup>18</sup>"*Serabit el-Khadim*," *Biblical World*, Chas. Pfeiffer, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), p. 517.

## ISRAEL'S ROUTE FROM EGYPT TO SINAI

### 10. From *Dophka* to *Alush* (Num. 33:13).

*Alush* has not been identified. *Inter. Stan. Bible Ency.* says that according to the rabbis *Alush* means *crowding*, thus indicating the difficulties of the march. Our map positions *Alush* at one oasis in the Wady Feiran.

As Israel journeyed up the Wady Feiran, they would certainly get "strung-out." The wadies are narrow and often hemmed in by steep-sided mountains. The very large number of Israelites would form a long column in these wadies, perhaps ten to fifteen miles long. This explains how the Amalekites could readily attack the "hindmost" part of Israel's column without the rest of people being available to help them readily (Deut. 25:17-18).

### 11. From *Alush* to *Rephidim* (Num. 33:14).

Rephidim is an oasis of date palms with a running stream,<sup>19</sup> located about eighteen miles from the plain Er-Rahah on the north side of Mt. Sinai. There seems to have been no water at this site in Moses' time, until he struck the rock (Ex. 17:1). Rephidim was the place where the Amalekites attacked Israel, and where Jethro was reunited with Moses.

### 12. From *Rephidim* to *Mt. Sinai* (Num. 33:15).

The Wady Esh-Sheikh goes around Rephidim on the north side, and then turns abruptly southward toward Mt. Sinai, and enters into the plain of Er-Rahah from the NE side of the plain. The Wadi Esh-Sheikh is the easiest approach to Er-Rahah, and is the one usually taken by baggage camels. We feel that it was probably Israel's approach route.

The plain of Er-Rahah is large enough to have accommodated the Israelite horde (1½ by 4 mi.). At the south side of this plain the impressive peak of *Ras Safsafeh* rises abruptly out of the level area, and towers 6739 feet

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<sup>19</sup>*International Stand. Bib. Ency.*, p. 3067.

above sea level. We feel that Ras Safsafeh is the peak which (as part of Mt. Sinai) was the mountain from which God spoke the ten commandments to Israel.

*Ras Safsafeh* is the northern summit of a steep-sided rocky ridge about four miles long, running generally NW to SE. On the southern tip of this ridge is its second summit, a peak called *Jebel Musa* (a name meaning Mt. of Moses), connected to Ras Safsafeh by a saddle. *Jebel Musa* is 7519 feet high. Christian tradition has generally identified Mt. Sinai with *Jebel Musa* as Mt. Sinai, although to us it seems that Ras Safsafeh is by far the more probable choice.

Narrow steep-sided valleys go along both the east and west sides of the ridge, which has Ras Safsafeh on its north end and *Jebel Musa* on the south. In the valley along its east side is the famous monastery of St. Katherine, named after a martyred Christian maiden of Alexandria who died in A.D. 307. At this monastery the famous Sinaitic manuscript of the Bible was found.

By the south end of this ridge is a small plain commonly called Wadi Sebaiyeh, or the Site of (Israel's) Encampment, having *Jebel Musa* on its north. To reach this southern plain Israel would have needed to skirt along through the narrow valleys east or west of the Mt. Sinai ridge. This south plain is neither as large as Er-Rahah on the north, nor is it as accessible. It only covers 145 acres, and is very rocky.<sup>20</sup> We doubt that it was the true site of Israel's encampment.

### III. DISTANCES IN ISRAEL'S JOURNEYS

(All distances approximate)

1. From Rameses (Qantir) to Succoth (Tell el Maskhuta) ..... 38 mi.

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<sup>20</sup>S. C. Bartlett, *From Egypt to Palestine* (New York: Harpers, 1879), pp. 270, 272.

## ISRAEL'S ROUTE FROM EGYPT TO SINAI

2. From Succoth, travelling along east side of Bitter Lakes, Bitter Lakes, to north end of Gulf of Suez ..... 55 mi.
3. North end of Gulf of Suez, across Red Sea, to Springs of Moses ..... 20 mi.
4. Springs of Moses to Marah ('Ain Hawwarah) ... 37 mi.
5. Marah to Elim (Wadi Gharandel) ..... 7 mi.
6. Elim to encampment by the sea (near Abu Zenima)..... 20 mi.
7. Encampment by the sea to the Wilderness of Sin (near Abu Rudeis) ..... 12 mi.
8. Wilderness of Sin, via Wadi Feiran and Wadi Sheikh, to Mt. Sinai ..... 85 mi.

Total: Approx.....275 mi.

These statistics reveal two interesting facts:

(1) The first part of Israel's journey, from Egypt to the crossing of the Red Sea, was a surprisingly large part of the total journey to Sinai, being about 113 miles of their 275 mile trip. This would have required ten or twelve days of travel. Many people have the impression that Pharaoh began to pursue Israel almost the next day after their departure. But the scripture nowhere states exactly how much time elapsed between Israel's departure and Pharaoh's pursuit. During that time the Egyptians embalmed and buried their firstborn (Num. 33:4). Surely a few days of mourning and shock followed these mass burials.

(2) Assuming that Israel's journey from Egypt to Sinai took approximately fifty days, they would need only to have averaged a bit more than five miles a day of travel to have covered the 275 miles in that time.

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Between the Bitter Lakes and the Red Sea, just south of the Bitter Lakes, lies an elevated area called the Heights of Chaloof. This rises for a short distance twenty feet or more above sea level. These heights are of the same geological character as Mt. Gineifah west of the Bitter Lakes. This geological feature makes it almost impossible for the Red Sea to have ever been joined to the Bitter Lakes. See S. C. Bartlett, *From Egypt to Palestine*, pp. 158-162.

## EXPLORING EXODUS

### INTRODUCTORY SECTION VII

#### RED SEA or REED SEA?

(Ex. 13:18; 15:4, 22)

What sea was it that the Israelites triumphantly crossed when they departed from Egypt? The name given in almost all English translations is *Red Sea*. The *Jerusalem Bible* (1966) calls it the *Sea of Reeds*. When we hear the words *Red Sea*, we at once think of that extension of the Indian Ocean lying between Arabia and east Africa, having a V-shaped northern tip, formed by the Gulfs of Suez and Akabah. We feel that THIS was the sea that the Israelites crossed, crossing it at the northern tip of the Gulf of Suez. See the preceding Introductory Section VI.

Older writers almost unanimously held this view. Modern writers have almost unanimously (but wrongly, it seems to us) taken another view. They assert that the sea which the Israelites crossed should not be called the Red Sea, but the SEA OF REEDS (or weeds). Furthermore, they affirm that this Sea of Reeds is not the Red Sea, but is another body of water somewhere between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, possibly the Bitter Lakes, or Lake Timsah, or Lake Balah (now disappeared since the digging of the Suez Canal), or Lake Menzaleh, or even Lake Sirbonis on the Mediterranean coast. There is no certainty or general agreement as to what body of water is referred to by the name Sea of Reeds.

We have no objection to the fact that the Hebrew words *Yam Suph* (usually translated *Red Sea*) actually mean *Sea of Reeds*, or Weeds. The word *suph* is translated *weeds* in Jonah 2:5, where it refers to seaweeds; and it is translated *flags* in Ex. 2:3, 5 and Isa. 19:6. (A *flag* is a water plant like a cattail.)

When the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek (about 275 B.C.), the translators rendered the Hebrew *Yam Suph* as *Eruthre Thalassa*, which is Greek for *Red Sea*. These translators did their work in Egypt, and would probably be familiar with Egypt's geography.

In classical Greek usage, the term *Red Sea* was applied to the

## RED SEA OR REED SEA?

entire Indian Ocean,<sup>1</sup> including what we call the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf, and the adjoining ocean areas. In the *Histories* by Herodotus (about 450 B.C.) we read that the Persian king "Cyrus on his way to Babylon came to the bank of the river Gyndes, a stream which . . . empties into the river Tigris. The Tigris, . . . discharges its waters into the *Erythraean* [Red] Sea."<sup>2</sup> This would refer to the Persian Gulf.

Why did the *Red Sea* come to be called by that name? No one really knows. Some have guessed that it is derived from the name *Edom*, which means red. The mountains of Edom that lie along part of the east side of the Red Sea have a reddish color in part. Classical writers say that the name came from that of Erythras, a king who ruled in western Asia Minor.<sup>3</sup> Others say it is derived from the red coral which lines its shores and covers the floor of the sea.

But the big question is this: Can the Hebrew *Yam Suph* actually refer to the sea we know as the Red Sea? We think it can and does, though many modern writers deny this. They argue that there are no reeds in the Red Sea, and that it cannot therefore be the Sea of Reeds. They affirm further that for Israel to have reached even the most northerly tip of the Gulf of Suez, they would have had to cross a long tract of desert to reach it. [It would be approximately 65 miles.] And that this would have been impossible for them to accomplish before the pursuing Egyptian chariots would have been upon them.<sup>4</sup> Also it is argued that one of the two bodies of water said in Egyptian writings to be near the city of Rameses (which was far north of the Red Sea) was called "Papyrus Lake." Papyrus in Egyptian was called *thuf*, a word similar to the Hebrew *suph*.

These arguments sound impressive, but we feel they have some weaknesses.

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<sup>1</sup>Liddell & Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* (abridged), Definition of *ERUTHROS*.

<sup>2</sup>I, 189. Translated by George Rawlinson. (London: Dent, 1964), Vol. I, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup>*The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 4 (New York: Abingdon, 1962), pp. 19-20.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

For example, we need not seek a shallow reedy lake as the place that corresponds to the name SEA OF REEDS. The word *reeds* also may be translated *WEEDS*, as in Jonah 2:5, where it refers to *seaweeds* in the Mediterranean Sea, not to cattails or swamp weeds. The Red Sea has seaweeds in it, like other seas. Because of this the name *Yam Suph* could refer to the Red Sea.

Furthermore, if we assume (as many modern writers do) that Israel travelled *northward* from Succoth (lying west of Lake Timsah) to the southern tip of Lake Menzaleh<sup>5</sup> (which is thought by many to be the Sea of Reeds), Israel would have been much closer to Egypt and far more exposed to the pursuing Egyptian chariots than they were in going by our proposed route. A journey from Succoth to Lake Menzaleh would be about fifty miles, a four-days' journey.

Yet further, the term *Sea of Reeds* (*Yam Suph*) is actually applied in several scriptures to the sea which we call the Red Sea. Thus in Numbers 21:4 it refers to a place on the north end of the Gulf of Akabah, near Elath and Ezion-Geber. In Numbers 33:10 there is a reference to an encampment on the shores of the *Yam Suph*, which almost certainly refers to a place on the shores of the Gulf of Suez. In I Kings 9:26 the term *Yam Suph* refers to the place where king Solomon had his fleet of ships at Ezion-Geber, which was on the north tip of the Red Sea Gulf of Akabah.

If the term *Yam Suph* means the Red Sea in these passages, why does it not refer to the same body of water in Ex. 13:18 and 15:4? Where is there any hint that the term refers to a different body of water in Ex. 15:4 than it refers to elsewhere?

Finally, we are told in Ex. 15:22 and Num. 33:8 that Israel travelled *three days'* journey from their place of crossing the sea to Marah. This is a distance of thirty-seven miles (assuming, as we do, that Marah is to be identified with 'Ain Hawwarah. This identification is widely accepted.<sup>6</sup>). If the Sea of Reeds were

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<sup>5</sup>G. E. Wright, *Biblical Archaeology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957), p. 61. *Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Broadman, 1969), p. 380.

<sup>6</sup>Wright, *Ibid.*, suggests on his map that this is the "probable" location of Marah.

## RED SEA OR REED SEA?

some body of water north of the tip of the Gulf of Suez, it would be too far north for the Israelite horde to have made the trip to Marah in three days. From Bitter Lakes to Marah is at least sixty miles. From Lake Timsah to Marah is over eighty miles. From Lake Menzaleh (where Wright locates the Sea of Reeds) it is almost 150 miles! Even the thirty-seven mile trip from the Springs of Moses (just east of Gulf of Suez tip) to Marah required the Israelites to travel twelve miles a day. This is about as far as a large group could travel each day.

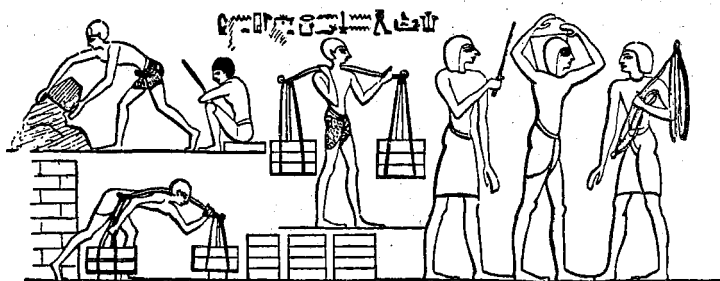
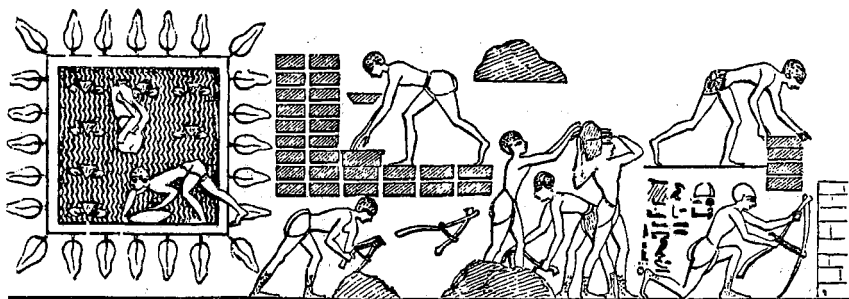
We have the uncomfortable feeling that the reason for locating the Sea of Reeds elsewhere than the Red Sea is the desire (deliberate or unconscious) to downgrade the great miracle of crossing the Red Sea into puny near-miracle of blowing a dry path across a shallow swamp area.



The Papyrus reed. The papyrus plant has an angular stem from 3 to 6 feet high, though occasionally it grows to a height of 14 feet. The basket for the baby Moses was made of papyrus stems.



## EXPLORING EXODUS



Egyptian Brickmakers and Brickmaking.

The drawing\* shown above was made from a wall painting on the tomb of Rekh-mire at Thebes, from the time of Thutmose III (probable pharaoh of the oppression), about 1450 B.C.

At the upper left two slaves fetch water from a pool surrounded by trees. The water-softened Nile clay is lifted with mattocks, and placed in baskets borne on workmen's shoulders. The man in the center top is pressing the mud into a wooden frame to form bricks. In the lower drawing three piles of bricks dry in the sun. The dry bricks are carried by slaves using poles over their shoulders. Two overseers with sticks urge the workers on. Part of the inscription quotes the overseer: "The rod is in my hand; be not idle." The Israelites were involved in work like this.

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\*From E. A. Wallis Budge. *The Dwellers on the Nile* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1888), p. 91.

# ONE HUNDRED FACTS ABOUT GOD

## INTRODUCTORY SECTION VIII

### ONE HUNDRED FACTS ABOUT GOD THAT ARE MADE KNOWN IN EXODUS

One of the great purposes for God's works that are recorded in the book of Exodus was that men might KNOW HIM. For us this is one of the great purposes of the book itself.

Ex. 6:7: "I will take you to me for a people, . . . and ye shall KNOW that I am Jehovah your God."

Ex. 7:5: "The Egyptians shall KNOW that I am Jehovah, when I stretch forth my hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them."

Many other verses in the book assert that it is God's purpose to make himself KNOWN to all men. Note Ex. 7:17; 8:10, 22; 9:14, 29; 10:2; 14:4, 18; 16:6, 12; 29:46; 31:13.

God is eternally the same. He changes not. "I, Jehovah, change not." (Malachi 3:6) If we learn the facts about God's nature as revealed in Exodus, we shall gain a broad understanding of God, for Exodus says very much about God.

In the following statements about God we list many of the qualities and works of God that are revealed in Exodus. Generally we have listed them in the order in which they are presented in the Biblical text.

1. God is a *personal* God, not an abstract force.
2. God knows our names. He knows us personally. (1:1-4)
3. God allows His children to suffer. (1:11, 13)
4. God rewards those who protect His people. (1:21)
5. God is the unseen controller of all history. (1:20, 21)
6. God directs the activities of people so that they may be present to do His will when necessity requires. (2:5)
7. God permits His servants to suffer rejection. (2:14; 5:2, 9, 21, 22)
8. God seems in no hurry, if judged by men's views of time. (2:23; Acts 7:30)
9. God hears His people's cries. (2:23, 24)
10. God remembers His covenants of old. (2:24)

## EXPLORING EXODUS

11. God sees and God knows. (2:25)
12. God is a miracle-worker. (3:2)
13. God *speaks* to men. (3:4; 25:22)
14. God is *holy*. His presence is holy and must be revered. (3:5; 20:12-15)
15. God is still the God of His people even after they are long dead. (3:6; Matt. 22:31, 32)
16. God is a *deliverer*. (3:8)
17. God *sends men* to accomplish His will. (3:10)
18. God is *with us*. (3:12)
19. God is the eternal I AM. (3:14)
20. God knows the outcome of events before they occur. (3:19-21; 8:2, 21)
21. God will not permit His will to be thwarted. (3:20)
22. God *makes spoil* of those who resist Him. (3:21)
23. God *desires faith* in His people. (4:5)
24. God becomes *angry* when His servants are unwilling to obey. (4:14)
25. God lets others share the glory of serving Him if those first chosen are hesitant. (4:14, 15)
26. God *smites* His servants to teach them full obedience. (4:24)
27. God wants His NAME to be known, and to be associated with His acts of deliverance. (6:7)
28. God *redeems* (rescues) His people. (6:6; 15:13)
29. God desires to take His people unto Him and be their God. (6:7)
30. God *pushes* and *pushes* to force an issue. (6:11)
31. God *hardens* the hearts of those who oppose Him. (7:3; 9:12; 10:20; 14:4)
32. God works great judgments upon opposers. (7:4)
33. God has *power* to overcome men's magic. (7:11, 12; 8:18)
34. God makes His works obvious and undeniable. (7:20; 8:19; 17:5, 6)
35. God *hears* His servant's *prayers*. (8:12, 31; 9:33)
36. God makes distinction between His people and others. (9:4, 7, 26)

# ONE HUNDRED FACTS ABOUT GOD

37. God permits some wicked men to live because He can show His power through them. (9:15, 16)
38. God gives repeated deliverances, even to those who have opposed Him. (10:18, 19)
39. God gives favor to His people in the sight of their enemies. (11:3)
40. God *gives* sinners *warning* of coming doom. (11:4, 5)
41. God saves His people by the *blood*. (12:6, 7, 13; 24:8)
42. God desires that His acts of deliverance be remembered by appropriate ceremonies. (12:14, 24; 20:11)
43. God's judgments on evil men are utter and total. (12:29)
44. God fulfills His promises. (12:33-36; 13:19)
45. God takes note of numbers and years. (12:37, 41)
46. God claims His redeemed ones as His. (13:2, 12; 34:19, 20)
47. God wants His deeds to be remembered. (13:14; 12:26, 27; 16:34)
48. God *directs* His people. (13:17; 15:13)
49. God gives light and guidance. (13:21, 22)
50. God does GREAT works. (14:31; 15:11)
51. God is our strength, song, and salvation. (15:2)
52. God is a man of war. (15:3; 17:16)
53. God is "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises." (15:11)
54. God *proves* (tests) His people. (15:25; 16:4; 20:20)
55. God is our healer. (15:26)
56. God hears our murmurings. (16:12)
57. God is our "banner" under whom we fight victoriously. (17:15)
58. God blots out even the remembrance of evil men. (17:14, 16)
59. God likes efficient government. (18:23)
60. God *deals* with men *through covenants*. (19:5; 24:8; 34:10)
61. God accepts His people upon the condition of *obedience*. (19:5, 6)
62. God shows His presence in clouds, lightning, etc. (19:16, 18)
63. God works in history. (20:2)
64. God is a *jealous* God. (20:5; 34:14)

## EXPLORING EXODUS

65. God heaps up punishments for many generations of sinners upon later generations that walk in the sins. (20:5)
66. God is a God of *lovingkindness*. (20:6)
67. God is *creator* of all. (20:11)
68. God retains final authority over life and death. (20:13; 21:12-17)
69. God is concerned about our hearts and their desires. He knows our hearts. (20:17)
70. God respects property rights. (21:33-36; 20:15)
71. God requires truth. (20:16; 22:11)
72. God cares about men's freedom. (21:2)
73. God protects the weak and afflicted. (22:22-27)
74. God is gracious. (22:27)
75. God *requires worship* from His people. (23:14-17)
76. God's appearance is glorious. (24:9, 10, 17)
77. God asks voluntary offerings from His people. (25:2; 35:5)
78. God desires to dwell among His people. (25:8)
79. God requires conformity to His directions. (25:9, 40; 26:30)
80. God gives detailed instructions about many things. (26:1ff)
81. God is associated with *light*. (27:20, 21)
82. God selects the men who perform His service. (28:1)
83. God desires glory and beauty. (28:2)
84. God is a revealer of secrets. (28:30)
85. God desires *modesty* in His servants. (28:42; 20:26)
86. God must be approached through sacrifices. (29:14, 18, 25)
87. God provides the material needs of His servants. (29:28; 16:4)
88. God *meets* with His people. (29:42, 43)
89. God does not forget our need of atonement (covering). (30:16)
90. God's ministers must minister in cleanliness. (30:19, 20)
91. God fills men with His Spirit for various services. (31:3-5)
92. God *sanctifies* us (makes us holy). (31:13)
93. God has wrath against idolatry. (32:10, 35)

ONE HUNDRED FACTS ABOUT GOD

94. God *repents* of "evil" threats when His servants pray. (32:14)
  95. God places distance between Himself and transgressors. (33:2, 5)
  96. God is *too glorious* for men to see and live. (33:20)
  97. God is merciful, gracious, and slow to anger. (34:6, 7)
  98. God will make all people to see His works. (34:10)
  99. God commands destruction of reprobate peoples. (34:11)
  100. God makes His presence obvious and dominant. (40:34, 38)
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THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**1** Now these are the names of the sons of Is-ra-el, who came into E-gypt (every man and his household came with Jacob): (2) Reu-ben, Sim-e-on, Le-vi, and Ju-dah, (3) Is-sa-char, Zebu-lun, and Ben-ja-min, (4) Dan and Naph-ta-li, Gad and Ash-er. (5) And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: and Joseph was in E-gypt already. (6) And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation. (7) And the children of Is-ra-el were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.

(8) Now there arose a new king over E-gypt, who knew not Joseph. (9) And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Is-ra-el are more and mightier than we: (10) come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out of the land. (11) Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pha-raoh store-cities, Pi-thom and Ra-am-ses. (12) But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And they were grieved because of the children of Is-ra-el. (13) And the E-gyp-tians made the children of Is-ra-el to serve the rigor: (14) and they made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field, all their service, wherein they made them serve with rigor.

(15) And the king of E-gypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of the one was Shiph-rah, and the name of the other Pu-ah: (16) and he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the birth-stool; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live. (17) But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of E-gypt commanded them, but saved the men-children alive. (18) And the king of E-gypt

called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men-children alive? (19) And the midwives said unto Pha-raoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the E-gyp-tian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwife come unto them. (20) And God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty. (21) And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them households. (22) And Pha-raoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.

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#### EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER ONE QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After reading the entire chapter, propose a one- or two-word topic for the entire chapter.
2. Who is the person referred to as *Israel* in 1:1?
3. Who came with every one of the children (sons) of Jacob? (1:1)
4. Who were the mothers of each of the men named in 1:2-4? Are the names grouped according to their mothers? (Compare Gen. 29:31—30:24; 35:16-18)
5. Propose some reason(s) for listing the names of the sons of Jacob here at the beginning of Exodus.
6. How many descendants of Jacob came into Egypt? (1:5)
7. What does the word *soul(s)* mean in 1:5?
8. Ex. 1:6, 8 suggests that considerable time elapsed in Egypt before the Israelites' situation changed. Can you obtain any information as to how much time? (Compare Gen. 15:13; 41:46; 50:22; Ex. 7:7; 12:40; Acts 7:23, 30.)
9. What promises did Israel's increase in population fulfill? (Gen. 12:2; 22:17; 25:4; 28:14; 46:3)
10. What is the name of the *land* referred to in 1:7? (Gen.



47:4; Ex. 9:26)

11. What change occurred in the government of Egypt? (1:9)
12. What disturbed the new king of Egypt? (1:9)
13. Exactly how numerous were the children of Israel? (1:9; 12:37; Numbers 1:46)
14. What did the king really mean when he said, "Let us *deal wisely* with them"? (1:10)
15. What two possible actions by the Israelites did the king seek to prevent? (1:10)
16. Why was the king, on the one hand, afraid of the number of the Israelites, and, at the same time, unwilling to let them leave Egypt? (1:10)
17. Who was set over the Israelites? Why? (1:11)
18. What two cities were built? What was the purpose (or use, or function) of these cities?
19. What was the effect of affliction on the Israelite population? (1:12)
20. What emotional effect upon the Egyptians was caused by Israel's multiplication? (1:12)
21. How severe was Israel's forced labor and service? (1:13-14)
22. What particular types of labor did the Israelites do? (1:14)
23. What is a midwife? (1:15)
24. What were the names of the two midwives? (1:15)
25. What instructions did the king give to the midwives?
26. Why kill the boys and save the daughters? (1:16)
27. What is the *stool* referred to in 1:16?
28. Why did the midwives not obey the king? (1:17)
29. What excuse did the midwives give for saving the boy babies? (1:19)
30. Was this excuse the real reason? (1:17, 19). Was their lie justifiable?
31. Did the midwives escape punishment from the king for their disobedience? (1:20)
32. Did God deal well with the midwives for lying, or for some other reason? (1:20)
33. How strong did the Israelites become? (1:20)
34. What does it mean by saying, "God made them (the

midwives) houses"? (1:21)

35. What cruel order did Pharaoh (king of Egypt) give? (1:22)

36. Who are the people referred to in 1:22 as "his people"?

### Exodus 1: TRANSITION!

1. From few to many; 1:1-7
2. From remembrance to rejection; 1:8
3. From harmony to hostility; 1:9-10
4. From freedom to slavery; 1:11-14
5. From peace to peril; 1:15-16
6. From bad to worse; 1:22

Life is filled with great transitions.  
God still rules in all conditions.

### Exodus 1: GOD KNOWS!

1. He knows our names; 1:1-5
2. He knows our journeys; 1:5
3. He knows our deaths; 1:6
4. He knows our enemies; 1:8-10
5. He knows our sufferings; 1:11-14
6. He knows our dangers; 1:15-22

### Bondage in Egypt/Bondage in Sin

- |                                                        |                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 1. Enslaving; (Ex. 1:11-12)                            | 1. Enslaving; (John 8:34)                     |
| 2. Painful; (Ex. 1:13-14)                              | 2. Painful; (Prov. 13:15)                     |
| 3. Pharaoh = leader                                    | 3. Satan = leader<br>(II Tim. 2:26)           |
| 4. Motivated by hatred;<br>(Ex. 1:8, 12)               | 4. Motivated by hatred;<br>(Rev. 12:12)       |
| 5. Death = sole prospect                               | 5. Death = sole prospect;<br>(Rom. 6:16)      |
| 6. Some viewed it as liberty!<br>(Ex. 16:3; Num. 11:5) | 6. Some view it as liberty!<br>(II Pet. 2:19) |

7. God could deliver  
(Ex. 3:7-8)

7. God can deliver  
(Col. 1:12-13)

### The Ways of Wickedness (Ex. 1:8-22)

1. Unthankful; 1:8
2. Unremembering; 1:8
3. Unprincipled; 1:10
4. Unfeeling; 1:13-14
5. Unrevealed; 1:16 (sneaky!)
6. Unconcealed; 1:22 (blatant!)
7. Unsuccessful; 1:12, 20

### Exodus 1: NEED FOR GOD'S MAN

1. Death of previous generation and leadership; 1:1-6
2. Multiplication of God's people; 1:7
3. Oppression of God's people; 1:8-14
4. Peril of God's people; 1:15-22

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### EXPLORING EXODUS: Notes on Chapter One

1. *What is the title of the book, and what does the title mean?*

The title *Exodus* is the title given in the Latin Bible (Vulgate). It is derived from the title in the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint, or LXX), *Exodos*, which means a "going out," or "departure." The word *exodos* actually is found in Ex. 19:1 of the LXX. As a title it would be more applicable to the first fifteen chapters of the book than to the whole book.

The Hebrew Bible simply titles the book by its opening words, *We-elleh shemoth*, meaning "and these are the names"; or, more simply, just *shemoth*, meaning "names."

2. *What is the significance of the first words ("Now these") in Exodus?*

In the Hebrew Bible the first words of Exodus are literally

"And these . . . ." These words indicate a close connection between Exodus and the Genesis story which precedes it. Genesis and Exodus are one continuous narrative, by one author. Indeed, the whole Torah is a continuous narrative. (*Torah* is a Hebrew word for *law*, or *instruction*; and it refers to the five books of Moses, Genesis through Deuteronomy.)

3. *How old was Jacob when he came into Egypt?*

He was 130 years old (Gen. 47:9). There is considerable sadness in seeing an old man leaving his home of many years. But, like Abraham and Isaac, Jacob viewed this life as a pilgrimage, and this world as a temporary residence (Heb. 11:9-10).

The Jewish *Midrash* (Interpretation) on Exodus says that though Jacob was an old man, the children came *with Jacob*, and not Jacob with his children.<sup>1</sup> He was not dependent on the children, but the children upon him. Such respect for parents is very befitting.

4. *Did ALL of Jacob's descendants come into Egypt with Jacob?*

The scripture says they did. See Ex. 1:1-5. In fact, the whole question would seem needless, if it was not for the fact that many modern critics argue that some of the descendants of Jacob remained in Canaan, and only part of them (especially the Joseph tribes and also Levi) went to Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

5. *Is there any significance in the order of the names of the sons of Jacob as given in 1:2-4?*

Probably not. The order of their names here is the same as in Gen. 35 (a list given at the close of Jacob's main life-story). It differs somewhat from the order of their births (See Gen. 30), and that given in Gen. 46. The lack of a consistent order for the names suggests that the order did not matter. The sons of Jacob's handmaids were accepted as fully as those of Rachel and Leah. Ancestry matters little;

<sup>1</sup>Amos W. Miller, *Understanding the Midrash* (New York: Jonathan David, 1965), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>See *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman, 1969), p. 322; Also Gabriel Hebert, *When Israel Came Out of Egypt* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1961), pp. 51-52, 63-64, 83-84.

faith is crucial.

6. *Why does Stephen say in Acts 7:14 that seventy-five souls came into Egypt, when Ex. 1:5 says seventy souls?*

Stephen quoted the Greek Old Testament, which reads "seventy-five souls" in Ex. 1:5.\* This is consistent with the LXX rendering of Gen. 46:27, which differs from the Hebrew text in three key expressions:

And the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in the land of Egypt, were *nine* (Heb. two) souls; all the souls of the house of Jacob *who came with Joseph* (italicized words omitted in Hebrew) were *seventy-five* souls. (Gen. 46:27, LXX)

Evidently the LXX counted as "sons" of Joseph some of his grandsons or other descendants, who are named in I Chron. 7:14, 20-21. Anyway, the LXX makes it clear how it arrived at the total of seventy-five. We do not know how or when this variant reading was first introduced, but it does not discredit the reliability of our common Hebrew text.

7. *Why mention the deaths of Joseph and his generation in 1:6?*

Possibly it is only to reveal the passage of considerable time. Joseph was thirty years of age when he stood before Pharaoh the first time (Gen. 41:46), and 110 at his death (Gen. 50:22).

Nonetheless, we are reminded by the verse that God notices the deaths of his children. If he notes the fall of a sparrow (Matt. 10:29), will he not notice our deaths?

A whole family died, even a big family! It is appointed unto all men once to die (Heb. 9:27).

8. *How did the population of Israel develop in Egypt?*

It increased tremendously. See Ex. 1:7. From a family of seventy men at the time Jacob came to Egypt, it multiplied until the men over twenty numbered 603,550 at their departure 430 years later (Ex. 12:37, 40; Num. 1:45-46).

This amazing growth fulfilled God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that he would make them become a "great nation." See Gen. 12:12; 15:5; 26:4; 28:14; 35:11.

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\* The LXX contradicts itself by giving the number as seventy in Deut. 10:22.

Israel's increase in population in Egypt was a matter of praise to God in later centuries. Psalm 105:12, 23-24. Children and large families are to be considered a blessing and not a curse.

There is a progression of ideas in the four verbs expressing Israel's multiplication: They were (1) "fruitful," (2) "brought forth," (3) "multiplied," and (4) "became very exceedingly strong."

9. *What is the "land" in which Israel dwelt? (See 1:7).*

It was the land of Goshen, probably the Wadi Tumilat, a broad valley stretching from the Nile to the line of the present Suez canal, near Lake Timsah. Israel did not fill the whole land of Egypt, only the land of Goshen (see Ex. 9:26).

10. *What change occurred in the government of Egypt? (See 1:8)*

A new king or ruling family (dynasty) came to power in Egypt. This new king had not known Joseph nor how Joseph saved Egypt. Possibly he did not want to know. Like Eli's sons, who knew the Lord Yahweh (Jehovah) by name, but still "knew not the Lord" (I Sam. 2:12), he may have wilfully disregarded Joseph and the true history about the past.

11. *Who was this new king over Egypt?*

This is a much disputed question. Evidently God did not consider his name significant enough to state it. We must not be as concerned over historical details, as we are over God's acts in history.

Some say the new king was Seti I (1317-1301 B.C.). Some say he was Rameses II (1301-1234). We think it was the new line or foreign rulers called the Hyksos who took over Egypt about 1670 B.C.

It is a common view that Joseph came into Egypt in the time of the Hyksos and was accepted into Pharaoh's court partly because the Hyksos kings were non-Egyptian Asiatics, racially similar to Joseph the Hebrew.

This idea contradicts the plain indications in the scripture that the king in Joseph's time really was an Egyptian. According to the Bible record the Egyptians in those times would not eat at the same table with Hebrews (Gen. 43:32).

Also during those times "Every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians" (Gen. 46:34). This presumably would not have been true under the Hyksos, who are thought to have had a shepherd (nomadic) ancestry.

Probably the expression "There arose a new king *over* Egypt" means that there arose a new king *against* Egypt.<sup>3</sup> If so, this would fit well with the Hyksos conquest at this time.

Because the Israelites and the Egyptians had been friends for a long time following Joseph's life, the Hyksos, who conquered Egypt, regarded them as potential allies of the Egyptians in the case any war arose, and therefore a threat to them.<sup>4</sup>

12. *How could the Israelites be "more and mightier" than the Egyptians?* (See Ex. 1:10)

This statement would more likely be true if it was spoken by the Hyksos conquerors than by native Egyptians. It is hard to see how the Israelites could outnumber the Egyptians. Israel had only about a half-million men eighty years later (Ex. 12:37), and these were loosely organized and poorly armed.

The Hyksos rulers, however, may well have been fewer in number than the Israelites. They took over Egypt by having superior weapons, such as the war horse and the composite bow. In a similar way centuries later, a few Spaniards under Cortez took over Mexico.

Note that the king expressed his fears about the Israelites to "his people," presumably to a limited circle of trusted associates.

13. *Why was the king so fearful Israel would escape from the land?* (Ex. 1:10)

He had learned that Israel was a foreign people in Egypt,

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<sup>3</sup>See John Rea, "The Time of the Oppression and the Exodus," *Grace Journal*, II, No. 1 (Winter 1961), pp. 7 ff; Quoted in John Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971), p. 45.

<sup>4</sup>For an excellent study on the Hyksos as the persecutors referred to in Ex. 1:8 ff, see Gleason Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1964), pp. 204-208.

and therefore a return to their own land was always a possibility, especially since Israel's homeland of Canaan was near to Egypt. The rulers absolutely had to have slave labor available, if there was to be food produced and buildings were to be built (see 1:14).

14. *What was the purpose of setting taskmasters over the Israelites?* (See 1:11)

The Bible says it was "to afflict them." This indicates a basic cruelty in the rulers of Egypt. Without doubt, they hoped also that the hard slave labor would hold down Israel's birth rate and weaken their ability and desire to resist. The bondage utterly failed to do either.

15. *What does the title Pharaoh mean?*

This title (it was not really a name) used by most Egyptian kings basically meant "great house," an expression used figuratively to suggest their greatness.

16. *How did Israel's bondage serve God's purposes?*

The bondage began to take the love of Egypt out of the people. Egypt had been their only home for nearly four hundred years. They had to be weaned from Egypt. They had become so thoroughly Egyptianized that most of them had forgotten the religious practices and traditions of their forefathers. The Jewish *Midrash* of Exodus says that the Hebrews had said among themselves, "Let us become like the Egyptians."<sup>5</sup> Even after Moses led Israel out of Egypt, periodically the Israelites wanted to return to Egypt (Num. 14:3; Ex. 16:3; 17:3). Egypt had always been a comfortable land, where abundant food and water were usually available.

Psalms 119:67 says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I have kept thy word." It is through affliction that God teaches his people what true values are.

The benefits to Israel that came through their Egyptian oppression were not forgotten. Later Israelites preserved the memory of those harsh experiences by reciting about them when they presented their first fruits unto the Lord (Deut. 26:6).

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<sup>5</sup>Amos W. Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 27.



17. *Where were the cities of Pithom and Raamses?*

The locations of these places are still in dispute. Most scholars locate Pithom at the hill-ruin of Tell er-Ratebah in eastern Goshen, or at the nearby site of Tell Maskhutah.<sup>6</sup> We have located it at Tell Ratebah on our map (p. 34A).

As for Raamses, there is now fairly general agreement that it is to be identified with the city in the N.E. delta area also called Avaris, or Tanis, or Zoan.<sup>7</sup> This location places Raamses quite far north to have been the starting point of Israel's journey, if we accept the traditional southward route of Israel's exodus across the Red Sea.

Others place Raamses at modern Qantir ("Bridge") on the eastern arm of the Nile Delta.<sup>8</sup> This would locate it nearer to the traditional route of Israel across the Red Sea. We have located Raamses at Qantir on our map.

18. *Does the city name Raamses (1:11) date the bondage of Israel in the time of king Rameses II?*

We think not. Rameses II, a great builder and warrior, ruled 1301-1234 B.C. If we accept rather literally the scriptural information about the date of the exodus given in I Kings 6:1 and Judges 11:26 (and we do take it rather literally), we must date the exodus about 1446 B.C., long before the time of Rameses II. See the Introductory section on The Date of the Exodus.

19. *How did the Egyptian rulers feel toward Israel when oppression did not decrease them? (See 1:12)*

They were grieved. They were "in dread" (Revised Stand. Vers.). The Hebrew word is very strong: it means "to have a disgust, to feel horror, or fear." Psalm 105:25 says that the Egyptians actually came to *hate* God's people.

20. *Are the "Egyptians" of 1:13 the same people as the oppressors of 1:8ff.?*

<sup>6</sup>Martin Noth, *Exodus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), p. 22; *New Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), p. 1001.

<sup>7</sup>Merrill C. Tenney, gen. ed., *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, 1964), p. 702.

<sup>8</sup>R. Alan Cole, *Exodus* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity, 1973), p. 54.

Probably not. Ex. 1:8-12 spoke of a "new king" over Egypt and of "his people." We have suggested that these oppressors were probably the Hyksos rulers (approx. 1670-1570 B.C.)<sup>9</sup> Beginning in 1:13 the text plainly says that the *Egyptians* oppressed them. Probably 1:13ff. refers to the Egyptian princes who drove out the Hyksos about 1570 B.C., and started the powerful XVIII dynasty in Egypt, the New Kingdom. If so, these Egyptian rulers continued the oppressions upon the Israelites that had been going on under the Hyksos. It seems obvious to us that Exodus Ch. 1 deals with the passage of considerable time, all the way from Jacob's coming to Egypt, to the time near Moses' birth, a period of over 300 years.

21. *How severe was Israel's bondage?*

It was extremely severe (1:14). Psalm 81:6 praises God for removing the burden from Israel's shoulder, and delivering his hands from the pots, or baskets. This refers to the vessels used in making mud bricks. Deut. 4:20 describes the Israelites' experience as an "iron furnace." Exodus 5:7-8 indicates that specific quotas of bricks had to be made each day, but that at the first the materials were all supplied.

Making bricks involved carrying water; digging earth; mixing earth, water, and straw; filling moulds with the mud; removing dried bricks from the mould; and transporting bricks by unaided manpower.

Israel's bondage is an illustration of the bondage of sin. "The way of transgressors is hard." (Prov. 13:15)

22. *Why did the king of Egypt enlist the help of the midwives?* (See Ex. 1:15-16.)

He sought their help because his previous scheme to suppress Israel by slave labor had failed. So he asked the midwives to kill male babies whenever they assisted a Hebrew woman in giving birth. It would not be too difficult for the midwife to make the death of the baby look accidental.

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<sup>9</sup>Dates from Siegfried J. Schwantes, *A Short History of the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965), p. 8.

Using the midwives concealed the king as the murderer.

23. *Were the midwives Hebrews or Egyptians?*

Commentators differ on whether the midwives were Hebrews or Egyptian women who served as midwives to the Hebrews. It is hard to imagine that the king would have expected the Hebrew women to slay the children of their own people. Nonetheless, the midwives had names of Semitic character (Hebrew-like); and they feared God, like good Hebrews. *Shiphrah* means "Beauty" and *Puah* means "splendor."<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps these women were part of the "mixed multitude" (Ex. 12:38) that came out of Egypt with the Israelites. We know that immigrants of various Semitic (Shem-ite) tribes had come into Egypt throughout its history. In fact, the Hyksos had been such people.

24. *Were there only two midwives for the Hebrews?*

Only two are named (Ex. 1:15). These would not seem to be enough, since there were probably nearly half a million Hebrew women, and the birth rate was quite high. Maybe *Shiphrah* and *Puah* were heads of the midwives guild (union), and had other women working under them. Maybe Pharaoh did not contact all the midwives, just these two. He was desperate.

The work of the midwives is partly indicated in Ex. 1:16. In birth the women often crouched down upon a pair of bricks or stones, or upon a birth stool built in a pattern of two stones.<sup>11</sup> The "birth-stool" of Ex. 1:16 literally means "two stones." After delivery, the midwives cut the infant's umbilical cord, washed the baby, salted and swaddled the body (Ezek. 16:4).

25. *Why save the girls (1:16)?*

Because the women did (and still do!) much of the hard labor, labor in fields and homes, spinning, needle work, cooking. Also girls would be saved for future harems, for

<sup>10</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>11</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

the Egyptians were steeped in immorality. See Gen. 12: 11-12. Also the boys might become soldiers of guerillas.

26. *What caused the midwives to spare the babies?* (See 1:17.)

They feared God more than they feared men. See Prov. 16:6. The expression *feared God* is used several times of feelings and actions of non-Jews, which humanized their actions even when their national or personal interests were at stake. See Gen. 42:18; 20:11. The opposite behavior is to "fear not God"<sup>12</sup> (Deut. 25:18).

We wonder where these midwives learned this fear of God. We really do not know. Perhaps from some Godly Hebrews. Some knowledge of God has pervaded the entire human race since creation. See Gen. 14:18; Ex. 2:16.

27. *Is it right to disobey civil authorities, as the midwives did?*

On those rare occasions when civil authorities issue orders in clear contradiction to God's words, it is better to obey God than men. See Acts 5:29; Daniel 3:16-18.

28. *Should the midwives have lied about why they spared the boys?*

See Ex. 1:17-18. Probably not. God probably would have saved them without their lying, as he saved Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who boldly stated the truth about their intentions (Dan. 3:13-18).

It might appear from Ex. 1:20 that God rewarded the midwives for lying. However, we feel that he rewarded them for sparing the male children rather than for their untruths.

We must never forget that the Bible accurately records many words and deeds that it does not necessarily approve. Even the Bible's heroes, like Abraham, David, Moses, and Simon Peter have their transgressions glaringly recorded in the holy book. We can be thankful that God has always dealt with people on the basis of grace, rather than solely on the basis of what they justly deserve. Were it not so, we would all be doomed.

29. *Were the Israelite women actually delivering their babies*

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<sup>12</sup>J. H. Hertz, ed., *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1969), p. 208.

*very quickly?*

We are not plainly told whether this was a fact or an excuse by the midwives. We do not know that quick easy delivery of babies was a common physical ability of Hebrew women. Certainly Rachel had a hard delivery (Gen. 35:16-18; Compare I Sam. 4:19-20).

30. *What reward did God give to the midwives (1:21)?*

He made for them houses, or households. They married Israelites and raised families. In some periods of history children have been looked upon as a curse, but they are actually one of God's greatest favors. To die childless was to a Hebrew one of God's direst punishments (Lev. 20:20; Jer. 22:30).

When we consider things like abortion, we should consider the high value God placed upon saving children's lives and having households, as related in Exodus chap. 1.

31. *What is revealed about the character of the Egyptian people by Pharaoh's command to "his people"? (See 1:22)*

The fact that Pharaoh could enlist the cooperation of his people in the work of throwing all boy babies into the river shows that very many of the Egyptians were as bad as their king.

At first Pharaoh had been secret and subtle in his murder attempts on the male Israelite babies. Now he becomes open, blatant, and God-defying. If anyone should feel sympathy for Pharaoh because God later hardened his heart during the ten plagues, he may well recall that Pharaoh had tried both secretly and openly to slaughter the innocent. If it be objected that it was a different Pharaoh whose heart was hardened, we reply that the same merciless disposition existed in both pharaohs.

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The Text of EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**2** And there went a man of the house of Le-vi, and took to wife a daughter of Le-vi. (2) And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. (3) And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch; and she put the child therein, and laid it in the flags by the river's brink. (4) And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him. (5) And the daughter of Pha-raoh came down to bathe at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river-side; and she saw the ark among the flags, and sent her handmaid to fetch it. (6) And she opened it, and saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children. (7) Then said his sister to Pha-raoh's daughter, Shall I go and call thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? (8) And Pha-raoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maiden went and called the child's mother. (9) And Pha-raoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it. (10) And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pha-raoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Mo-ses, and said, Because I drew him out of the water.

(11) And it came to pass in those days, when Mo-ses was grown up, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he saw an E-gyp-tian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren. (12) And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he smote the E-gyp-tian, and hid him in the sand. (13) And he went out the second day, and, behold, two men of the Hebrews were striving together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? (14) And he said, who made thee a prince and a judge over us? thinkest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the E-gyp-tian? And Mo-ses feared, and said, Surely the thing is known. (15) Now

when Pha-raoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Mo-ses. But Mo-ses fled from the face of Pha-raoh, and dwelt in the land of Mid-i-an: and sat down by a well.

(16) Now the priest of Mid-i-an had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. (17) And the shepherds came and drove them away; but Mo-ses stood up and helped them, and water their flock. (18) And when they came to Reu-el their father, he said, How is it that yea re come so soon to-day? (19) And they said, An E-gyp-tian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and moreover he drew water for us, and watered the flock. (20) And he said unto his daughters, And where is he? why is it that ye have left the man? call him, that he may eat bread. (21) And Mo-ses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Mo-ses Zip-porah his daughter. (22) And she bare a son, and he called his name Ger-shom; for he said, I have seen a sojourner in a foreign land.

And it came to pass in the course of those many days, that the king of E-gypt died: and the children of Is-ra-el sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. (24) And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with I-saac, and with Jacob. (25) And God saw the children of Is-ra-el, and God took knowledge *of them*.

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#### EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWO QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. Of what tribe were Moses' parents? (2:1)
2. What were the names of Moses' father and mother? (6:20)
3. Did Moses' mother hide her baby only because he was a goodly child? (Ex. 2:2. Compare Hebrews 11:23; Acts 7:20)
4. How long was Moses hidden at home? (2:2)
5. Where was the baby Moses placed? (2:3)
6. How was the "ark" made watertight? (2:3)
7. Who watched over the babe in the basket? (Ex. 2:4; Num. 26:59)

8. Who saw the ark among the flags? (2:5)
9. Who actually fetched the ark? (2:5)
10. What did the baby do when the ark was opened? (2:6)
11. What was the reaction of Pharaoh's daughter when she saw the child? (2:6)
12. What did the baby's sister offer to get for Pharaoh's daughter? (2:7)
13. How could Exodus 2:7-8 illustrate Romans 8:28?
14. Where did Moses' mother bring the boy after she raised him past infancy? (2:10)
15. Who called his name *Moses*? (2:10)
16. Why was his name called *Moses*? What does that name mean? (2:10)
17. How old was Moses when he went unto his brethren? (2:11; Acts 7:23)
18. What did Moses look upon when he went out unto his brethren: (2:11)
19. What did Moses see that grieved him? (2:11)
20. Was slaying the Egyptian necessary? (2:12)
21. What did Moses suppose that his Hebrew brethren would understand when he killed the Egyptian? (Acts 7:24-25)
22. What was done with the Egyptian's body? (2:12)
23. When two Hebrews fought, was just one at fault, or were both at fault? (2:13)
24. How quickly had the Egyptian's death become known? By what means had it become known? (2:14)
25. How did Pharaoh react to the news of the Egyptian's death? (2:15)
26. To what land did Moses flee? Where is this land? (2:15)
27. Where did Moses sit down in this land? (2:15)
28. How many daughters did the priest of Midian have? (2:16)
29. What was the name of the priest of Midian? (2:18; 3:1)
30. What was the labor of the priest's daughters? (2:17)
31. How did Moses help the priest's daughters? (2:17)
32. What surprised the priest of Midian about his daughters' return? (2:18)
33. Why did the daughters refer to Moses as an "Egyptian"?



(2:19)

34. Who drew the water from the well? (2:16, 19)
35. What invitation was extended to Moses? (2:20)
36. What was Moses content to do? (2:21)
37. What change in Moses' manner of life took place when he settled in Midian? (Compare Ex. 3:1 and Acts 7:22)
38. Who became Moses' wife? (2:21)
39. What was the name of Moses' son? (2:22)
40. What does the name of the son of Moses mean? (2:22)
41. Who was Moses' second son? What does his name mean? (Ex. 18:2-4)
42. Was it a long time or a short time before the king who sought Moses' life died? (2:23)
43. Did the death of the king of Egypt ease Israel's bondage? (2:23)
44. What sound effects came from the children of Israel in Egypt? Why? (2:23-24)
45. Did Israel's crying have any effect? (2:23-24)
46. What did God remember? (2:24)
47. What connection is there between Israel's groaning and God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? (Ex. 2:24; Compare Gen. 15:13-14)
48. Tell four things God did when Israel cried and groaned. (2:24-25).

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### Exodus 2: THE MAKING OF GOD'S MAN

Things needed in the making of God's man:

1. God-fearing parents; 2:1-2
2. Divine direction and providence; 2:3-9
3. Training; Acts 7:22
4. Personal decision; 2:11; Heb. 11:24
5. Courage to act; 2:11-13, 17
6. God's chastening; 2:14-15, 21-22
7. Patient endurance; Heb. 11:27; Ex. 18:4

Exodus 2: MOSES' DECISION IN EGYPT

I. *He refused . . .*

1. To be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter (Heb. 11:24).
2. To enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Heb. 11:25).
3. To cherish the treasures of Egypt (Heb. 11:26).

II. *He decided . . .*

1. To stand with Israel, the people of God (Heb. 11:25).
2. To deliver his people (Acts 7:24).
3. To suffer ill treatment.
4. To share the reproach of the Messiah (Christ) (Heb. 11:26).

EXPLORING EXODUS: Notes on Chapter Two

1. *Who were Moses' parents?*

His father was Amram, a man of the house (or tribe) of Levi. He was a grandson or later descendant of Levi. The genealogy in Ex. 6:16-20 almost certainly has some names omitted. (See notes on Ex. 6:16-20.) It appears from Ex. 2:1 that Amram himself went out and took a wife of his own choosing, a somewhat unusual act in a time when fathers usually arranged marriages for children.

Moses' mother was Jochebed, the daughter of Levi (possibly a first generation descendant of Levi, and maybe his only daughter). She was born to Levi in Egypt (Numbers 26:59). She would have been Amram's aunt, but was not necessarily older than he.

2. *Was Moses the firstborn son in his family?*

No. He had a brother, Aaron, three years older than he (Ex. 7:7). Also he had a sister, Miriam (= Mary), several years older yet. Some interpreters have proposed that since Miriam is called the "sister of Aaron" in Ex. 15:20, that perhaps she and Aaron were children of Amram by another wife. But Numbers 26:59 says plainly that Jochebed bore all three children.

3. *What was noticeable in the appearance of the infant Moses?*

He was incredibly beautiful. The Hebrew Bible says he was a "good" (*tov*) or "goodly" child. Acts 7:20 says he was "exceeding fair" (literally "fair to God," or "fair like God"). "The very beauty of the child seemed to be a particular token of divine approval, and a sign that God had some special design concerning him."<sup>1</sup>

This statement about his beauty does not really suggest that the parents would have been less willing to save his life if he had been an ordinary baby.

4. *Why was the baby Moses hidden?*

Because of the king's commandment to slay all baby boys. But his parents (both of them!) were not afraid of the king's commandment, and hid him for three months (Heb. 10:23).

5. *Why could not the parents continue to hide the baby?*

Any parents of a normal strong-lunged, three-months-old baby know why such a one would be hard to hide. (The clothesline would betray you!)

The Jewish *Midrash* (Interpretation) of Exodus says that the Egyptians would go from house to house where they suspected a Hebrew child might have been born. This is possibly true.

Later Jewish tradition preserved or invented many traditions about Moses' infancy and youth. We read them in Josephus, the *Midrash*, and other Jewish sources. They are often very interesting. In the same way in later centuries Roman Catholic traditions about the infant Jesus and his mother Mary were brought forth in addition to the simple brief Biblical stories about Jesus' childhood.

6. *How was Moses hidden "by faith"?* (Hebrews 11:23).

Since "faith cometh by hearing," maybe God had given some revelation to the parents about the future of the child and what they should do. Josephus, the Jewish historian, says that Amram foretold how Moses would deliver Israel, while his wife was still expecting.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. I (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), p. 427.

<sup>2</sup>*Antiquities*, II, 9, 3.

Such traditions are unverifiable. The faith of Moses' parents may have simply been based only on their knowledge of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their seed (descendants). This knowledge could have been learned from their parents or grandparents. They had faith in what had been told to them, and dared to risk their safety because of this faith.

7. *How important was the child Moses?*

No words can tell how important he was. Through this child God was preparing the emancipation of Israel at the very time when Pharaoh was planning their extermination! This Moses would become the greatest personage of history prior to Jesus.

How important the birth of any child may be! No one could have foreseen Moses' influence. What if Moses or some other child destined for greatness had been murderously aborted by his mother?

8. *What preparations were made for placing Moses upon the water? (2:3-4)*

His mother took an ark of bulrushes, a basket or chest made of papyrus.<sup>3</sup> (The scripture does not say that she *made* it.) The Hebrew word translated ark (*tebah*) is used in the scripture only in reference to Moses' basket and Noah's ark. Perhaps that is significant, since both were means of deliverance, and possibly symbols of our deliverance.

Moses' mother coated the ark with slime (bitumen, or asphalt) and pitch (tar), making it watertight. She put the child in the basket, and placed it among the flags, or reeds,<sup>4</sup> by the Nile river (probably one of the arms of the eastern Nile delta).

All of these acts seem deliberately and calmly done. Surely

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<sup>3</sup>Papyrus was the plant whose stems could be made into paper. It grew in water or swamps and attained a height of 10-15 feet. Boats were sometimes made of it (Isaiah 18:2).

<sup>4</sup>The word for *reeds* in 2:3 is *suph*, the same term used to describe the Reed Sea, or Red Sea, in Ex. 13:18. This, however, does not prove that there were reeds growing in the Red Sea. The term *suph* also refers to seaweeds. Note its use in Jonah 2:5.

Moses' mother knew what time and place that Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe at the river. Placing the sister (Miriam) at a distance from the basket to observe suggests that they expected someone to come. We imagine that a spot used for royal bathing would be off limits to the general public.

9. *Where did Moses' mother stay while her babe was in the river?*

Apparently she went home, leaving her child in the care of Miriam and of God (Ex. 2:4, 8). Her confidence in both was beautiful.

10. *Who was the daughter of Pharaoh who found Moses?*

We really do not know. The princess who later became queen Hatshepsut was probably then a young woman; but this does not prove that she was the daughter of Pharaoh referred to in the Bible. We favor the idea that she was the one, but we do not know. R. K. Harrison suggests that the woman was only one of the daughters in one of the numerous royal harems scattered about Egypt.<sup>5</sup>

11. *Why should the daughter of Pharaoh go to the river to bathe?*

Probably this was a religious ceremonial washing of some kind. The Nile river was the lifestream of Egypt. The ancient Egyptians regarded the river as worthy of divine honors. They wrote hymns to it.<sup>6</sup> They felt that its waters imparted fruitfulness and long life. Note that Pharaoh made frequent trips out to the water (Ex. 7:17; 8:20).

12. *Why did Pharaoh's daughter have compassion on the babe?* (Ex. 2:6)

Three reasons may be suggested: (1) natural female tenderness (which is a beautiful, needed gift from God!); (2) religious teaching among the Egyptians which required tenderness toward the suckling infant;<sup>7</sup> (3) the providential

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<sup>5</sup>Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 575.

<sup>6</sup>"Hymn to the Nile," translated by John A. Wilson, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (hereafter referred to as ANET), edited by James B. Pritchard (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U. Press, 1955), pp. 372, 373.

<sup>7</sup>F. C. Cook, ed., *The Bible Commentary*, Exodus-Ruth, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1964), p. 9.

control of God.

13. *What care was given to the infant Moses by his mother after she got him back?*

Every possible care. He received physical care. The term "nurse" in 2:7, 9 means to "suckle." Both Josephus<sup>8</sup> and the Jewish *Midrash*<sup>9</sup> say that the infant Moses rejected the breasts of Egyptian women before being turned back to his mother. This seems like a superstitious yarn.

But we can be completely sure that the child Moses grew up with spiritual care also, hearing songs and words about God and his people Israel. As far as we know the only training Moses could have received about God was that which he received at home as a very young child. But the earliest impressions upon a child often stick with him all his life. This certainly proved true in the case of Moses.

A wise teacher was asked, "When should a child's education begin?" He replied, "In the life of his great-grandmother." Observe the effects of Eunice and Lois upon Timothy (II Tim. 1:5).

Observe how the faith of Moses' mother was rewarded. Previously she cared for Moses at great peril; now under the protection of Pharaoh's daughter. Previously she cared for him at her own expense; now she gets royal wages for doing it.

Observe also how important the women were in the life of Moses. His mother, his sister, Pharaoh's daughter—all played vital roles in his career. All honor to the wonderful women of all ages who fear the Lord! Moses' wise mother knew what some "emancipated" women of our times do not know, namely that service at home to her family will have more powerful influence on the world than competing with men for authority. Who had a more lasting powerful influence on the world, the Egyptian queen Hatshepsut or Moses' mother?

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<sup>8</sup>*Antiquities*, II, ix, 5.

<sup>9</sup>Amos W. Miller, *Understanding the Midrash* (New York: Jonathan David, 1965), pp. 56-57.

14. *What was Moses' youth in Egypt like?*

At an unspecified age (3-5?) Moses' mother turned him over to Pharaoh's daughter, who nourished him for her own son (Acts 7:21). He was trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22). This would include languages, such as Egyptian hieroglyphic, Babylonian cuneiform,<sup>10</sup> and possibly the early Semitic alphabetic writing, such as was then in use down in the Sinaitic peninsula at Serabit El Khadim.<sup>11</sup> The Egyptians were also skillful in architecture, astronomy, and medicine.

Moses became "mighty in word and deed" as a young man (Acts 7:22). Josephus<sup>12</sup> tells of Moses' leading a victorious war against the Ethiopians, and consummating marriage with an Ethiopian princess. Could she have been the Cushite woman of Numbers 12:1? We can neither accept nor reject this information with complete certainty.

15. *Who gave Moses his name? Why? (Ex. 2:10)*

Pharaoh's daughter gave him his name. In Egyptian his name means "son of" (the water). The *-mose* in Moses is found in Egyptian names such as Ahmose, Thutmose, etc.<sup>13</sup>

In Hebrew, Moses' name is *Moshe*, derived from the verb *masha*, meaning "to draw out." It is remarkable that Moses' name would have meanings that related to his life in both the Egyptian and Hebrew languages.

16. *What great decision did Moses make in Egypt? (Ex. 2:11)*

<sup>10</sup>The so-called Amarna letters, written from petty kings in Canaan and Syria to Egyptian kings Amenhotep III (1413-1377) and Amenhotep IV (1377-1358), were written in Babylonian cuneiform writing. Apparently it was the international language of government and business at that time. See "Amarna Letters," in *Biblical World*, Chas. Pfeiffer, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), p. 36.

<sup>11</sup>Serabit el Khadim was a site in western Sinai where there were turquoise mines and a temple and a shrine to the Egyptian goddess Hathor. On these ruins, dated about 1500 B.C., are inscriptions in a very ancient alphabetic writing related to Hebrew. See Sir Charles Marston, *The Bible is True* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoods, 1937), p. 191; "Serabit el Khadim" in *Biblical World*, Chas. Pfeiffer, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), p. 191.

<sup>12</sup>*Antiquities*, II, x, 1-2.

<sup>13</sup>Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1964), p. 211.

Moses chose to stand with his people, the Hebrews. Heb. 11:24 says that by faith he REFUSED to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. The very fact that he *refused* implies that some offer was made to him.<sup>14</sup> Moses' decision involved a complete severance from Egypt.

He made the decision when he was grown, at age forty (Acts 7:22). The decision may never have been publicly declared in the palace in Egypt, but Moses' deeds soon made clear whose side he was on.

Heb. 11:26 says that Moses chose to share the "reproach of Christ" (the Messiah). This reveals to us that Moses had some knowledge of the Messianic hope in Israel, a fact that we would not have learned from the book of Exodus alone.

17. *How did Moses demonstrate his decision?*

He "went out unto his brethren" (2:11) and "looked upon their burdens," supposing that his brothers (the Hebrews) would understand that God was by his hand giving them deliverance (Acts 7:25).

Observe that Moses "went out" to his brethren. He had not up till then lived among his fellow countrymen, and had not shared their hard lot.

Moses had to learn that God would give Israel deliverance by HIS own hand, rather than by Moses' hand. This lesson required forty years of sheep-herding in humiliation.

We must not, however, find fault with Moses' impulsiveness. At least he tried to do *something*. Simon Peter was also impulsive, and in an act of questionable violence he cut off the ear of the high priest's servant (Mark 14:47). God used both Peter and Moses to do great things. Their decisiveness showed their potential for leadership, once they were properly disciplined. God does not get much service from those who know all the right things to do, but do not do anything.

18. *Was Moses' fearful when he broke with Egypt?*

No. "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king" (Heb. 11:27). This refers to Moses' leaving

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<sup>14</sup>Arthur W. Pink, *Gleanings in Exodus* (Chicago: Moody, n.d.), p. 19.



Pharaoh's house, not to his flight to Midian, for then he feared (Ex. 2:14).<sup>15</sup>

The "king" from whom Moses fled was probably the great Thutmose III (1502-1448 B.C.), who made seventeen military campaigns into Palestine and Syria, including a famous frontal attack on the city of Megiddo through a narrow mountain pass.<sup>16</sup> Thutmose III was just at this time (about 1486 B.C.) coming to full power, having been a rival to Hatshepsut for many years. (Hatshepsut was both his mother-in-law and step-mother!)

19. *Why did Moses kill the Egyptian? (2:12)*

The Egyptian (probably one of the taskmasters) was smiting (beating) one of the Hebrews. The verb *smite* (*nakah*) in Ex. 2:11 is the same verb used in 2:12 to tell how Moses "slew" (smote, struck down) the Egyptian. This hints that the Egyptian was beating, or nearly beating, the Hebrew to death.

It is easy to question Moses' act. Why did he do it only when he saw no one was looking? Could he not have ordered the Egyptian to leave the Hebrew alone, since Moses was a prince? But such questions can never diminish the greatness of Moses.

20. *When two Hebrews fought, were both at fault? (2:13)*

No. One of them was bullying the other, then probably using the resistance of his victim as an excuse to fight him more. How true this is to human psychology! It is not always true that it takes two to make a fight. One who is oppressed by others may be equally oppressive himself if given an opportunity. Only the death of Christ and his love dwelling in us can reconcile men to God and to one another (Col. 1:21).

21. *How had Moses' deed become known?*

The slaying of the Egyptian could only have been made known by the Israelite whom Moses had saved the day

<sup>15</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, *op cit.*, 432.

<sup>16</sup>ANET, 234-237.

before. Imagine how fast and far the gossip grape-vine carried this news!

22. *Did Moses seek to become a prince and a judge over the Hebrews?* (2:14)

Not really. He made no threatening gestures toward the Israelites striving together. He merely asked the one man, "Why are you striking your companion?" The wrong-doer's reply to Moses resembles the words used by the Sodomites against Lot (Gen. 19:9).

23. *What does Moses' FEAR suggest to us?* (2:14)

It suggests the very human quality in an extraordinary man. Moses is not so different from us that we cannot identify with him.

It also suggests the truthfulness of the story in Exodus. A fictionalized narrative glorifying Moses might omit such a fact.

24. *Where was the land of Midian to which Moses fled?* (2:15)

Moses fled to an area in the southeast part of the Sinai peninsula, west of the Gulf of Akabah. The Midianites mainly lived east of the Gulf of Akabah; but some lived on the west side. It was there where Moses fled, going perhaps 250 miles from Egypt.

Two facts confirm the view that the land of Midian where Moses fled was west of the Gulf of Akabah: (1) In that area Moses later rejoined his Midianite father-in-law Jethro (Ex. 18:1, 5); (2) also Moses was herding sheep for Jethro near Mt. Horeb (Sinai), which is certainly west of the Gulf of Akabah. Sheep could hardly have been driven from the area east of the Gulf all the way to Sinai. The distance is too great and the terrain is too rugged and barren.

25. *Who were the Midianites?*

The Midianites were descendants of Abraham through his wife Keturah (Gen. 25:2, 4). They were thus remotely related to the Israelites.

R. Alan Cole comments that since later Israelites were bitter foes of the Midianites (Num. 25:17-18; Judges 6), it is unthinkable that the story of the Midianite sojourn of

Moses would have been invented by a later Israelite author.<sup>17</sup> This is true; and it is a significant statement, since many Bible critics hold that Exodus was written by several authors living in the tenth or fifth centuries before Christ (long after Moses).

26. *What were the three main periods in Moses' life?*

THREE 40-YEAR PERIODS IN MOSES' LIFE

1. In Egypt, as a prince.
2. In Midian, as a shepherd.
3. In the wilderness (desert), as leader of Israel.

27. *Why did Moses sit down at a well? (2:15)*

Literally, He sat down by *the* well, probably the only one in the vicinity. Perhaps he sat down there because he was weary or thirsty, or because he hoped to meet someone. Wells were common meeting places in any area. Jacob met Rachel at a well (Gen. 29:10; Compare Gen. 24:11); and Christ met the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4).

28. *What is indicated about the Midianites' religion?*

The Midianites knew God by the name *El* (Pl. *elohim*), a name which means "mighty one." This is indicated by the name *Reuel* (2:18), which means friend of God, or perhaps shepherd of God.

The Midianites had a priest (2:16). However, the extent of his knowledge of God seems very limited (Ex. 18:8-11). He did offer burnt-offerings and sacrifices (Ex. 18:12), although the exact way these sacrifices were made is not known.

The conduct of the shepherds toward Jethro's daughters (2:17) may indicate that his person and office were lightly regarded by the idolatrous and irreligious citizens of his immediate neighborhood.

29. *Describe Reuel's (Jethro's) family.*

He had a large family with seven daughters (some of marriageable age), and apparently a son, Hobab (Num. 10:29). A large Godly family is good. Jethro's daughters were industrious. No mention is made of Reuel's wife.

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<sup>17</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

Part of Reuel's family is later referred to as the Kenites (Judges 4:11; 1:16). The name *Kenite* in Aramaic means smith, or metal worker.<sup>18</sup> It is a known fact that copper mines existed in the Sinai peninsula (near Ezion-Geber at the north end of the Gulf of Akabah) and turquoise mines near Serabit el-Khadim. Just possibly some members of the family were involved in mining, as well as shepherding.

30. *What were Reuel's other names?*

(1) *Raguel*. This form of his name is given in the King James version of Numbers 10:29, although the Hebrew form of the name there is identical to that which is spelled *Reuel* in Ex. 2:18.

(2) *Jethro*. (Heb. *Yithro*). This alternate name for Reuel is given in Ex. 3:1 and 18:1. *Jethro* may mean "his excellence." Ex. 4:18 gives a variant form of the name *Jethro*, *Jether* (Heb. *Yether*). We do not know why Reuel was also called *Jethro*. Several Biblical people had two names. Examples are Gideon-Jerubbaal (Judges 6:27, 32), Bartholemew-Nathanael, Solomon-Jedidiah (II Sam. 12:25), Simon-Peter (John 1:42), Jehoiachin-Jeconiah (II Kings 24:15; Jer. 24:1). Reuel's having an alternate name need not therefore surprise us.

31. *What is shown about Moses by his driving the shepherds away? (2:17)*

It shows that he was undaunted by his failures in Egypt to reconcile the fighting Hebrews and to deliver his people. He still had spunk to stand up against wrongdoing. His impulses led to immediate action.

It shows he was kind and courteous. The sisters were surprised that he drew water for them. Usually this was exclusively a woman's job.

The behavior of the shepherds was rotten and rank. They had apparently been imposing on the daughters for a long time, because when the girls were not delayed by the

<sup>18</sup>G. Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), p. 65. Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. II, p. 834.

shepherds taking over the water they had drawn, they got home so much sooner than usual that their father was surprised. It is interesting to ponder whether Jethro knew of this regular water-well larceny, and if so why he had not stopped it.

32. *Why call Moses an Egyptian? (2:19)*

Culturally he was an Egyptian — in dress, in speech, and every outward aspect. But inwardly he was NOT an Egyptian; and it is from the heart that the expressions of life come forth.

33. *What is shown about Jethro by his having his daughters call in Moses?*

Hospitality, gratitude, recognition of good personal qualities.

Jethro rather scolds the daughters for leaving Moses at the well. "Why have you left the man? Is it because you have not been taught better? Is it because you are selfish? Is it because you did not understand or believe the man?" (*Preacher's Homiletic Commentary*). Parents should teach their children hospitality, especially when kindnesses have been extended to them.

34. *What significance is there to Moses "eating bread" with Jethro? (2:20)*

Eating bread in those lands means more than casual hospitality. It involves a personal pledge of friendship and protection.

35. *Was Moses happy to remain with Jethro?*

The expression "content" in 2:21 has no idea of satisfaction or of concession about it. Moses simply agreed to dwell with the man. Perhaps he felt he had nowhere else to go. The fact that he could stay forty years with Jethro suggests that Jethro must have been congenial. Ex. 18:14ff suggests that Jethro was wise.

36. *What do we know about Zipporah? (2:21)*

Very little. Her name meant "Bird" (perhaps "warbler" "twitterer").<sup>19</sup> She wasn't loyal enough to the Abrahamic

<sup>19</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

convenant to see to it that her son was circumcised (Ex. 4:25). Moses sent her back to her father's house when he went back to Egypt to lead Israel out. She rejoined Moses at Rephidim near Sinai (Ex. 18:1-2). Unless she is the Cushite woman of Num. 12:1, we hear nothing more about her. The feeling strikes us that Zipporah was never really very sympathetic to Moses.

37. *What do the names of Moses' sons suggest? (2:22)*

*Gershom* means "a stranger there" (from Hebrew *ger*, stranger). Though Moses had safety and a wife and children, the name *Gershom* suggests that he felt a feeling of banishment in Midian.

A second son named *Eliezer* was born. See Ex. 18:4. His name means "My God is a help." This name suggests that as time passed Moses came to be more content, and to rely more fully on God. He did not lose his faith.

38. *What possible results came to Moses through his sojourn in Midian?*

(1) He learned to trust less in his own abilities. See 3:11. Such a lesson is good if it does not completely destroy our self-confidence, and if it causes us to depend the more on God.

(2) He learned patience, at least more patience than he had before.

(3) He learned many details about the land, its trails, oases, etc. He was later to lead the Israelites through part of the very territory wherein he labored as a shepherd.

(4) Possibly Jethro, as priest, may have had written documents that came into Moses' possession. The book of Job was probably written in patriarchal times (time of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob) in Arabia, which lay next to Midian. If this came to Moses' attention or he acquired it, this would help account for its presence in the group of books accepted as scripture (the canon).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup>The tract *Baba Bathra* from the Jewish *Talmud* (probably second century after Christ) says, "Who wrote the Scriptures? — Moses wrote his own book and the portion of Balaam (Num. 23-24) and Job." *Baba Bathra* 14b-15a.

(5) One result sometimes credited to Moses' sojourn in Midian can be seriously questioned. This is the idea that Moses got the name of YAHWEH (Jehovah) from the Midianites (or Kenites), and some of his ideas about God's nature and laws. This is called the "Kenite theory."

According to the so-called Kenite hypothesis, Yahweh was originally the tribal god of the clan of Kenites headed by Moses' father-in-law Jethro. From them Moses allegedly first learned of the name and worship of Yahweh.<sup>21</sup>

The Scriptures do not indicate that the Midianites knew the name Jehovah. Moses was reminded of it by God at the burning bush (Ex. 3:13-16). Jehovah declared that he was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. How could the Israelites have been induced to leave Egypt under the guidance of a God with whom they had had no previous association, and about whom they knew absolutely nothing?

Moses learned about God at the burning bush, and in the later experiences of leading Israel out of Egypt, and at Mt. Sinai. This knowledge was relayed to Jethro and accepted by him only after it was validated by the events of the exodus (Ex. 18:11). Jethro learned of Jehovah from Moses and not Moses from Jethro.

39. *What king of Egypt is referred to in Ex. 2:23?*

Probably the one who died was Thutmose III (1502-1448 B.C.). He was succeeded by his son Amenhotep II (1448-1422), who was probably the pharaoh at the time of the exodus. Amenhotep II continued the earlier oppression of the Israelites.

40. *What sound effects came from oppressed Israel? (2:23-24)*

(1) *Sighing*, which is often an expression of grief. Psalm 12:5.

(2) *Cry*. Compare Ex. 3:9 and James 5:4.

(3) *Groaning*. Compare Ex. 6:5.

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<sup>21</sup>James King West, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), p. 125. Compare H. H. Rowley, *From Joseph to Joshua* (London: Oxford U. Press, 1951), pp. 149-160.

The fact that the Israelites cried unto God shows that they retained some faith in the God of their fathers. When the old oppressing king died, they prayed in hope. But the bondage continued for a time.

41. *How important was God's covenant? (2:24)*

A *covenant* has always been the cornerstone of God's dealings with mankind. A covenant is variously defined as a commitment, bargain, agreement, arrangement, or will. God made covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and others. God is unfailing in remembering his covenants.

Regarding God's covenant with Abraham, see Genesis 15. This covenant involved promises of Israel's increase in population, its enslavement in a foreign country, its deliverance, and the possession of the land of Canaan.

42. *What four actions are ascribed to God in 2:24-25?*

God heard . . . remembered . . . saw . . . knew. Ex. 2:25, when translated very literally, says, "And God looked upon the sons of Israel, and God knew." How beautiful! What more could anyone ask than that God would see us and know? To *know* means to know meaningfully, by experience. It often has the idea of intimacy, of approval, and acceptance.

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The Text of EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**3** Now Mo-ses was keeping the flock of Je-thro his father-in-law, the priest of Mid-i-an: and he led the flock to the back of the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God, unto Ho-reb. (2) And the angel of Je-ho-vah appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. (3) And Mo-ses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. (4) And when Je-ho-vah saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Mo-ses, Mo-ses. And he said, Here am I.



(5) And he said , Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. (6) Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of I-saac, and the God of Jacob. And Mo-ses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. (7) And Je-ho-vah said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people that are in E-gypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; (8) and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the E-gyp-tians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Ca-na-an-ite, and the Hit-tite, and the Am-or-ite, and the Per-iz-zite, and the Hi-vite, and the Jeb-u-site. (9) And now, behold, the cry of the children of Is-ra-el is come unto me: moreover I have seen the oppression wherewith the E-gyp-tians oppress them. (10) Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pha-raoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Is-ra-el out of E-gypt. (11) And Mo-ses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Is-ra-el out of E-gypt? (12) And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be the token unto thee; that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of E-gypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain. (13) And Mo-ses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Is-ra-el and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? (14) And God said unto Mo-ses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Is-ra-el, I AM hath sent me unto you. (15) And God said moreover unto Mo-ses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Is-ra-el, Je-ho-vah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of I-saac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations. (16) Go, and gather the elders of Is-ra-el together, and say unto them, Je-ho-vah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of I-saac, and of Jacob, hath appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and *seen* that which is done to you in E-gypt: (17)

and I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of E-gypt unto the land of the Ca-naan-ite, and the Hit-tite, and the Am-or-ite, and the Per-iz-zite, and the Hi-vite, and the Jeb-u-site, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. (18) And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Is-ra-el, unto the king of E-gypt, and ye shall say unto him, Je-ho-vah, the God of the Hebrews, hath met with us: and now let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Je-ho-vah our God. (19) And I know that the king of E-gypt will not give you leave to go, no, not by a mighty hand. (20) And I will put forth my hand, and smite E-gypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go (21) And I will give this people favor in the sight of the E-gyp-tians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: (22) but every woman shall ask of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall despoil the E-gyptians.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THREE  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading of Exodus 3, propose a topic or theme (1-3 words) for the entire chapter.
2. What work did Moses do in Midian? (3:1)
3. Who was Moses' father-in-law? What other names are given to him (Compare Ex. 2:18; 4:18; 18:1)
4. Which side of an area is the "backside"? (3:1; 26:12, 22)
5. What mountain is Horeb? (3:1; 19:20; 33:6; 34:2). Why is it called the "mountain of God"? (Compare Deut. 4:10-13; Ex. 19:20—20:3).
6. What appeared unto Moses? (3:2) What was unusual about the sight? At what place was this appearance?
7. Who was the *angel* of the LORD? (3:2, 6; Compare Gen. 22: 11-18; 31:11-13; Judges 6:11-16).
8. What was Moses' reaction upon seeing the burning bush? (3:3)

9. Who called out of the midst of the bush? (3:4)
10. With what words did God call to Moses? (3:4)
11. What two preliminary commands did God give Moses from the bush? (3:5)
12. What significance is there in removing the sandals? (Compare Josh. 5:15)
13. What made this spot "holy ground"? (3:5)
14. Why did God introduce himself to Moses as "the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, . . ." (3:6; Gen. 15:13-18)
15. What does 3:6 reveal about the faith of Moses' father? What was the name of Moses' father? (6:20)
16. What argument did the Lord Jesus draw from Ex. 3:6? (Luke 20:37-38)
17. How did Moses feel about looking upon God? How did he show his feelings? (3:6)
18. What had the LORD seen and heard? (3:7, 9)
19. By what term did the Lord refer to the Israelites in 3:7?
20. What was God's purpose in "coming down"? (3:8). Why does God need to "come down"? Isn't He everywhere? (Compare Jer. 23:23-24)
21. What is meant by saying that the land was "flowing with milk and honey"? (3:8; Compare Deut. 8:7-8).
22. How many nations occupied the land that God was bringing the Israelites into? (3:8; Compare Deut. 7:1).
23. To whom was Moses sent? (3:10)
24. What was Moses' mission? (3:10)
25. What was Moses' first excuse when God told him to lead Israel out? (3:11)
26. What were Moses' four other excuses that he later gave? (3:13; 4:1, 10, 13)
27. What reassurance did God give to encourage Moses to do his job? (3:12)
28. What was the *token*, or sign, that God promised to Moses, to verify that God had indeed sent him on this mission? (3:12)
29. How could this be a sign to reassure Moses during the

performance of his work, when Moses could not possibly see the fulfillment of the sign until his work was done? (3:12; Compare John 2:18-22).

30. How and when did Israel serve God "upon this mountain"? (3:12; 19:1-3)
31. What question did Moses assume that Israel would ask him when he told them that God had sent him to them? (3:13)
32. What does the question concerning God's name suggest about Israel's religious knowledge and faithfulness in Egypt?
33. What was the name God gave for Himself? (3:14)
34. What significance and implications can you perceive in this name for God? (Compare Isa. 57:15; Rev. 1:4; John 8:58).
35. Why the repeated stress on the fact that God was the God of their fathers? (3:15)
36. What had God promised to Abraham that made Abraham so important and prominent? (3:15; Gen. 15:13-14; 22:18).
37. What name for God is solemnly given in 3:15?
38. What is indicated by God's calling His name "my memorial"? (3:15; Compare Psalm 97:2; 102:12; 135:13).
39. How long was the memorial to be known? (3:15)
40. Whom was Moses to go and gather together? (3:16)
41. What is the significance of God "visiting" them? (Compare other passages on "visiting," such as Gen. 21:1; 50:24; Ruth 1:6; Psalm 106:4; Luke 1:68).
42. What promise of God was to be declared unto Israel? (3:17)
43. How would the Israelites respond to God's promise? (3:18)
44. Who was to go with Moses unto the king of Egypt? (3:18). Did it work out that way? (5:1-2)
45. What request was Moses to make to the king? (3:18; Compare 5:1-2)
46. What did God predict about the king's response to Moses' request? (3:19)
47. Explain "No, not by a mighty hand." (3:19)
48. What did God promise (or threaten) to do to Egypt? (3:20)
49. How did God fulfill the threat stated in Ex. 3:20? See Ex. 7:3ff.
50. What would Egypt do after all God's wonders had been done

in its midst? (3:20)

51. What would God give to the Israelites in the sight of the Egyptians? (3:21)
  52. What does "Ye shall not go out empty" mean? (3:21; 12:35-36)
  53. From whom were the women to ask (borrow) valuables? (3:22)
  54. What did these valuables consist of? (3:22)
  55. Where were the valuables to be placed? (3:22)
  56. How extensively were the Israelites to take valuables from the Egyptians? (3:22)
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### EXODUS THREE: THE CALL OF GOD'S MAN

#### Facts About God's Call:

1. Comes in unexpected ways; 3:2
2. Comes in keeping with past revelations; 3:6
3. Must be heard with reverence; 3:5
4. Given to help man; 3:7-8
5. Sends us to BIG jobs; 3:8.
6. Comes to the fearful; 3:11.
7. Comes with God's directions; 3:16.
8. Comes with reassurance; 3:17.
9. Sends us against human opposition; 3:19.
10. Comes with divine help; 3:20.

### EXODUS THREE: AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

#### I. Preparations for an encounter with God

1. Awareness; 3:3.
2. Humility; 3:5-6.

#### II. Purposes of an encounter with God

1. To deliver the afflicted; 3:8-10.
2. To bless the afflicted; 3:8, 17.

#### III. Power of an encounter with God

1. Power to answer objections; 3:13-17.
2. Power to overcome resistance; 3:18-20.

## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER THREE

1. *What was Moses' main occupation in Midian?* (3:1)

He kept the flock (sheep, goats, small cattle) of Jethro, his father-in-law. Literally, he "was keeping" the flock, indicating the continuance of this occupation. Often this work was considered the work of women or children, and men would not do it. What a contrast this was to Moses' previous life-style in Egypt!

2. *Who was Jethro?* (3:1)

He was Moses' father-in-law, the same person called *Reuel* in 2:18. See notes on 2:16-18. The name *Jethro* also occurs in 4:18 and 18:1ff. Critics like Martin Noth assume that the use of the two names Jethro and Reuel indicate separate sources and traditions lying behind our exodus narrative.<sup>1</sup> But even he admits that it is impossible to discover the origin of the different names given to the priest at a "later date." It seems to us that there is no solid evidence for the existence of any sources, and that we can confidently hold to the clear Biblical assertions that Moses gave us all the law (John 7:19; Neh. 10:29).

3. *Which side is the back side of the desert?* (3:1)

To the Hebrews the *backside* of anything was the west side. (Americans have a different idiom, and say "back east.") It appears that Jethro lived in the S.E. part of the Sinai peninsula. Moses drove the sheep westward (or north-westward) through a wilderness to the patchy pasture areas around Horeb.

4. *What is the "mountain of God"?*

The expression may mean only "the great mountain." Tradition reaching back many centuries identifies this mountain as Mt. Sinai, or Jebel Musa (meaning, Mt. of

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<sup>1</sup>Exodus, p. 37.

Moses), in the southern Sinaitic peninsula. We see no cause to reject this view.

Perhaps the mountain was called the mount of God because God here afterwards came down and gave the ten commandments and other laws (Exodus 19-24). Moses wrote Exodus after the law was given at Sinai. Therefore, Sinai was indeed the "mount of God" to those who first read Exodus.

Josephus<sup>2</sup> says that men had the opinion that God dwelt at that mountain, and therefore shepherds had not before pastured there before Moses came. It is possible that the mountain was regarded as a holy mountain by the superstitious residents even before God called Moses there. But such superstitions are neither certain nor significant.

The term "mount of God" (or similar terms) is also found in Ex. 4:27; 18:5; 24:13; Num. 10:33; I Kings 19:18.

5. *What does Horeb mean?*

The name *Horeb* comes from a verb meaning "to be dry." This well describes much of the rugged, granitic, mountainous, desert area around Sinai. The name refers to Mt. Sinai, or, more probably, the entire region thereabout. The name *Horeb* is found in Ex. 33:6; 17:6; I Kings 8:9; 19:8; and numerous other passages.

6. *Who appeared to Moses at Horeb? (3:2)*

The angel of the LORD appeared to Moses. The word *angel* means messenger. But this messenger was none other than God himself. See 3:4, 6. Deut. 33:16 speaks of God's blessings as coming from the "good will of him that dwelt in the bush." The angel of the Lord was the same personality that later came into the world as Jesus of Nazareth, the one whom John calls the WORD (John 1:1). "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not" (John 1:10).

Keil and Delitzsch<sup>3</sup> make the helpful comment that the transition from the *angel of Jehovah* (vs. 2) to *Jehovah* (vs. 4)

<sup>2</sup>*Antiquities*, II, xii, 1; III, v, 1.

<sup>3</sup>*Op. Cit.*, p. 439.

proves the identity of the two; and the interchange of the names *Jehovah* (LORD) and *Elohim* (the Hebrew word for God) in vs. 4 precludes the idea of Jehovah's being merely a national God of the Hebrews.

7. *Was the bush really burning?*

Certainly it was. Ex. 3:2 says that the bush burned with fire, but the bush was not consumed. This bush was a kind of thorn bush (Heb., *seneh*) common in that district.

We ask this question only because some modern commentators seek to do away with the miraculous feature of the burning bush. They suggest that it had brilliant flowers that looked like flame; or sunlight was falling on it so as to produce an effect of flame.<sup>4</sup> And even more radical idea is that the vision was only an inner experience in Moses' mind, and that one standing next to Moses would have seen nothing unusual.<sup>5</sup> Noth supposes it was some manifestation similar to St. Elmo's fire.<sup>6</sup>

8. *How did God address Moses at the bush? (3:4)*

He called his name twice, "Moses, Moses," in a way reminding us of God's call to Abraham in Gen. 22:11: "Abraham, Abraham."

Note the interchange of divine names in 3:4: The LORD (*Jehovah*) saw, but God (*Elohim*) called. *Jehovah* is God's covenant name with his people. *Elohim* is the general term for God as the mighty one, creator, and ruler.

9. *Why take off the shoes? (3:5)*

This was an act of reverence and humbleness before God. The special manifestation of God's presence made the spot "holy ground." Removing the shoes is still practiced in the East. Moslems remove their shoes upon entering any of their holy places. Joshua put off his shoes when he stood before the captain of the Lord's host (Josh. 5:15).

10. *How did God describe himself to Moses? (3:6)*

<sup>4</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>5</sup>The Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 1 (Nashville; Broadman, 1969), p. 328.

<sup>6</sup>Op. cit., p. 39.



As the God of thy father (Amram?), of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. This verse implies Moses had some knowledge of the patriarchal history in Genesis.

God described himself as one who remembers, sees, hears, and helps his people.

The word *father* (singular) may refer to Moses' father, Amram, about whom we know almost nothing. Or it may be a collective use of the term, and refer to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who are named in the second part of the verse. Moses receives communication from no new or unknown God, but only a fuller of revelation from Him whom his people had known before.

Our Lord Jesus presented this passage as a proof of the resurrection of the dead to the Sadducees (Matt. 22:32; Mark 12:26; Luke 20:37). God said to Moses, "I AM the God of Abraham (not, "I was"). When God spoke to Moses, Abraham had been dead over five hundred years. But Abraham was not dead to God; for all live unto Him. On the basis of this assertion of the continued existence of Abraham's soul after his physical death, Jesus said that ultimately soul and body will be reunited by a resurrection of the body.

11. *Why did Moses hide his face?* (3:6)

People are always fearful to look on God when they really see His holiness and glory. (Isaiah 6:1, 5; Judges 13:22; Luke 5:8; I Kings 19:13)

12. *Why was God now coming down to deliver Israel?* (3:7-8)

Because He had seen their affliction, and heard their cry, and knew their sorrow. God is a God of personal feelings and tenderness.

Also the time of which God had foretold to Abraham was nearly fulfilled. "They shall afflict thy seed four hundred years" (Gen. 15:13). God keeps His promises, and keeps His schedule.

13. *To what kind of a land would God bring Israel?* (3:8).

To a *broad*, or large, land. This is indicated by the enumeration of the six (or seven) tribes which then inhabited the country.

To a *good* land, a land flowing (oozing) with milk and honey. This means that it was a land of pastures, where flocks giving milk could be raised. It would be a land of flowers, from which bees would make honey. The phrase "flowing with milk and honey" is repeated in 3:17; 13:5; Jer. 11:5. The goodness of the land is also described in Deut. 8:7-8.

Sinuhe, an Egyptian fugitive who fled into the land of Canaan, or a nearby area, about 1960 B.C., described the land in a way similar to that by which God described it to Moses:

It was a good land, named Yaa. Figs were in it, and grapes. It had more wine than water. Plentiful was its honey, abundant its olives. Every (kind of) fruit was on its trees. Barley was there, and emmer. There was no limit to any (kind of) cattle.<sup>7</sup>

14. *What peoples would be displaced from the promised land by Israel? (3:8)*

Six "nations" are named. This is the first reference to these since God's promise to Abraham in Gen. 15:18-21. They are named frequently after this. See 3:17; 13:5; Deut. 7:1; Josh. 24:11. Each of these nations is said to be "greater and mightier than thou" (Deut. 7:1).

This group of "nations" is often said to number seven. Collectively they are called the Canaanites, even though one tribe called Canaanites was a distinct group among the seven. Gen. 10:15-19 reveals that six of them (the Perizzites are not mentioned) were descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham. While they were distantly related by blood, these nations were not a United Nation or a United States. They had wars between themselves. Their society was based on a city-state system. Prominent among the city-states in Canaan were Hazor, Jericho, Gezer, Megiddo, Jerusalem, Shechem, and Hebron. Cities such as these ruled as much territory as

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<sup>7</sup>"The Story of Sinuhe," translated by John A. Wilson, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U. Press, 1955), p. 19. Used by permission.

they could control. The Egyptians had general control over all of Palestine at this time, but when the Egyptian troops were absent, the Canaanite city-states were not very loyal subjects.

Morally, the Canaanites had become very degenerate. Their cup of iniquity had become full and running over (Gen. 15:16). They offered their children as sacrifices (Deut. 9:5; 18:9-10). Sometimes fornication was part of their religious ritual (Numbers 25:1-2).

Here are a few facts about these seven Canaanite nations: (1) The *Canaanites* (the separate tribe) settled into the land about 1900 B.C.<sup>8</sup> They gave their name to the whole land, which included Phoenicia and the Mediterranean coastal area of Syria. Their areas included Jericho, Tyre, Sidon, Byblos (in Phoenicia).

(2) The *Hittites* were immigrant peoples from the Old Hittite empire (1800-1450 B.C.) in Asia Minor to the north. See Gen. 23:10.

(3) The *Amorites* were the most numerous and dominant of the "Canaanites." They had settled into Canaan and nearby lands about 2300 B.C., probably from the Syrian and Arabian deserts. They destroyed most of the urban settlements which had existed in the land before their arrival.<sup>9</sup> They occupied the Northern part of Moab, north of the Arnon river, among other areas (Num. 21:26).

(4) The *Perizzites* are not identifiable. The term may mean *villagers*.

(5) The *Hivites* dwelt around Gibeon (about five miles NW of Jerusalem) and around Shechem. See Josh. 11:19; 9:3-7; Gen. 34:2. They may be the same people as the Horites, or Hurrians, who were people from the mountains north of Mesopotamia, who settled into Palestine about 2000 B.C.

(6) The *Jebusites* occupied Jerusalem. (Judges 1:21; II Sam.

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<sup>8</sup>Kathleen Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land*, Second Ed. (New York: Praeger, 1956), pp. 160-161.

<sup>9</sup>Kenyon, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-137.

5:6; Josh. 15:63)

(7) The *Girgashites* (Josh. 24:11; Deut. 7:1) are obscure.

15. *Could Moses have disobeyed God's call to deliver Israel?*

Certainly. See Ex. 3:10. But, like Paul, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision (Acts 26:19).

16. *Why was Moses hesitant to go and bring forth Israel?* (3:11)

Why should he say, "Who am I?" Undoubtedly, any human would have been frightened by such a commission. Especially would this have been true of Moses, who is said to have been meek above all men on earth (Num. 12:3). Whatever may have been Moses' reason for hesitancy, the scripture does not criticize him at this point, and we shall certainly not do so either.

17. *What were Moses' five excuses to God?*

1. "Who Am I?" (3:11)

2. "What shall I say when they ask, 'What is his (God's) name?' " (3:13)

3. "They will not believe" (4:1).

4. "I am not eloquent" (4:10).

5. "Send someone else" (4:13).

18. *What was God's reassurance to Moses?* (3:12)

"Certainly I will be with thee." Years later Moses gave the same reassurance to Israel and to his successor Joshua (Deut. 31:8, 23).

The Hebrew word translated "I will be" is *ehyeh*. This word is the very word which God gave for Himself as His name in 3:14 ("I Am . . ."). God's name thus means that he is the existing one, the being one, the eternal.

19. *What was God's token of assurance that he had sent Moses?* (3:12)

The token, or sign, was that Israel and Moses would serve God upon that very mountain before which Moses then stood, after God had brought them forth from Egypt! Moses was being called from the burning bush before Mt. Horeb; he would return to Horeb with Israel.

This token required faith to accept. We might feel it took more faith to believe the promise of the sign than it would

take to go and attempt to lead Israel out. But the sign itself was such a daring and confident assertion that it would inspire confidence and courage. Compare II Kings 19:29.

This token to Moses reminds us of the sign Jesus offered in John 2:18-19: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise IT [my body] up." Such a daring challenge demonstrates confidence within the one saying it, and inspires confidence in those who hear.

20. *Why would the Israelites ask Moses about God's name? (3:13)*

Probably because they had forgotten God's name Jehovah, or the LORD, or Yahweh (YHWH). The name had been used in Abraham's time (Gen. 15:2; 22:14), and long before then (Gen. 4:26). But it had been neglected in Egypt.

In patriarchal times, new revelations of the ancestral God were sometimes accompanied or illustrated by a new title for God (Gen. 16:13; 22:14; 35:7). Thus Israel might be conditioned to expect to hear a new name for God. But they received only the old name with new power and events associated with its meaning.

It is not surprising that Israel wanted to know God's name. Can you conceive of *knowing* someone without knowing a name for that person? Manoah wanted to know God's name so that he could render him honor (Judges 13:17). Jacob wanted to know the angel's name (Gen. 32:29).

21. *What is God's name? (3:14-15)*

His name is I AM THAT I AM. This probably is better translated, "I will be who (or what) I will be," since the verbs express future or continuing action. The Greek O.T. translated it, "I am the being one" (*ego eimi ho on*). The famous archaeologist Wm. F. Albright rendered the name, "I am he who causes (things) to be."<sup>10</sup> Certainly Jehovah is the one who makes all things happen, but most scholars feel that this translation is too abstract and subtle to be the only meaning.

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<sup>10</sup>Wm. F. Albright, *From The Stone Age to Christianity* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1957), pp. 259-261.

The name LORD (Jehovah, or Yahweh) in Ex. 3:15 is derived from the verb translated "be" or "am." Thus the name points God out as he who is, and was, and is to come. See Rev. 1:4, 8; Isa. 57:15. The possible implications in this name are as infinite as God himself. See notes on Ex. 6:3.

In the same way that God is Father is the eternal I AM, Jesus is also called "I Am" (John 8:58). Jesus is the same yesterday, and today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). In fact, the very one who was speaking to Moses at the bush later came unto us in human form as Jesus of Nazareth.

Interestingly, the Jewish historian Josephus would not tell his Roman readers what God's name which God told Moses was.<sup>11</sup> Modern Jews still will not utter aloud the name Yahweh (Jehovah, the LORD). They avoid it so that they may not possibly use God's name in vain. But God expressly told Moses to say the name to the children of Israel. Ex. 4:1 says that the Israelites would utter the name. Nowhere does the O.T. hint that the name dare not be spoken by our lips. Of course, it should be used reverently or not at all.

22. *What is God's memorial? (3:15)*

His name YAHWEH (Jehovah, or LORD) is his memorial. "Sing praises unto Jehovah, O ye saints of his. And give thanks unto his holy memorial name" (Ps. 30:4; A.S.V.). See also Psalm 97:12; 100:12; 135:13; Hosea 12:5. By that name His person, nature, and works are to be recalled. Alan Cole says that the name YHWH ultimately came to mean to the Jews what the name Jesus has come to mean to Christians, a shorthand for all God's dealings of grace.<sup>12</sup>

Surely if God's name YAHWEH is to be remembered throughout all generations, the Jews perverted this truth in refusing to utter it.

23. *Whom was Moses to gather and speak to? (3:16)*

He was to gather and speak to the elders of Israel. The Israelites had very little formal governmental organization.

<sup>11</sup>*Antiquities*, II, xii, 4.

<sup>12</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 70.

The older men ruled in each location and family to the extent that their personalities and situations made possible.

24. *What does "visit" mean?* (3:16)

This word is often used in the Bible of some particular saving act of God toward his people. See Luke 1:68; Gen. 21:1; Ruth 1:6; Ex. 4:31.

Joseph had prophesied before his death that God would visit Israel, and they would go up from Egypt (Gen. 50:25). Moses' words about God's visiting them surely point to a fulfillment of Joseph's words, even though Joseph had been dead over three hundred and fifty years.

For notes on 3:17, see under 3:8.

25. *Would Israel believe Moses' words?* (3:18)

Yes. Ex. 4:29-31 reports that Moses and Aaron did gather the elders and spoke to them, and they did believe, at least at first.

26. *Who was to go in and speak to Pharaoh?* (3:18)

Moses, with the elders. As it worked out, only Moses and Aaron went. See 5:1, 3.

27. *What would Pharaoh understand the words "God . . . hath met with us" to imply?*

The words almost suggest hostile confrontation: "Our God has confronted us, and said to worship him, or else . . .!" Ex. 5:3 tends to confirm this idea. Also 4:24.

28. *Where would the three-days' journey lead them?* (3:18)

The place is not specified. Certainly all of the proposed locations for Mt. Sinai are much farther than three days' journey from Egypt. Probably no specific place was in mind. God foreknew Pharaoh was not going to release Israel, whether the request was for a brief or a long trip. By making the request small, the refusal of Pharaoh would display the hardness of his heart. Moses later enlarged his demand, for Pharaoh to grant them entire departure from the land (6:10). From the outset of this confrontation, nothing was stated positively about Israel's coming back after three days.

The request to Pharaoh was politely worded: "Let us go, we pray thee." Actually Pharaoh had no right to detain

them. Israel had entered Egypt by invitation, and surely had the right to leave when they wished.

29. *What did God predict about Pharaoh's response?* (3:19)

Pharaoh would refuse to let Israel go, and would never grant it unless compelled by a mighty overpowering hand.

This is the first reference to Pharaoh's responses to Israel's request for departure. And right here at the outset the blame and the root of the trouble is placed where it belongs, on Pharaoh, not on God.

That Pharaoh expected Israel would never return is suggested by his insolent response.

30. *How did God stretch out his hand?* (3:20)

This figure of speech compares God to a warrior extending his arm in readiness for combat. The record of God's stretching out his hand to deliver Israel is the story of the ten plagues in Ex. 7-13. "By strength of hand Jehovah brought you out from this place" (Ex. 13:3; 7:4; 6:1).

31. *Why were the Israelites to collect jewels from the Egyptians?* (3:21-22)

The use of the word *spoil* in 3:22 suggests it was an act of triumph over Egypt, taking as it were the spoils of battle from the vanquished.

The jewelry could be looked upon as payment by the Egyptians for unpaid wages to the Israelites for many years of slave labor. However, the scripture does not suggest this as a justification for the act.

Note in 3:22 that some Egyptian women sojourned in the houses of the Hebrews. Not all the Egyptians shared the hateful feelings of their king toward Israelites.

"Borrow" in 3:22 simply means "ask." No hint of returning the items is implied.

The promise to give the Israelites favor in the eyes of the Egyptians was fulfilled. See Ex. 11:2-3; 12:35-36.

It is interesting to note that the Israelites placed these jewels upon their sons and daughters. While the Egyptians were burying their dead first born, the Israelites were adorning their children with Egyptian jewelry.



The jewelry was partly used later in making the vessels of the tabernacle (Ex. 35:22). Alas, some of it went into the golden calf (32:2).

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THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**4** And Mo-ses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, Je-ho-vah hath not appeared unto thee. (2) And Je-ho-vah said unto him, What is that in thy hand? And he said, A rod. (3) And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Mo-ses fled from before it. (4) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Put forth thy hand, and take it by the tail (and he put forth his hand, and laid hold of it, and it became a rod in his hand); (5) that they may believe that Je-ho-vah, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of I-saac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee. (6) And Je-ho-vah said furthermore unto him, Put now thy hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, as white as snow. (7) And he said, Put thy hand into thy bosom again. (And he put his hand into his bosom again; and when he took it out of his bosom, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh.) (8) And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign. (9) And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe even these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the river shall become blood upon the dry land. (10) And Mo-ses said unto Je-ho-vah, Oh, Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; for I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. (11) And Je-ho-vah said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh a man dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? is it not I, Je-ho-vah? (12) Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt speak. (13) And he said, Oh, Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send. (14) And the anger of Je-ho-vah

was kindled against Mo-ses, and he said, Is there not Aaron thy brother the Le-vite? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. (15) And thou shalt speak unto him, and put the words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. (16) And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people; and it shall come to pass, that he shall be to thee a mouth, and thou shalt be to him as God. (17) And thou shalt take in thy hand this rod, wherewith thou shalt do the signs. (18) And Mo-ses went and returned to Je-thro his father-in-law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren that are in E-gypt, and see whether they be yet alive. And Je-thro said to Mo-ses, Go in peace. (19) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses in Mid-i-an, Go, return into E-gypt; for all the men are dead that sought thy life. (20) And Mo-ses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of E-gypt: and Mo-ses took the rod of God in his hand. (21) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses. When thou goest back into E-gypt, see that thou do before Pha-raoh all the wonders which I have put in thy hand: but I will harden his heart, and he will not let the people go. (22) And thou shalt say unto Pha-raoh, Thus saith Je-ho-vah, Is-ra-el is my son, my first-born: (23) and I have said unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me; and thou hast refused to let him go: behold, I will slay thy son, thy first-born. (24) And it came to pass on the way at the lodging-place, that Je-ho-vah met him, and sought to kill him. (25) Then Zip-po-rah took a flint, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet; and she said, Surely a bridegroom of blood art thou to me. (26) So he let him alone. Then she said, A bridegroom of blood *art thou*, because of the circumcision.

(27) And Je-ho-vah said to Aar-on, Go into the wilderness to meet Mo-ses. And he went, and met him in the mountain of God, and kissed him. (28) And Mo-ses told Aar-on all the words of Je-ho-vah wherewith he had sent him, and all the signs wherewith he had charged him. (29) And Mo-ses and Aar-on went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Is-ra-el: (30)

and Aar-on spake all the words which Je-ho-vah had spoken unto Mo-ses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. (31) And the people believed: and when they heard that Je-ho-vah had visited the children of Is-ra-el, and that he had seen their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER FOUR  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After reading the chapter carefully, propose a short topic or theme for it.
2. How did Moses think the Israelites would respond to his message (4:1)? How did God say they would respond (3:18)? How did they finally respond (4:31)?
3. What did Moses have in his hand? (4:2)
4. Can you name other Bible characters who used for God the things that they had in their hands?
5. What happened to Moses' rod? How did Moses react? (4:3)
6. How was the rod restored? (4:4)
7. List the references in chapters three and four where God refers to Himself as the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."
8. What was the second miracle Moses was empowered to do? (4:6)
9. What color was leprosy? (4:6) Check the cross references in your Bible on this.
10. How was Moses' leprosy removed? (4:7)
11. What miracle would certainly convince the people? (4:8)
12. What third miracle was Moses empowered to do? (4:9)
13. Was this third miracle ever used? Compare Ex. 7:18-19.
14. What excuse did Moses give pertaining to his voice? (4:10)
15. Was Moses really NOT able to speak well? Compare Ex. 20:19-20; 24:7; 32:26-28; Deut. 1:1ff.
16. Who makes every man's mouth, and men's other abilities? (4:11)
17. What is the application of the questions in 4:11 to Moses?
18. How would Moses know what to say? (4:12)
19. When God inspired men to reveal His will, did God give them words or just general ideas? (4:12, 15; Compare Num. 22:38)

20. Putting 4:13 into blunt modern English, what did Moses ask God to do?
21. How did God react to Moses' unwillingness? (4:14)
22. Who was Moses' brother?
23. What ability did Moses' brother have?
24. What feelings would Aaron have upon seeing Moses?
25. How long had it been since Aaron had seen Moses? (See Acts 7:23, 30)
26. What was Aaron to be for Moses? (4:16; 7:1)
27. How could Moses be a *God* to Aaron? (4:16)
28. How significant was the rod in Moses' later deeds? (4:17, 20; 7:15; 14:16)
29. From who did Moses ask permission to leave? (4:18)
30. Was this permission granted?
31. What possible reason was there for God's repeating his commission to Moses in Midian? (4:19)
32. Which direction was Midian from Mt. Horeb (Sinai)?
33. Who had once sought Moses' life? (4:19; 2:15). What had happened since then?
34. How many sons did Moses have? (See 18:2-4)
35. How many rode on one ass? (4:20)
36. How is Moses' rod described? (4:20)
37. What was Moses to be sure to do in Egypt? (4:21)
38. What would God do to Pharaoh? (4:21)
39. Was it fair for God to harden Pharaoh's heart? (Compare Rom. 9:14-24)
40. What relationship did Israel bear unto God? (4:22; Ex. 6:7; Compare II Cor. 6:18). How did this relationship come to exist? (See Deut. 4:37, 20; Ex. 19:5-6)
41. What threat was to be made unto Pharaoh? (4:23)
42. When was this threat carried out? (12:27, 29)
43. Where did the Lord "meet" Moses and his family? (4:24)
44. What did the Lord seek to do to Moses? By what means was the Lord doing this? (4:24-25)
45. Why was the Lord so extreme in his treatment of Moses just because Moses' son had not been circumcised? (Compare Gen. 17:10-14)

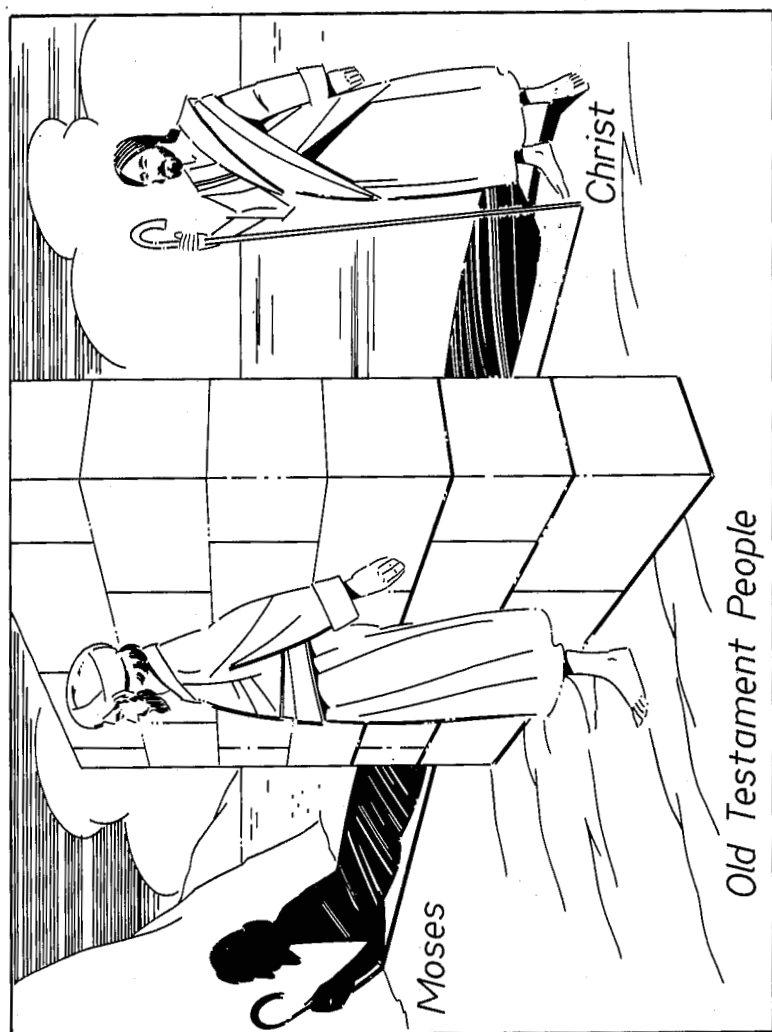
46. How did Moses and his family discover that the uncircumcision of the son was the cause of Moses' trouble? (4:25). (At least propose some answer.)
47. Who circumcised the son?
48. How did she like this job? Explain the meaning of "A bloody husband . . . because of the circumcision."
49. Did Zipporah and the sons accompany Moses on to Egypt? (4:29; 18:1-3)
50. Why did Aaron go out into the wilderness of Sinai? (Ex. 4:27)
51. Where did Aaron and Moses meet? (4:27)
52. With what act did Aaron greet Moses? (4:27)
53. What did Moses tell Aaron about? (4:28)
54. Did Moses show Aaron the signs (miracles)? (4:28)
55. What did Moses and Aaron gather together in Egypt? (4:29; 3:16)
56. Who did the talking to the Israelites? (4:28)
57. Who did the signs before the people? (4:30)
58. How did the people react when they heard the words and saw the signs? (Give two answers; 4:31)
59. What is the significance of the verb *visited* in 4:31?

#### EXODUS FOUR: HESITANCY OF GOD'S MAN

- A. Fear the people would not believe; 4:1ff.
- B. Fear of his slow speech; 4:10ff.
- C. In need of having his commission repeated; 4:19.
- D. Personal failure to obey God's covenant; 4:24ff.
- E. Victory when hesitancy is overcome; 4:27-31.

#### MOSES, A TYPE OF CHRIST

(A *type* is some person, thing or event in the Old Testament age which resembled and foreshadowed a similar person, thing, or event in the New Testament. The *antitype* is that person, thing, or event in the New Testament which was foreshadowed by



*Old Testament People*

PEOPLE LIVING ON THE OLD TESTAMENT SIDE OF THE WALL OF TIME  
COULD SEE IN MOSES AND SUCH LEADERS A FORESHADOWING, OR TYPE,  
OF CHRIST, THE GREATER ONE WHO WAS TO COME.

ISRAEL, A TYPE OF THE CHURCH (I Cor. 10:1-11)

I  
S  
R  
A  
E  
L

Bondage in Egypt	R	Freedom from Egypt		
Deliverer (Moses)	E	Heavenly food provided	J	C
Moses believed	D	Law of Moses	O	A
Egypt forsaken		Tabernacle worship	R	N
Passover	S	Unfaithful perished	D	A
	E	Faithful entered	A	N
	A		N	

C  
H  
U  
R  
C  
H

Bondage in sin	B	Freedom from sin		
Deliverer (Christ)	A	Heavenly food provided	D	H
Christ believed	P	Law of Christ	E	E
Sin forsaken	T	Church worship	A	V
Death of Christ	I	Unfaithful to perish	T	E
	S	Faithful enter	H	N
	M			

the Old Testament type.)

People on the Old Testament side of the wall of time could see only the shadow. We see both the shadow (Moses) and the substance (Christ) that cast the shadow.

Moses said that God would raise up a prophet, *like unto me*. (Deut. 18:15, 18; Acts 3:22-23; 7:37).

1. Christ, like Moses, was a prophet. (Matt. 13:57; Deut. 34:10)
2. Christ, like Moses, was a lawgiver. (John 1:17; Gal. 6:2)
3. Christ, like Moses, was saved as a babe.
4. Christ, like Moses, came as a peacemaker. (Luke 19:42; Ex. 2:13)
5. Christ, like Moses, was commissioned by God. (John 5:30; Ex. 3:10)
6. Christ, like Moses, came working miracles. (John 12:37)
7. Christ, like Moses, came preaching deliverance. (Luke 4:18; Ex. 4:29-30)
8. Christ, like Moses, was rejected by many. (Acts 7:23-39, 51-52)
9. Christ, like Moses, put His brethren (the church!) before his own interests (Heb. 2:14-15; Ex. 32:31-32).

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#### EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER FOUR

1. *Why was Moses so sure that Israel would not believe him?* (4:1).

a. There was no reason why thou should believe a long-absent, sheep-herding, fugitive, who had already failed in one attempt to deliver them.

b. It had been 430 years since God had spoken directly to any Israelite.

They were not accustomed to communications from God.

2. *Did Moses' excuse (in 4:1) indicate that he lacked faith?*

It is easy to think that he did. God had said that Israel would hearken (3:18). Moses said that they would not believe. It turned out that God was right (as always).

However, because Moses finally did obey, and because he



is called a man of faith (Heb. 11:24-29), we are reluctant to say he lacked faith.

3. *Would the people accept Yahweh (the LORD) as God's name?* (4:1; 3:13-15).

Moses seemed to assume that they would do so. The name was almost certainly familiar to some Israelite elders from their knowledge of the distant past. They would recognize it, and use it in speaking of God.

4. *What was the rod of Moses?* (4:2).

Probably only the familiar shepherd's crook, as in Psalm 23:4. This rod became extremely prominent in the acts of Moses and Aaron in later chapters. "Thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs" (4:17).

5. *What special force was there in the rod-to-serpent miracle?*

A carving of a serpent (cobra, or uraeus) was placed upon the front of the crown by many Pharaoh's. It was a symbol of the royal power in lower Egypt. Thus Moses' miracle gave the appearance of an intentional attack upon Egypt's supreme authority.

Also, an Egyptian goddess, Buto, was depicted in serpent form. She was the protectress of Egypt's northern capital. The miracle discredited her power.

Behind all this lay also the fact that the serpent has been the constant enemy of the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). It was the representative and tool of Satan (Rev. 12:9). At the basic level, Israel's deliverance involved a confrontation with the devil himself.

6. *When did Moses use the rod-to-serpent sign?*

He showed it to the elders of Egypt (4:30), and before Pharaoh during his second confrontation with him (7:10).

7. *Whose name was to be made vivid by the miracle of the rod?*

The name of the LORD (Jehovah, Yahweh), the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham . . ." (Ex. 4:5). Note the continued emphasis upon God's name, and upon God's association with their forefathers (Ex. 2:24; 3:15-16; 4:5; 6:2; et al).

8. *What particular significance was there in the sign of the*

*leprous hand?* (4:6).

a. It displayed the limitless and superhuman power of God. Leprosy usually was a disease of long duration. Even the ceremony for cleansing it took eight days (Lev. 14:8-10). But in the case of Moses, the infection, the cure, and the cleansing were all immediate.

b. The leprosy suggested the uncleanness of the people. Compare Lev. 13:45. Moses came to them when they were an unclean people. But God could make the unclean clean.

9. *Was leprosy always white?* (4:6).

Often it was white: Miriam (Numbers 12:10); Elisha's servant Gehazi (II Kings 5:27); Lev. 13:3. We do not think that the leprosy of the Bible was the same disease as Hansen's disease, now called leprosy. The whiteness that is so commonly associated with Biblical leprosy is not associated with Hansen's disease.

10. *Were Moses' miracles convincing to the Israelites?* (4:8)

Yes, at least temporarily. They were convinced, until subsequent difficulties arose. Then they seemed to forget the miracles, and doubt the constant infinite power of God.

In the same manner the miracles of Christ did not produce an unshakeable faith in most of the people who saw them (John 12:37). People whose faith depends upon seeing signs often require a steady stream of miracles, or they forsake Christ. See John 6:14, 30.

In doing these miracles Moses was a type of Christ, who also came working miracles (Deut. 18:15).

11. *Was the miracle of changing water to blood used by Moses?* (4:9)

We have no record that Moses did this miracle in Egypt. The first of the ten plagues consisted of a similar miracle on a nation-wide scale (Ex. 7:20-25).

12. *Was Moses' excuse about not being eloquent a good excuse?* (4:10)

No; it was a miserable excuse, and God did not accept it.

Moses' great ability to speak afterwards shows that he really was an able speaker. For example, note 32:11-13. The

whole book of Deuteronomy consists of eloquent speeches by Moses.

Moses' excuse here comes close to blaming God for his imagined difficulty in speech. He said, in paraphrase, "I was not eloquent before now, and I have not miraculously become eloquent since you began speaking to me. How then can you expect me to speak?"

Eloquence was highly regarded by the Egyptians as a means for bringing about social justice and political decisions. One Egyptian story, called the "Tale of the Eloquent Peasant"<sup>1</sup> is an Egyptian classic. It was written in the Egyptian Middle Kingdom (about 2000 B.C.), before Moses' time.

Moses had to learn that the working of God's power does not depend upon human eloquence and wisdom (I Cor. 2:1, 4). Many people thought the speech of the apostle Paul was of no account (II Cor. 10:10). But his influence was powerful, in spite of this. When we appear weak in ourselves, the power of God may become more obvious and more potent in us (II Cor. 12:9-10).

But at that moment Moses could only feel that he was slow of speech (meaning he had a hard time recalling words) and was of a slow tongue (he had a hard time forming the words in his mouth).

13. *Who gives people their abilities or disabilities? (4:11)*

Yahweh, the LORD! "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" (I Cor. 4:7). Nothing! Therefore, we must neither low-rate the abilities God has given us (and therefore hesitate to use them), or overrate them (and become conceited).

King James version has "*the* dumb, or deaf, or *the* seeing, or *the* blind." The *the*'s are not actually in the Hebrew text. It appears from the scripture that God causes or allows some people to be handicapped and some to be more capable (John 9:1-3). But it is probably an overstatement to say that

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<sup>1</sup>Translated by John A. Wilson, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton, 1955), pp. 407-410.

God is responsible for all the cases of blindness or deafness that exist.

14. *Does God provide to his spokesmen words, or just general ideas?* (4:12, 15)

He taught Moses "what you shall say." This involved general knowledge and ideas, but also frequently specific words. To Jeremiah God gave words (Jer. 1:9). To Paul also (I Cor. 2:13). Prophetic inspiration often times involved dictation of divine words. Many scholars of modern times resist this idea with some passion, but it is still true.

We must be careful as believers not to claim the kind of word-by-word revelations that God has given once-for-all to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph. 3:5; Jude 3). We are promised wisdom (James 1:5), but apparently not the miraculous revelations of words and thoughts such as Moses and the prophets received.

15. *How did Moses show his basic reluctance to go?* (4:13)

By asking God to send someone else. God had told HIM to go (4:13). He asked God to send someone else. In order that his request might not sound so blunt, Moses stated it with extra superfluous words: "Send by the hand (that is, by the power and efforts) or him whom thou wilt send." In fact, God was doing exactly what Moses asked him to do: God had decided to deliver Israel by Moses' hand, and was therefore sending Moses. God became angry with Moses' unwillingness (4:14).

16. *Who would help Moses with the speaking?* (4:14)

Aaron, Moses' brother, who could speak well, was at that very time coming to see Moses. Probably Aaron was coming to visit Moses to report the good news of the death of the king (2:23; 4:19). He could not have known just then that the new pharaoh would be as bad as the former one. Aaron would rejoice from his heart upon seeing Moses. It would be interesting to us to know just how Aaron learned of Moses' whereabouts.

Aaron is called the "Levite," although he would have been no more a Levite by race than Moses would have been. It

would seem that the title "Levite" had taken on some technical connotation of "teacher" or "spokesman."

The reference to Aaron in 4:14 is the first mention of him.

17. *How would Moses use Aaron's assistance? (4:15)*

Moses would put the words (of God) into Aaron's mouth (by first putting them into his ears) (Ex. 4:30). We wonder why Moses could not himself speak to Pharaoh if he could speak the words to Aaron. The fact that Moses put THE words into Aaron's mouth reveals the definiteness of God's communication with Moses (Compare Num. 22:38; 23:5; Isa. 51:16). God would direct both Moses' mouth so he would speak to Aaron correctly, and with Aaron's mouth so he would relay the message correctly. This passage indicates much about how inspiration worked as "men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:21).

18. *How could Moses be as God to Aaron? (4:16)*

Only in the respect that Aaron must get his utterances totally from Moses, just as Moses got his message totally from God. See Ex. 7:1-2, 19.

19. *What function was Moses' rod to play in the events that followed? (4:17)*

By the rod he would perform the signs (miracles). This surely came to pass (7:10, 20; 8:5, 16; and other passages).

Unbelieving critics argue that passages (like 7:19; 8:5) which place the rod in the hand of Aaron are by a different author (P., in post-exilic times!) than passages which place the rod in Moses' hand.<sup>2</sup> It seems to us that it would be simpler to suggest that this rod was merely passed back and forth between the hands of Moses and Aaron.

20. *Where did Moses go from the burning bush at Horeb? Why? (4:18)*

He returned back to Jethro, probably in the east part of the Sinai peninsula, to ask permission to go back to Egypt. (He doubtless drove the sheep back with him!) The courtesy of Moses and his thoughtfulness of others' feelings are

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<sup>2</sup>The Broadman Bible Commentary (1969), Vol. 1, p. 335.

commendable.

Moses did not tell Jethro the whole story about the call at the burning bush to go back and save all Israel, but rather simply said that he wanted to go back and visit his relatives. We cannot condemn Moses for this. Jethro could not have accepted this revelation; he would surely have thought Moses had lost his mind.

Maybe Moses was not yet quite convinced himself. This is suggested by the Lord's repeating the command to go in 4:19. Moses was feeling cold feet.

We admire Jethro's agreeable response to Moses' request. Moses' departure was to involve also the departure of Jethro's daughter and Jethro's grandchildren.

Jethro's name in 4:18 is spelled as *Jether* in the Hebrew Bible. The Greek LXX spells it the same as in 3:1. No significance lies in this slight variation in spelling.

21. *Why the repetition of the command of God to Moses in 4:19?*

As indicated above, Moses was probably still hesitant. Some critics maintain that one supposed source of the text of Exodus (J) said that God called Moses in Midian; another source (E) said that God called him at Horeb.<sup>3</sup> This analysis seems to us to overlook the naturalness in God's repeating the command to the still-hesitant Moses. It also ends up contradicting the idea that Moses wrote all of Exodus by attributing different passages in Exodus to different authors living centuries after Moses. Our Lord quoted a passage from Exodus (3:6) and said that it came from the "book of Moses" (Mark 12:26).

22. *When did Moses learn of the death of his enemies in Egypt? (4:19)*

God told him about it at Jethro's house, after he returned from the burning bush at Horeb! There is no indication that he knew it before then. This increases our admiration for Moses greatly. When God first called him, he probably

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<sup>3</sup>W.O.E. Oesterly and T.H. Robinson, *Introduction to the Books of the O.T.* (Cleveland and New York: World, 1965), p. 36.

assumed that at least some of those who had tried once before in Egypt to kill him would still be alive, even if older. In the face of that possibility, he arose to go! Can we possibly be surprised if he showed a little reluctance?

Type: "The men are dead which sought thy life" (Ex. 4:19).

Antitype: "They are dead that sought the young child's (Jesus') life" (Matt. 2:20).

23. *Who went with Moses as he left for Egypt? (4:20)*

His wife and his two sons (Gershom and Eliezer). The second son is here alluded to for the first time. See Ex. 18:3-4. All three apparently sat on one ass! (However, the Greek LXX reads "asses.")

The "rod of God" in Moses' hand is prominently mentioned. This title occurs also in Ex. 17:9. It is called the "rod of GOD" because God used it in such a powerful way.

24. *Would God really harden Pharaoh's heart, and then punish him for his hard-hearted deeds? (4:21)*

Yes, He would. Yes, He did. And for just causes.

The pronoun *I* in "I will harden" is emphatic. God later hardened the heart of Sihon, the Amorite king (Deut. 2:30). Also He hardened the hearts of the Canaanite kings whom Joshua overthrew (Josh. 11:20). God sends strong delusions upon those who receive not the love of the truth (II Thess. 2:10-12).

Rom. 9:17-18: "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth."

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#### SPECIAL STUDY — HARDENING PHARAOH'S HEART

In the passages about the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, sometimes it says that (1) Pharaoh hardened his own heart; sometimes that (2) his heart was hardened, without any clear

indication as to whether God or Pharaoh himself was the main agent in the hardening; sometimes that (3) God hardened his heart. The following chart shows how these three different statements about hardening Pharaoh's heart occur in the scripture.

There are three different Hebrew words used to describe the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. In the order of the intensity of their meaning they are:

- (1) *Kabad* — To be heavy, or insensible; to be honored; to be dull or unresponsive.
- (2) *Qashah* — To be hard, severe, fierce; to be stiff; to make hard, or harden. (Used only in 7:3 and 13:15)
- (3) *Hazaq* (strongest word) — To be strong, firm, obstinate, stout, rigid; to make strong or strengthen.

The following chart indicates which word is used in each passage.

A. Hardening Pharaoh's heart: Preliminary predictions and declarations:			
Reference	Pharaoh hardened his own heart.	Indefinite about who hardened it.	God hardened it.
3:19	King of Egypt will not let you go		
4:21			I will harden ( <i>hazaq</i> ) his heart.
5:2	I will not let Israel go.		
7:3			I will harden ( <i>Qashah</i> ) P.'s heart
7:13		P.'s heart was hardened ( <i>hazaq</i> )	
7:14		P.'s heart is stubborn ( <i>kabad</i> )	
B. Hardening Pharaoh's heart: During the ten plagues:			
7:22 (after 1st)		P.'s heart was hardened ( <i>hazaq</i> )	
8:15 (after 2nd)	He hardened ( <i>kabad</i> ) his heart		
8:19 (after 3rd)		P.'s heart was hardened ( <i>hazaq</i> )	
8:32 (after 4th)	Pharaoh hardened ( <i>kabad</i> )		



9:7 (after 5th)	heart of P. was stubborn ( <i>kabad</i> )	
9:12 (after 6th)		the LORD hard- ened ( <i>hazaq</i> )
9:34 (after 7th)	he sinned again and hardened ( <i>hazaq</i> ) his heart	
9:35	heart of P. was hardened ( <i>hazaq</i> )	
10:20 (after 8th)		the LORD hard- ened ( <i>hazaq</i> )
10:27 (after 9th)		the LORD hard- ened ( <i>hazaq</i> )
11:10 (summary)		the LORD hard- ened ( <i>hazaq</i> )
13:15 (just before Passover)	P. was stubborn ( <i>qashah</i> )	
14:4 (before pursuit)		"I will harden ( <i>hazaq</i> ) P.'s heart."
14:8		the LORD hard- ened ( <i>hazaq</i> )
14:17 (at Red Sea)		I will harden ( <i>hazaq</i> ) the hearts of the Egyptians.

### C. Conclusions about the hardening of Pharaoh's heart:

1. The very first reference to Pharaoh's not letting Israel go places the basic choice about and blame for hardness upon Pharaoh himself (3:19).

2. God promised that he would further harden Pharaoh's heart, since Pharaoh himself had started in this evil way (4:21).

3. After the first five plagues, either the statement is made the Pharaoh hardened his own heart, or the scripture is indefinite about who hardened it. Pharaoh himself made the first choices, and started his own troubles.

4. After the sixth plague, God hardened his heart. Probably Pharaoh sensed to some degree that he was being pushed by a power outside of himself. He was being shown

what might be the consequences of further determined hardness.

5. After the seventh plague, God again left the choice of response to Pharaoh. Pharaoh confesses that he has sinned (9:27). But he sinned yet more, and hardened his own heart again (9:34).

6. After all these opportunities to choose right had been spurned by Pharaoh, God finally stepped in and hardened his heart after the last three plagues. Because Pharaoh chose to go the way of disobedient hardness, God pushed him down his self-chosen route to the bitterest end of his folly.

Take heed, lest any one of YOU be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Hebrews 3:13.

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25. *In what way was Israel God's firstborn? (4:22)*

Israel was God's firstborn in that Israel was the most sacred of all peoples to God. The term *firstborn* is applied to the most honored son of a family, who would usually be the oldest. Pharaoh would have no difficulty in understanding the expression. The Pharaohs called themselves the "son of Ra" (the sun god) or some other deity. Pharaoh's oldest son (or heir) would be specially honored and even sacred in many respects. Israel bore a similar relationship with Yahweh to that which the Egyptian pharaohs claimed for themselves with their own deities.

Israel was not to be Yahweh's only son, but certainly his FIRSTBORN son (or people). Other nations would later be adopted.

Hosea 11:1 speaks of Israel as God's SON whom he called out of Egypt. Isa. 64:8 speaks of the LORD as Israel's father.

26. *What threat was directed at Pharaoh? (4:23)*

"Because you refuse to let Israel, my firstborn, go, behold, I will slay your son, your firstborn." Pharaoh's *firstborn* referred to here consisted of all the firstborn of all the people in Egypt. They were Pharaoh's firstborn because all the people of Egypt were regarded as belonging to Pharaoh. The

death of Egypt's firstborn would be a calamity that exceeded any calamity. See Ex. 11:5; 12:29.

27. *When and why did God try to kill Moses?* (4:24)

On the journey back to Egypt from Midian, while at an inn with his wife and two sons, Moses was smitten by God. Inns were simple tourist houses with shelter for animals as well as people. Compare Gen. 42:27. They must have been fairly common.

It appears from the scripture that Moses became deathly sick, so sick he could not rise from his cot nor do anything. This event occurred before they went as far from Midian as Mt. Sinai, probably at their first stop after leaving Midian.

The reason for this affliction was that Moses had neglected to circumcise one of his sons, possibly because his wife Zipporah had found the act repugnant to her. But God had long before told Abraham — the father and founder of the Hebrew covenant people — that circumcision was the token of God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants. "And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall but cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant" (Gen. 17:14).

Moses was to be the leader of the covenant people Israel. He could not be a leader if he had not first been a follower of God in his own house. We cannot lead where we will not go. This was a serious shortcoming in Moses, and, he nearly died because of it. This incident is a forcible example to God's servants now. They cannot expect to lead people to obey God in ways that they themselves are unwilling to obey.

Skeptical critics dislike Ex. 4:24-26. The 1969 *Broadman Bible Commentary*<sup>4</sup> said that the passage has an almost demonic element about it, and that one is hardly justified in concluding that Yahweh actually attempted to take the life of Moses. The same source thinks that *feet* in 4:25 is a euphemism referring to the male organ, and that the whole passage is a distorted and ugly allusion to ancient marriage

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<sup>4</sup>Vol. 1, p. 337. See also Martin Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

rituals. For our part we find the story edifying and helpful, although not particularly pleasant.

28. *How did Zipporah save her "bridegroom"? (4:25-26)*

She took a sharp flint, and circumcised her son, and cast the foreskin at "his" feet (presumably Moses' feet). By doing this she purchased Moses' life anew by the blood of her son, and she received him back as it were from the dead. Moses recovered.

The fact that she circumcised only her *son* (singular), although two sons were with them on the trip, suggests that the older son had already been circumcised. Zipporah's act in throwing the foreskin at his feet suggests her abhorrence of the rite. We are not informed how Zipporah was able to know that the failure to circumcise the son was the cause of Moses' affliction.

Some interpreters believe that the *his* in 4:25 refers to the son, rather than to Moses. The Revised Standard version translates the passage, "she touched *Moses'* (emphasis ours) feet with it" (the foreskin). Martin Noth, an extreme liberal, says that this insertion of the name *Moses* is "begging the question."<sup>5</sup> We agree that the *his* should probably be left unaltered and uninterpreted, as it is in the Hebrew text. But, nonetheless, the *his* does surely seem to refer to Moses' feet, rather than to the son's. The pronoun *him* in 4:24 and 4:26 seems to refer to Moses in both places. Why should not the *his* in between (in 4:25) also refer to Moses? Also, what significance could there be in casting it at the son's feet?

A quite different view of this passage (4:25-26) is often set forth. This is the view that the *son* is the one called the bridegroom. Gesenius *Hebrew Lexicon* says that it is customary for [Jewish] women to call a son when he is circumcised, "Bridegroom"; and that those who apply the words [of Zipporah] to Moses and not to the child, seem to have made a great mistake. By this view the infant son is by the ceremony of circumcision married into God's covenant.

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<sup>5</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

It appears to us that this view and practice results from a misinterpretation of this passage, and that the more obvious meaning of the text should not be altered by interpreting it by the practice. Judge the practice by the verse, and not the verse by the practice.

Nonetheless, there are problems in the interpretation of the passage. Why should Zipporah refer to Moses as a *bridegroom* when he had been married to her for nearly forty years? The common King James version renders the Hebrew word *hathan* as *husband*; but in all truth *hathan* means a bridegroom, or daughter's husband, and does not simply mean husband. The question is not easy to answer. Possibly Zipporah looked upon Moses' near-death and hoped-for recovery as a renewal of their marriage, and therefore called him bridegroom. To us this seems a more reasonable explanation, than any explanations as to how the son could be called anyone's bridegroom.

After this circumcision incident, Moses sent Zipporah and the two lads back to Midian, and he went alone on toward Egypt. Compare Ex. 18:2-3. It was over a year later when they were reunited.

29. *Where did Moses meet Aaron?* (4:27)

He met him at the mountain of God, that is, Horeb, or Sinai (3:1). God spoke to Aaron, directing him to a certain place at a certain time, as He did later to Philip (Acts 8:26). Moses had made quite a long trip (perhaps seventy miles) from the burning bush at Horeb, back to Midian, and back again to Horeb with his family. The meeting with Aaron would be a strong sign of divine favor to Moses (see 4:14).

30. *What did Moses tell Aaron about?* (4:28)

Two things: the words of God, and all the signs that God had commanded him to do. There is no indication that Moses performed the signs before Aaron; but he told him about them.

31. *What did Aaron do when the elders of Israel were gathered?* (4:30)

He spoke the words which Jehovah had spoken to Moses;

and he did the signs in the sight of the people. We hardly feel that Aaron himself actually did the signs (see 4:3-9). He probably announced that they would be done, and Moses did them. Note how prominent Aaron was as the spokesman here at the beginning of Moses' work of delivering Israel. Aaron's prominence later diminished.

32. *What was Israel's response to the news of deliverance?* (4:31)

They believed, and bowed their heads in worship. The people believed, as God had foretold they would (3:18), and not as Moses feared (4:1).

God twice gave encouragement to Moses as he began his great task: (1) Aaron met Moses, as God had predicted; (2) the people believed, as God had foretold.

*On visit*, see 3:16 and Gen. 50:25.

The Israelites believed when they first heard Moses. Their faith did not stand up in subsequent tests. But they started well, and God only gave them one test at a time. Each experience could lead into a harder test to follow, and to the opportunity for even greater victories of faith.

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The Text of EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**5** And afterward Mo-ses and Aar-on came, and said unto Pha-raoh, Thus saith Je-ho-vah, the God of Is-ra-el, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness. (2) And Pha-raoh said, Who is Je-ho-vah, that I should hearken unto his voice to let Is-ra-el go? I know not Je-ho-vah, and moreover I will not let Is-ra-el go. (3) And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice unto Je-ho-vah our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword. (4) And the king of E-gypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Mo-ses and Aar-on, loose the people from their works? get you unto your burdens. (5) And Pha-raoh said, Behold, the people of the land are now many, and ye make them rest from their burdens. (6) And the same day Pha-raoh commanded the taskmasters of the people, and their

officers, saying, (7) Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves. (8) And the number of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish aught thereof: for they are idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God. (9) Let heavier work be laid upon the men, that they may labor therein; and let them not regard lying words.

(10) And the taskmasters of the people went out, and their officers, and they spake to the people, saying, Thus saith Pha-raoh, I will not give you straw. (11) Go yourselves, get you straw where ye can find it; for nought of your work shall be diminished. (12) So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of E-gypt to gather stubble for straw. (13) And the taskmasters were urgent, saying, Fulfil your works, *your* daily tasks, as when there was straw. (14) And the officers of the children of Is-ra-el, whom Pha-raoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten, and demanded, Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your task both yesterday and to-day, in making brick as heretofore?

(15) Then the officers of the children of Is-ra-el came and cried unto Pha-raoh, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? (16) There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Make brick: and, behold, thy servants are beaten; but the fault is in thine own people. (17) But he said, Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and sacrifice to Je-ho-vah. (18) Go therefore now, and work; for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the number of bricks. (19) And the officers of the children of Is-ra-el did see that they were in evil case, when it was said, Ye shall not diminish aught from your bricks, *your* daily tasks. (20) And they met Mo-ses and Aar-on, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pha-raoh: (21) and they said unto them, Je-ho-vah look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savor to be abhorred in the eyes of Pha-raoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us.

(22) And Mo-ses returned unto Je-ho-vah, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou dealt ill with this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? (23) For since I came to Pha-raoh to speak in thy name, he hath dealt ill with this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER FIVE  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading of the chapter, propose a very brief topic or theme for it.
2. What people went in to talk to Pharaoh? (5:1; Compare 3:18)
3. What request did they deliver to Pharaoh? (5:1)
4. What particular wilderness (or desert) did the people propose to go into? (14:3, 12; 15:22)
5. Did they promise that the people would come back?
6. What did Pharaoh imply about the LORD by asking, "Who is the LORD?"
7. What did Pharaoh NOT know (perhaps deliberately)? What did he refuse to do?
8. What did the Hebrews request to do in the desert? (5:3)
9. What threat upon themselves did Moses use to strengthen his request to Pharaoh? (5:3)
10. What effect did Pharaoh assume that Moses' request would have on the people? (5:4)
11. Where did Pharaoh think that Moses and Aaron ought to be? (5:4)
12. Did Pharaoh regard Moses and Aaron with any honor?
13. What order did Pharaoh give the Egyptian taskmasters to deliver to the Hebrews? (5:6-8)
14. How was straw used in brick making? (Look this up in some Bible dictionary.)
15. Did Pharaoh really believe the people were idle, or was this just an excuse to burden them more? (5:8)
16. What "vain" (or lying) words does Pharaoh speak of in 5:9?
17. Where were the people to get straw for brickmaking? (5:11)
18. How far did the people go looking for straw? (5:12)
19. What did the people gather instead of straw? (5:12)
20. Were the taskmasters patient? (5:13)
21. Who were beaten? Why? (5:14)
22. Who came and cried unto Pharaoh? (5:15) Why did they not have Moses go do their pleading?
23. By what title did the Israelite officers refer to themselves before Pharaoh? (5:15)



24. Where did the blame rest for making fewer bricks? (5:16)
25. How did Pharaoh respond to the protest? (5:17-18)
26. What did the Israelite officers realize after they heard Pharaoh's response? (5:19)
27. Where were Moses and Aaron standing? (5:20)
28. How did the Israelite officers feel toward Moses and Aaron? (5:21)
29. Did the Israelite officers now believe that the LORD had sent Moses to deliver them? (5:21)
30. Explain "Ye have made our savor to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh." (5:21)
31. Explain the figurative meaning of "put a sword in their hands to slay us." (5:21)
32. What did Moses do after the Israelites criticized him? (5:22)
33. How did Moses feel just then? (5:23)
34. What questions did Moses ask of God? (5:23)
35. How had Pharaoh's responses matched Moses' hopes and beliefs?
36. What did the LORD tell Moses that he would see? (6:1)
37. What sort of manner is "with a strong hand"? (6:1)
38. Would Pharaoh *let* them go or drive them out? (6:1; Compare 12:31-33).

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### EXODUS FIVE: RESISTANCE TO GOD'S MAN

- I. RESISTANCE FROM SINNERS (Pharaoh); 5:1-14.
  1. Willful resistance; 5:1-5.
  2. Cruel resistance; 5:6-14.
  3. Intractable resistance; 5:15-18.
- II. RESISTANCE FROM GOD'S PEOPLE; 5:15-21.
  1. Bypassing Moses; 5:15-19.
  2. Criticizing Moses; 5:20-21.

It is not surprising that God's man should get resistance from sinners and outsiders. But the resistance from God's people is unexpected and more painful. Nonetheless, every man of God experiences it.

## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER FIVE

1. *Whose authority did Moses mention first when he confronted Pharaoh?* (5:1)

He mentioned first the authority of Jehovah (Yahweh), the God of Israel. By mentioning Jehovah's name first of all, Moses and Aaron set the tone for the whole conflict that was to come (chs. 5-11). It was fundamentally a conflict between Jehovah God and the gods of Egypt (which included Pharaoh himself). Moses went in to Pharaoh in God's name, speaking as a prophet. Compare Amos 1:3; Jer. 2:2.

It took a lot of courage to go in before great Pharaoh and demand that he let Israel go. Moses had had plain warning that Pharaoh would NOT let them go (3:19).

Moses requests that they be allowed to hold a feast unto Jehovah in the wilderness. God had told Moses to request permission to keep such a feast (or sacrifice; see 3:18; 10:9). Israel had to go into the wilderness for the sacrifice, because they would sacrifice animals sacred to the Egyptians (and almost EVERY animal was sacred to the Egyptians). This could infuriate the Egyptians like the slaughter of a cow would upset a Hindu mob. See 8:25-27.

2. *Who actually confronted Pharaoh?* (5:1)

Only Moses and Aaron. The elders had been instructed to go in with Moses (3:18). Where were they? The Jewish *Midrash*<sup>1</sup> says, very plausibly, that they stole furtively away, singly and in pairs.

This confrontation occurred somewhere in the Nile delta area, even though the capital of XVIII dynasty Egypt was in far-off Thebes to the south. XVIII dynasty kings frequently visited the important Nile delta area.<sup>2</sup> The fact that Pharaoh could communicate the "same day" (5:6) indicates that Pharaoh was near the Israelites, who lived by the delta.

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<sup>1</sup>Amos W. Miller, *Understanding the Midrash* (New York; Jonathan David, 1965), p. 159.

<sup>2</sup>G. L. Archer, *A Survey of O. T. Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1964), pp. 215-216.

### 3. *Was Israel's request to Pharaoh unreasonable?*

Not at all. Every nation presents sacrifices and worship to its gods. Work-journals belonging to the New Kingdom period (time of Moses) in Egypt have furnished, among other reasons for absenteeism, the offering of sacrifices by workmen to their gods.<sup>3</sup>

Pharaoh's refusal shows his complete lack of consideration for people, and his lack of fear of God. By refusing a small request, his real heart-nature was exposed and his conduct condemned. His heart did not need very much hardening to be totally solid!

Note that Moses refers to the God of *Israel*. This is one of the earliest references to Israel as a people, or nation. Previously, *Israel* is used only as a man's (Jacob's) name; hereafter, it is mostly the name of the people as a whole.

### 4. *What did Pharaoh know about Jehovah? (5:2)*

Perhaps nothing. He asks, "Who is Jehovah, that I should hearken to his voice?"

Nonetheless, it seems very doubtful that Pharaoh was completely ignorant of Jehovah. The facts of how the Hebrews' God had saved Egypt in the days of Joseph were not secrets. Most likely Pharaoh was wilfully ignorant. Pharaoh regarded himself as a god.<sup>4</sup> So he disregarded any God other than Egypt's gods.

Pharaoh was soon to regret saying, "Who is Jehovah?" He was to become VERY well acquainted with the power of Jehovah. Sennacherib of Assyria in later years asked a similar question about Jehovah, with equally disastrous results (II Kings 18:35).

Unbelieving critics argue that it had been only a short time (a few months) before when Jehovah revealed himself to the Hebrews by the name Jehovah.<sup>5</sup> By this idea Pharaoh could

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<sup>3</sup>A. Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt* (1894), pp. 124f; quoted in R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the O. T.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 577.

<sup>4</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>5</sup>*Broadman Bible Commentary* (1969), p. 339.

not have known the name since the Hebrews had only recently been introduced to Him. We feel that this idea goes against the Bible's teachings. See notes on 6:2.

In spite of Pharaoh's harsh refusal of Moses' request, God later graciously told the Israelites, "Thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian" (Deut. 23:7).

5. *How did Moses reinforce his request that Pharaoh let Israel go?* (5:3)

He declared that the God of the Hebrews had "met" them, and demanded that they sacrifice unto Him, lest he fall on them with a pestilence (disease) or the sword (war). They faced danger if they did not obey God. See notes on 3:18.

Even though Moses' request was strong, it was rather politely worded: "Let us go, we pray thee."

Again, we emphasize that Moses was under no illusions that Pharaoh would grant their request. It was only their first barrage in the assault on Pharaoh.

6. *How did Pharaoh regard the Hebrews?* (5:3)

He probably regarded them only as one of the assorted Semitic peoples who had at various times in history entered into and "squatted" in Egypt. The Hyksos had been such a people. Such peoples were a threat to the "native" population. The Egyptians contemptuously referred to them as sandcrossers. They are also called the Habiri (or Habiru, or Khapiru, or Apiru), a name applied to peoples in various places who existed outside the normal establishments of society, somewhat like our "Gypsies."

7. *How did Pharaoh regard Moses and Aaron?* (5:4)

He regarded them as nothing more than slaves who ought to be out working with the rest of their people, at "your burdens."

Pharaoh had apparently already learned of the meeting of the Israelites with Moses and Aaron (4:29). This had created considerable stir among the Egyptian rulers, because the Israelites had taken time off from their toils to meet with Moses.

8. *Who were the "people of the land"?* (5:5)

Apparently they were the Hebrews. The exact implications of this expression are not clear, but it is obviously not complimentary. Perhaps Pharaoh refers to "people of the *land*" as contrasted with the city-dwelling "high-class" Egyptians. The people of the land were the working-class serfs, the riff-raff.

Or it may be that Pharaoh spoke of them as his private property. He owned all the land (Gen. 47:20), and they were the "people of the land," people who were permanently associated with the land use.

In any case, the large number of these people was disturbing to Pharaoh, just as their numbers long before had disturbed an earlier ruler of Egypt (Ex. 1:9).

9. *How did the Egyptians feel about idleness? (5:5)*

They did not tolerate it in slaves. A painting in an Egyptian tomb dated about 1450 B.C. (the very time of the oppression!) shows slaves making bricks while their supervisor watches with a stick in his hand. In the writing along the side of the painting the taskmaster is quoted as saying, "The rod is in my hand; be not idle!"<sup>6</sup>

10. *To whom is Ex. 5:5 addressed?*

It is addressed to "ye," apparently to Moses and Aaron, just as is 5:4. However, it sounds somewhat like a monologue, as if Pharaoh were thinking out loud while talking to Moses.

Martin Noth claims that verses 4 and 5 are remains of two distinct source documents, giving two different accounts of Israel's confrontation with Pharaoh. He says that verse 4 is a fragment of E. . . . inserted into the context of J.<sup>7</sup> It seems to us that there is no clash at all between the verses, and that verse 5 is only somewhat of a repetition for emphasis by Pharaoh.

11. *What three classes of officials were over the Hebrew workers?*

(1) "Taskmasters" (Heb. *sare missim*), Egyptian officers

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<sup>6</sup>Ira M. Price, E. L. Carlson, O. R. Sellers, *The Monuments and the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1958), p. 168.

<sup>7</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 53.

apparently over large labor gangs. (1:11)

(2) "Taskmasters" (Heb. *nogesim*). Literally, the title means oppressors; it seems to refer to Egyptian supervisors of smaller work crews. (5:6, 14)

(3) "Officers" (Heb. *shoterim*). Literally, the title means writers, scribes, officers, leaders. It seems to refer to Hebrew workers assigned to crews with them. Perhaps they were responsible to turn in written reports of their productivity each day.

12. *When did Pharaoh issue new work orders?* (5:6).

"The same day!"

13. *What new work-order did Pharaoh issue?* (5:7-11).

He ordered that the Hebrew slaves go find their own straw for brickmaking, but make just as many bricks as they did when straw had been brought to them. Obviously specific daily quotas of bricks had been assigned to be made.

Pharaoh's response was harsh and unreasonable. For requesting a three-day holiday for religious sacrifices, the people are sentenced to much heavier work on an apparently permanent basis. Probably Pharaoh sensed that their request was only the beginning of bigger aspirations.

14. *What did the straw serve for in brickmaking?* (5:7, 12)

Egyptian mud sticks together well enough that straw is not actually needed to hold mud bricks together. Therefore, bricks made without straw are found in Egypt, as well as bricks with straw. However, the straw contains an enzyme that makes the mud much easier to mix and handle.<sup>8</sup> Not having straw would make the Hebrews' work much harder and more abrasive.

These mud bricks work well in a dry land like Egypt, where absence of rainfall prevents houses from being softened and washed away.

15. *Why did Pharaoh accuse Israel of being idle?* (5:8)

Because he was cruel, and was looking for something to

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<sup>8</sup>Joseph Free, *Archaeology and Bible History* (Wheaton, Ill.: Scripture Press, 1972), pp. 91-92.

accuse them of, so he could oppress them. They had not really been idle, except for the one meeting with Moses and Aaron. Pharaoh still said they were idle even after the Israelite workmen themselves told him their true situation (5:16-17). This shows that his charge of idleness was only an excuse to treat them cruelly.

16. *How did Pharaoh regard the words of Moses and Aaron? (5:9)*

He regarded them as vain, or lying, words, which offered false hopes to the people. Pharaoh seems to have heard indirectly of God's promise to Moses to deliver Israel. By overburdening the people, he attempted to crush their spirits, remove all hope from them, and destroy all their confidence in Moses and Aaron.

AMENHOTEP II, (1448-1422 B.C.), Pharaoh of the exodus.

We can understand Pharaoh's reactions to Moses much better when we have read the unbearably boastful writings by Amenhotep II, telling of his exploits as a sportsman.

Now, further his majesty appeared as king as a goodly youth. When he had matured and completed eighteen years on his thighs in valor, he was one who knew every task of Montu [the god of war]: there was no one like him on the field of battle. He was one who knew horses; there was not his like in this numerous army. There was not one therein who could draw his bow. He could not be approached in running.

Strong of arms, one who did not weary when he took the oar, he rowed at the stern of his falcon-boat as the stroke for two hundred men. When there was a pause, after they had attained half an iter's course [probably five-eighths of a mile], they were weak, their bodies were limp, they could not draw a breath, whereas his majesty was (still) strong under his oar of twenty cubits in its length [about 34 feet!].

.....

He drew three hundred stiff bows in comparing the work of the craftsmen of them, in order to distinguish the ignorant from the wise. When he had just come from doing this which I have called to your attention, he entered into his northern garden and found there had been set up for him four targets of Asiatic copper of one palm in their thickness [A little less than 3 inches], with twenty cubits between one post and its fellow. Then his majesty appeared in a chariot like Montu in his power. He grasped his bow and gripped four arrows at the same time. So he rode northward, shooting at them like Montu in his regalia. His arrows had come out on the back thereof while he was attacking another post. It was really a deed which had never been done nor heard of. . . .<sup>9</sup>

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17. *What did the Israelites use for straw?* (5:12)

They used stubble. The long clean wheat straw that had been cut with sickles, tied into bundles, and probably kept in barns, was no longer brought to them for brickmaking. Instead they had to go out and pull up stubby ends of wheat stems attached to the roots still in the ground. Along with wheat and barley stubble would be all kinds of field rubbish, weeds, twigs, etc. These had to be uprooted, carried home, cleaned, sorted, and chopped.

The presence of stubble indicates this occurred after the barley and wheat harvest, near the end of April, or early May. At this season the pestilential sand-wind blows over Egypt, often for days on end. The Israelites' sufferings must have been intense! Why would they ever at later times have longed to return to Egypt (Ex. 16:3)?

18. *Could the Israelites fulfill the heavier work demands upon them?* (5:14)

By no means! Thereupon the Hebrew "straw bosses" were beaten with sticks by the Egyptians, because their crews had

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<sup>9</sup>From "Pharaoh as a Sportsman," translated by John A. Wilson, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1955), p. 244. Used by permission.



not made the daily assigned quotas of bricks. The Egyptians had set this up deliberately. The impossibly difficult work quotas were just the excuse for the persecution they intended to lay on them.

19. *Who went to Pharaoh to protest the beatings?* (5:15-16)

The Israelite officers themselves went. They took matters into their own hands. Moses had failed initially to get them delivered, and so they went to Pharaoh seeking fair treatment. Observe that the Israelites meekly referred to themselves three times as "thy servants."

20. *Whom did the Israelites blame for their troubles?* (5:16)

They blamed Pharaoh's taskmasters, "thine own people." This was only partly true: the fault was really in Pharaoh himself. His people were only following his orders.

The Greek O.T. (LXX) reads in 5:16, ". . . thy servants have been scourged; thou wilt therefore injure (or deal unjustly with) thy people." Both this translation and that of the Hebrew Bible show how submissive the Israelites felt.

21. *What did the Israelites realize about their situation after their conference with Pharaoh?* (5:19)

"They did see that they were in an evil situation." It impresses us that they were extremely slow in figuring this out. The root of their trouble was Pharaoh himself, not his taskmasters. Perhaps in their desperation they had believed what they wanted to believe, that surely Pharaoh would help them when he knew the truth about them. That hope was now dashed. To whom could they turn now for help? They did not turn to God. Instead they turned to bitterness (5:21; 6:9).

22. *Where did the Israelites meet Moses and Aaron?* (5:20)

Moses and Aaron were standing in the road from Pharaoh's house, evidently having stationed themselves there, probably expecting to hear a more hopeful report.

23. *What use of Jehovah's name did Israel make toward Moses?* (5:21)

They called on Jehovah to judge (condemn, punish, or damn) Moses and Aaron. Their statement is nearly a curse.

What perversity this shows! While calling upon Jehovah to

judge and punish Moses, they show by their complaining that they have no confidence in God or His power to save.

24. *What effects did the Israelites feel that Moses' meeting with Pharaoh had had upon them?* (5:21)

(1) "You have made us stink in the eyes (nostrils?) of Pharaoh. *Savor*, or smell, here means reputation or standing. Similar expressions can be found in Gen. 34:30; II Sam. 10:6; I Sam. 27:12. In truth, the Israelites did not have a very good "savor" before Pharaoh even before Moses arrived; they were already enslaved then (2:23-24).

(2) "You have put a sword in their hands to slay us." You have given them the provocation and excuse to harm us.

These first accusations of the Israelites against Moses were only the beginning of a torrent of such objections to his leadership that would later grieve Moses. See Ex. 14:11; 15:24; 16:2; and on and on.

25. *What did Moses do when the Israelites rejected him?* (5:22)

He *returned* unto Jehovah. This expression is beautiful in its simplicity, implying constant communion with God. God's man must have such closeness with God constantly.

Then he *prayed*, asking God why He had done evil to the Israelites. Moses' words are not critical, but words of inquiry and prayer. They spring from faith instead of doubt. But his words are urgent: "Why did you ever send me?"

By the word *evil* Moses referred to calamity, misfortune, or other adversities, rather than to moral evil. Compare Gen. 43:6; Num. 20:15; Job 24:20.

Moses' prayer here is the first of many prayers he uttered after the times when the people challenged his leadership. Compare Ex. 32:1, 11; Numbers 11:11.

26. *What answer did God give to Moses' prayer?* (6:1)

"You shall see what I will do to Pharaoh . . . he shall drive Israel out of his land."

"By a strong hand" means "with a powerful force" and "with urgency." It refers to Pharaoh's hand, rather than to God's hand. God indeed laid His hand heavily upon Pharaoh (7:4-5; 13:3). This broke Pharaoh's resistance, so that

Pharaoh himself thrust Israel out of his land (See Ex. 12:33, 39.)

27. *How do we relate to Moses' experiences?*

Few people can read Exodus chapters 1-6 and fail to see therein a reflection of their own experiences with God and His people. In Moses we see our own aspirations and disappointments, faith and fears, hopes and hesitancy, dreams and despair. Moses as God's man is a picture of every man of God.

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THE TEXT OF EXODUS

TRANSLATION

**6** And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pha-raoh: for by a strong hand shall he let them go, and by a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.

(2) And God spake unto Mo-ses, and said unto him, I am Je-ho-vah: (3) and I appeared unto Abraham, unto I-saac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty; but by my name Je-ho-vah I was not known to them. (4) And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Ca-naan, the land of their sojournings, wherein they sojourned. (5) And moreover I have heard the groaning of the children of Is-ra-el, whom the E-gyp-tians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. (6) Wherefore say unto the children of Is-ra-el, I am Je-ho-vah, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the E-gyp-tians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with an out-stretched arm, and with great judgments: (7) and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and ye shall know that I am Je-ho-vah your God, who bringeth you out from under the burdens of the E-gyp-tians. (8) And I will bring you in unto the land which I swore to give to Abraham, to I-saac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for a heritage: I am Je-ho-vah. (9) And Mo-ses spake so unto the children of Is-ra-el: but they hearkened not unto Mo-ses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.

(10) And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (11) Go in, speak unto Pha-raoh king of E-gypt, that he let the children of Is-ra-el go out of his land. (12) And Mo-ses spake before

Je-ho-vah, saying, Behold, the children of Is-ra-el have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pha-raoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips? (13) And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses and unto Aar-on, and gave them a charge unto the children of Is-ra-el, and unto Pha-raoh king of E-gypt, to bring the children of Is-ra-el out of the land of E-gypt.

(14) These are the heads of their fathers' houses. The sons of Reu-ben the first-born of Is-ra-el: Ha-noch, and Pal-lu, Hez-ron, and Eac-mi; these are the families of Reu-ben. (15) And the sons of Sim-e-on: Jem-u-el, and Ja-min, and O-had, and Ja-chin, and Zo-har, and Sha-ul the son of a Ca-naan-i-tish woman; these are the families of Sim-e-on. (16) And these are the names of the sons of Le-vi according to their generations: Ger-shon, and Ko-hath, and Me-ra-ri; and the years of the life of Le-vi were a hundred thirty and seven years. (17) The sons of Ger-shon: Lib-ni and Shim-e-i, according to their families. (18) And the sons of Ko-hath: Am-ram, and Iz-har, and He-bron, and Uz-ziel; and the years of the life of Ko-hath were a hundred thirty and three years. (19) And the sons of Me-ra-ri: Mah-li and Mu-shi. These are the families of the Le-vites according to their generations. (20) And Am-ram took him Joch-e-bed his father's sister to wife; and she bare him Aar-on and Mo-ses: and the years of the life of Am-ram were a hundred and thirty and seven years. (21) And the sons of Iz-har: Ko-rah, and Ne-pheg, and Zich-ri. (22) And the sons of Uz-ziel: Mish-a-el, and El-za-phan, and Sith-ri. (23) And Aar-on took him E-lish-e-ba, the daughter of Am-min-a-dab, the sister of Nah-shon, to wife; and she bare him Na-dab and A-bi-hu, E-le-a-zar and Ith-a-mar. (24) And the sons of Ko-rah: As-sir, and El-ka-nah, and A-bi-a-saph; these are the families of the Ko-rah-ites. (25) And E-le-a-zar Aar-on's son took him one of the daughters of Pu-ti-el to wife; and she bare him Phin-e-has. These are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Le-vites according to their families. (26) These are that Aar-on and Mo-ses, to whom Je-ho-vah said, Bring out the children of Is-ra-el from the land of E-gypt according to their hosts. (27) These are they that spake to Pha-raoh king of E-gypt, to bring out the children of Is-ra-el from E-gypt: these are that

**Moses and Aaron.**

(28) And it came to pass on the day when Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses in the land of E-gypt (29) that Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, I am Je-ho-vah: speak thou unto Pha-raoh king of E-gypt all that I speak unto thee. (30) And Mo-ses said before Je-ho-vah, Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pha-raoh hearken unto me?

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**EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER SIX**  
**QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE**

1. After careful reading propose a brief title or topic for ch. six.
2. Why did God keep telling Moses "I am the LORD (Jehovah)"? (6:2, 6, 8, 29)
3. By what name was God known to Abraham and Isaac? (6:3; Gen. 17:1)
4. By what name was God NOT known to them?
5. Didn't Abraham really know the name *Jehovah* (LORD)? See Gen. 22:14; 18:14; 15:7.
6. How can we explain Ex. 6:3 if Abraham actually used the name *Jehovah*? Compare Ezekiel 39:7; Jer. 16:21; Isaiah 52:6.
7. What had God established with Abraham and Isaac? (6:4)
8. What did God intend to give to Abraham and Isaac? (6:4)
9. How were Abraham and Isaac "strangers" (sojourners) in the land? See Acts 7:4-5; Heb. 11:8-10, 13-16.
10. What had God heard? (6:5)
11. What did God remember? (6:5)
12. What significance would there be to Israel in God's saying, "I am the LORD"? 6:6-7; (Compare Isa. 49:23)
13. What does *redeem* mean in "I will redeem you"? (Ex. 6:6)
14. What is implied in God's arm being "outstretched"?
15. When did God formally take Israel to him as His people? (6:7; Ex. 19:1, 5-6; Deut. 4:20; 29:13)
16. Did Israel quickly sense the significance of the fact that the

LORD was their God? (6:7-8)

17. How strongly had God affirmed His intention to give the land to Abraham and Isaac? (6:8)
18. Did Israel accept God's words which Moses delivered unto them? Why or why not? (6:9)
19. Why did the LORD in 6:11 repeat His command to Moses to go in and speak unto Pharaoh? (Compare 4:22, 23; 5:1)
20. What objection did Moses give against going back to Pharaoh? (6:12)
21. What is meant by *uncircumcised* lips? (Compare Ex. 4:10; Acts 7:51)
22. What charge did the LORD give Moses and Aaron? (6:13). What is a charge?
23. Do you think from 6:10-13 that Moses was rather reluctant?
24. What is the purpose or point of inserting all of the genealogies of 6:14-25 into the story right here?
25. Which three sons of Jacob have descendants listed in 6:14-16?
26. Can you suggest any possible reason(s) for listing the descendants of only three of Jacob's sons in 6:14-16?
27. Whose son married a Canaanite woman? (6:15)
28. Was the chosen family at this time prohibited from marrying outside of their family? (Gen. 24:3-4; 28:1-2; Compare Ex. 34:11-16)
29. Name the three sons of Levi. (6:16)
30. What were the Levites later appointed to do? (Numbers 3:6-8, 12)
31. Who was Amram? (6:18, 20)
32. Who was Izhar the brother of? (6:18)
33. Who was the first son of Izhar, as listed in 6:21?
34. How was Korah related to Moses and Aaron? (6:18-21)
35. What was Korah later famous (or infamous) for? (Numbers 16:1-3, 32; Jude 11)
36. Who was Amram's wife? (6:20)
37. Whom did Aaron marry? (6:23)
38. Of what tribe was Aaron's wife? (6:23; Numbers 1:7)
39. Name Aaron's four sons. (6:23)

40. Who was Aaron's grandson? (6:25)
  41. What verse (in this sixth chapter) does 6:26 refer back to?
  42. What thought connection may there be between the genealogies of 6:14-25 and the emphatic references to Moses and Aaron in 6:26-27? Try to suggest some possible connection.
  43. According to (or by) what groupings were the Israelites to be brought out of Egypt? (6:26; Num. 1:3; Num. 10:11-14, 18; Ex. 7:4)
  44. What emphatic declaration did God make about Himself in 6:29?
  45. What was Moses to speak unto Pharaoh?
  46. What does the repetition in 6:12 and 6:30 suggest about Moses' willingness?
  47. Is there a sharp thought break between chapters 6 and 7? Does 6:28—7:7 seem like one paragraph to you?
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#### EXODUS SIX: STRENGTHENING OF GOD'S MAN

Moses surely needed strengthening after the resistance described in chapter five. How was God's man strengthened?

- I. By God's name; 6:2-3, 6, 29.
  - II. By God's promises; 6:1, 6-8
  - III. By God's covenant; 6:4-5.
  - IV. By God's command; 6:10-13, 28-29.
  - V. By past examples (family associations); 6:14-27.
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#### EXODUS SIX: STRENGTH FOR SERVICE

#### EXODUS SIX: THREE PRECIOUS P's

- I. Promise of God; 6:1, 6.
  - II. Power of God; 6:6.
  - III. People of God; 6:7, 14-26.
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GOD'S PROMISES TO ISRAEL (Ex. 6:6-8)

1. I will bring you out; 6:6.
  2. I will rid you of bondage.
  3. I will redeem you.
  4. I will take you for my people; 6:7.
  5. I will be to you a God.
  6. I will bring you into the land; 6:8.
  7. I will give the land to you for a possession.
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GOD'S COMMITMENT TO HIS PEOPLE

1. He redeems from oppressions.
  2. He takes us as His.
  3. He gives us an inheritance.
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I AM THE LORD (JEHOVAH)

1. Jehovah, the covenant-maker (6:4).
  2. Jehovah, the cry-hearer (6:5).
  3. Jehovah, the deliverer (6:6).
  4. Jehovah, the receiver of His people (6:7).
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EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER SIX

1. *What is Exodus chapter 6 all about?*

The chapter gives the record of how God strengthened and reassured Moses. Moses was downcast after both Pharaoh and the people of Israel had rejected him (Ch. 5). Ch. six tells how God strengthened him and confirmed him in his labors.

2. *How do unbelieving critics interpret chapter 6?*

They regard it as a different account of the commission of Moses by a different author (called P, for priestly) than the



one who wrote 3:1—6:1 (called J, for Jehovist). P supposedly lived after the Babylonian captivity and J in the ninth or tenth century before Christ. They maintain that P knew nothing of Moses' call in Midian, but rather thought he was called in Egypt. Frankly, this shocks us.

Even a critic as extreme as Martin Noth admits that chapter six now *appears* (emphasis ours) as a confirmation of the commission previously given to Moses, and an invitation to make new demands upon Pharaoh.<sup>1</sup> It surely does so appear! But he is confident that he can see by the wording that really chapter six is an independent treatment of the one and only call and commissioning of Moses.

To us it is more natural to regard chapter six as a continuation of the story given in ch. five. Also to divide Exodus into several contradictory sources (J, E, P) is to deny that Moses wrote the books of the law, as Christ affirmed that he did (John 7:19; 1:17).

3. *How would God's saying "I am the LORD (Jehovah)" help Moses? (6:2)*

It would help because by that name all the power, permanence, potential, promises, and performances of God were brought back to their minds.

The name *Jehovah* signifies the eternal one, the one who causes things to happen. See notes on Ex. 3:14-15.

In this chapter God repeatedly reassured Moses and Israel by saying, "I am Jehovah" (6:2, 7, 8, 29). "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe." (Prov. 18:10)

Centuries later in the time of the Babylonian captivity God was still reassuring Israel by saying "I am Jehovah." (Ezek. 39:7; 38:23).

If the name of the LORD Jehovah does not give us some reassuring thoughts, we need to study and meditate some more concerning it.

4. *By what name was God known to Abraham, Isaac, and*

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<sup>1</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 58.

*Jacob?* (6:3)

As God Almighty (Hebrew, *El Shaddai*). This name is specially prominent in Gen. 17:1, where God gave the covenant of circumcision to Abraham. It also appears in Gen. 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3. The Greek O.T. translates it as *Pantocrator*, meaning the Almighty. The Latin gives it as *Deus omnipotens*, meaning God almighty.

The name *El* means mighty or powerful one. In its plural form *elohim* it is the most common word for *God* in the O.T. A variant form *Eloah* also occurs (Deut. 32:15; Ps. 18:31; Job 3:4 and many other places in Job).

The most ancient meaning of *Shaddai* is quite uncertain. Some connect it with the Assyrian word *shadu*, meaning mountain.<sup>2</sup> This could be the origin of the word, without its preserving any polytheistic implications, such as that *El Shaddai* was once a mountain worshipped as a god. Psalm 36:6 speaks of God's righteousness as being like a great mountain.

5. *Did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob really know that God's name was Jehovah (LORD)?*

Certainly they knew it. See Gen. 12:8; 14:22; 15:8; 21:33; 24:3; 26:22; 27:27; 28:16; 49:18. In Gen. 22:14 Abraham called the place where he almost sacrificed his son Isaac *JEHOVAH-JIREH*, meaning Jehovah will see, or provide.

In fact, Gen. 4:26 indicates that men began to call upon the name of Jehovah back in the time of Enosh, the great-grandson of Adam.

How then can Ex. 6:2 say that God was not known to them by his name Jehovah?

The explanation seems to be that to God knowing that his name is Jehovah means knowing what that name implies. It implies knowing his eternal nature, and how He will deliver his people.

Abraham knew Jehovah by name; but he never lived to learn the glorious Jehovah-type fulfillment of His promises or

<sup>2</sup>Broadman Bible Commentary (1969), p. 342. Cole. *op. cit.*, p. 84.

how He delivered His people. Even we do not really know a person when we know only what his name is.

That this is the true explanation of how Abraham could use the name *Jehovah* and still not know the name *Jehovah* is indicated by later passages, such as Ezek. 39:7 and Jer. 16:21 and Isa. 52:6. These passages were written centuries after the name *Jehovah* was well known. But even then God said, "I will cause them to know . . . that my name is *Jehovah*" (Jer. 16:21). Also "My holy name will I make known in the midst of my people Israel" (Ezek. 39:7).

In our language and idiom we do not speak of people as not knowing our names just because they do not know our works and personalities. But God so speaks of His name. It is for us to adjust our thinking to God's manner of speaking, rather than to assert that the Bible is contradictory. Critics assert oftentimes that previous references (in Genesis and Ex.) to the name *Jehovah* were from one source document (J), and that the Priestly source here at 6:2 introduces the name *Jehovah* for the first time. We find this unverified and unacceptable.

6. *What had God promised in His covenant with Israel spoken to Abraham?* (6:4, 8)

He promised to multiply their number and give them the land of Canaan. See Gen. 15:18; 17:4, 7, 8; 12:7; 26:3; 28:4, 13; 35:11-12. Israel's occupation of Canaan is always seen in the Bible as a fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham. But on the other side, the driving out of the Canaanites is seen as God's punishment for their wickedness (Gen. 15:16).<sup>3</sup>

7. *What did God remember?* (6:5)

He remembered His covenant with Israel spoken to Abraham. To say that He remembered does not imply that God had previously forgotten. He was remembering now in the sense that He was now starting to ACT in fulfilling His covenant. Faithfulness to covenant promises is one of God's

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<sup>3</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

most consistent qualities. How greatly this should reassure us who are under such NEW covenant promises as Heb. 8:12!

8. *What seven great promises did God give to Israel? (6:6-8)*

See p. 141 for the list of these promises. In these seven great promised acts, Israel would see what the name *Jehovah* meant. The name *Jehovah* should bring to their minds the whole list of God's acts in the exodus experiences.

The *I* in "I am Jehovah" is emphatic.

Jesus may also be called Jehovah (LORD), as well as the father is called by that name. Compare Isa. 40:3 and Mark 1:1, 3. All the significance of the name *Jehovah God* to the Jews should be felt by Christians in the mighty name of JESUS-JEHOVAH.

9. *What does "redeem" mean? (6:6; Compare 15:6)*

Basically it means to buy back something that has been forfeited or sold. It means to act as a redeemer-kinsman (Heb. *goel*), one who saves some destitute relative from danger, debt, or widowhood. Boaz was the redeemer-kinsman of Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 2:20; 3:9; Lev. 25:25). Later the meaning of *redeem* was broadened to refer to deliverance from dangers of various types.

To *redeem* therefore means to deliver people from unbearable troubles. The way God redeemed Israel is an illustration of the way we Christians are redeemed (I Peter 1:18; Eph. 1:7). God did not spare Israel from all their troubles and hardships in the desert, but He did deliver them from all intolerable difficulties, those which were beyond their power to face. Similarly we cannot expect to escape all tribulation and persecution. But God does redeem us from the sin, death, and distresses that are beyond our ability to conquer.

10. *What kind of arm is an "outstretched" arm? (6:6)*

It is a visible, powerful, and active arm, like the arm of a warrior arming for battle. The idea of God's stretched-out arm and His great judgments reappears later in Ex. 13:3 and Deut. 5:15.

11. *What would God take Israel unto Himself to be? (6:7)*

To be His people! Compare Ex. 19:5-6; 29:45-46; Gen. 17:8;

Deut. 4:20; 7:6; 29:13. Israel was a stiff-necked rebellious people. God's choice of Israel was an act of incredible grace and forbearance.

The actual time and place when God took Israel as His people was at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:5). This Sinai covenant was reconfirmed and settled in the plains of Moab, just before Israel entered the promised land (Deut. 28:9; 29:1, 12-13).

The result of God's taking Israel for His people would be to cause them to know that He was Jehovah their God. This thought about knowing God's name was a strong and repeated emphasis by God (6:2, 6; Isa. 49:23).

At the present time we Christians are the people of God, whether we be Jews or Gentiles (Eph. 1:4; II Cor. 6:18; Rev. 21:7).

12. *What was God's heritage to Israel? (6:8)*

The heritage was the land which He swore to give to Abraham (Compare Neh. 9:15). A heritage is a possession, often one received as an inheritance. Interestingly, the term *heritage* is applied in Deut. 33:4 to the law (or Torah) itself.

13. *How did Israel respond to Moses' words of reassurance? (6:9)*

They would not hearken or pay attention to him. Because of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage they were not receptive to any optimistic promises. *Anguish of spirit* is literally *shortness of spirit* (or *breath*). Their longsuffering had shrunk to shortness of spirit. Israel's vital energy and hope was shortened and sapped.

14. *What order did God give to Moses in his despondency? (6:10-11, 13)*

God told him to go in and speak to Pharaoh and demand that he let Israel go. God's order to Moses would strengthen his weak spirit. Often a good "kick in the pants" is exactly what hesitant men need. Note the reemphasis of the order in 6:13.

Note also that the demands upon Pharaoh have gone up. Previously it was only for permission to go and sacrifice (5:1). Now Moses is to ask that Israel be released (6:11, 13).

15. *What are uncircumcised lips? (6:12, 30)*

*Lips* seems to be a figure of speech meaning speaking ability. Uncircumcised lips are lips that are not adequate and capable of saying the words necessary to get a needed job done.

Similarly we read of uncircumcised hearts and ears, that is, ears and hearts that will not hear and comprehend (Acts 7:51).

The root application in the word *uncircumcised* refers, of course, to the natural fleshly state of the male member. In the ages before Christ came, to be uncircumcised was to be outside of God's covenant promises to Abraham's descendants (Gen. 17:10-14). By broadening the use of the term, it came to be applied to several inadequate, incompetent, unqualified aspects of our being.

NOTE: The Biblical description of Moses at this point (6:12) is not very flattering; but it is realistic. In significant contrast to the Biblical record about Moses, the Jewish historian Josephus<sup>4</sup> says that Moses did not let his courage sink for the king's threatenings; nor did he abate of his zeal on account of the Hebrews' complaints. How different is the truthful inspired Biblical account from the flattering propaganda version of history by Josephus!

16. *Why is a genealogical list (6:14-25) inserted into the history at this point?*

To be very candid, no one knows why with absolute certainty.

Unbelieving critics see it only as evidence of the existence of several poorly-harmonized source documents lying behind our book of Exodus. Martin Noth<sup>5</sup> says 6:13-30 is a secondary insertion which serves in the Priestly author's view to introduce and exalt the priest Aaron as the older brother of Moses. Believers can point out that Aaron was introduced long before (in 4:14, a verse ascribed to J, another author!).

<sup>4</sup>*Antiquities*, II, xiii, 4.

<sup>5</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 58.

Also, in the genealogy Aaron really receives little more stress than Amram (6:18, 20) or even Korah (6:21-24).

But what can believers say to account for the genealogy here? Ex. 6:27 indicates that the genealogy is to highlight and identify the persons Moses and Aaron at this dramatic moment in their history.

Also we may conjecture that at this discouraging time in Moses' career, he himself may have recalled his family tree, a family that had long before received God's promises through their forefather Abraham. This would be great encouragement to Moses. How could he (or we) forsake the God and faith of the forefathers?

God himself may have brought thoughts about his family tree to Moses' mind just then (Compare John 14:26). Therefore, when Moses later penned Exodus, he recorded here an abbreviated genealogy, but one given in sufficient detail to make its encouraging force in his life obvious. The genealogy is certainly too abbreviated to have been intended as a full family record.

17. *What is presented in the genealogy?*

First the names of Jacob's (Israel's) three oldest sons (Reuben, Simeon, and Levi) and their immediate descendants are given (6:14-16). Then the descendants of Levi are traced on through several generations, with special attention given to those personages who will be prominent in the later history of Israel's wilderness wanderings and the conquest of Canaan.

18. *What are "heads of fathers' houses"?* (6:14)

This is a technical term for clans, or families;<sup>6</sup> or for a collection of families called by the name of a common ancestor.<sup>7</sup>

19. *What is related of Reuben's descendants?* (6:14)

Only his sons' names. Their names here are identical to (and possibly transcribed from) Gen. 46:9. The Reubenites

<sup>6</sup>J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1969), p. 234.

<sup>7</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 469.

are also listed in Num. 26:5-9 and I Chron. 5:1ff.

20. *What is related of Simeon's descendants?* (6:15)

Only his sons' names and the fact that one son (Shaul) was the son of a Canaanite woman. The list here is like that of Gen. 46:10, and is similar to those in Num. 26:12-14 and I Chron. 4:24ff.

The marriage of Simeon to a Canaanite woman speaks loudly about the strong tendency of the Israelites to enter such faith-destroying marriages. These were later strictly forbidden by God through Moses (Ex. 34:15-16; Deut. 7:3-4). The idolatry which later developed among the Simeonites (Num. 25:14), and their great decline in population (Num. 1:23; 26:14) suggests an inherent weakness in the tribe's character.

21. *Who were the three sons of Levi?* (6:16)

Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Memorize these names now! These were fathers of large families that later had specific assignments in transporting and caring for the tabernacle in the wilderness. See Numbers 3:14ff.

A comment in *Preacher's Homiletic Commentary* about these genealogies is good: These genealogies are like great stone bluffs, sterile looking, but there is a spring at their feet.

22. *Are there gaps in the genealogy given for Levi?* (6:16-20)

Yes. This is clearly indicated by the fact that all three of Levi's sons had been born before Jacob's family settled into Egypt (Gen. 46:11); then, Amram, the son of Levi's son, lived only 137 years; and Amram's son Moses was only eighty years old at the time of the exodus. There are not enough years in the life spans of these men to stretch across the Egyptian bondage period of 430 years (Ex. 12:40).

Even more conclusive proof of gaps in the genealogy of Levi is the fact that at Mt. Sinai, less than two years after the time of Ex. 6, the Kohathites (which included Moses) numbered 8600 men and boys (Num. 3:28ff). These Kohathites are divided into four groups named after Kohath's four sons, including Amram. This would indicate that there were about 2147 ( $8600 \div 4$ ) Amramites. But Amram the



father of Moses had only two sons (Moses and Aaron), and these had less than ten descendants at Mt. Sinai. So apparently the numerous Amramites are descendants of the previous Amram, Levi's grandson, and not the later father of Moses, also named Amram.

23. *Who were the sons of Kohath?* (6:18)

They were (1) Amram (not the father of Moses, but a previous Amram); (2) Izhar, the father (or, more probably, a previous ancestor) of the infamous Korah, who led a rebellion against Moses (Num. 16:1); (3) Hebron; and (4) Uzziel. Of the latter two we know little (Compare 6:22). Uzziel's sons helped bury Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:4). See also Num. 3:30.

24. *Who were Moses' father and mother?* (6:20)

Amram and Jochebed, his father's aunt. See notes on Ex. 2:1.

Jochebed's name means "Jehovah (Jah) is (my) glory."<sup>8</sup> This shows that the name *Jehovah* (or Yahweh) was indeed used by the Hebrews before Ex. 6:3. And therefore the imaginary *P* source (to which critics ascribe Ex. 6) did know and use Jehovah's name before the Ex. 6:3 "revelation." Critics ascribe all earlier uses of the name *Jehovah* to another source. Their knowledge of unknowable things passes all bounds.

25. *Who were Aaron's wife and children?* (6:23)

His wife was Elishaba, better known as Elizabeth (from the LXX). She was of the tribe of Judah. Her brother Nahshon was one of the princes of the tribe of Judah, so she would be a princess (I Chron. 2:10). Elishaba was a sister of a direct ancestor (Nahshon) of Christ. Her father was Amminadab, and her grandfather was named Ram (Matt. 1:4; Luke 3:33; Ruth 1:18-20).

Aaron's children were Nadab and Abihu and Eleazar and

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<sup>8</sup>Hertz, *op. cit.*, p. 234. Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 87, affirms a differing view, that the name *Jochebed* means only "May he (the unnamed god!) glorify." Hertz is a Jewish commentator, and his interpretation of this name seems definitely preferable.

Ithamar. Memorize these names now, preferably in pairs. Aaron's sons (descendants) later became the priests in Israel (See Ex. 28:1). Nadab and Abihu were burned to death at Mt. Sinai for offering "strange" (unauthorized) fire upon the altar of incense (Lev. 10:1-2). Eleazar became high priest after Aaron died (Num. 20:25-28). In later generations the high priesthood passed to the house of Aaron's son Ithamar in the person of Eli and his sons Ahimelech and Abiathar (I Chron. 24:3; I Sam. 1:9). Still later the high priesthood reverted to the house of Eleazar through Zadok (I Kings 2:26-27, 35).

26. *How did Korah's family become famous?* (6:24)

Korah led a great rebellion against Moses at Kadesh-barnea (Numbers 16; Jude 11). Centuries later the surviving "sons" of Korah became famous temple musicians among the Levites of Israel (I Chron. 6:22-23). Psalm titles on Psalms 42, 44-49, 84-85, 87-88 attribute these psalms to the sons of Korah.

27. *How significant were Eleazar and Phinehas?* (6:25)

Extremely significant. Eleazar became high priest after the death of his father Aaron (Num. 20:23-28). He was priest during Israel's conquest of Canaan and the division of the land (Josh. 14:1).

Phinehas was the son of Eleazar and succeeded him as high priest (Josh. 24:33). Phinehas is renowned for spearing an adulterous couple, and thereby averting God's judgment upon Israel (Num. 25:7-11; Psalm 106:30).

28. *What purpose does the reference to Aaron and Moses in 6:26-27 have?*

This reference draws our minds back to the main story of Moses and Aaron and their confrontation with Pharaoh, after the interruption of presenting their family tree in 6:14-25. The story now resumes where it left off at 6:13. We are reminded in 6:26-27 of the fact previously stated, namely that Moses and Aaron had been commanded to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt. The genealogies give a sense of historical honor to Moses and Aaron. This sharpens the

issues in their conflict with Pharaoh.

Note that Aaron is mentioned first in 6:26 and Moses first in 6:27. Probably no great significance can be attached to this.

Note also the third-person writing in Ex. 6:26-27. This style does not eliminate the possibility that Moses himself wrote Exodus. Egyptian writings by the Pharaohs about themselves and by themselves are often written in third person. So also are Biblical writings. Note Ezra 7:10 (compare 8:15) and John 19:35 as examples.

29. *Whose words would Moses (and Aaron) speak? (6:28-29)*

God's words. "Speak . . . all that I speak unto thee." Compare 7:2. God's servants need not fear or wonder what they should speak. Speak words God has given us.

30. *What reassurance did God give Moses? (6:28-29)*

God told him, I am Jehovah! See notes on 3:14-15 and 6:3 for information about the meaning and power in the name Jehovah.

Regarding Moses' statement about "uncircumcised lips," see notes on 6:12.

31. *Where does the paragraph beginning at 6:28 extend to?*

It extends on through 7:7. It is unfortunate that the chapter division was placed where it is. 7:1-7 continues God's reassurance to Moses, telling how He will harden Pharaoh's heart, and work wonders in Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel.

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## The Text of EXODUS

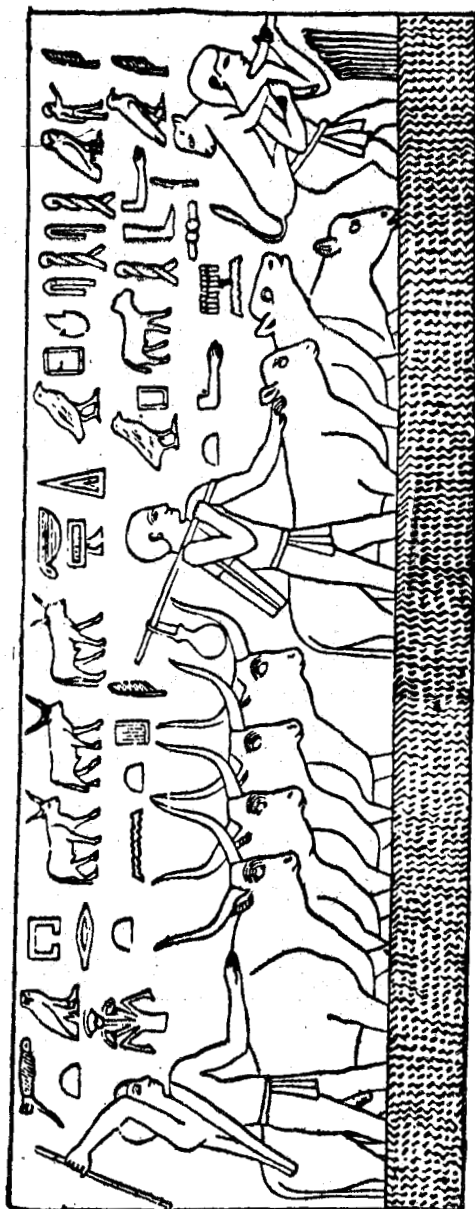
### TRANSLATION

**7** And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses. See, I have made thee as God to Pha-raoh; and Aar-on thy brother shall be thy prophet. (2) Thou shalt speak all that I command thee; and Aar-on thy brother shall speak unto Pha-raoh, that he let the children of Is-ra-el go out of his land. (3) And I will harden



(Upper) The author at Beersheba with mud bricks made with straw. The bricks the Israelites made in Egypt were similar to these. These bricks were made for restoration and preservation of archaeological remains.

(Lower) The Sphinx in Egypt. It has a lion-shaped body, and a head representing king Khephren (about 2500 B.C.), the builder of the second great pyramid. An inscription standing between its forelegs tells of a later Pharaoh (Thutmose IV) who cleaned away deep sand from the Sphinx and later became king.



A Herd in the Old Kingdom, Fordling a Canal. (From J. H. Breasted, *A History of Egypt*, p. 93.)

Pha-raoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of E-gypt. (4) But Pha-raoh will not hearken unto you, and I will lay my hand upon E-gypt, and bring forth my hosts, my people the children of Is-ra-el, out of the land of E-gypt by great judgments. (5) And the E-gyp-tians shall know that I am Je-ho-vah, when I stretch forth my hand upon E-gypt, and bring out the children of Is-ra-el from among them. (6) And Mo-ses and Aar-on did so; as Je-ho-vah commanded them, so did they. (7) And Mo-ses was fourscore years old, and Aar-on fourscore and three years old, when they spake unto Pha-raoh.

(8) And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses and unto Aar-on, saying, (9) When Pha-raoh shall speak unto you, saying, Show a wonder for you; then thou shalt say unto Aar-on, Take thy rod, and cast it down before Pha-raoh, that it become a serpent. (10) And Mo-ses and Aar-on went in unto Pha-raoh, and they did so, as Je-ho-vah had commanded: and Aar-on cast down his rod before Pha-raoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent. (11) Then Pha-raoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers: and they also, the magicians of E-gypt, did in like manner with their enchantments. (12) For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aar-on's rod swallowed up their rods. (13) And Pha-raoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as Je-ho-vah had spoken.

(14) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Pha-raoh's heart is stubborn, he refuseth to let the people go. (15) Get thee unto Pha-raoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water; and thou shalt stand by the river's brink to meet him; and the rod which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thy hand. (16) And thou shalt say unto him, Je-ho-vah, the God of the Hebrews, hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness: and, behold, hitherto thou hast not hearkened. (17) Thus saith Je-ho-vah, In this thou shalt know that I am Je-ho-vah: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in my hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood. (18) And the fish that are in the river shall die, and the river shall become foul; and the E-gyp-tians shall loathe to drink water from the river. (19) And Je-ho-vah said

unto Mo-ses, Say unto Aar-on, Take thy rod, and stretch out thy hand over the waters of E-gypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their ponds of water, that they may become blood; and there shall be blood throughout all the land of E-gypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.

(20) And Mo-ses and Aar-on did so, as Je-ho-vah commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pha-raoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.

(21) And the fish that were in the river died; and the river became foul, and the E-gyp-tains could not drink water from the river; and the blood was throughout all the land of E-gypt. (22) And the magicians of E-gypt did in like manner with their enchantments: and Pha-raoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as Je-ho-vah had spoken. (23) And Pha-raoh turned and went into his house, neither did he lay even this to heart. (24) And all the E-gyp-tians digged round about the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river. (25) And seven days were fulfilled, after that Je-ho-vah had smitten the river.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER SEVEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading, propose a brief topic or theme for the entire chapter.
2. Which chapters in Exodus deal with the ten plagues?
3. What had God made Moses unto Pharaoh? (7:1)
4. What position did Aaron bear unto Moses? (7:1)
5. What demand were Moses and Aaron to make unto Pharaoh? (7:2)
6. What would God do to Pharaoh? (7:3)
7. What would God multiply in the land of Egypt? (7:3)
8. What was God going to lay upon Egypt? For what purpose? (7:4)

9. By what terms are the Israelites described in 7:4?
10. What would the Egyptians learn to know about God? What would cause them to know this? (7:5)
11. How old were Moses and Aaron when they spake unto Pharaoh? (7:7)
12. What miracle were Moses and Aaron to do? (7:9-10)
13. What did the magicians of Egypt do after Moses' rod became a serpent? (7:11-12)
14. What miracles did the magicians of Egypt duplicate? (7:11-12, 22; 8:7, 18)
15. Name the Egyptian magicians. (II Tim. 3:8)
16. What effect upon Pharaoh's heart did the rod-to-serpent miracle have? (7:13)
17. At what place was Moses told to go to meet Pharaoh? (7:15)
18. What was Moses to take with him when he met Pharaoh? (7:15)
19. How would Pharaoh come to know that God was the LORD (Jehovah)? (7:17)
20. What results would occur because of the change in the Nile waters? (7:18, 21)
21. What waters would be affected? (7:19)
22. Did Pharaoh witness the changing of the waters? (7:20)
23. How far-reaching in area was the change in the waters? (7:21)
24. Who duplicated the water miracle? (7:22)
25. What was the condition of Pharaoh's heart after the water was changed? (7:22)
26. Where did Pharaoh go after this miracle? (7:23)
27. How did the Egyptians try to obtain good water? (7:24)
28. How long did the Nile-to-blood plague last? (7:25)

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#### EXODUS SEVEN: THE CONFLICT BEGINS!

- I. The command; 7:1-7.
- II. The confrontation; 7:8-13.
- III. The calamity; 7:14-21.



## IV. The counterattack; 7:22-25.

## RELATIONSHIPS AMONG MEN (7:1-2)

1. Relationships are assigned by God; 7:1.
2. Relationships are needed to serve mankind; 7:2.

## PHARAOH: THE TYPE OF STUBBORN SINNERS (7:3-5)

- I. Rejects the divine command; (7:3-4)
- II. Receives the divine punishments; (7:4)
- III. Ruins others by his wickedness; (7:5)

## THE COUNTERFEITS OF SATAN (7:8-12, 22-23)

("Anything you can do, I can do better!")

- I. Imitations of God's works; (7:8-10, 22)
- II. Inferior to God's works; (7:11-12)
- III. Inspire evil men to more evil; (7:13, 22)

## MAN'S RICHEST RESOURCES RUINED! (7:14-25)

- I. Ruin caused by stubbornness; (7:14)
  - II. Ruin comes to the mightiest; (7:15-16)
  - III. Ruin contains God's lesson; (7:16-17)
  - IV. Ruin crunches our resources; (7:18-21, 24)
  - V. Ruin cannot always bring repentance; (7:23)
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## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER SEVEN

1. *What is in Exodus chapter seven?*

The conclusion of God's charge to Moses to go back to Pharaoh extends to 7:7. It started back at 6:28.

The story of Moses and Aaron's second encounter with Pharaoh is in 7:8-13. At this encounter the miracle of the rod changing to a serpent (or crocodile) was displayed.

The story of the first plague, the river-to-blood disaster, is in 7:14-25.

We entitle this chapter *The Conflict* (or contest) *Begins!*

The conflict we refer to is the battle between God and Pharaoh. The battle consisted of the ten plagues, and Jehovah God won the conflict. The stories of the ten plagues are found in Exodus chapters 7-12.

2. *What relationship would Moses have toward Pharaoh? (7:1)*

He would be as God to Pharaoh, with divine power and authority over him. He could barge into Pharaoh's throne room without an appointment and not be arrested. He would work miracles, like God. He would speak the divine message.

Moses had been fearful of confronting Pharaoh (6:30), but he had no cause for fear.

3. *What relationship would Aaron be to Moses? (7:1)*

He would be Moses' prophet, or spokesman. As the prophets spoke God's message, so Aaron would speak Moses' message. Note 4:16, where we are told that Moses would be as God to Aaron.

4. *What was Moses to say unto Aaron? (7:2)*

"All that I (Jehovah) command thee." It is necessary that God's men speak the whole counsel of God (Acts 20-27). Our leaving out some of God's words may be worse than our saying some wrong things.

5. *What would God do when Aaron spoke to Pharaoh? (7:3)*

Two things: (1) he would harden Pharaoh's heart; and (2) multiply his signs (miracles with a meaning) and wonders in the land of Egypt. Compare Exodus 11:9. It is simply a wrong view of God's nature to think that He is so loving and indulgent that he will never "rub it in" to those who defy Him.

Also it is a wrong view of God to think that He is not jealous of His own honor. Jehovah was determined to teach Pharaoh the truth about Jehovah; and this He would do by inflicting the plague-wonders on Egypt.

6. *What are the "great judgments" by which God would bring Israel out? (7:4)*

They are the ten plagues of Exodus 7-12. The word *judgments* here refers to acts of punishment. Compare Ex. 6:6. These judgments redeemed Israel and punished Egypt.

Ramm correctly asserts that modern man seeks to omit real judgment on the part of God, while still preserving the love of God.<sup>1</sup> But love in that case ceases to be *holy* love, and disappears into sentiment and sentimentality. We add further that it is a false analysis of God's real nature.

7. *With what organization would Israel leave Egypt? (7:4)*

As "hosts," or armies. Israel left Egypt organized as an army, with its tribes as different divisions (Ex. 12:51; Num. 1, 2). Their organization was not very strong; nor were they well-equipped. But they were not without some force.

8. *What would Egypt learn by Israel's deliverance? (7:5)*

That God was Jehovah! See notes on 6:2-3. The statement "I am Jehovah" carries with it a depth of meaning that few modern readers grasp. The Egyptians would learn that Jehovah is the existing one, the eternal, the ultimate causer. They would learn that their bag of gods was a fiction! See 7:17; 8:10, 22; 14:4, 18.

9. *What were Moses' and Aaron's ages at this momentous time? (7:7)*

Moses, eighty; Aaron, eighty-three. Moses had been about forty when he went out to help Israel (Acts 7:23). He was 120 at his death (Deut. 31:2). Thus Moses' life is divided into three nearly equal parts:

- (1) 40 yrs. in Egypt as a prince (thinking he was somebody);
- (2) 40 yrs. in Midian as a shepherd (finding out he was a nobody);
- (3) 40 yrs. in the desert as leader of Israel (learning what God can do with a somebody who realized he was a nobody).<sup>2</sup>

10. *What miracle was Moses to do in Pharaoh's presence? (7:8-9)*

Change his rod to become a serpent. Of the three miracles given to Moses to do (in 4:1-9), only the rod-to-serpent miracle was done before Pharaoh. The water-to-blood sign

<sup>1</sup>Bernard L. Ramm, *His Way Out* (Glendale, Calif.: Regal, 1974), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>Attributed to D. L. Moody. Quoted in Ramm, *Ibid.*

became the first of the ten plagues. The leprosy sign is not referred to after it was shown to Moses. Certainly Moses' miracles set him forth as God to Pharaoh.

The *serpent* referred to in 7:9 is (in Hebrew) a *tannin*, meaning a large reptile, sea or river monster. Jewish commentators rendered it as *crocodile*. The Hebrew word for serpent in 4:3 is *nahash*, meaning a serpent or snake.

We have no strong reasons for doubting that Aaron's rod became a *crocodile* in the presence of Pharaoh, rather than a serpent. Certainly that would be an even more impressive miracle than changing it to a serpent. The only real objection to this idea is that it differs from the previous rod-to-serpent miracle shown to the Israelites (4:30). However, that miracle was specially designated to be shown to the Israelites; Pharaoh is not mentioned in reference to it. Another objection is that the Greek LXX renders both 4:3 and 7:9 as *drakon*, meaning dragon or (in later times) serpent.

Some critics made an issue of whether the rod is said to be Aaron's rod or Moses' rod, arguing that references to the rod as Aaron's are in sections by a different author from those referring to the rod as Moses' rod.<sup>3</sup> Keil and Delitzsch correctly insist that there was only one rod.<sup>4</sup> Aaron threw down the rod in 7:8, 10. The *same* rod was later used by Moses at the river's edge (7:15). Even there Aaron actually wielded the rod (7:19). Obviously the one rod was passed back and forth between Aaron and Moses.

11. *What means did Pharaoh use to belittle Moses' miracle? (7:11)*

He called in his wise men and sorcerers and magicians, who (seemingly) duplicated Moses' miracle. Pharaoh was NOT convinced that Moses' miracle proved that Moses had any powers that differed from those the Egyptian magicians and sorcerers possessed. Their performance confirmed his unbelief.

<sup>3</sup>Martin Noth, *Exodus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), pp. 71, 73.

<sup>4</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentaries on the O.T.*, Vol. II (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), pp. 475-476.

Back of Pharaoh's act lay a total unwillingness to accept any suggestion that he, Pharaoh, and the other gods of Egypt were not supreme. King Amenhotep II (probable Pharaoh of the exodus) entitled himself "the son of the sun god Re, . . . Amen-hotep-the-god-Ruler-of-Heliopolis, given life forever; the good god, likeness of Re, . . . ."<sup>5</sup> To him Moses' miracle was a fifteen-cent stunt that was not about to make him relinquish his lofty views of his own omnipotence!

12. *How did Pharaoh's magicians duplicate the miracle?* (7:11-12)

In truth, we do not know. We only know that the effect produced was similar enough to Moses' miracle to satisfy Pharaoh. Davis<sup>6</sup> lists four suggestions as to how they may have done it:

(1) An optical illusion, produced in the minds of the viewers by Satan or evil spirits.

(2) Effective sleight-of-hand, possibly aided by Satan.

(3) Charming of serpents to become rigid like sticks. Some writers report that Egyptian magicians have been renowned for doing this. By pressing the nape of the neck, they partially paralyze the snake in such a way that they become stiff and unmovable, thus seeming to change them into rods.<sup>7</sup> (This would be MUCH more difficult if the rods were changed into crocodiles!)

(4) Supernatural feats, by demonic assistance, "lying wonders" (II Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13-14; Deut. 13:1-3). Such powers are real. We lean to this interpretation, since the text says they did their act by their "enchantments."

Compare Rev. 16:14.

The great inferiority of the magicians' enchantments to Moses' powers was shown when Aaron's crocodile ate up the magicians' crocodiles. Their folly became obvious to all except the wilfully blind (II Tim. 3:8-9).

<sup>5</sup>From "The Asiatic Campaigning of Amenhotep II," translated by John A. Wilson, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1955), p. 245. Used by permission.

<sup>6</sup>*Op. cit.*, pp. 82-84.

<sup>7</sup>Jamison, Faussett, Brown, *Commentary on Old and New Testament*, Vol. I (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1945), p. 295.

13. *Who were these magicians? (7:11-12)*

The apostle Paul gives their names as Jannes and Jambres (II Tim. 3:8), names also found in the Jerusalem Targum (a second-century A.D. Jewish writing).<sup>8</sup> Magicians were very important in the bureaucracy of the ancient Egyptian government. They were a professional class, and held high government positions as advisers and diviners. Pharaoh called upon them to interpret his dreams (Gen. 44:8),

14. *Did Pharaoh function as God planned. (7:13)*

Exactly so! God had said Pharaoh would not hearken, and he didn't. According to the predicted plan of God, Pharaoh set himself up to become the victim of the signs and wonders (the ten plagues) that were now poised to strike his land.

15. *Who hardened Pharaoh's heart? (7:14, 3)*

The wording of 7:13-14 does not actually indicate whether Pharaoh hardened his own heart or God hardened it. However, the prediction in 7:3 indicates that God did it on this occasion. But do not forget that Pharaoh had already committed himself NOT to let Israel go (5:2). See notes on 4:21 ff. for a discussion about who hardened Pharaoh's heart.

16. *How do skeptical critics regard 7:14 ff?*

They regard it as the start of a different section, mostly by a tenth century B.C. author called J (for Jehovist, or Yahwist). The previous material (6:2—7:13) is attributed to a P (Priestly) author of the fifth century B.C. Some brief segments of 7:14—8:4 are attributed to P or to another source called E (Elohist). We simply cannot accept this theory (and that is all it is, a theory). It denies the Mosaic authorship of the book, something that Christ affirmed. Those who hold this view have many differences in their analyses as to which "source" certain segments are to be ascribed to (though they all deny it to Moses!). This lack of unity casts strong doubt on the whole system. In 7:15 we have a clear allusion back to 7:8-9. This supports the fact

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<sup>8</sup>Alan Cole, *Exodus* (Downers Grove, Ill., 1973), p. 89.

that both sections are by the same author.

17. *Where did Moses go to encounter Pharaoh before the first plague? (7:15)*

To the Nile river brink. We gain the impression that Pharaoh went there regularly, perhaps every morning (8:20; Compare 2:15). We suppose it was an act of worship to the Nile, for the Egyptians honored the Nile as a god. They even had a Hymn to the Nile:

When the NILE floods, offering is made to thee,  
oxen are sacrificed to thee, great oblations are made  
to thee, birds are fattened for thee, lions are hunted for  
thee in the desert, fire is provided for thee, and offering  
is made to every (other) god, as is done for the Nile,  
with prime incense, oxen, cattle, birds, and flame.<sup>9</sup>

Note the curiously antiquated wording "against he come" in the King James version of 7:15. A.S.V. gives "to meet him," and R.S.V. "to wait for him."

18. *What demand did Moses remind Pharaoh about? (7:16)*

The demand of God, that Pharaoh let Israel go out of his land, so Israel could serve Him in the wilderness (the desert of Sinai).

19. *What would the water-to-blood miracle make Pharaoh know? (7:17)*

That Jehovah was Jehovah (the Eternal one)! This idea is repeated so many times in Exodus that we need to pay special heed to it. See notes on 7:5; 6:2,6,7. Pharaoh had brazenly said, "I know not the Lord." He is about to get to know the Lord extremely well!

20. *Was the "blood" really blood? (7:17)*

Most commentators assume that any thick red fluid would correspond to the description of the river as "blood."<sup>10</sup> Keil and Delitzsch say that the changing of the water to blood was not a chemical change into real blood, but a change in color which caused it to assume the appearance of blood;

<sup>9</sup>From "Hymn to the Nile," translated by John A. Wilson, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1955), p. 373. Used by permission.

<sup>10</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

and that we should compare this miracle to Joel 3:4, where the moon is said to turn into "blood."<sup>11</sup>

We are hardly willing to say that this "blood" was so exactly like body blood that it might have been used for transfusions. But we do not like the practice of assuming that we know a great deal more than what the scripture says. We assume that the river-blood was so much like body blood that it ought to be called "blood," just as the scripture speaks of it.

Many interpreters seek to explain this "miracle" as an unusual intensification of the annual pollution of the Nile at its lowest annual level, just before the spring rise begins in June.<sup>12</sup> At this time the river is stagnant and sometimes red as ochre from microscopic organisms. But the Nile river is not unhealthful to fish at that stage,<sup>13</sup> as it became when Moses changed it.

Furthermore, if Moses' act of reddening the river were just the usual annual reddening of the Nile, why would it have had any effect on Pharaoh?

The liberal critic Martin Noth, while not accepting the literal truth of the plague stories, nevertheless says that the Nile-to-blood miracle is not a representation of regular annual Nile pollution, but is presented as a unique divine wonder.<sup>14</sup> In this he speaks truth.

Others seek to explain the reddening of the river as being associated with some volcanic explosion.<sup>15</sup> But this is mostly guesswork. These explanations also require us to believe

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<sup>11</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 478.

<sup>12</sup>K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1966), p. 93. Gabriel Hebert, *When Israel Came Out of Egypt* (Richmond: John Knox, 1961), p. 69.

<sup>13</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 479.

<sup>14</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>15</sup>Phythian-Adams, *The Call of Israel* (1934), pp. 137-72. *Reader's Digest*, Nov. 1967, has an article "The Explosion that Changed the World," which suggests that the explosion of the Greek island of Santorini about 1400 B.C. may have been a factor in causing the ten plagues in Egypt. The article admits that this theory stands on shaky ground.



some colossal coincidences occurred, such as that the volcanic eruptions occurred on the days just after Moses made predictions of disasters, and that the affected areas ended just where the Israelites began.

21. *What effects did the changed water produce? (7:18, 21)*

The fish died. The river *stank*. (That is exactly the meaning of the statement.) The water became loathesome and undrinkable. Such a pollution of the Nile would have had religious implications to thoughtful Egyptians.

22. *What places were affected by the change in the water? (7:19)*

The river branches of the Nile delta. The canals. (Canals had been dug all over the delta region for irrigation.) The pools (or reservoirs). And "in wood and stone."

The usual interpretation is that the "wood" and "stone" refer to *vessels* of wood and stone. Probably this is correct. Certainly the greatness of the miracle was demonstrated when water already in containers also changed to blood at the same time the river did. To us, it seems that the text says this very thing happened. Keil and Delitzsch say that this is NOT indicated by the text, but only that no more water was put into these vessels that was not changed to blood. This argument could be true only if several hours or days were required for the water to change to blood, allowing time for people to dip up water after the reddening started, but before all of it changed. The scripture does not really indicate any such time lag.

Some interpreters think that the "blood" so penetrated underground that trees and plants of "wood" picked it up with their roots, so that the plants would ooze red sap if plucked. There was blood in "stone," because the springs that flowed out from fissures in the stone ran with red liquid.

This explanation about the "wood" and "stone" seems unlikely to us, since apparently the Egyptians were able to obtain drinkable water by digging in the ground (7:24).

23. *Did Pharaoh himself witness the change? (7:20)*

Certainly he saw Moses and Aaron smite the water, and it appears that he saw the change occur. 7:23 indicates that

Pharaoh went to his house only after the water had changed and the magicians had performed their enchantments to change water to blood. Therefore, we assume Pharaoh saw the change occur.

The Nile river is a huge river. The delta of the Nile is nearly 150 miles wide and 125 long. The enormity of this miracle is staggering. "The blood was throughout all the land of Egypt."

It was powerfully appropriate that the first plague be directed at the Nile. Because the Nile affects all of Egypt, the plague got the attention of all Egypt. The Israelites would see God's power on a massive scale, and so would the Egyptians. It is still a picture of God's power to us.

24. *How did the magicians get into the act of changing water to blood? (7:22)*

We do not know. Maybe they were accompanying Pharaoh as he came out to the water. Maybe he summoned them, as he did before (7:11).

How were they able to change water to blood? Presumably by the same tricks or powers by which they changed rods to serpents (see notes on 7:11-12).

Where did they get water to change to blood if all water was almost immediately transformed by Moses? We suppose they got it from the water obtained by digging holes (7:24). The rabbi Ibn Ezra said they took rain [which is rare in Egypt], or they obtained water from Goshen, or they digged for it.<sup>16</sup>

One would think that the magicians would have shown more power (and certainly more usefulness!) if they could have changed the blood back to good water. But this they had no power to do.

Furthermore, the magicians probably only changed a few drops of water. Compared to Moses' massive miracle, this was nothing! But it was enough to satisfy Pharaoh. His wicked heart found all the justification he felt necessary in

<sup>16</sup>J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1969), p. 238.

the magicians' act. He now felt that Moses' miracle did not prove that he needed to change his thinking or his deeds. So he did not even consider it seriously, or lay it to his heart (7:23).

25. *Did the Israelites have good water?*

The scripture does not tell us definitely one way or the other. In later plagues a distinction between the treatment of the Israelites and of the Egyptians definitely occurred. No such differentiation is stated in 7:20-21, although that does not prove it did not occur. Josephus (in *Antiquities* II, xiv, 1) has an account that seems fanciful to us: "Such [bloody] was the river to the Egyptians, but it was sweet and fit for drinking to the Hebrews, and in no way different from what it naturally used to be."

26. *Did the Egyptians succeed in obtaining water by digging?* (7:24)

It appears that they did. Note that *all* the Egyptians digged round about the river. If the first few test holes that were dug had produced only the same blood that was in the river, surely digging would not have been employed on so wide a scale.

27. *To what period does the "seven days" of 7:25 refer?*

Probably it refers to the duration of the water-to-blood plague. Others suggest that it was the interval of time between the first and second plague (the frogs). We assume that after seven days the flow of fresh water from the upper Nile cleansed the river in lower Egypt (the delta). If this was the case, it is one more evidence that this change in the river water was not the usual annual discoloration, because that continues about twenty days.<sup>17</sup>

28. *How long a time-span did the plagues occupy?*

The last plague (death of the firstborn) occurred in March. The seventh plague (the hail, which beat down the flax and barley, but did not destroy the wheat) occurred sometime in

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<sup>17</sup>F. C. Cook, editor, *The Bible Commentary*. Exodus-Ruth (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1964), p. 22.

January. The interval between January and March averages out to nearly three weeks between plagues. If we assume that the other plagues were approximately the same time apart, the whole series would have required about six months; and the first plague would have occurred during early autumn (Sept.-Oct.). This is admittedly mostly guesswork.

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### SPECIAL STUDY: THE TEN PLAGUES

#### I. *Facts about the Plagues:*

##### 1. List of the plagues:

- |                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| (1) River to blood.     | (6) Boils.               |
| (2) Frogs.              | (7) Hail.                |
| (3) Lice (gnats).       | (8) Locusts.             |
| (4) Flies.              | (9) Darkness.            |
| (5) Death of livestock. | (10) Death of firstborn. |

##### 2. Meaning of the word *plague*:

A *plague* is not just a disease or epidemic, but any event or thing that afflicts, smites, troubles, or harasses.

The plagues are frequently called *signs* and *wonders*. See Ex. 7:3; 8:23; 10:1; Deut. 4:34; 6:22; Ps. 105:27. A *sign* is a miracle with a message. The plagues were to teach something, as well as to punish.

The plagues are also called *judgments*, a term which refers to punishments. (Ex. 6:4; 12:12)

The English word *plague* is a translation of several Hebrew words in Exodus. *Plague* in Ex. 9:14 (and Num. 14:37) is from *maggephah*, meaning a slaughter (as in I Sam. 4:17), or pestilential and fatal disorder. *Plague* in Ex. 11:1 is from *nega'*, meaning a blow, or stroke. *Plague* in Ex. 12:13 is from *negeph*, meaning a stumbling, or smiting, or plague. A verb form of this word is in Josh. 24:5.

#### II. *Purposes of the plagues:*

1. To force Pharaoh to let Israel go. Ex. 3:20: "I will put

forth my hand and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go." See also Ex. 7:4.

2. To show that God was the LORD, JEHOVAH. This was to be demonstrated both to the Egyptians (7:5, 17; 8:22; 9:14; 14:4, 18), and to the Israelites (6:7; 10:2; 15:11).
3. To show God's power. Ex. 9:16. The Egyptians would learn that the LORD was high above all gods (Ex. 9:14).
4. To *punish* Pharaoh and the Egyptians for their treatment of Israel. The word *judgments* in Ex. 6:6 carries the idea of punishments. "God cast upon them the fierceness of his anger" (Ps. 78:49-50). God made sport of the Egyptians and mocked them (Ex. 10:12).
5. To execute judgment upon the gods of Egypt (Ex. 12:12; Num. 33:4). Several of the gods of Egypt seem to have been specific targets of various plagues. See the following article and the notes on the various plagues.
6. To show that God made a *distinction* between His people Israel and those not His people. See 8:23; 11:7. One-half of the plagues are specifically said to have not touched the Israelites. Indeed, the Hebrews may have been exempt from all the plagues.
7. To cause God's name and fame to be spread abroad through the earth (Ex. 9:16; 10:2). Even today we still tell and retell the stories of God's acts in the plagues.
8. To produce fear in the surrounding nations that God would defeat them (Josh. 2:9-10; 9:9; I Sam. 4:8). The nations would learn that God would curse those who cursed the Israelites (Gen. 12:3).
9. To be signs to strengthen Israel's faith. The Israelites should have had courage to invade and conquer Canaan after they had seen what God did to the Egyptians (Deut. 7:18-19; Ps. 78:42-43).

Sadly, Israel did not understand the wonders in Egypt (Psalm 106:6-7, 21-22), and they soon forgot God's acts in Egypt.

10. To cause Israel (and us!) to keep the statutes of God

(Deut. 6:20-24).

11. To serve as *tests* (or temptations) to Israel (Deut. 4:33; 7:19). How would Israel respond to God's help? Would they have steadfast faith, or would they fail the test? Would the demonstrations of God's power in the plagues give Israel faith at other times when God did not choose to show His power so immediately and dramatically?

### III. *Moral significance of the plagues.*

1. The plagues show God means business. We better do what He says.
2. The plagues show that God is certainly going to win in His conflict with Satan and with Satan's followers. Those who oppose God are going to lose and lose utterly.
3. The plagues show that God will surely PUNISH those who defy Him and refuse to receive His truth.
4. The plagues show that God will HARDEN those who set themselves to defy Him, and then punish them doubly. Other examples of this truth can be seen in the cases of (1) the Canaanites (Deut. 2:30); Hophni and Phinehas (I Sam. 2:25); (3) King Rehoboam (I Kings 12:15); King Amaziah (II Chron. 25:15-16); and (5) those who receive not the love of the truth (II Thess. 2:10-12).
5. The plagues show God's determination to keep His covenant with Abraham and his descendants. God was determined to bless Abraham and his descendants and give them the land of Canaan (Gen. 15:14; Psalm 105: 8-9, 27-36).
6. The plagues were types of Christ's victory over Satan. Moses was a type, or likeness, of Christ who was to come. At the outset of Moses' ministry, he defeated Pharaoh in the plagues. At the outset of Christ's ministry he defeated Satan's temptations in the wilderness. And finally Christ "despoiled the principalities and the powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it (the cross)" (Col. 2:15).

We certainly agree with Bernard Ramm's statement

that unless there is a deeper typology in Exodus, the story is trivial. That which raises the story in Exodus above all other stories of struggle and survival in human history is its deeper typology. Ramm adds that it is at this point that Jewish commentaries and critical Protestant commentaries fail, because in both instances they fail to grasp the deeper struggle behind the events.<sup>1</sup> How true!

7. Since the experiences of the Israelites are examples, or types, of our spiritual experiences as Christians (I Cor. 10:11), the plagues appear to be illustrations of the way Christ will destroy all the enemies of His church. He shall smite the nations and rule them with a rod of iron (Rev. 19:15).

Thus the plagues are types of God's subsequent judgments upon the nations. The plagues of Egypt resemble the seven last plagues of Rev. 15:5—16:21. Both involve sores, or boils (Rev. 16:2, 11), water to blood (Rev. 16:3-4), frogs (Rev. 16:13), and hail (Rev. 16:21). In both the plagues in Egypt and those described in Revelation, men are unwilling to repent (Rev. 16:9, 11, 21), even in the face of total ruination.

#### IV. *Arrangement of the ten plagues.*

1. The plagues grew generally more severe as they progressed. The plagues of the locusts and the darkness were particularly severe. The darkness was severe in that it exposed the greatest god of Egypt, its sun-god, Re, as being nothing. The plagues increased to a climax of terror at the death of Egypt's firstborn.
2. Commentators frequently have expressed the idea that the first nine plagues are grouped into three groups of three (1-2-3, 4-5-6, 7-8-9). We feel that this triple-triad arrangement is a man-made analysis, and is not really very significant. A case could be made for grouping the plagues into two groups of five, since plague number five (death of livestock) and plague ten (death of the

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard L. Ramm, *His Way Out* (Glendale, Calif.: Regal, 1974), pp. 58-59.

firstborn) both involved death. Still these groupings seem accidental and unintentional. Certainly they were not obvious during the course of the plagues.

Nevertheless, we feel we should list here some of the reasons why many interpreters feel that the first nine plagues are arranged into three groups of three.

- a. Plagues one and two in each group (1-2, 4-5, 7-8) are announced to Pharaoh in advance, while the third plague of each group is inflicted without previous warning.
- b. The first series (1-2-3) was wrought with the rod of Aaron. No rod is mentioned in the second series (4-5-6). The rod is in the hand of Moses in the third series (7-8-9).
- c. In the second series a distinction between the Israelites and the Egyptians is mentioned. See 8:22; 9:4. However, this distinction is also mentioned in connection with plague seven (the hail; 9:26).

Keil and Delitzsch' commentary adopts the view that the three-fold grouping is real and noteworthy. However, they add the very necessary caution that this arrangement is NOT a merely external arrangement adopted by the writer for the sake of greater literary effect, but is in fact founded upon the facts themselves.<sup>2</sup>

#### V. *Views held about the plagues.*

1. Bible-believers regard the plagues as miracles. While the plagues involved familiar natural phenomena like frogs, lice, hail, locusts, etc., there were miraculous features about their coming and going.

Joseph Free lists five respects in which the plagues had a miraculous nature: 1. Intensification - frogs, insects, etc. were intensified far beyond any ordinary occurrence ever; 2. Prediction - the time of their appearance (like "tomorrow") and disappearance was predicted

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<sup>2</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 473.



before several plagues. Even modern weather forecasters cannot predict exactly when and where it will hail. 3. Discrimination - In the area where the Israelites lived, there were no flies (8:22), no hail (9:26), etc. 4. Orderliness - the severity of the plagues gradually increased. 5. Moral purpose - the plagues were not just freaks of nature, but carried a moral purpose in several ways.<sup>3</sup>

2. Other interpreters who are more skeptical view the ten plagues as purely natural events. They consider that the original events have grown larger and more marvelous as they have been told and retold. They feel that the plague stories are "derived from living oral tradition of the mighty acts of God."<sup>4</sup> Of course, to hold such a view we must deny that Moses wrote down the record of events to which he was an eyewitness. Even more harmful is the presupposition lying behind these views, that God has never intervened in history by miraculous acts.

The interpreters who regard the plague stories as corrupted accounts of natural events do not agree among themselves as to what those natural events may have been. One Prof. Mahler thought that the plague of darkness was a total eclipse of the sun in 1335 B.C.<sup>5</sup> Of course, 1335 is not the date of the exodus; and a solar eclipse lasts about three minutes, not three days. Others have thought that the plagues were effects of volcanic explosions, like those that blasted Mont Pelee in Martinique in 1902, or Krakatoa in the East Indies in 1883. Those produced terrific tidal waves, torrential rains, muddy cataracts of black and poisonous water, so that many fish died; and dark clouds of volcanic dust covered the sky.<sup>6</sup> This explanation also is set forth as the

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<sup>3</sup>Joseph P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History* (Wheaton, Ill.: Scripture Press, 1972), p. 95.

<sup>4</sup>Martin Noth, *Exodus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), p. 71.

<sup>5</sup>J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1969), p. 231.

<sup>6</sup>See "The Explosion that Changed the World," in *Reader's Digest*, Nov. 1967, pp. 122-127. Also W. J. Phythian-Adams, *The Call of Israel* (1934), 137-172.

explanation for the drying up of the Red Sea waters, the pillar of cloud and fire, and the descent of Jehovah in the cloud on Mt. Sinai.

The volcanic theory cannot explain how Moses could have predicted the coming and departure of these plagues at such precise times. Nor can it explain how the plagues were so selective about their victims. By common consent the theory is admitted to stand on shaky ground.

Others have thought that the plagues were only natural events in Egypt, which happened to an unusual degree. Sir Flinders Petrie wrote:

The order of the plagues was the natural order of such troubles on a lesser scale in the Egyptian seasons, . . . . The river turning to blood with the fish dying, was the unwholesome stagnant Nile just at the *lowest* [emphasis by author] before the inundations, when it is red and swarming with organisms. The Egyptians have to resort to wells and cisterns at this time, . . . . The frogs abound after the inundation has come in July. The plagues of insects, murrain and boils belong to the hot summer and damp unwholesome autumn. The hail and rain come in January. . . . The locusts come in the spring, over the green crops about February. The sandstorms bring a thick darkness that may be felt, in March. . . .<sup>7</sup>

The inadequacy of such an explanation may be perceived by suggestions by Greta Hort.<sup>8</sup> She argues that the first nine plagues began with an unusually *high* [emphasis by the author] inundation, which may have brought microcosms known as flagellates, which would redden the river and kill the fish. Decomposing fish

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<sup>7</sup>*Egypt and Israel* (1911), pp. 35-36.

<sup>8</sup>Quoted in K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Chicago: InterVarsity, 1966), pp. 48-59.

drove the frogs ashore, having also infected them with *Bacillus Anthracis*. . . . The cattle disease of the fifth plague would be anthrax contracted from the dead frogs, etc.

For our part we place our faith in the record given in the Bible, and not in the contradictory guesswork of those without deep faith in God.

### JEHOVAH VS. THE GODS OF EGYPT\*

The ten plagues were Jehovah's judgment against all the gods of Egypt (Ex. 12:12; Num. 33:4). All of the plagues showed the utter inability of Egypt's gods to protect the Egyptians. Several of the plagues appear to have been pointed directly against specific Egyptian gods. Here are some of the gods of Egypt which seem to have been special targets of specific plagues:



Hapi, god of the Nile. Sculpture at Kom Ombo temple, upper Egypt.

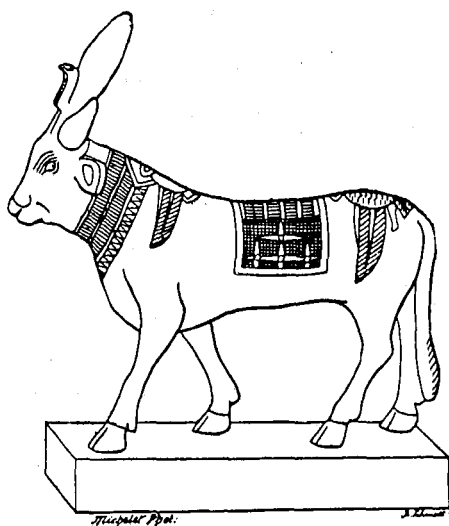


Hathor, cow goddess of love. Statue at Memphis.

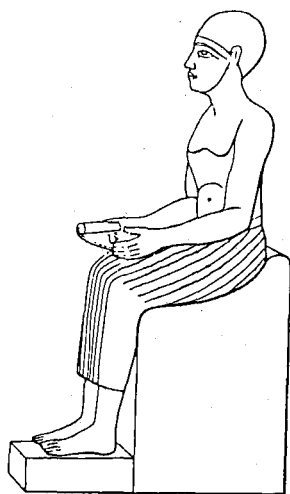
\*The drawings of the gods of Egypt are from E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Dweller on the Nile* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1888); and from E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Mummy* (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1972). Used by permission.

*Hapi*, the god of the Nile, was often depicted as holding a table or altar on which are vases for libations, and lotus flowers, and fruits. He is thus represented as if he were presenting the rich products of the Nile's productivity. He was discredited in the first plague, when the river water turned to blood.

*Apis*, the sacred bull of Memphis, was called "the second life of Ptah," (the creator god). *Apis* was disgraced in the fifth plague, the murrain (or death) of cattle.



The Apis Bull.



I-em-hetep.

*Hathor*, the cow-headed goddess, was identified with the sky, and was the goddess of beauty, love and joy. She assisted the souls of the dead. The plagues of murrain of cattle and of hail discredited her.

*Imhotep* was originally an architect, wise-man, and chief ritualist in the Old Kingdom of Egypt. (In Egypt magic and medicine were inseparably related.) Imhotep became a demigod after his death, and eventually was deified as the god of medicine. But he couldn't prevent the plague of boils from scourging all Egyptians.

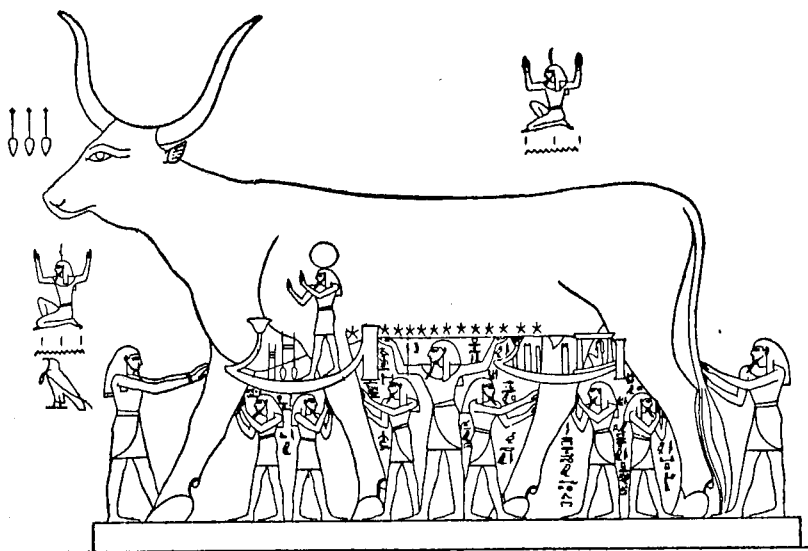


Amen-Rā



Rā

Two sun-gods of Egypt were discredited by the plague of darkness. *Amon* (or Amon-Ra), the city god of the capital city of Thebes, was a sun-god. To the Egyptians he was the **ONE** and **ONLY ONE**, the maker of gods, and lord of eternity. *Ra* (or Re) was the great sun-god. He was the great god of Heliopolis, the “city of the sun.” He was second only to Ptah, the chief god.



The Celestial Cow

Various divine beings support her limbs, while in the middle, *Shu*, the god of the atmosphere upholds her. (*Shu* couldn't prevent the plague of hail!) Along her belly, which forms the heavens, and bears the stars, moves the celestial boat of the sun-god, who wears the sun-disk on his head. Pictures like this one show that the plagues attacked Egyptian gods.\*

\* From J. H. Breasted, *A History of Egypt* (New York: Scribner's, 1924), p. 55.

The Text of EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**8** And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, Go in unto Pha-raoh, and say unto him, Thus saith Je-ho-vah, Let my people go, that they may serve me. (2) And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs: (3) and the river shall swarm with frogs, which shall go up and come into thy house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneading-troughs: (4) and the frogs shall come up both upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants. (5) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Say unto Aar-on, Stretch forth thy hand with thy rod over the rivers, over the streams, and over the pools, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of E-gypt. (6) And Aar-on stretched out his hand over the waters of E-gypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of E-gypt. (7) And the magicians did in like manner with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of E-gypt.

(8) Then Pha-raoh called for Mo-ses and Aar-on, and said, Entreat Je-ho-vah, that he take away the frogs from me and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice unto Je-ho-vah. (9) And Mo-ses said unto Pha-raoh, Have thou this glory over me: against what time shall I entreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, that the frogs be destroyed from thee and thy houses, and remain in the river only? (10) And he said, Against to-morrow. And he said, Be it according to thy word; that thou mayest know that there is none like unto Je-ho-vah our God. (11) And the frogs shall depart from thee, and from thy houses, and from thy servants, and from thy people; they shall remain in the river only. (12) And Mo-ses and Aar-on went out from Pha-raoh: and Mo-ses cried unto Je-ho-vah concerning the frogs which he had brought upon Pha-raoh. (13) And Je-ho-vah did according to the word of Mo-ses; and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the courts, and out of the fields. (14) And they gathered them together in heaps; and the land stank. (15) But when Pha-raoh saw that there was respite,

he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as Je-ho-vah had spoken.

(16) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Say unto Aar-on, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the earth, that it may become lice throughout all the land of E-gypt. (17) And they did so, and Aar-on stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and there were lice upon man, and upon beast; all the dust of the earth became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. (18) And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: and there were lice upon man, and upon beast. (19) Then the magicians said unto Pha-raoh, This is the finger of God: and Pha-raoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as Je-ho-vah had spoken.

(20) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pha-raoh; lo, he cometh forth to the water; and say unto him, Thus saith Je-ho-vah, Let my people go, that they may serve me. (21) Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the E-gyp-tians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are. (22) And I will set apart in that day the land of Go-shen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am Je-ho-vah in the midst of the earth. (23) And I will put a division between my people and thy people: by to-morrow shall this sign be. (24) And Je-ho-vah did so; and there came grievous swarms of flies into the house of Pha-raoh, and into his servants' houses: and in all the land of E-gypt the land was corrupted by reason of the swarms of flies.

(25) And Pha-raoh called for Mos-es and for Aar-on, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land. (26) And Mo-ses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the E-gyp-tians to Je-ho-vah our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the E-gyp-tians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? (27) We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to Je-ho-vah our God, as he shall command us. (28) And Pha-raoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice



to Je-ho-vah your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away: entreat for me. (29) And Mo-ses said, Behold, I go out from thee, and I will entreat Je-ho-vah that the swarms of flies may depart from Pha-raoh, from his servants, and from his people, to-morrow: only let not Pha-raoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to Je-ho-vah. (30) And Mo-ses went out from Pha-raoh, and entreated Je-ho-vah. (31) And Je-ho-vah did according to the word of Mo-ses; and he removed the swarms of flies from Pha-raoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one. (32) And Pha-raoh hardened his heart this time also, and he did not let the people go.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER EIGHT  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. What purpose was in God's mind for his people after Pha-raoh let them go? (8:1; 9:1; 10:3)
2. Where would the frogs originate? (8:3)
3. What would the frogs get into? (8:3-4)
4. Whose hand signalled the frogs to come up? (8:5-6)
5. How did the magicians' frog-miracle compare to that of Moses and Aaron? (8:7-8)
6. What did Pharaoh promise after the frogs came upon the land? (8:8)
7. What did Moses mean by "Glory over me"? (8:9)
8. Where would frogs remain after the plague was removed? (8:9)
9. When were the frogs to be removed? (8:10)
10. What did Moses do to get the frogs removed? (8:12)
11. Where did the frogs die? (8:13)
12. What was done with the dead frogs? (8:14)
13. What was Pharaoh's response after the death of the frogs? (8:15)

14. What was Aaron's rod to smite? (8:16)
15. What did the lice attack? (8:17)
16. Could the magicians duplicate the plague of lice? (8:19)
17. What was the magicians' comment about the lice? (8:19)
18. Where did Moses meet Pharaoh after the plague of lice? (8:20)
19. Where would there be swarms of flies? (8:21)
20. How did the plague of flies affect different areas differently? (8:22)
21. What compromise offer did Pharaoh make to Moses? (8:25)
22. What did Moses refer to as the "abomination of the Egyptians"? (8:26)
23. Did Pharaoh actually promise to let Israel go? (8:28, 8)
24. What second compromise offer did Pharaoh make? (8:28)
25. Where did Moses go to pray that the flies be removed? (8:29-30)
26. How many flies remained? (8:31)
27. What was Pharaoh's reaction after the removal of the flies? (8:32)

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**EXODUS EIGHT: LITTLE CREATURES — BIG PLAGUES!**  
(The supremely great smitten by the supremely contemptible!)

1. Frogs; 8:1-15.
2. Lice (gnats); 8:16-19.
3. Flies; 8:20-32.

**COMPROMISES THAT CONTINUE CAPTIVITY!**  
(Pharaoh's compromise offers)

1. "Go; sacrifice in the land." (8:25)  
(The compromise of remaining in the "world.")
2. "Go, but not very far." (8:28)  
(The compromise of lukewarmness)
3. "Go, ye that are men." (10:11)  
(The compromise of undedicated families)

4. "Everyone go; but leave your flocks." (10:24)  
(The compromise of undedicated livelihoods)

### FLEETING REPENTANCE IN FRIGHTENED REBELS (8:8-15)

1. Caused by disasters; (8:8)
2. Causes men to call God's ministers; (8:8)
3. Causes men to make promises; (8:8)
4. Causes procrastination in seeking deliverance; (8:10)
5. Brings blessings briefly (8:11-14)
6. Quickly forgotten; (8:15)

### THE FINGER OF GOD! (8:19)

1. Cannot be escaped; (8:16-17)
2. Cannot be counterfeited; (8:18)
3. Cannot be comprehended by some; (8:19)

### GOD'S REDEMPTION FOR HIS PEOPLE; (8:23)

1. It is obvious; (8:22)
2. It is protective; (8:24)
3. It is instructive; (8:22)
4. It leads to deliverance; (8:20, 25)

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## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER EIGHT

### 1. *What is in chapter eight?*

This chapter contains the stories of three plagues - the frogs, the lice (or gnats), and the flies. The chapter closes with Pharaoh's first compromise offers to Moses. The chapter tells how the plagues soon forced Pharaoh to admit that Jehovah was causing them, and that Moses' prayers could remove them. Also in this chapter we learn how the magicians of Egypt (and the gods of Egypt) utterly failed to match Moses' deeds or protect Egypt.

### 2. *What demand and threat did Jehovah give Pharaoh?* (8:1-2)

He demanded the Pharaoh let Israel go so that they might *serve* Him. *Serving* God in this case involved sacrificing to Him (3:12, 18). God threatened to smite ALL of Pharaoh's land with frogs if he refused to let Israel go.

Refusing was a habit with Pharaoh. See 7:14. The warning, "If you refuse . . .," was given before several plagues. See 8:2, 21; 9:2; 10:4.

### 3. *What did the Egyptians think of frogs?*

Frogs were highly regarded before this plague. Each September after the summer overflowing of the Nile had gone down, frogs would become numerous in ponds of water all over Egypt. Their croaking was a reminder that the gods had done their duty again and another fruitful year lay before them.

Within Egyptian mythology the frog was the embodiment of the life-giving power.<sup>1</sup> The frog was the symbol of the goddess Hekt (Heqt), who was thought to blow the breath of life into the nostrils of the bodies of men that her husband (Khnum) fashioned on the potter's wheel from the dust of the earth. She also supposedly assisted women in childbirth, and was a symbol of the resurrection and fertility.

### 4. *Where would the frogs penetrate?* (8:3-4)

From the river they would go everywhere. Frogs would enter the houses, where they would be particularly offensive to the scrupulously clean Egyptians. (See notes on 8:15, 17.) Psalm 105:30 says, "Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the *chambers of their kings*." There was no escaping this scourge. By digging holes the Egyptians had found some relief from the water-to-blood plague, but they could not escape the frogs. They entered homes, bed-chambers, even ovens and kneading troughs, where unbaked bread was rising. This was most unusual; for frogs do not normally seek dry places like beds or ovens, nor do they crawl on people.

An Egyptian oven was only a hole in the earth, in which

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

they put wood for a fire, and over which they put an earthen pitcher. The bread was placed inside that, and baked by the action of the fire in the hole beneath. We can imagine that when this hole was filled with frogs the preparation of bread would become utterly impractical.

5. *What act started the plague of frogs?* (8:5)

Aaron stretched forth his hand with his rod in his hand, over the rivers (referring to the branches of the Nile delta), the streams (or canals), and pools. See notes on 7:19. Aaron used the rod in the first three plagues (7:19; 8:5, 16).

6. *How disastrous was the plague of frogs?* (8:6)

It was not a mere inconvenience; it was a *destruction*, or ruination. Psalm 78:45 says, "He sent . . . frogs, which *destroyed* them." It stopped all usual activities of life. People could not work, or sleep, or eat, or move about without the most dreadful interference from the frogs. Frogs leaped upon and crawled over people wherever they were.

We are sure that the popularity of the frog-goddess Hekt dropped to near zero after this plague.

Egypt's power was defeated not by lions, but by frogs. The supremely powerful Pharaoh was brought low by the supremely contemptible frogs.

The plague of frogs was clearly a miracle. The frogs came and died suddenly at the command of Moses and Aaron. Their coming in such great numbers can be accounted for on no other basis.

7. *How did the magicians respond to the frog plague?* (8:7)

By their enchantments (secret arts) they brought up more frogs upon the land of Egypt. This certainly did not help the Egyptians. They needed frogs removed, and not more frogs. But to Pharaoh the implications of the magicians' duplicating the frog miracle were more important even than relief from the frog-scurge. At least he could satisfy himself that he was not dealing with a uniquely powerful Jehovah and a uniquely powerful Moses.

Note again that it was by *enchantments* that the magicians brought up frogs on Egypt. This makes us think that

supernatural powers of Satan were involved. Compare 7:11, 22; 8:18. Rev. 16:14 prophesies, "Three unclean spirits, as it were *frogs*, proceed forth; for they are spirits of demons, working signs."

8. *What did the frogs teach Pharaoh about Jehovah?* (8:8)

He learned that Jehovah was very real and "out of his league"; and that he needed Moses as an intercessor. The man who once said that he did not know Jehovah (5:2) now requests that Jehovah be entreated. He begins and ends his speech with the name of Jehovah.

9. *What did Pharaoh ask Moses to do?* (8:8)

To entreat, or intercede, to Yahweh (Jehovah) to take away the frogs. In return he promised to permit Israel to go and sacrifice. He certainly did not keep this promise. This pattern of appeal-promise-renegeing soon became a habit. Four times Pharaoh asked Moses to entreat the LORD to remove some plague (8:8, 28; 9:28; 10:17). Four times Moses complied (8:12, 30; 9:33; 10:18). Four times Pharaoh backed down and would not keep his promise (8:15, 32; 9:34-35; 10:20).

Pharaoh's repentance was that of a hypocrite, and not a godly sorrow. He desired not a new life, but simply removal of the judgment that had come upon the nation. When hypocrites have been overpowered, they often beg for deliverance and make promises. Thus did king Jeroboam I (I Kings 13:6), and Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:24). Pharaoh was like people who repent and make promises when in the anguish of a sick room, or in a storm, or war, or bankruptcy. Such repentance and promises often do not last long when the troubles are past.

10. *What does "Glory over me" mean?* (8:9) *Who said this?*

Literally it says, "Glorify thyself." It means to take the honor or advantage over me, by directing me as to *when* I shall entreat God for you and your servants, to cut off the frogs from you. This was a face-saving gesture granted by Moses to Pharaoh. Moses did not say when he would remove the frogs, but when he would pray about it.

Granting Pharaoh the privilege (?) of designating when

Moses should pray for deliverance from frogs actually enhanced the power and honor of Moses! Pharaoh would perceive that Moses could do this not just at some time of Moses' choosing, but at any time Pharaoh said.

11. *Why did Pharaoh not ask for immediate deliverance? (8:10)*

Why wait till tomorrow? Possibly Pharaoh hoped that by the next day the frogs would be going away by themselves, and he would be clear of the plague without being obligated either to Moses or to Jehovah.

Perhaps it was a face-saving gesture for Pharaoh. It was as if he said, "I can tough this out another day! You have not made me cry out in utter abject helplessness." He was still basically unwilling to yield to the claims of God upon him and to Moses' authority.

12. *What would Pharaoh learn by the removal of the frogs? (8:10)*

That there was no one else like Jehovah, *our* God. Compare 9:14. The *our* reflects some justifiable Israelite pride. The truth that no one else is like God is frequently asserted in later scriptures (Deut. 33:26; II Sam. 7:22; Isa. 46:9).

13. *Where would there be frogs after the plague? (8:11)*

In the river only. Their presence in the river indicates that the river was no longer polluted. The blood was all gone.

14. *Where did Moses pray about the frogs? (8:12)*

He "went out" from Pharaoh. This he did also after the plagues of flies (8:29), hail (9:29), and locusts (10:18). Often prayer is best done privately. Praying in Pharaoh's presence would seem like casting pearls before swine.

15. *Did Moses' prayers remove the frogs? (8:13-14)*

Yea, verily! The frogs outside of the river, in fields, court-yards, and houses ALL died. They were gathered (maybe raked up) into heaps, and the land *stank* again. Compare 7:21.

The deeds of sinners often leave stinking heaps of after-effects, even after the sins are forgiven. Past sins may leave behind weakened bodies, bad memories, broken marriages, debts, and enmity.

16. *What did Pharaoh do after the frog-plague was removed?* (8:15)

He hardened his heart, and would not let Israel go, as he had promised he would. Pharaoh was still unwilling to admit that the God of the Hebrews had outdone the gods of Egypt in a demonstration of power.

17. *How did these plagues affect most Egyptians?*

The plagues caused total disruption of their usual life-patterns and much misery. When a father or a ruler sins, he brings misery on his whole family or nation. Thus Pharaoh caused others to suffer even more than he did.

The Greek historian Herodotus (about 450 B.C.) wrote about the Egyptians:

All other men pass their lives separate from animals; the Egyptians have animals always living with them. [The murrain of cattle disrupted this life-style!]

.....  
They are religious to excess, far beyond any other race of men, . . . . They wear linen garments [See Ex. 9:31!], which they are specially careful to have always freshly washed. . . . The priests shave their whole body every other day, that no *lice* or other impure thing may adhere to them when they are engaged in the service of the gods. Their dress is entirely of linen. . . . They bathe twice every day in cold water, and twice each night [What did they do when their water turned to blood?]; besides which they observe, so to speak, thousands of ceremonies.<sup>2</sup>

18. *What warning was given before the plague of lice?* (8:16)

No warning was given before this plague. Similarly no warning was given before plagues six (boils) and nine (darkness). Aaron's rod was employed before the plague of lice, as with the previous two plagues.

19. *What insects are referred to as "lice"?*

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<sup>2</sup>Herodotus II, 36, 37, Translated by George Rawlinson (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), pp. 88-89.



Probably *gnats*. This is the translation of the Hebrew word *kinnim* in the R.S.V., the Catholic *New American Bible*, the *Berkeley* version, and the *New American Standard Bible*. Nonetheless, the meaning of the word is still uncertain. The *New English Bible* renders it *maggots*, and the *Jerusalem Bible* as *mosquitoes*. The Jewish historian Josephus translated the word as *louse* (Gr. *phtheir*), as did the Jewish Talmud; and these renderings have influenced most later translations. The Greek O.T. (LXX) rendered it as *sknips* (pl. *skniphes*), probably meaning *flea*. The *skniphes* were small insects which pierced the skin, and also set up intolerable itching and penetrated the ears and nostrils.

Gnats and other small insects are a common affliction in Egypt, but not to the disastrous degree reached in this plague.

20. *Where did the gnats (or lice) originate?* (8:17)

From the dust of the earth. "ALL the dust of the earth became lice throughout all the land of Egypt." We hardly suppose that every particle of dust in Egypt became an insect on a one-to-one basis, but the expression certainly refers to limitless hosts of insects.

*All* in Hebrew usage sometimes means a very large portion, but not necessarily *all* in an absolute sense. Thus in the days of Noah "*All* flesh had corrupted their way" (Gen. 6:12); however, Noah and his family had not. Similarly *all* the cattle of Egypt died in plague five; but some cattle were still alive during plagues six and seven (Ex. 9:6, 9, 25).

21. *How did the lice affect Egypt?* (8:17)

They were upon both man and beast. Compare Psalm 105:31. See note 17 in the notes on this chapter.

22. *How did the magicians react to the lice?* (8:18-19)

They tried by enchantments to produce lice (gnats) but they could not. They did not give up; they were defeated! How small a thing the Lord used to put down the Egyptians! God apparently set this as the limit on the Satanic powers by which they had changed rods to crocodiles, made water blood, and produced frogs. The magicians had tried to

salvage their own honor and the reputation of their gods, but their folly now became manifest (obvious) to all men (II Tim. 3:8-9). We wonder why Pharaoh and the magicians were so slow in perceiving that ALL of the plagues were the work of God's finger.

The confession of the magicians that this was the *finger of God* is a thoroughly Egyptian expression. Compare I Sam. 6:3, 9; Luke 11:20. We would probably use the idiom "the hand of God." G. L. Robinson says that the phrase *finger of God* occurs often in Egyptian magical texts. For example, we read of the "*finger of Seth*" (who was one of the principal gods of Egypt). Also in a condemnation of the monster-dragon Aphophis, the sun-god Re said, "The *finger of Thoth* [the Egyptian recorder-god] is before thy eyes."<sup>3</sup>

The magicians do not imply that they are converted to Moses' God; but they surely recognize that he is a God, and has some potent powers.

23. *How did Pharaoh react to the defeat of the magicians?* (8:19)

Their confession of impotence did not convince Pharaoh of the need of ceasing his resistance to the command of God. His heart was hardened. The text does not indicate whether he himself hardened it, or God, or both.

24. *Where was Moses to accost Pharaoh before the plague of flies?* (8:20)

Moses was to rise up early the next day and meet Pharaoh at the water, presumably at the brink of the Nile. Compare 7:15. Moses was to make the same demand as before (7:16; 8:1). Pharaoh was surely getting the message by this time.

25. *What kinds of flies afflicted Egypt?* (8:21)

Many kinds! Indeed *swarms*! The Hebrew word here translated "swarms" (of flies) means "mixture."<sup>4</sup> Psalm 78:45 says (in KJV) "He sent divers sorts of flies"; this is an

<sup>3</sup>The Bearing of Archaeology on the Old Testament (New York: American Tract Society, 1944), p. 42.

<sup>4</sup>The Hebrew word *'arob* used here is employed nine times in the O.T., and is always related to this plague.

accurate rendering of the idea. The Hebrew word is similar to that used in Ex. 12:38, where it refers to the *mixed* multitude that left Egypt with the Israelites.

The Greek O.T. translated "swarm" as *kunomuia*, or dog-fly. Since the Greek Bible was translated in Egypt, this may be a precise description of the type of fly that attacked the Egyptians. The dog-fly (also called the stable-fly, because of its usual presence in stables) has a sharp and painful bite, which may cause inflammation. It is the species *Stomoxys calcitrans*.

Other translations have been made of "swarms" (of flies). *Jerusalem Bible* and *Berkeley* version give it as *gadflies*, a word referring to any of various flies, as horseflies, botflies, warble flies, that bite and annoy livestock. This seems like an excellent translation.

The Jewish commentator J. H. Hertz renders it *beetles*. Beetles (particularly the scarab beetle, a dung beetle) were sacred bugs in Egypt. The ichneumon fly, which was regarded as a manifestation of the god Uatchit, has been suggested. Another common view is that the "swarms" were swarms of various creatures, not just insects. This is a common Jewish view. Josephus (*Antiquities* II, xiv, 3) said they were "various sorts of pestilential creatures, with their various properties, such indeed as had never come into sight of men before." Another Jewish view, that they were "swarms" of "evening wolves," is not regarded as acceptable.

Once again we must note that most of the plagues had religious significance, and were directed against the gods of Egypt.

26. *What distinction was made during the plague of flies? (8: 22-23)*

There were to be no flies in Goshen where the Israelites were. This is the first specific mention of such a distinction during the plagues, although we are by no means certain that it had not been the case during the first three plagues.

This distinction would cause Pharaoh to know that Israel's god was "Jehovah in the midst of the earth." It was God's

great goal in the plagues to make this truth real to Pharaoh. (Ex. 7:5, 17; 14:4, 18)

27. *What would God place between his people and the Egyptians?* (8:23)

Literally the text says, "I will set a *redemption* (or ransom) between my people and thy people." The Hebrew word *peduth* is also translated *redemption* in Ps. 111:9; 130:7; Isa. 50:2.

However, some authors feel the word is more accurately rendered *division*. The Greek O.T. and Latin Vulgate render it *division*. So also the R.S.V.: "I will put a division. . . ." We still prefer the translation of *redemption*.<sup>5</sup> As Keil and Delitzsch<sup>6</sup> assert, the exemption from the plague of flies was essentially a redemption, or deliverance, for Israel. It was not just a division from harm, but involved deeper deliverance and blessings.

28. *When was the plague of flies to start?* (8:23)

The next day! The flies arrived the next day as predicted. The fulfillment of this prediction shows that the plague was a miracle.

29. *What effects did the flies have on the land?* (8:24)

The land was *destroyed*,<sup>7</sup> or ruined. "Corrupted" seems too weak a translation here. The Hebrew word *shahat* means to *destroy* when physical objects are referred to. Thus, a vineyard is destroyed (Jer. 12:10), a temple (Lam. 2:6), or a crop (Judges 6:4; Mal. 3:11).

Psalm 78:45 says, "The flies *ate them up*."

The plague is said to have been *grievous*, meaning heavy,

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<sup>5</sup>The question hinges around whether *peduth* is from the verb *padad*, meaning to divide, or from a very similar verb *padah*, meaning to redeem. Both Davies' *Lexicon* and Harkavy's *Hebrew Dictionary* say it comes from *padah*.

<sup>6</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 485.

<sup>7</sup>The Hebrew verb *destroyed* is in the imperfect, or future, tense, but it has a past significance here. Ancient Hebrew did not always distinguish carefully between the tenses. The imperfect tense here may indicate the continuation of the flies' destruction of the land for some days: "it was being destroyed."

or massive, or abundant, or numerous. This is a form of the same word used to describe the heavy (or hardened) heart of Pharaoh. God sends heavy plagues to defeat men's heavy resistance.

30. *What effect did the flies have on Pharaoh?* (8:25)

This plague brought him to Moses with a compromise offer. Pharaoh promised to let Israel go and sacrifice, but only in the land. Pharaoh had found no deliverance from the gods of Egypt, his magicians, or his own bluster; therefore, he now seeks compromise with Moses. Persecutors like Pharaoh never want God's people to go far out of their reach and power.

This was the first of four compromise offers by Pharaoh. Any of them would have effectively prevented Israel from leaving the land permanently, and Moses turned them all down.

PHARAOH'S COMPROMISE OFFERS

1. Go sacrifice in the land of Egypt. (Ex. 8:25)
2. Go out of the land, but do not go far. (8:28)
3. The men alone may go sacrifice. (10:8, 11)
4. Everyone may go, but leave flocks and herds in Egypt. (10:24)

31. *Why couldn't Israel sacrifice in the land of Egypt?* (8:26-27)

Because the Israelites would offer sacrifices that would be an abomination (a detestable thing) to the Egyptians, so that the Egyptians would stone them. Also to sacrifice to Jehovah acceptably, they had to obey His command to go three days' journey out of the land. Compare 3:18.

Moses did not specify what the Egyptians would find abominable about their sacrifices; but apparently Pharaoh sensed the truth in Moses' objection. At least he offered no rebuttal.

The "abomination" did not involve sacrificing cattle, for the Egyptians did sacrifice and eat cattle, even though some

cattle were sacred to them. See notes on 7:15. Probably the best explanation is that the abomination somehow involved the use of sheep for sacrifice. Every shepherd was an abomination to the Egyptians (Gen. 46:34).

This dialogue between Moses and Pharaoh suggests that during their stay in Egypt the Israelites had not sacrificed to their God.

32. *What second compromise offer did Pharaoh make? (8:28)*

He would let them go and sacrifice in the desert out of the land of Egypt; only they should not go far away. Pharaoh's offer is a significant concession, and shows the plagues were truly having effect on him. Note Pharaoh's request for Moses to "Entreat" for him. See notes on 8:8.

The world does not want Christians to move too far from it, or be too different from it. They want us to be in their power, and not to condemn them by the example of a life too righteous.

33. *What did Moses caution Pharaoh about doing? (8:29)*

"Let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more." Pharaoh had done deceitfully previously when he promised during the plague of frogs to let Israel go, but refused to do so after the plague (8:8, 15).

God's servants like Moses are ready to help persecutors in misery, and to pray for them. But also they *warn* them about sin.

On "going out" to pray for Pharaoh, see 8:12.

34. *How fully were the flies removed? (8:31)*

"There remained not one!" How great is God's deliverance! The flies were removed in answer to prayer. God removes swarms of judgments when his servants pray to him.

35. *How did Pharaoh fulfill his promises to Moses? (8:32)*

He hardened his heart again, and would not let them go. He broke his promise (8:28). This *also* refers back to the second plague (the frogs), when he hardened his heart after promising to let them go if the frogs were removed (8:8, 15).

THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**9** Then Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Go in unto Pha-raoh, and tell him, Thus saith Je-ho-vah, the God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. (2) For if thou refuse to let them go, and wilt hold them still, (3) behold, the hand of Je-ho-vah is upon thy cattle which are in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the herds, and upon the flocks: *there shall be* a very grievous murrain. (4) And Je-ho-vah shall make a distinction between the cattle of Is-ra-el and the cattle of E-gypt; and there shall nothing die of all that belongeth to the children of Is-ra-el. (5) And Je-ho-vah appointed a set time, saying, To-morrow Je-ho-vah shall do this thing in the land. (6) And Je-ho-vah did that thing on the morrow; and all the cattle of Egypt died; but of the cattle of the children of Is-ra-el died not one. (7) And Pha-raoh sent, and, behold, there was not so much as one of the cattle of ~~the~~ Is-ra-el-ites dead. But the heart of Pha-raoh was stubborn, and he did not let the people go.

(8) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses and unto Aar-on, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Mo-ses sprinkle it toward heaven in the sight of Pha-raoh. (9) And it shall become small dust over all the land of E-gypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast, throughout all the land of E-gypt. (10) And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pha-raoh; and Mo-ses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast. (11) And the magicians could not stand before Mo-ses because of the boils; for the boils were upon the magicians, and upon all the E-gyp-tians. (12) And Je-ho-vah hardened the heart of Pha-raoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as Je-ho-vah had spoken unto Mo-ses.

(13) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pha-raoh, and say unto him, Thus saith Je-ho-vah, the God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. (14) For I will this time send all my plagues upon thy heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people;

that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. (15) For now I had put forth my hand, and smitten thee and thy people with pestilence, and thou hadst been cut off from the earth: (16) but in very deed for this cause have I made thee to stand, to show thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. (17) As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go? (18) Behold, to-morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very greivous hail, such as hath not been in E-gypt since the day it was founded even until now. (19) Now therefore send, hasten in thy cattle and all that thou hast in the field; *for* every man and beast that shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die. (20) He that feared the word of Je-ho-vah among the servants of Pha-raoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses: (21) and he that regarded not the word of Je-ho-vah left his servants and his cattle in the field.

(22) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Stretch forth thy hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of E-gypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of E-gypt. (23) And Mo-ses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and Je-ho-vah sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down unto the earth; and Je-ho-vah rained hail upon the land of E-gypt. (24) So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as had not been in all the land of E-gypt since it became a nation. (25) And the hail smote throughout all the land of E-gypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field. (26) Only in the land of Go-shen, where the children of Is-ra-el were, was there no hail.

(27) And Pha-raoh sent, and called for Mo-ses and Aar-on, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: Je-ho-vah is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. (28) Entreat Je-ho-vah; for there hath been enough of *these* mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer. (29) And Mo-ses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto Je-ho-vah; the thunders shall cease,



neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know that the earth is Je-ho-vah's. (30) But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear Je-ho-vah God. (31) And the flax and the barley were smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was in bloom. (32) But the wheat and the spelt were not smitten: for they were not grown up. (33) And Mo-ses went out of the city from Pha-raoh, and spread abroad his hands unto Je-ho-vah: and the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth. (34) And when Pha-raoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants. (35) And the heart of Pha-raoh was hardened, and he did not let the children of Is-ra-el go; as Je-ho-vah had spoken by Mo-ses.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER NINE  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After reading the chapter, propose a brief theme or topic for it.
2. Before which plagues in chapter nine did Moses come in unto Pharaoh with demands? (9:1; etc.)
3. What did the LORD intend for his people to do after they were released? (9:1, 13)
4. What is *murrain*? (9:3)
5. What animals would be affected by the murrain? (9:3)
6. How would the murrain affect the cattle of Israel? (9:4)
7. What time was set for the murrain to begin? (9:5)
8. Who investigated the effects of the murrain on Israel's cattle? (9:7)
9. What does Pharaoh's reaction to the murrain reveal about him? (9:7)
10. What was to be sprinkled toward heaven? By whom? In the sight of whom? (9:8)
11. What effect would the ashes produce? (9:9)
12. What are *blains*? (9:9)

13. Why could not the magicians stand before Moses? (9:11)  
What does "stand before" mean?
14. What happened to Pharaoh's heart after the plague of boils? (9:12)
15. When was Moses to stand again before Pharaoh? (9:13)
16. What lesson was Pharaoh to learn from the plagues? (9:14)
17. What possible plague did God threaten Pharaoh with in 9:15? What would have been the effect of this plague?
18. Why had God not smitten Pharaoh with pestilence, but rather let him live? (9:16)
19. Where would God's name be declared? (9:16)
20. What question did God ask of Pharaoh? (9:17) Why ask this question?
21. How much advance warning was given about the hail? (9:18)
22. How severe would the hail be? (9:18-19, 24)
23. What precaution was Pharaoh urged to take before the hail? (9:19) Why should God give Pharaoh such a forewarning?
24. Did Pharaoh's servants take heed to the warning about the hail? (9:20-21) What determined whether they heeded or not?
25. What act did Moses perform at the start of the hail? (9:22)
26. What was mixed with the hail? (9:23)
27. What effect did the hail have upon the trees? (9:25)
28. Where was there no hail? (9:26)
29. What confession about himself did Pharaoh make after the hail? (9:27) What did Pharaoh confess about the LORD?
30. What (lying!) promise did Pharaoh make to Moses?
31. When did Moses promise to call off the thunder? (9:29, 33)  
How does this promise show faith on the part of Moses?
32. What was Pharaoh to learn by the LORD's stopping the thunder? (9:29)
33. What did Moses foreknow about Pharaoh's conduct after the hail? (9:30)
34. What two crops were smitten by the hail? (9:31)
35. What two crops were not smitten by the hail? Why not? (9:32)
36. Was Moses able to get the thunder stopped as he promised? (9:33)

37. Who hardened Pharaoh's heart after the hail stopped? (9:34)
38. How did Pharaoh sin "yet more" by hardening his heart? (9:34)
39. Was Pharaoh's breaking his promise a surprise? (9:35)

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**EXODUS NINE: WEALTH AND HEALTH  
DESTROYED BY DISOBEDIENCE**

1. Plague of death of livestock; 9:1-7.
2. Plague of boils; 9:8-12.
3. Plague of hail; 9:13-35

**EXODUS NINE: SUFFERINGS CAUSED BY SIN**

1. Brute creation suffers; 9:1-7, 9, 19, 25; Rom. 8:20.
2. Physical bodies suffer; 9:8-11, 19, 25.
3. National wealth suffers; 9:6, 24-25.

**EXODUS NINE: MAN POWERLESS BEFORE GOD'S PUNISHMENTS**

1. Powerless to prevent them; (9:3, 18)
2. Powerless to endure them; (9:10-11, 27-28)
3. Sometimes powerless to learn from them; (9:7, 12, 30, 35).

**EXODUS NINE: GOD'S MERCIES DURING GOD'S JUDGMENTS**

1. The mercy of advance warning; 9:2-3, 18-19.
2. The mercy of deferred punishment; 9:15-16; II Pet. 3:9.
3. The mercy of praying ministers; 9:28-29.
4. The mercy of removed plagues; 9:33.

## WEALTH AND HEALTH DESTROYED

9:1-35

### HEART PLAGUES! (Ex. 9:14) (The Hail, Locusts, Darkness, Passover)

1. Cause agony of spirit; 9:27; 10:4-7; 12:30.
2. Sent when lesser corrections fail; 9:15-17.
3. Cause men to confess God; 9:27; 10:16.

### FEAR OF THE WORD OF GOD (9:20-21)

1. Based on God's past acts.
2. Brings action; 9:20; Matt. 7:21.
3. Brings deliverance; 9:25.

### REPENTANCE BASED ON FEAR (9:27)

1. Felt by the mightiest of men; 9:27.
2. Causes us to acknowledge sin; 9:27.
3. Causes us to seek God's servants; 9:27-28.
4. Often concerned with removal of penalty rather than removal of sin.
5. Often very temporary; 9:34-35.

### THE WORK OF GOD'S MINISTER WITH A STUBBORN SINNER (9:27-33)

1. Be available to help him; 9:27.
2. Pray for him; 9:28, 33.
3. Proclaim God's deliverance; 9:29.
4. Present God's demands; 9:29.
5. Tell him the truth; 9:30.

## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER NINE

1. *What instruction did God give Moses after the plague of flies? (9:1)*

He sent him back to Pharaoh, presumably at Pharaoh's house, as in 8:1. There he was to make the same demand as before: "Let my people go that they may serve me." This was the fourth or fifth time this demand was made to Pharaoh (5:1; 7:2, 7, 16; 8:1, 20).

2. *What threat was to be made to Pharaoh? (9:2-3)*

If he refused there would be a grievous (heavy) *murrain* on all the livestock of Egypt. A *murrain* (Heb. *deber*) is a destruction, pestilence, or plague. The English word *murrain* is an archaic term from the same root as the word *murder* and the Latin *mors* (meaning death). We do not know exactly the nature of this plague, whether it was like anthrax or rinderpest, or some other disease. But it was deadly!

This murrain may have been a *unique* pestilence, because it was not confined to one species of animal, as most diseases are. This murrain is said to be the HAND of the Lord.

First God destroyed Egypt's cattle, then its crops (by hail and locusts). This really cut off its food supply. The change from plagues affecting people's personal comfort to economic disasters represents a worsening of the plagues.

3. *What animals would be affected by the murrain? (9:3)*

The disease was to affect cattle in the field, horses, donkeys, camels, herds and flocks. Cattle and domestic animals were very common in Egypt, and very precious to the Egyptians, as witnessed by their paintings and literature. Pharaoh himself kept a large number of cattle (Gen. 47:6, 17). The disease appears to have been limited to cattle in the fields; those that were sheltered indoors escaped. This partly explains why some cattle survived the plague (9:10, 21).

Horses were affected. Horses were common in Egypt in the XVIII dynasty (1570-1345 B.C.), which was the time of Moses. They were primarily used for war, and their introduction has been attributed to the Hyksos (1670-1570 B.C.).

Note that the animals presented to Abraham at an earlier date do not include horses (Gen. 12:16).

The reference to *camels* has been thought by some to be an anachronism, something out of its true historical position, because supposedly camels were not domesticated in Moses' time.<sup>1</sup> However, numerous evidences have been brought forth showing that camels were in limited use during the times of the patriarchs and Moses. The Egyptologist K. A. Kitchen mentions the "Mesopotamian lexical lists that originated in the Old Babylonian Period [which] show a knowledge of the camel about 2000/1700 B.C., including its domestication." Also from the city of Byblos comes an incomplete camel figurine of the nineteenth/eighteenth centuries B.C.<sup>2</sup>

4. *What animals were not affected by the murrain?* (9:4)

It did not kill the Israelites' cattle. Regarding the distinction which God made between Egyptians and Israelites, see 8:22. The fact of this distinction certainly shows that the death of the cattle had miraculous features. Also the setting of a specific time for its coming makes it miraculous.

5. *When would the murrain strike?* (9:5)

God said, "Tomorrow." And true to the prediction on the next day all the cattle of Egypt died; but of the cattle of the children of Israel, not one died.

This plague shows the absolute rulership of Jehovah. He completely controls every creature in the world. Disease strikes only when and where He decrees. The believer is safe in the hands of God.

6. *What portion of the cattle of Egypt died?* (9:6)

"All the cattle of Egypt died." This *all* is restricted in 9:3 to those "which are in the field." It would seem that the term *all* in 9:6 (as in 8:17) is not to be taken in an absolute sense, but as referring to such a large portion that what remained

<sup>1</sup>For example, see G. E. Wright, *Biblical Archaeology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957), pp. 40, 46.

<sup>2</sup>K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament*, (Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1966), p. 79.

was as nothing in comparison.<sup>3</sup> Thus, we find that there were some cattle still remaining in 9:19 and 12:29.

7. *How did the Egyptians regard cattle?*

While the Egyptians did sacrifice cattle and eat them, the cow had *sacred* associations to the Egyptians. The goddess *Hathor* is pictured in the form of a cow. She was the goddess of love, beauty, and joy. She helped the departed soul on its perilous journey after death. This goddess is often pictured as a cow suckling one of the kings, giving him divine nourishment.

The *Apis* bull was regarded as the incarnation of the Egyptians creator-god Ptah of the capital city of Memphis. After their deaths these bulls were mummified. During their lifetimes the bulls were fed choice food, bathed, brushed, and pampered daily. On their birthdays they were brought out for the people's adoration. When one died, another was chosen on the basis of various markings such as a black color, with a square or triangular spot on his forehead. Mummification for these animals is estimated to have cost \$50,000 to \$100,000 each. In A.D. 1856 the excavator Auguste Mariette found a long underground avenue where these bulls had been buried in black granite sarcophagi. The burial tunnels extended 1120 feet; and sixty-four large burial chambers lay along the avenue. Remains of drink-offerings dedicated by visitors were still lying near some of the sarcophagi.<sup>4</sup>

8. *Who checked on the survival of the Israelites' cattle? (9:7)*

Pharaoh himself sent investigators, who found that not even one Israelite cow had died in the plague. The possibility that such a thing might have happened in an ordinary plague is almost nonexistent.

Nonetheless, Pharaoh's heart was stubborn, and he probably attributed the sparing of the Israelites' cattle to natural

<sup>3</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 487.

<sup>4</sup>G. Frederick Owen, *Archaeology and the Bible* (Westwood, N. J.: Revell, 1961), pp. 181-183.

causes; or, more probably, he just did not let himself think about it.

9. *What was used at the start of the plague of boils? (9:8)*

Moses and Aaron both took full handfuls of ashes (or soot, or dust) from a furnace (or oven). Then apparently Aaron passed his handfuls to Moses, who scattered (or sprinkled) the ashes toward heaven in the sight of Pharaoh.

Some authors (Pink, for example) have suggested that the ashes came off an altar for human sacrifice. This does not seem to be true, as we have no evidence the Egyptians burned human bodies. More probably the ashes came from a brick kiln or smelting furnace.<sup>5</sup>

If these ashes did come from a brick kiln, there is a sardonic twist of vengeance revealed. The Israelites had been enslaved at brick-making, and now the ashes that made the lives of the oppressed bitter smite the oppressor with boils.

10. *What effect did the ashes produce? (9:9-10)*

They spread like a dust cloud over all the land of Egypt, settling upon men and beasts. This caused an inflammation to break out in boils (blains), which became blisters, or running sores (Lat. *pustulae*). Such boils were sometimes regarded as leprous (Lev. 13:12, 18-20; 14:43). This disaster struck both man and beast. The previous plague had caused the deaths of domestic animals in the fields, but spared others to be afflicted by the boils and hail. This time the boils affected every beast and man in Egypt.

What irresistible power lay in those ashes! We do not assume that there was a biological connection between the ashes and the boils. God caused the boils; but the scattering of the ashes was a visual aid linking Moses to the boils, and doing it right under Pharaoh's nose.

This plague is a further advance in the terribleness of the disasters. Previously the Egyptians had not been directly attacked in their persons (although admittedly the lice and flies were not pleasant).

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<sup>5</sup>Keil and Delitzsch. *op. cit.*, p. 488.



In Deut. 28:27, 35 God threatened to smite the Israelites with the *botch* of Egypt, if they disobeyed Him. The *botch* is the boil referred to here in Ex. 9:9.

The plague of boils may have been an attack on Imhotep, the Egyptian god of medicine. Imhotep had been a sage, architect, and chief ritualist in the Old Kingdom of Egypt; but had become regarded as a demigod after his death, and later was "canonized" to become their god of medicine. The inability of their gods to save Egypt must have shaken the Egyptians profoundly.

11. *How did the magicians fare with the boils? (9:11)*

Very poorly! Just after being "loused-up" (8:18-19), now they find themselves "boiled." God's judgment comes on high and low alike. So great was their pain that they could not stand before Moses. They were probably in such misery they could not endure to remain in one position for more than a few seconds. To stand up face to face with Moses in a confrontation was utterly beyond their power.

12. *Why did not Pharaoh let Israel go after the plague of boils? (9:12)*

He did not let them go because Jehovah hardened his heart. This is the FIRST time that the text specifically says that God himself hardened Pharaoh's heart. Of course, God had predicted that He would do this (4:21).

We wonder if Pharaoh sensed that he was being driven by some irresistible force outside of himself. Perhaps after this plague he wondered within himself how he could have been so stubborn. We have the opinion that he WAS in some manner conscious that matters had gotten beyond his control. If this were not so, then it would seem that God was dealing with him solely for the purpose of punishment. That stage did come to pass, but it was not there yet. In the very next plague God gave Pharaoh the choice; and he hardened his own heart. Apparently then during this plague of boils and during the next plague, God was still dealing with Pharaoh for the purpose of persuasion and not just punishment.

Before we accuse Jehovah of being unjust for hardening

Pharaoh's heart, we need to consider how often Pharaoh had already hardened his own heart. (See 8:15, 32. See also notes on 4:21 and the special study on *Hardening Pharaoh's Heart*.)

It is God's right as God to deal with sinners any way He chooses. Any good that God does to a sinner is an act of pure grace. What all sinners really deserve is death.<sup>6</sup> God's dealings with men never remove from man the responsibility for his own actions.

13. *How and where did Moses announce the plague of hail?* (9:13) (9:13)

Moses met Pharaoh again at an early hour (compare 8:20), possibly again at the water's edge (7:15; 8:20). There Moses spoke God's demand that Pharaoh let Israel go so they could serve Him. See notes on 9:1.

14. *Upon what would God send the plague of hail and the following plagues?* (9:14)

He would send them upon the *heart* of Pharaoh, and upon his servants. These last three plagues were of greater severity than the previous ones, and pointed toward the final decisive blow. These plagues attacked his innermost nature and feelings. These plagues would break his will or destroy him. Each of the three plagues before the passover produced a real, though temporary, change in Pharaoh's feelings.

These heart-plagues were to teach Pharaoh that there was none like Jehovah in all the earth. This lesson had been the assignment to learn in 8:10; but Pharaoh seemed to need a second lesson. (Compare 8:10; 18:11.)

The word *plagues* (plural, referring to the next three plagues) in 9:14 is a different word than is used with reference to the other plagues. This word means a blow (sometimes a fatal blow, as in Num. 14:37; Ezek. 24:16; I Sam. 4:17), or slaughter, or stroke, or striking.

15. *What had God considered doing to Pharaoh and the Egyptians?* (9:15)

He had considered smiting them with a pestilence that would have killed them all. The word for *pestilence* is the

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<sup>6</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

same word translated *murrain* in 9:2. The people would have died, as the cattle had died. Pharaoh could justifiably have been slain. So could we all for our sins! But, bless the Lord, He has no pleasure in the death of the sinner (Ezek. 33:11), but only desires that the sinner may turn from his wicked way and live.

16. *Why had God spared Pharaoh?* (9:16)

He spared him to show Pharaoh His power, and that God's name might be declared throughout all the earth. WE must now declare Moses' deeds and God's wonders in Egypt, so that His name may be honored throughout all the earth.

The King James Vers. of Ex. 9:16 says, "For this cause I have *raised thee up*. . . ." This is very similar to the wording used by Paul in Rom. 9:17. What does "raised thee up" mean? It seems to mean two things: (1) I have raised you up to be king in Egypt; and (2) I have enabled you to stand firm in your kingship against all the punishments that have come upon you in the plagues. The Hebrew Bible simply reads (as given in the A.S.V.) "I have made thee to stand."

The Greek O.T. says, "On account of this I have preserved thee." The R.S.V. gives a similar reading: "I have let you live." This seems to us to limit the meaning too much. God had not only preserved Pharaoh through the plague-disasters, but even before that had raised him up to be king. Pharaoh had already made of himself a vessel fitted for destruction (Rom. 9:22). Nonetheless, God had raised him up to become king, and preserved him as king, so that Pharaoh could see God's power (and therefore be without excuse), and that God's power might be declared in all the earth.

17. *Is Ex. 9:17 a question?*

We feel that it is a question. It is given as a question in the KJV, the A.S.V., the *Berkeley Bible*, the *New American Bible*, and the *Living Bible*. The R.S.V., the *Jerusalem Bible*, and the *New English Bible* render it as a statement. On the basis of grammar alone, it can be read either as a question or as a statement.

As a statement it would either state a completely obvious

fact, or it would express amazement on the part of God. God was certainly not amazed at Pharaoh's response; He had predicted it exactly.

As a question, it functions not as a request for information, but to bring about conviction. Like God's questions to Cain and to Adam (Gen. 3:11; 4:10), this one was directed at the conscience: "Are you still exalting yourself against my people?"

The verb translated "exalting yourself" may have the idea of "fortifying yourself" by heaping up mounds and ramparts. Pharaoh was digging in for a fight against God.

18. *When was the hail to begin? (9:18)*

"Tomorrow!" Moses announced before four of the plagues that they would start *tomorrow*. (Flies, 8:23; murrain, 9:5; hail; locusts, 10:4) Hailstorms are rare in Egypt. This hailstorm was to be the worst in all the history of Egypt. It was to be very *grievous*. The word *grievous* (Heb. *kabed*) is the word used to describe Pharaoh's *heavy* stubborn heart (Ex. 9:7). Heavy hail for a heavy heart!

19. *What opportunity to escape the hail was announced? (9:19)*

Moses announced that men and beasts who came in from the fields and took shelter in houses would be saved from the hail. Those that remained outdoors would be killed by hailstones. This warning was an act of pure divine mercy.

20. *Was the warning about taking shelter from the hail heeded? (9:20-21)*

Those of the servants of Pharaoh who feared (respected) God's word as uttered by Moses caused their servants and cattle to flee into the houses. But he who did not take the word of Jehovah to heart left his servants and his cattle in the field.

The expression "regarded not the word of Jehovah" is literally "set not his heart . . ." This is a similar expression to Ex. 7:23, where Pharaoh did not "set his heart" on the matter after the water was turned to blood.

This is the first plague where we see indication that the warnings were taken seriously by the Egyptians. This is

definite progress toward victory. We imagine that Pharaoh was displeased to see his subjects obeying the word of Moses and Aaron.

In Egypt cattle are usually kept out-of-doors from January to April. After that they are kept indoors for protection from the heat. Note that the livestock were kept in people's houses, a custom in many lands. See note 17 in Ex. ch. 8.

Giving attention to the word of God is the condition for deliverance from the coming judgments of God. God has promised to keep us from the hour of trial coming upon the whole world (Rev. 3:10). But we must heed His word to receive deliverance.

21. *How was the plague of hail started?* (9:22-23)

Moses stretched forth his hand with his rod toward heaven. In the three plagues just before the Passover, Moses stretched forth his hand and/or rod toward heaven (10:12-13, 21-22). Regarding the rod, see 4:17.

22. *What was the plague of hail like?* (9:23-25)

There was thunder<sup>7</sup> and hail, and fire (presumably lightning) going to the land. Jehovah rained upon all the land of Egypt. Psalm 78:47-48: "He killed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with hail-stones. He delivered up to the hail their cattle, and their flocks to the lightning-flashes." Psalm 105:32-33 says, "He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land. He smote their vines also and their fig trees, and broke the trees of their borders." This fire was mingled together, perhaps into balls of fire.

Assuming that the hailstorm covered just the habitable area of Egypt, it would be a ribbon-shaped hailstorm, about ten miles wide and four hundred miles long, with a fan-shaped end.

At the south end of the Nile delta, near Cairo, about two inches of rain falls each year. Hail sometimes accompanies the rain, but not with great severity. South of this area rain

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<sup>7</sup>Thunder in Hebrew is *voices of God*. Thunder is often used as a representation of God's voice. See Ex. 19:19; John 12:29; Job 37:2-5; Psalm 77:18.

is a rare occurrence. The rains usually fall from January to April. This is the time when the cattle are likely to be outdoors.

The extent of the hail disaster was indicated by the Egyptians themselves. In Ex. 10:7 they begged Pharaoh to release Israel before any more plagues came. The economy of the country had been ruined.

God's judgments in all ages have often been accompanied by dreadful hail. See Isa. 30:30; Ps. 18:13; Rev. 16:21.

23. *How did the Israelites fare in the hail storm? (9:26)*

There was no hail in Goshen where they were. Also the Israelites had no flies (8:22), no murrain of cattle (9:4, 6), and no darkness (10:23). Compare 11:7 and 12:13.

24. *How did Pharaoh respond to the plague of hail? (9:27-28)*

He summoned Moses and Aaron, and confessed his sin, and asked for prayer that the hail stop. He promised to let Israel go. The terribleness of the plague really seized him. Pharaoh had given up calling upon his magicians. The solution was obviously only in Moses and Aaron.

The wicked often seek the prayers of the righteous when the wicked find themselves defeated. Note the cases of King Jeroboam I (I Kings 13:6) and Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:24).

Pharaoh's confession that he had sinned *this time* sounds as if his guilt were not very deeply felt. He certainly had sinned before this (see 8:29).

Pharaoh's confession that Jehovah was righteous, and he and his people were wicked, is progress. He had once said he did not even know Jehovah (5:2). For similar confessions, see II Chron. 12:6 and Lam. 1:18. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of righteousness, that is, of God's righteousness and Christ's righteousness (John 16:10). Pharaoh repeated his confession about sinning in 10:16, during the plague of locusts.

This was the third time Pharaoh begged for a removal of a plague. Compare 8:8, 28.

Pharaoh made an unconditional promise to let Israel go if

the thundering and hail stopped.

25. *Where did Moses go to pray about the hail?* (9:29, 33)

He went out of the city. See notes on 8:12.

Moses was utterly confident that his prayers would stop the hail. And they did!

Moses indicated that Pharaoh was to learn from the plagues that the earth (or the land) was the LORD'S! Compare 8:10, 22; 9:14. Pharaoh had already learned that Jehovah was a God, and that there was no one like him. He is now to learn that Jehovah owned and controlled all the land. Compare Psalm 24:1. When this assertion is read against the background of divine kingship in Egypt and the Egyptian view of different deities controlling different areas and different activities of life and nature, the assertion takes on a tone of triumph, exultation, and victory. It is not Pharaoh who controlled and owned the earth. It was not even the gods of Egypt, but YAHWEH, God of Israel!

26. *Did Moses trust Pharaoh's promise to release Israel?* (9:30)

Moses knew he would not keep it. Moses knew this by God's revelation, rather than by his own natural understanding of human nature. (See 4:21; 9:35)

"Let favor be showed unto the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:10).

Note the full name *Jehovah God* in 4:30. It appears that Moses relished speaking this name in all its fulness in Pharaoh's hearing.

27. *What crops were smitten by the hail?* (9:31-32)

The flax and barley were smitten. These ripen about the same time, in the month of March. The hail hit when the barley heads had appeared and the flax was in bloom, that is, with immature heads blooming with pollen. This would be near the end of January. Regarding the importance of flax as the source for linen cloth, see note 17 in ch. 8.

The wheat and spelt mature in April, about a month after the barley. The hail fell at a time when it would not greatly harm the subsequent yield of wheat and spelt. Spelt (not rye, or rie) is a grain much like wheat, but inferior to it.

The desperate Egyptians were in sorrow and fright. Their sky-goddess Nut could not protect them from hail from the sky. (She is often pictured as a lanky nude female arching from horizon to horizon across the sky, touching the ground with finger tips and toes.) The goddess Isis and the god Seth also were thought to have care over agricultural production. But the gods were silent.

28. *Did Pharaoh keep his promise to let Israel go? (9:34-35)*

No. He hardened his heart, and his Egyptian servants did also. Observe that Pharaoh hardened *his own* heart. God had hardened his heart after the plague of boils (9:12). This time God let Pharaoh make the decision, and Pharaoh proved himself to be a hard-hearted liar. He also revealed (unintentionally!) that God's treatment of him was completely just. (See notes on 4:21 concerning the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.) In refusing to let Israel go, Pharaoh sinned "yet more." (See 9:27.)

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The Text of EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**10** And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Go in unto Pha-raoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servant, that I may show these my signs in the midst of them, (2) and that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought upon Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye may know that I am Je-ho-vah. (3) And Mo-ses and Aar-on went in unto Pha-raoh, and said unto him, Thus saith Je-ho-vah, the God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me. (4) Else, if thou refuse to let my people go, behold, to-morrow will I bring locusts into thy border: (5) and they shall cover the face of the earth, so that one shall not be able to see the earth: and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remaineth unto you from the hail, and shall eat



every tree which groweth for you out of the field: (6) and thy houses shall be filled, and the houses of all thy servants, and the houses of all the E-gyp-tians; as neither thy fathers nor thy fathers' fathers have seen, since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day. And he turned, and went out from Pha-raoh. (7) And Pha-raoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve Je-ho-vah their God: knowest thou not yet that E-gypt is destroyed? (8) And Mo-ses and Aar-on were brought again unto Pha-raoh: and he said unto them, Go, serve Je-ho-vah your God; but who are they that shall go? (9) And Mo-ses said, We will go with our young and with our old; with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto Je-ho-vah. (10) And he said unto them, So be Je-ho-vah with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you. (11) Not so: go now ye that are men, and serve Je-ho-vah; for that is what ye desire. And they were driven out from Pha-raoh's presence.

(12) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Stretch out thy hand over the land of E-gypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of E-gypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail hath left. (13) And Mo-ses stretched forth his rod over the land of E-gypt, and Je-ho-vah brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all the night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. (14) And the locusts went up over all the land of E-gypt, and rested in all the borders of E-gypt; very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. (15) For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing, either tree or herb of the field, through all the land of E-gypt. (16) Then Pha-raoh called for Mo-ses and Aar-on in haste; and he said, I have sinned against Je-ho-vah your God, and against you. (17) Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and entreat Je-ho-vah your God, that he may take away from me this death only. (18) And he went out

from Pha-raoh, and entreated Je-ho-vah. (19) And Je-ho-vah turned an exceeding strong west wind, which took up the locusts, and drove them into the Red Sea; there remained not one locust in all the border of E-gypt. (20) But Je-ho-vah hardened Pha-raoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Is-ra-el go.

(21) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Stretch out thy hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of E-gypt, even darkness which may be felt. (22) And Mo-ses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of E-gypt three days; (23) they saw not one another, neither rose any one from his place for three days: but all the children of Is-ra-el had light in their dwellings. (24) And Pha-raoh called unto Mo-ses, and said, Go ye, serve Je-ho-vah; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you. (25) And Mo-ses said, Thou must also give into our hand sacrifices and burnt-offerings, that we may sacrifice unto Je-ho-vah our God. (26) Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not a hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve Je-ho-vah our God; and we know not with what we must serve Je-ho-vah, until we come thither. (27) But Je-ho-vah hardened Pha-raoh's heart, and he would not let them go. (28) And Pha-raoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thy-self, see my face no more; for in the day thou seest my face thou shalt die. (29) And Mo-ses said, Thou has spoken well; I will see thy face again no more.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After reading the entire chapter, propose a brief theme or title for the entire chapter.
2. Why had God hardened Pharaoh's heart? (10:1) (Give the Biblical answer.)
3. Who was to be told of God's deeds in Egypt? (10:2)
4. What were the people to come to know because of the signs

- (plagues)? (10:2)
5. What question did God ask of Pharaoh through Moses and Aaron? (10:3) Was this a fair question, seeing that God had hardened his heart? (10:1; Compare 9:33.)
  6. What plague was to follow the hail? (10:4) When would it arrive?
  7. How extensive would this plague be? (10:5-6)
  8. Had Egypt ever experienced a plague like the one threatened? (10:6)
  9. Who urged Pharaoh to let the men of Israel go? (10:7) Why did they urge this?
  10. What (or who) caused Moses and Aaron to come back unto Pharaoh? (10:8)
  11. Had Pharaoh softened up a little? (10:8; Compare 9:25, 28)
  12. Who all were to depart from Egypt? (10:9)
  13. Does 10:10 sound sincere or sarcastic? Compare 10:11.
  14. What did Pharaoh think were the motives of Moses and Aaron? (10:10)
  15. Why did Moses and Aaron leave Pharaoh's presence? (10:11)
  16. What did Moses stretch forth to bring in locusts? (10:12, 13)
  17. From which direction did the wind blow in locusts? (10:13)
  18. How did the locusts compare to locusts of other times? (10:14)
  19. What did the locusts eat? (10:15)
  20. What confession did Pharaoh make? (10:16)
  21. What two requests did Pharaoh make during the locust plague? (10:17)
  22. By what term did Pharaoh describe the locust plague? (10:17)
  23. What did Moses do to get the locust plague removed? (10:18)
  24. What removed the locusts? Where did they end up? (10:19)
  25. What happened to Pharaoh's heart after the locusts were removed? (10:20)
  26. What did Moses stretch forth to bring on the darkness in Egypt? (10:21-22)
  27. How heavy and dense was the darkness? (10:21)
  28. How long did the darkness last? (10:22-23)
  29. How did the darkness affect the dwellings of the Israelites? (10:23)

30. What compromise offer did Pharaoh make to Moses? (10:24)
  31. Could Israel have survived in the wilderness without their livestock? (10:24)
  32. Could Israel have offered sacrifices without taking livestock? (10:25)
  33. What additional demand did Moses make to Pharaoh besides that he let them take out all their own livestock? (10:25)
  34. Did Israel know what God would ask them to sacrifice? (10:26)
  35. Did Pharaoh agree to Moses' request? Why or why not? (10:27)
  36. What command and what threat did Pharaoh make to Moses? (10:28)
  37. Did Moses agree to accept Pharaoh's order? (10:29)
  38. Did Moses see Pharaoh's face again? (10:29; 12:30-31)
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## EXODUS TEN: LOCUSTS AND DARKNESS (WORDS OF TERROR!)

### I. LOCUSTS; 10:1-20

1. Advance warning; 10:1-6.
2. Fear; 10:7.
3. Defiance of Pharaoh; 10:8-11.
4. The disaster; 10:12-15.
5. The supplication; 10:16-18.
6. The deliverance; 10:19.
7. The hardening; 10:20.

### II. DARKNESS; 10:21-23.

1. Stopped activity; 10:21-23.
2. Subdued Pharaoh; 10:24.
3. Strengthened Moses; 10:25-26.
4. Sharpened the conflict; 10:27-29.

EXODUS TEN: FOOD AND FAITH FORFEITED  
(FOOD AND FAITH ARE MAN'S DEAREST POSSESSIONS.)

- I. FOOD FORFEITED to locusts; 10:1-20.
- II. FAITH FORFEITED through darkness; 10:21-29.  
(Egypt's chief gods were sun-gods. The faith of the Egyptians in these gods was forfeited.)

FROM IGNORANCE TO HARDENING (Ex. 10:1; Eph. 4:18)

- I. Man's deliberate ignorance.
  - 1. Ignoring God's mercies; Ex. 8:13, 31; 9:33; 10:19.
  - 2. Ignoring God's power; Ex. 7:12; 8:18-19; 9:6-7.
  - 3. Ignoring God's past punishments; Ex. 9:12, 24-26; 10:3.
- II. God's dreadful hardening; Ex. 10:1, 20, 27.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO FUTURE GENERATIONS (Ex. 10:2)

- 1. God controls nature.
- 2. God condemns sinners.
- 3. God is the LORD.

THE LOCUSTS: GOD'S ARMY (Joel 2:11; Ex. 10:14)

- 1. Covered everything; Ex. 10:4, 14.
- 2. Consumed everything; Ex. 10:5, 15.
- 3. Conquered the king; Ex. 10:16-17.
- 4. Controlled by God; Ex. 10:19.

LOCUSTS AND DARKNESS,  
TYPES OF FINAL PUNISHMENTS

- 1. Locusts; Ex. 10:4-5; Rev. 9:3.
- 2. Darkness; Ex. 10:21-23; Matt. 8:12; Jude 13.

## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TEN

1. *What were God's purposes in sending Moses back to Pharaoh after the plague of the hail? (10:1-2)*

God's purposes were (1) that He might show further signs (miracles and plagues) in the midst of Pharaoh and his servants; and (2) that Moses might tell to his children and grandchildren how God had made sport of the Egyptians, and the great signs God had done among them.

The expression "what things I have wrought" literally refers to actions which bring shame, disgrace, or mockery upon its objects.

By this time Pharaoh had gone so far in disobedience that there was no opportunity for him to turn and change his ways. Moses was sent to him primarily to provide an opportunity for God to work further signs upon Pharaoh. Moses' going to Pharaoh and warning him of the next plague would cause Pharaoh to know that the next plague was no accident, but was linked to Jehovah and Moses.

Moses himself certainly told the next generation about the miracles and signs in Egypt (Deut. 7:8, 18-19). But Moses was not the only one that was to tell of these wonders. He was only the representative of all the people. The Israelites have always related to their children God's wonders in Egypt. Psalms 78 and 105 are examples of the way the plague stories were told in song and story. We ourselves still also exult in God's triumphs in Egypt.

God repeated again His desire that Israel would know that He was Jehovah! (Compare 6:7.) Israel needed to learn this as much as the Egyptians did. The Israelites had worshipped idols in Egypt (Josh. 24:14; Ezek. 20:6-8), and they continued to do so even after their exodus.

2. *Why would God send locusts, and when? (10:3-4)*

God would send locusts because Pharaoh would not humble himself before the LORD. He had confessed after the last plague (hail) that he had sinned, and that Jehovah was righteous (9:27). But he hardened his heart afterwards (9:35).

God did not demand that Pharaoh humble himself so that He might, as it were, place his foot upon the neck of a defeated victim (Josh. 10:24). But rather God sought to humble Pharaoh that Pharaoh might be blessed, for God exalts the humble (James 4:10).

The locusts would be brought in *tomorrow*. Likewise the plagues of hail, murrain, and flies were announced one day in advance.

3. *What would the locusts do?* (10:5-6)

They would blanket the land because they were so numerous. They would eat up every sprig of green vegetation left by the hail. They would get into the houses of the Egyptians and fill them in a manner such as no one had ever seen before. They would even eat the wood of the trees. This would grieve the Egyptians because they were fond of trees. Their land did not have a great many trees because they were so close to the desert.

Joel 2:9-10 refers to a later locust plague: "They leap upon the city; they run upon the wall; they climb up into the houses; they enter in at the windows like a thief. The earth quaketh before them; the sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining." Compare also Psalm 105:34-35; 78:46.

See notes on 10:14-15 for more about the effects of the locusts.

4. *Why did Pharaoh's servants urge Pharaoh to let the Israelites go?* (10:7)

They had already suffered much in the previous plagues - the frogs, boils, hail, etc. They had probably been out in the land and had seen that Egypt was destroyed. They believed that Moses' threats were to be taken very seriously.

They asked Pharaoh, "How long will this man (Moses) be a snare (a trap, or noose) unto us. Send the men (of Israel) away, and let them serve Jehovah their God! Don't you know yet that Egypt has perished?" Note their use of the full title "Jehovah their God."

5. *Did Pharaoh make a sincere offer to let Israel go?* (10:8)

Not really. He did tell Moses and Aaron to go and serve Jehovah their God (and note that he also used God's full title). But almost before he finished uttering the offer, he was hedging. He demanded, "Who and who (else) will be going?" (Thus his question reads in Hebrew.)

6. *What feelings did Moses express about who would leave Egypt?* (10:9)

Total confidence! Total freedom! Total certainty! He declared, "With our young, and with our senior citizens, WE SHALL GO!" He did not request permission; he stated their intentions with force. (In the Hebrew Moses' reply to Pharaoh begins with the words "With our young, and with our old, . . . ." Moses unhesitatingly threw back into the teeth of Pharaoh's demanding question the full list of who would be leaving Egypt.)

Moses made again the demand that Pharaoh let them go and *sacrifice*, the demand that he made at the very first meeting with Pharaoh (5:1).

7. *Did Pharaoh agree to let ALL Israelites go?* (10:10-11)

Defiantly not! His reply was contemptuous and sarcastic toward Moses and Aaron, and also toward Jehovah. The Hebrew may be translated, "May Jehovah be with you in like manner to that by which I am sending you out, (you) and your little ones! Watch out! Because (I know) evil is in your minds!" (literally, "before your faces").

Pharaoh knew he was not going to send them out; and he did not think Jehovah *could* deliver them any more than he *would* deliver them. He practically dared Jehovah to do anything. It is easy to imagine Pharaoh was smirking as he fired off his choice sarcastic saying. It is the kind of "put-down" that cruel people enjoy.

Note that to Pharaoh it was *evil* for Moses to consider taking the Israelites away from his slave service.

Pharaoh's restriction of permission to depart to the men only was pure tyranny, without reason or mercy. Even the



Egyptians, according to Herodotus,<sup>1</sup> held religious festivals at which women were in the habit of going with men. He tells of men and women sailing together to the assemblies, vast numbers in each boat, and that the number of men and women sometimes amounted to seven hundred thousand!

Oppressors often permit *adults* to exercise religious observances, while they seek to control the *children* and educate them away from the faith of their fathers. Proud persecutors yield a little to God, but yet refuse to obey His basic terms. They threaten the people of God. But their threats return upon the threateners.

Pharaoh's lack of genuine sincerity was demonstrated by his driving Moses and Aaron from his presence.

8. *What brought locusts into Egypt?* (10:12-13)

Moses stretched forth his hand and rod. (Compare 9:22-23) Then the LORD caused a wind to blow from the east for twenty-four hours, all day and all night, and the next morning the cloud of locusts appeared, and then settled all over Egypt.

Sometimes locust swarms first appear as a dark band on the horizon, heavy enough to block the light of the rising sun. Egypt has occasional invasions by locusts, so that this sight must have terrorized the people.

Usually locusts come into Egypt from the SOUTH<sup>2</sup> or southwest (from Ethiopia and Libya). But sometimes they do come into Egypt from the east, from Arabia.<sup>3</sup> The fact that the wind blew so long suggests that the locusts were blown in from a great distance. The power of the LORD reached far beyond the borders of Egypt, and ruled over every land.

9. *What effects did the locusts have upon Egypt?* (10:14-15)

They utterly covered the land, so that the land was

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<sup>1</sup>Herodotus, *Histories*, II, 58, 60. Translated by George Rawlinson (London: Dent, 1964), Vol. II, pp. 143-144.

<sup>2</sup>The Greek O.T. translates 10:13, "The Lord brought a *south* wind upon the land." We feel that this is probably incorrect.

<sup>3</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 496.

darkened. They ate every herb and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left. Nothing green remained in all the land of Egypt.

The locusts in this plague were a variety more destructive and numerous than ever seen before. Compare Joel 2:2-3; Psalm 105:34-35; 78:46.

Locusts that develop to the migratory stage resemble the grasshopper, but are larger, being nearly three inches long. They are yellowish-tan in color, with dark roundish spots on their wings. A locust can eat its own weight daily. In a severe plague a square mile of land will have from one hundred to two hundred million locusts. They are hardy creatures. They can fly up to twenty hours continuously at ten to twelve miles an hour. Locusts have been tracked as far as 900 miles in fourteen days.<sup>4</sup> In one day they can eat the growing food grains that took a year to grow; and the price of bread will soar beyond the reach of the poor (who then may be reduced to eating the locusts!). Palm trees bending with fruit may be reduced to bare spars, golden grainfields to stubble, and even wild marsh reeds disappear. While locust hordes are often a mile or less in width, clouds of locusts have been known to extend over 500 miles and to be so thick as to hide the sun completely as they fly over.

10. *What did the locusts cause Pharaoh to do? (10:16-18)*

He summoned Moses and Aaron in haste, and confessed that he had sinned, and begged them to forgive him, and pray for the LORD to take away this DEATH (the locusts).

Pharaoh sought forgiveness of his sin "this once." He did not ask for a purification of his moral nature. He had once before confessed to sin (9:27), but that conviction left him quickly when the hail stopped.

Pharaoh asked Moses to pray for him, rather than humbling himself before God and praying for himself. (See 9:28.)

Moses complied with Pharaoh's request, and went out

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<sup>4</sup>Part of this information is taken from a vivid article, "Reports From the Locust Wars," *National Geographic* mag., April 1953, pp. 545-562.

from him and entreated Jehovah. See notes on 8:12.

11. *How were the locusts removed?* (10:19)

The LORD changed the direction of the wind, and a very strong wind from the (Mediterranean) sea blew the locusts into the Red Sea, and there remained not one locust in the land of Egypt.

Only God could remove such a scourge. Swarms of fully mature locusts are almost impossible to discourage once they have settled to feed. And they are hard to hurt with any quantity of poison not also deadly to other creatures.

This is the first mention of the Red Sea (Heb., *Yam Suph*). We feel that this is the same sea we now refer to as the Red Sea. (See Introductory Section VII.)

12. *Why did not Pharaoh release Israel after the locust plague?* (10:20)

Because Jehovah hardened his heart. See notes on 4:21; 9:12.

13. *What was unusual about the darkness in Egypt?* (10:21-23)

It came when Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven. See 9:22-23 and 10:12-13 on Moses' stretching forth his hand.

The darkness was so intense it could be "felt."

The Israelites had light while the Egyptians nearby were in darkness.

14. *Why was the darkness so dreadful?*

Darkness was a direct attack on some of Egypt's main gods. Re (or Ra), the sun-God, was also the creator of gods and men; his emblem was the sun's disk. Pharaoh himself was thought to be the embodiment of that god. Another great god was Amon, and he also was a sun-god. He was the chief deity of Thebes, the capital city during the XVIII dynasty, the time of Moses.

The darkness was so dense it could be "felt." This is to be taken literally. The same word meaning *feel* is used in Judges 16:26 (where Samson *felt* the pillars), and in Psalm 115:7 (where the hands are said to *feel*).

What caused this darkness? Was it a supernatural

darkness, like that which came the day Christ died (Luke 23: 44)? The Greek O.T. reads in Ex. 10:22, "There was darkness, very black, even a *storm*, over all the land of Egypt three days." We feel that the darkness could have been caused by a dust storm. The other plagues involved use of natural creatures and things. God miraculously controlled their intensity and exactly when and where they affected. Severe sandstorms occur in Egypt during the spring months (which was the time of year this plague occurred).

The author of this book lived in western Kansas during the "dust bowl" days of the early 1930's. The dust clouds then rolled over the prairies, turning daylight into total blackness, so black that not even the position of windows could be detected by those in houses; so black that one feared to walk across a familiar room. God's darkness in Egypt was more severe than any Kansas "dust bowl" storm; but the mental picture of a darkness so heavy that it could be felt, and that caused no "one to rise from his place for three days" is very real.

What a terrifying prospect lies in store for those in hell, in the "outer darkness" (Matt. 8:12)! If Pharaoh found the darkness of Egypt terrifying, what a fearsome fate awaits those "to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever"! (Jude 13)

5. *What final compromise offer did Pharaoh make to Moses?* (10:24)

He would let all the Israelites go, but they must leave flocks and herds behind. Pharaoh seems to be saying that the cattle of the Israelites were to be placed and kept in designated places under the guard of Egyptians, as a pledge of the Israelites' return. Perhaps Pharaoh simply coveted their herds to replace his own destroyed flocks.

Israel could not have survived long in the desert without the milk, meat, skins, and wool of their animals.

We suspect that Pharaoh had difficulty contacting Moses in the pitchy darkness!

16. *How did Moses receive the compromise about leaving their*

*livestock behind?* (10:25-26)

He insisted that every one of their cattle must go with them. Not a hoof was to be left behind. This was necessary because they did not know what Jehovah would ask them to sacrifice until they arrived at their destination.

In addition to that, Moses demanded that Pharaoh give to *them* "sacrifices and burnt-offerings," that is, additional animals from Pharaoh's herds. This may be a "dig" at Pharaoh, because his herds were extinct, or nearly so (9:6).

By making this extra demand Moses seems to be forcing the issue between him and Pharaoh to a decisive climax. He was not giving one concession to Pharaoh; rather he was upping his demands!

There is no indication that the Israelites received livestock from the Egyptians when they left Egypt, or that they even requested any at that time (12:35-36).

17. *How did Pharaoh try to get Moses away from him permanently?* (10:28)

He told Moses to get away from him, and not to come back, for he would kill him if he returned. Moses accepted the demand without fear. He knew, and told Pharaoh so plainly, that after just one more plague, Pharaoh's servants would come down to him, and bow down, and plead with the Israelites to leave (11:8). Even Pharaoh himself came to Moses and begged for them to leave (12:30-31).

Pharaoh made this final refusal because the LORD hardened his heart. He was no longer in control of his choices of conduct. On "hardening Pharaoh's heart," see 4:21; 14:4, 8.

18. *Did Moses warn Pharaoh of the final plague?* (10:29; 11:4)

Yes. Before leaving Pharaoh's palace, as Pharaoh ordered (10:28), Moses warned him of the final plague of the death of the firstborn. The conversation of 10:28-29 is continued in 11:4-8. 11:1-3 is an interruption in the narrative, inserted to explain how Moses knew about the last plague, and could therefore tell Pharaoh about it.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**11** And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Yet one plague more will I bring upon Pha-raoh, and upon E-gypt; afterwards he will let you go hence; when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether. (2) Speak now in the ears of the people, and let them ask every man of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold. (3) And Je-ho-vah gave the people favor in the sight of the E-gyp-tians. Moreover the man Mo-ses was very great in the land of E-gypt, in the sight of Pha-raoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.

(4) And Mo-ses said, Thus saith Je-ho-vah, About midnight will I go out into the midst of E-gypt: (5) and all the first-born in the land of E-gypt shall die, from the first-born of Pha-raoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the mill; and all the first-born of cattle. (6) And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of E-gypt, such as there hath not been, nor shall be any more. (7) But against any of the children of Is-ra-el shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that Je-ho-vah doth make a distinction between the E-gyp-tians and Is-ra-el. (8) And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pha-raoh in hot anger.

(9) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Pha-raoh will not hearken unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of E-gypt. (10) And Mo-ses and Aar-on did all these wonders before Pha-raoh: and Je-hovah hardened Pha-raoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Is-ra-el go out of his land.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER ELEVEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. Propose a theme or topic for chapter eleven.
2. When did the LORD say the things in 11:1-3 to Moses? How do they fit into the narrative of chapters 10-11?
3. What was to be the result of the last plague? (11:1)
4. What was Moses to tell the Israelites to say to the Egyptians? (11:2)
5. How did the Egyptians regard the Israelites? What brought this about? (11:3)
6. What was the estimation of Moses by the Egyptians? (11:3)
7. At what time of day would the LORD pass over? (11:4)
8. To whom is 11:4ff addressed?
9. What was to be the extent of the death of the firstborn? (11:5)
10. Who were the highest and lowest people in Egyptian society? (11:5)
11. What would be the immediate effect of the death of the firstborn? (11:6)
12. What would the silence of the dogs reveal about the status of the Israelites? (11:7)
13. What was Pharaoh to know (to learn) from the fact that the Israelites were spared the death of their firstborn? (11:7)
14. Who would urge the Israelites to depart? (11:8)
15. What was Moses' feeling as he departed from Pharaoh? (11:8)
16. Why would not Pharaoh hearken? (11:9)

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EXODUS ELEVEN: THE LAST WARNING!

1. Revealed by God to Moses; 11:1-3.
2. Related by Moses to Pharaoh; 11:4-8.
3. Rejected by Pharaoh; 11:9-10.

## EXODUS ELEVEN: ONE MORE BLOW (OR PLAGUE)!

1. The day for judgment is set; 11:1-3.
2. The day of judgment will be final; 11:4-8.

## GOD'S SAINTS FAVORED (11:2-3)

1. Jewelry given; 11:2; 3:22; 12:35-36.
2. Honor given; 11:3.

## RESULTS OF THE LAST PLAGUE

1. Death of the firstborn; 11:5.
2. Great cry; 11:6.
3. Distinction demonstrated; 11:7.
4. Supplication of Egyptians; 11:8.
5. Departure of Israel; 11:8.

## THE LORD MAKES A DISTINCTION!

1. Between Israelites and Egyptians.
2. Between Moses and Pharaoh.
3. Between Himself and Egypt's gods.

## THE SAD SUMMARY (11:9-10; John 12:37)

1. Pharaoh would not hearken.
2. Moses and Aaron worked wonders.
3. Jehovah hardened Pharaoh's heart.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. *What does Exodus eleven tell about?*

It gives God's last warning to Pharaoh through Moses. It tells us that God revealed to Moses that only one more plague - the death of Egypt's firstborn - remained before Pharaoh would thrust out the Israelites. It tells of Pharaoh's rejection of Moses and God's message.

2. *When did God inform Moses about the last plague? (11:1)*



God either revealed this information to Moses' mind during his hot conversation with Pharaoh (Cassuto's view); or God had already told it to Moses before his arrival at Pharaoh's house (10:24) (view of Keil and Delitzsch, Hertz, and others.) If that is the true interpretation of 11:1, then the verse should be translated, "Jehovah *had said* unto Moses, . . . ." We lean to this latter view, but either view is possible. Perhaps God revealed to Moses the facts about the last plague and about the Passover during the three days of darkness.

The word for *plague* in 11:1 is not used elsewhere in Exodus. Its most numerous occurrence is in Lev. 13-14, where it refers to the plague of leprosy. It means a *blow*, or *striking*. It was to be the final decisive blow.

We must reject the unproven views of critics<sup>1</sup> who argue that 11:1-3 was written by one author (called E), and 11:4-8 was by another author (called J). This interruption of the record of the conversation between Moses and Pharaoh is necessary for our understanding of how Moses knew about the last plague (as related in 11:4-8).

3. *What were the Israelites to ask the Egyptians for? (11:2)*

For jewels of gold and silver. The word *jewels* actually just means *vessels*, but the fact that they were of gold and silver justifies the translation of it as *jewels*.

In 3:22 only *women* were mentioned as those who were to request jewels. Here *men* are mentioned also. This is not a contradiction, just an enlargement of the command.

The word *borrow* in KJV is misleading. Neither the Hebrews nor the Egyptians interpreted their asking as borrowing. No one hinted that the items would be returned. See notes on 3:22.

4. *How did the Egyptians feel toward Moses and the Israelites? (11:3)*

They looked upon the people with favor, and upon Moses as very great. This had been predicted to Moses back at the

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<sup>1</sup>S. R. Driver, *Intro. to the Literature of the O. T.* (New York: World, 1965), p. 27.

burning bush (3:20-22). In 12:33, 35-36 we read about how Jehovah gave the Israelites favor with the Egyptians.

The "people" of 11:3 seem to be the *Israelite* people. Just at this moment Moses was very high in the esteem of the Israelites. Not long before, they had scorned him (5:20-21); and very soon after this they were blaming Moses for every trouble they had (15:23; 16:21).

The honor Moses achieved must be held up in contrast with the excuses he once gave about being such an inferior person (3:11; 4:10). This is a warning to us not to low-rate ourselves too much.

Would Moses as the author of Exodus write words like Ex. 11:3 about himself? Certainly! Why not? It was the truth. Compare the way Paul wrote of himself (II Cor. 10:8-14), and the way Nehemiah wrote of himself (Neh. 5:18-19).

5. *When would the last plague strike?* (11:4)

About midnight! The hour of this plague would make its coming even dreadful.

God did not specify which midnight. We know from 12:1 that a new month (called Abib) had then started. Ex. 12:3 tells us that on the tenth day of that month each family was to select a lamb. Then on the fourteenth day of the month the lamb would be slain (12:6). Thus the "midnight" was at least four days distant, and maybe as many as nine. But Pharaoh did not know this. Possibly the approach of each midnight gave him premonitions of terror as he recalled Moses' words.

In Egyptian mythology the sun god Re was supposed to fight each *night* with Apepi, the monster-serpent, and his army of fiends, who tried to overthrow Re.<sup>2</sup> Re always conquered, and thus the sun arose day after day in the sky. The occurrence of the death of the firstborn at *night* may have therefore made some Egyptians sense that Jehovah could

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<sup>2</sup>E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Mummy* (New York: Collier-Macmillan, 1972), pp. 270-271.

enter the nighttime arena of combat with Egypt's gods, and so utterly overwhelm them that it was evident that they never had existed at all.

The conversation between Moses and Pharaoh that was interrupted at 10:29 is picked up again in the narrative at 11:4.

6. *What would happen in the last plague? (11:4-6)*

God would go out into the midst of Egypt. (The *I* in 11:4 is emphatic.) All the firstborn of Egypt would die, those high-born and those low-born, and the firstborn of all beasts. There would be a great cry of anguish throughout all the land of Egypt.

The lowly maidservant (slave woman) working at the "two grindstones" (a lower one and an upper stone that rotated upon the lower) would see her firstborn die. Pharaoh on his throne would suffer the same.

Pharaoh's forefather had once tried to slay the babes of Israel (1:22). Now all Egypt is sentenced to have its firstborn die.

The death of firstborn beasts would be impressive in Egypt, where many beasts were worshipped as manifestations of various gods.

Ramm comments<sup>3</sup> that the universality of the plague of death of the firstborn is a type of universality of God's last judgment, when the small and great alike shall stand before the judge (Rev. 20:12). God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). There will be weeping and wailing, like the cry that came up from Egypt (Matt. 25:30).

The cry that was to arise throughout Egypt on that dreadful night recalls the cries of the Israelites (2:23). Now it is the Egyptians who will cry out in anguish at God's judgment.

We surely cannot accept the hypothesis set forth<sup>4</sup> that the story of the death of the firstborn is an exaggerated account of a fatal pestilence which struck the Egyptian children and

<sup>3</sup>Bernard Ramm, *His Way Out* (Glendale, Calif.: Regal, 1974), p. 68.

<sup>4</sup>*The Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Broadman, 1969), pp. 363-364.

brought about the release of the Hebrews. Proponents of this theory think that through years of transmission within Israel the memory of the event was so shaped that the end product, the present Exodus narrative, suggests that *only* the firstborn were involved, and that both the firstborn of man and beast were involved. Bernard Ramm replies well to this notion with the point that Pharaoh would not have released Israel because of an ordinary epidemic among children.<sup>5</sup>

7. *How would God show that He made a distinction between Egyptians and Israel? (11:7)*

He would protect the Israelites from the death of their firstborn. His protection would be so total that not even a dog would bark at the hordes of departing Israelites and their cattle. (Literally the text says that a dog will not "sharpen" [or point] his tongue. This same idiom is used also in Joshua 10:21.)

What a contrast! The wicked crying, the good quiet; the wicked dead, the good living; the wicked frightened, the good peaceful; the wicked helpless, the good protected. (*Preacher's Homiletic Commentary*)

8. *What would Pharaoh's servants do when their firstborn died? (11:8)*

They would come to Moses, bow down, and beg him and his people to leave. "After that," Moses said, "I will go out!" These were Moses' last words to Pharaoh before the Passover.

What a reversal! Egyptians begging Moses to leave? Yes, and even Pharaoh joined in the begging (12:30-33).

9. *With what feeling did Moses leave Pharaoh? (11:8)*

With hot anger! First Pharaoh became angered (10:28); then Moses' wrath arose. But it was a righteous anger, the kind all noble Godly souls should feel sometimes when dealing with people like Pharaoh - lying, double-dealing, promise-breaking, stubborn, cruel, persecuting, hard, resistant to the truth.

10. *Did Pharaoh change his mind after Moses left him? (11:9-10)*

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<sup>5</sup>Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

In no wise! God cautioned Moses not to expect Pharaoh to come to his senses. All along God had foretold that Pharaoh would not listen, and that He would work his signs (miracles and plagues) in Egypt; and *then* after all that, "I will bring forth my hosts, my people, the children of Isreal" (7:4; 4:21).

There is a marvelous review and summary of the first nine plagues in the two verses Ex. 11:9-10.

The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart after plagues number six (boils), eight (locusts), nine (darkness), and after Israel departed (14:4, 8). See notes on 4:21 concerning this hardening.

Ex. 11:9-10 are truly transitional verses. From now on Moses will be dealing with Israel and not with Pharaoh.

## THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**12** And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses and Aar-on in the land of E-gypt, saying, (2) This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. (3) Speak ye unto all the congregation of Is-ra-el, saying, In the tenth *day* of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household: (4) and if the household be too little for a lamb, then shall he and his neighbor next unto his house take one according to the number of the souls; according to every man's eating ye shall make your count for the lamb. (5) Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old: ye shall take it from the sheep, or from the goats: (6) and ye shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Is-ra-el shall kill it at even. (7) And they shall take of the blood, and put it on the two side-posts and on the lintel, upon the houses wherein they shall eat it. (8) And they

shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; with bitter herbs they shall eat it. (9) Eat not of it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roast with fire; its head with its legs and with the inwards thereof. (10) And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; but that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. (11) And thus shall ye eat it: with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste; it is Je-ho-vah's passover. (12) For I will go through the land of E-gypt in that night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of E-gypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of E-gypt I will execute judgments: I am Je-ho-vah. (13) And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and there shall no plague be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of E-gypt. (14) And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to Je-ho-vah: throughout your generations ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.

(15) Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Is-ra-el. (16) And in the first day there shall be to you a holy convocation, and in the seventh day a holy convocation; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done by you. (17) And ye shall observe the *feast of* unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your hosts out of the land of E-gypt: therefore shall ye observe this day throughout your generations by an ordinance for ever. (18) In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. (19) Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Is-ra-el, whether he be a sojourner, or one that is born in the land. (20) Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread.

(21) Then Mo-ses called for all the elders of Is-ra-el, and said

unto them, Draw out, and take you lambs according to your families, and kill the passover. (22) And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side-posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. (23) For Je-ho-vah will pass through to smite the E-gyp-tians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side-posts, Je-ho-vah will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. (24) And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. (25) And it shall come to pass, when ye are come to the land which Je-ho-vah will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. (26) And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? (27) that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of Je-ho-vah's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Is-ra-el in E-gypt, when he smote the E-gyp-tians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped. (28) And the children of Is-ra-el went and did so; as Je-ho-vah had commanded Mo-ses and Aar-on, so did they.

(29) And it came to pass at midnight, that Je-ho-vah smote all the first-born in the land of E-gypt, from the first-born of Pha-raoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle. (30) And Pha-raoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the E-gyp-tians; and there was a great cry in E-gypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. (31) And he called for Mo-ses and Aar-on by night, and said, Rise up, get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Is-ra-el; and go, serve Je-ho-vah, as ye have said. (32) Take both your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. (33) And the E-gyp-tians were urgent upon the people, to send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We are all dead men. (34) And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading-troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. (35) And the children of Is-ra-el

did according to the word of Mo-ses; and they asked of the E-gyp-tains jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: (36) and Je-ho-vah gave the people favor in the sight of the E-gyp-tians, so that they let them have what they asked. And they despoiled the E-gyp-tians.

(37) And the children of Is-ra-el journeyed from Ram-e-ses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, besides children. (38) And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks and herds, even very much cattle. (39) And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of E-gypt; for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of E-gypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victuals. (40) Now the time that the children of Is-ra-el dwelt in E-gypt was four hundred and thirty years. (41) And it came to pass at the end of four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of Je-ho-vah went out from the land of E-gypt. (42) It is a night to be much observed unto Je-ho-vah for bringing them out from the land of E-gypt: this is that night of Je-ho-vah, to be much observed of all the children of Is-ra-el throughout their generations.

(43) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses and Aar-on, This is the ordinance of the passover: there shall no foreigner eat thereof; (44) but every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou has circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. (45) A sojourner and a hired servant shall not eat thereof. (46) In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth aught of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof. (47) All the congregation of Is-ra-el shall keep it. (48) And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to Je-ho-vah, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: but no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. (49) One law shall be to him that is home-born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you. (50) Thus did all the children of Is-ra-el; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses and Aar-on, so did they. (51) And it came to pass the selfsame day, that Je-ho-vah did bring the children of Is-ra-el out of the land of E-gypt by their hosts.



EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWELVE  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading, propose a brief title or topic for the chapter.
2. Where were God's instructions about the Passover given? (12:1)
3. What change in the calendar did the Passover make? (12:2)
4. When is the month Abib according to our calendar? (13:4)
5. On what day of the month was the lamb to be selected? (12:3)
6. What was the passover lamb a type of? (I Cor. 5:7)
7. What groups of people selected lambs? (12:3)
8. What if a family was too small to eat a whole lamb? (12:4)
9. What were the qualifications for the passover lamb? (12:5)
10. On what day was the lamb slain? At what time of day? (12:6)
11. What was done with the blood? (12:7, 22)
12. How was the lamb to be cooked and served? (12:8-9, 11)
13. What was done with the inwards of the lamb? (12:9)
14. What was to be done with the leftovers? (12:10, 45)
15. How were the people to be clothed as they ate the passover? In what manner was it to be eaten? (12:11)
16. What does *passover* mean? (12:11-13)
17. Who passed over the land? (12:12, 13, 23)
18. Against what would God execute judgment? (12:12)
19. What caused God to pass over the Israelites? (12:13)
20. How was the Passover remembered after the original observance in Egypt? (12:14)
21. What feast followed the Passover? (12:15, 17)
22. How long did this feast last? (12:15, 18)
23. What was the penalty for eating leaven? (12:15)
24. When were holy convocations (gatherings) to be held during the feast of Unleavened bread? (12:16)
25. What work was to be done during this feast? (12:16)
26. What was the cause or purpose for observing the feast of unleavened bread? (12:17)
27. On what days of the month were the feasts of Passover and unleavened bread? (12:18)

28. Was there any restriction about leaven besides not eating it? (12:19)
29. Who selected and killed the passover lamb? (12:21)
30. What was used to apply blood? (12:22)
31. Where were the people to stay during the passover? (12:22)
32. Did the Israelites leave in the middle of the night or the morning? (12:22)
33. How long was the Passover to be observed? (12:24)
34. Who would ask questions about the Passover observance? (12:26)
35. What was the reaction of the Israelites to Moses' orders about the Passover? (12:27-28, 50)
36. At what time did the firstborn die? (12:29)
37. What was the reaction of the Egyptians to the death of their firstborn? (12:30)
38. Who called Moses and Aaron? When? (12:31)
39. What did Pharaoh tell Moses and Aaron to do? (12:31-32)
40. What did Pharaoh ask Moses to do for him? (12:32)
41. How urgent were the Egyptians? (12:33)
42. What is stated about the bread dough the Israelites carried out? (12:34, 39)
43. What did the Israelites ask for? (12:35)
44. What place was the starting point of Israel's journey out? (12:37)
45. How many Israelites went out of Egypt? (12:37; Numbers 1:46)
46. Who went out with the Israelites? (Ex. 12:38)
47. How long had the Israelites dwelt in Egypt? (12:40-41; Gen. 15:13; Acts 7:6; Gal. 3:17)
48. How were the Israelites to feel about and react to the Passover? (12:42)
49. Could foreigners eat the passover? (12:43)
50. When could servants or sojourners eat the passover? (12:44-45, 48)
51. Where was the passover to be eaten? (12:46)
52. What was the law about the bones of the passover lamb? (12:46)

- 53. Why is this law about the bones significant to Christians? (John 19:36)
- 54. Which Israelites were to keep the passover? (12:47)
- 55. In what groups did God bring the Israelites out? (12:51)

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### EXODUS TWELVE: OVER AND OUT!

(The radio-operators' expression "Over and out" sums up much of the story in Exodus 12.)

- I. God passed over Egypt; 12:1-36.
- II. Israel went out of Egypt; 12:37-51.

### THE FIRST MONTH OF THE YEAR! (Ex. 12:2)

- I. A time of deliverance; Ex. 12:13.
- II. A time of sacrifice; Ex. 12:3-6.
- III. A time of observance; Ex. 12:42.
- IV. A time to step forth; Ex. 12:37.

### RELIGION IN THE HOME! (12:3-4, 15)

- I. Sacrifices in every home; (12:3)
- II. Gatherings in every home; (12:3-4, 22)
- III. Blood on every house; (12:7, 22)
- IV. Instruction in every home; (12:26-27)

### NO LEAVEN IN YOUR HOUSES! (12:19)

- I. Unleavened bread after the Passover; (12:15).  
(After accepting Christ, our Passover lamb, we must put out the leaven of malice and wickedness. I Cor. 5:7-8).

- II. Unleavened bread in every generation; (12:17).  
 ("Be thou faithful unto death." Rev. 2:10).

**DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN,  
 A TYPE OF CHRIST'S SECOND COMING! (12:29)**

- I. A time of judgment and vengeance; Ex. 6:6; II Thess. 1:7-9.
- II. Advance warnings given; Ex. 11:4-5; 12:12; Rev. 1:7.
- III. Sudden; Ex. 12:29; I Thess. 5:2-3.
- IV. No one escapes; Ex. 12:30; I Thess. 5:3.
- V. A time of cry; Ex. 12:30; Rev. 1:7; 6:15-17.
- VI. Deliverance to those under the blood; Ex. 12:13, 23; Rev. 5:9.

**DELIVERANCE OF GOD'S PEOPLE! (Ex. 12:29-36)**

- I. It is the work of GOD; (12:29).
- II. It requires obedience; (12:28).
- III. It requires stepping forth; (12:34, 37)
- IV. It is triumphant; (12:35-36).

**GOD FULFILLING HIS PROMISES!**

- 1. His people would come out from bondage. (Gen. 15:14)
- 2. His people would come forth with great substance. (Gen. 15:14; Ex. 12:36)
- 3. Pharaoh would drive them out. (Ex. 6:1; 12:31-33)
- 4. His people would be ill treated for four hundred years. (Gen. 15:13; Ex. 12:40)

**THE PASSOVER**  
 in Egypt

— A Type of —

**CHRIST,**  
 Our Passover

- 1. The start of a new year.
- 1. The start of new life for

- |                                                       |                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ex. 12:2.                                             | the believer. II Cor. 5:17.                                          |
| 2. Each family, led by the father, kept the feast.    | 2. Each person and family keeps "the feast."                         |
| Ex. 12:3                                              | II Cor. 5:8.                                                         |
| 3. Unblemished lamb;                                  | 3. Christ, the lamb of God (John 1:29), without sin; (Heb. 4:14-15). |
| Ex. 12:5                                              |                                                                      |
| 4. Lamb pre-selected;                                 | 4. Christ foreknown;                                                 |
| Ex. 12:3.                                             | I Peter 1:19-20.                                                     |
| 5. Lamb slain! Ex. 12:6, 21.                          | 5. Christ slain! Rev. 5:6; 13:8.                                     |
| 6. Not a bone broken;                                 | 6. Not a bone broken;                                                |
| Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12.                                 | John 19:33, 36.                                                      |
| 7. Blood applied to doors;                            | 7. Blood sprinkled upon our hearts; I Pet. 1:2;                      |
| Ex. 12:7, 22.                                         | Heb. 12:24.                                                          |
| 8. Lamb eaten; 12:8-10                                | 8. Must eat of Christ;                                               |
|                                                       | John 6:53.                                                           |
| 9. Be ready to march;                                 | 9. Be ready to obey;                                                 |
| Ex. 12:11.                                            | Titus 3:1.                                                           |
| 10. All firstborn died, except those under the blood; | 10. All to perish except those under the blood;                      |
| 12:12-13, 29.                                         | Heb. 9:22; Rom. 5:9.                                                 |
| 11. An eternal observance;                            | 11. Jesus the same forever;                                          |
| Ex. 12:14, 24-25.                                     | Heb. 13:8.                                                           |
| 12. Leaven removed;                                   | 12. Purge out old leaven (malice, wickedness);                       |
| Ex. 12:15, 19-20; 13:6-7.                             | I Cor. 5:8.                                                          |
| 13. Holy convocations to be kept; Ex. 12:16.          | 13. Need to assemble together; Heb. 10:25.                           |
| 14. Brought deliverance;                              | 14. Brings deliverance;                                              |
| Ex. 12:30-33.                                         | Heb. 2:14-15.                                                        |
| 15. Available to all those circumcised; 12:43-48.     | 15. Available to all those circumcised in baptism;                   |
|                                                       | Col. 2:11-13.                                                        |
| 16. To speak of it always;                            | 16. Speak always of our hope;                                        |
| Ex. 12:24-27; 13:8-9.                                 | I Pet. 3:15.                                                         |

## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWELVE

1. *What is in Exodus twelve?*

God's instructions to Moses in the land of Egypt occupy 12:1-20. These instructions concerned how the Israelites should kill and eat the passover in Egypt (12:3-14), and how they should keep the feast of unleavened bread (12:15-20). Pervading these instructions are words about the future observance of these feasts.

The chapter relates how Moses gave a last-day reminder to the people to kill the passover (12:21-28).

The chapter tells of the death of Egypt's firstborn, and how the Egyptians thrust out the Israelites, and how the Israelites collected jewelry from the Egyptians. It tells of Israel's mass departure. (12:29-42)

The chapter closes with Jehovah's revelation to Moses about foreigners eating the Passover (12:43-51).

2. *Where did God give the instructions about the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread? (12:1)*

He gave them *in Egypt*. Of the three annual feasts of the Israelites, the Passover alone is said to have been instituted in Egypt. Why should this statement be made, unless as a matter of fact it is true?

Critics maintain that the Passover information in Ex. 12 is a very late priestly composition (fifth century B.C.), designed to give an explanation for the Passover and to enforce its observance upon the people. Supposedly it had been borrowed from a sheep-herding people, who at lambing season smeared blood on their tent-flaps to protect their flocks from some demonic spirits. Such ideas lack any proof at all, and certainly do not agree with the Biblical information about the Passover's origin.

3. *What month became the first month of the year? Why?*

The month when the Passover occurred became thereafter the first month of the Israelites' religious year. God designated this to be done because the Passover was the occasion of Israel's liberation from Egypt. It started a new epoch in

Israel's history.

The month containing the Passover was anciently called *Abib*, and occurred partly in our March and partly in April. Ex. 23:15: "You shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month *Abib*, for in it you came out of Egypt. Compare Ex. 34:18; Deut. 16:1.

This month was called Nisan after the Babylonian captivity. See Esther 3:7; Neh. 2:1.

The Israelites had two starting points for their years. The religious calendar began in *Abib*. The civil (or agricultural) calendar began six months later in *Ethanim* (also called *Tishri*), which was in our Sept.-Oct. The *Tishri*-to-*Tishri* year had been used before the Passover was instituted.

In a true spiritual sense the Passover marked the beginning of a new year for Israel. In the same way, our acceptance of Jesus as Lord, Messiah, and savior is the start of God's new year for us. It is our spiritual birthday. Our past life in sin was a bondage, like Israel's in Egypt. When any one is in Christ, lo, he is a new creature! (II Cor. 5:17)

4. *What animal was selected for the Passover?* (12:3-5)

A *lamb* was selected. The Hebrew word for lamb used here (*seh*) referred also to kid goats. See 12:5.

Each family was to select its own lamb, and thus many lambs would be sacrificed. In view of this fact, it is very noteworthy to see that throughout this chapter the lamb is referred to as *singular* (not *lambs*). We feel that this was no accident, but was God's way of indicating that there was only ONE true passover lamb in HIS mind. That lamb is Christ, our passover, who has been sacrificed for us! (John 1:29; I Cor. 5:7). Unless the Passover is studied with this in mind, it is little more than a triviality of history. But the twelfth chapter of Exodus becomes exciting when we realize that almost every line of it reveals more about Christ, the true Passover lamb.

5. *When was the Passover lamb to be selected?* (12:3, 6)

The lamb was to be selected on the tenth day of the month.

Presumably it was kept apart from the rest of the flock. It was to be slain on the fourteenth day of the month. (12:6)

The act of selecting out the Passover lamb four days in advance served several purposes. It directed the people's minds toward the coming feast. It became a topic of conversation. The visible presence of the lamb stimulated the people to do the other necessary jobs in preparation for the coming feast and for their departure. More than that, it illustrated the fact that Christ our passover lamb was selected and foreordained to die long before He perished on Calvary. Indeed, he was foreknown before the foundation of the world! (I Pet. 1:19-20)

In Ex. 12:3 we have the first Biblical usage of the term *congregation* (Heb. *edah*). This became a common technical term for the whole body of the Israelites. The word has a somewhat similar meaning to the New Testament word *ekklesia*, the church, or the called-out assembly. Though there were many families in Israel, they were all one congregation. In a similar way we Christians today should think and act like members of a single, world-wide congregation of those redeemed by Christ, our Passover lamb. Loyalty to our humanly-created denominations and exclusive devotion to our local congregations destroy the Spirit-given unity of the whole world-wide congregation of God.

6. *What function did family units have in the Passover?* (12:3-4)

The Passover was eaten by family groups individually. The Passover was fundamentally a family-feast, although two or more small families could join together if one family was too small to eat an entire lamb. Jewish tradition later specified ten as the smallest number of participants at a family Passover. But this number was originally left to the discretion of individual heads of families.

The observance of the Passover in this way was a simple, manageable way to guarantee the participation of every Israelite in the Passover feast. It also showed God's approval of and stress on the family. The family is a vital, divinely-ordained unit in society.



7. *What kind of lamb was selected?* (12:5)

The lamb was without blemish, having no sores, scars, or deformities. Compare Lev. 22:20-22. Likewise Christ was without blemish of sin (I Peter 1:19; Heb. 4:15). The lamb was to be a male a year old. The Jewish rabbis interpreted this to mean "born within the year." More probably it meant "a full year old." The Hebrew literally says "a son of a year." A similar expression is used in Gen. 21:4, where we are told that Isaac was circumcised when he was a "son of eight days," that is, eight days old. Lev. 27:6 has a similar wording: "from a son of a month unto a son of five years."<sup>1</sup>

Our Lord Jesus, like the full-grown yearling lamb, was offered at the peak of his young maturity, a little beyond age thirty (Luke 3:23).

8. *Who killed the lamb? When?* (12:6)

The *whole congregation* killed it "between the two evenings." (Compare Num. 9:3.) Probably only one person in each family actually killed the lamb, the father or someone he appointed. But by the principle of *representation* every member of the family killed it; all were involved in its death. It is most remarkable that "*all* the assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill *it*," as if God referred to ONE lamb for the whole body of Israelites. We feel that this is exactly what God had in mind. God was providing to them an advance symbol, or type, of THE lamb, Christ!

By the same principle of representation, we all killed the Lord Jesus. The Jews and the Romans condemned him and drove the nails. But we by our sins also shared in killing him!

This principle works also for our benefit. We become sharers in the death of Jesus by this principle. Jesus died *for* sins, and died *to* sins, once for all. We who are baptized *into his death* (Romans 6:3-4) have been united with Him in death. His death becomes our death to sin. We are united with him in death and in resurrection.

The lamb was slain about sunset. Deut. 16:6: "Thou shalt

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<sup>1</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun." Ex. 12:6 literally says "between the two evenings." The meaning of this is not absolutely certain, but the Jews interpreted it to mean between three and six o'clock in the afternoon.<sup>2</sup> Supposedly if it were after sunset, it would place the sacrifice on the next calendar day. The annual Day of Atonement was on the tenth day of the seventh month, but the observance began on the ninth day of the month, at even (Lev. 23:32). Perhaps this is an analogy with the start of the Passover: it could be slain at any period from late afternoon, to sunset, or shortly after.

It is noteworthy that our Lord died at the ninth hour, about 3:00 p.m., which was the time the passover lambs began to be slain.

#### 9. *Was the Passover a SACRIFICE?*

Certainly it was a kind of sacrifice. Observe that the Passover ritual is called the *sacrifice* of the Lord's Passover (Ex. 12:27; 34:25; Deut. 16:2).

The only reason for hesitating to call the Passover a sacrifice is that its original observance in Egypt did not involve use of altars or priests. But this was due to the fact that the first Passover was kept during the patriarchal age before the law of Moses (given at Mt. Sinai) set up a system of priests, altars, etc. But this did not keep it from being a true sacrifice. Prior to the law of Moses the heads of families often functioned as priests to offer sacrifices (Gen. 8:20; Job 1:5).

Like all true sacrifices the Passover involved blood and death. Blood was given by God to make atonement for our souls (Lev. 17:11), and was employed for no other purpose.

Like all true sacrifices, the Passover was in later times to be offered only at the central place of worship which God had designated (Deut. 12:2, 5-6).

Like all true sacrifices, the Passover involved substitution! The Israelites were sinners and idolaters, just like the Egyptians. They deserved to perish (as we do also). God did

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<sup>2</sup>Josephus, *Antiquities*, XIV, iv, 3.

not spare Israel because they were righteous (Deut. 9:4). God was determined to destroy all the firstborn IN Egypt, not just the firstborn OF Egypt (Ex. 11:4). The death of the lamb was accepted as the substitute for the death of the firstborn of Israel.

We stress the fact that the Passover was a sacrifice, because it was a type of the death of Christ. Christ's death was also a sacrifice, the righteous Christ dying in the place of unrighteous sinners like us. His death was not just a moral lesson or good example but a provision for our guilt, a substitution for us. This is a great comfort to us, if we have become truly aware of our desperate condition in sin.

10. *Where was the blood placed?* (12:7, 22)

It was placed on the two side posts and on the lintels across the tops of the doorways of the houses where the passover was being eaten. A bunch of hyssop was used to apply the blood to the door-posts, after the hyssop had been dipped in the blood in the basin.

The sprinkling of the blood and the use of *hyssop* both suggest cleansing and putting out (expiation) of uncleanness. Hyssop is a lowly plant, sometimes growing out of cracks in walls (I Kings 4:33). Hyssop was used in the rituals for cleansing leprosy (Lev. 14:4-6, 49-52), for cleansing the uncleanness associated with the dead (Num. 19:18-19), and for cleansing sin generally (Ps. 51:7).

The blood spattered about the door was the only difference that night between Israel and Egypt. Likewise, on the day of judgment, whether or not the blood of Christ is sprinkled upon our hearts (that is, souls) will be the only criterion for determining whether we receive eternal life or eternal punishment. See I Peter 1:2; Heb. 12:24.

Ex. 12:22 speaks of dipping the hyssop in the blood in the *basin*. The Hebrew word translated *basin* (*saph*) indeed means basin, or bowl, (as in Jer. 52:19; I Kings 7:50). But it is also translated *threshold*, or sill (as in Judges 19:27; II Kings 12:9). The Greek O.T. translated it in Ex. 12:22 as *thura*, meaning door or threshold.

Some interpreters make a big matter of this, arguing that by having blood on the threshold, all four sides of the doorway were sprinkled with blood, and thus the Israelites were totally protected from entry by a "destroyer." Whether this idea is set forth with a reverent attitude (as by Pink) or as an attempt to explain the sprinkling of the blood as a custom borrowed from other nations by the Israelites, it is still not valid. How could there be enough blood in (or on) the threshold to dip a hyssop into it? Why should blood be placed on the door threshold where it could be trodden under foot of men?

The 1969 *Broadman Bible Commentary* seriously assures us that we need to know that the doorway was the abode of good and evil spirits in Near Eastern culture, in order to have understanding of the smearing of the blood in the Passover narrative (p. 373). Possibly some superstitious peoples did believe that this was true; but it has no proven connection with the acts of the Israelites.

11. *How was the lamb prepared for eating? How was it served?* (12:8-9, 46)

It was roasted entire (not cut up), probably over an open fire. It was served with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. The inward parts were roasted with the rest of it. (We are quite sure that the entrails were first cleaned out before roasting.)

Perhaps the significance of the lamb's being roasted entire lay in the fact that Christ sacrificed himself entirely, body and soul. The entirety of the lamb hardly represents the perfect unity of Israel as a nation,<sup>3</sup> unless Israel is represented as a sacrifice for its own salvation.

The Greek O.T. (LXX) inserts into 12:10 the words, "and a bone of it ye shall not break." This is stated in 12:46, both in the Hebrew and the Greek. The unbroken bones of the Passover lamb symbolized the unbroken bones of Christ (John 19:36). See notes on 12:46.

Unleavened bread is bread made without yeast or other

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<sup>3</sup>J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1969), p. 255.

“starter.” Usually the leaven was a pinch of the old dough added to the next new batch of dough. Unleavened bread would be flat, unraised, and probably pancake-shaped. Leaven was not used on Passover night because there was not time for the process of letting the bread rise (Ex. 12:34).

The apostle Paul reveals that there was a spiritual meaning in the unleavened bread, which was not clearly revealed in the original feast. Leaven is a symbol of such evil influences as malice, wickedness, and hypocrisy (II Cor. 5:7; Luke 12:1; Mark 8:15). These are “leaven” which must be put out of a Christian’s life.

The *bitter herbs* that were served with the unleavened bread and roasted lamb probably were symbols of the previous sufferings of the Israelites. They also remind us that Christ was a man of sorrows (Isa. 53:3). The bitter herbs are also referred to in Num. 9:11. The Jewish writings called the *Mishna* allowed as bitter herbs lettuce, chicory, pepperwort, snakeroot, or dandelion. (*Pesahim* 2:6) (The *Mishna* dates from second century B.C. to second century A.D.)

12. *Why were no leftovers kept from the Passover feast?* (12:10, 46)

The reason is not stated. Compare Num. 9:12; Deut. 16:4. Perhaps it was to cause the participants to associate this food exclusively with the deliverance they experienced that night. Also perhaps leftover fragments might have been used as objects for superstitious practices. Also any leftover fragments might have fallen into irreverent hands that would treat them spitefully. God has frequently claimed holy things for His exclusive use. See Ex. 30:37-38; Lev. 27:30ff.

13. *In what manner were the Israelites to eat the Passover?* (12:11)

They were to eat it in haste. The hour was probably late by the time the lamb was roasted and served, and lamb had to be eaten by midnight (11:4; 12:29). There was also many other last-minute jobs for the Israelites, as any one who has

ever packed up to move can testify. As they ate the supper, they were to be packed-up and clothed for travel; even though the hour was late. We wonder if some babies were not crying because of the interruption in their usual life patterns.

Little did the Israelites dream that those same clothes and shoes they wore that night would be miraculously preserved for forty years in the desert. (Deut. 29:5; Neh. 9:21)

The instructions about the Passover were made forcible by God's declaration "It is *Jehovah's* passover." Although the passover was for man's good, it was not BY man. The Lord God was the creator and designer of the passover. Salvation is of GOD. "GOD so loved the world that he gave. . . ." Often we fail to honor God and His basic place in our salvation. In various cases of sacrifice God himself has provided FOR HIMSELF the sacrifice that saves us. Thus he did for Abraham (Gen. 22:8). Thus also He did when he provided for Christ a *body* in which to die for us (Heb. 10:5-7).

The Passover was a new thing, and not a reinterpretation of some old previously-existing ritual.

The Hebrew word for *passover* is *pesach*; the Greek is *pascha*, from which we get "*paschal* lamb." *Pesach* means a sparing, or immunity from penalty or calamity. Its meaning can be seen (by the use of the related verb *pasach*) in Isaiah 31:5: "Jehovah of hosts will protect Jerusalem; he will protect it and deliver it, he will *pass over* and preserve it." *Pasach* has another meaning: to halt, limp, or waver, as in I Kings 18:21. This meaning does not seem to apply to the matter of the Passover.

14. *What disaster would strike Egypt the night of the Passover?* (12:12)

God would go through the land of Egypt on that (literally "this") night, and smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both of men and beast. By this act God would perform (literally "do") judgments against all the gods of Egypt. Compare Numbers 33:4. Note that it was GOD who passed over the land. No "destroying angel" is mentioned here; but

see the notes on 12:23.

*Pass through* in 12:12 is a different term from *pass over*. Passing *through* merely has the idea of movement across some area. Passing *OVER* has the idea of sparing, or passing by. To Egypt it was a passing through; to Israel it was a passing over!

Pharaoh considered himself a son of various gods. His firstborn son was the prime heir to his divine royal dignity. But God executed judgment upon Egypt's *gods* during the plagues, and particularly at the passover. All the gods of Egypt could not save the firstborn of Egypt.

Again God asserted, "I am Jehovah." How often God had said that! See notes on Ex. 6:2.

15. *What was the purpose of the blood?* (12:13)

The blood was to be a *token*, or sign, for the Israelites, upon their houses. A sign of what? A sign of faith; a sign of sacrifice; a sign of obedience; a sign for deliverance. A sign to whom? To God; to the "destroyer" (12:23); to one another.

How glorious are the words: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

Does the word *plague* in 12:13 indicate that the firstborn of Egypt died by a *disease* plague? The Hebrew word here translated *plague* (Heb. *negeph*) is a rather general term meaning a smiting, hurting, or stumbling. By itself it does not necessarily refer to a disease plague.

However, Psalm 78:50-51 says, "He spared not their soul from death, But (Heb., *And*) gave their life over to the *pestilence*, and smote all the firstborn in Egypt." The word *pestilence* here is *deber*, the same word translated *murrain* (once) and *pestilence* forty-seven times. In some Bibles the words "their life" is translated "their beasts" in the margin. This would connect the pestilence to the death of the cattle. However, the literal reading is "their life"; and the close connection of Psalm 78:50c with 78:51a seems definitely to link the pestilence with the death of the firstborn.

When we first read Ps. 78:50-51, we found ourselves resisting the idea that a pestilence killed Egypt's firstborn,

lest anyone think that we were endeavoring to give a purely natural explanation for the death of the firstborn. We believe that this was a *miraculous* judgment in the fullest sense of that term. Still we cannot deny the testimony of Ps. 78:50; it is also part of God's word. Therefore we accept the information that the firstborn of Egypt perished by a pestilence. But what a miraculous pestilence! It was almost instantaneous in its effect. It struck every house at the same moment. It struck only at the oldest child in every family, and the oldest beasts. It did not strike in houses with blood at the doors.

16. *What observance of the Passover was to be kept in the future? (12:14, 24-27)*

It was to be observed every year thereafter as a memorial and as a feast unto Jehovah, throughout Israel's generations, for ever. Ex. 13:10. Compare Lev. 23:4-5. In one way the Passover was for ever, because Christ is for ever.

The Old Testament records just six times when the passover was kept: 1. Egypt (Ex. 12); 2. Sinai (Num. 9); 3. Canaan (Joshua 5); 4. Hezekiah (II Chron. 30); 5. Josiah (II Kings 23); 6. Jews returned from Babylon (Ezra 6). We suppose that it was kept in other years. But we know the Israelites were not always faithful in observing it.

Repeating the Passover yearly made the later generations participants in the original event in a very real way. Similarly God has given to us the observances of baptism and the communion. These are both memorials to past events and means to help us be participants in those events.

17. *What observance followed the Passover? (12:15-25)*

The feast of Unleavened bread followed the Passover during the seven days after it. (See Lev. 23:5-8; Num. 28:17-25; Deut. 16:3-8.) These two feasts were so closely associated that they were sometimes spoken of as one feast (Ex. 23:14-15).

During this feast no leaven of any sort was to be tolerated in the Israelites' houses.<sup>4</sup> This was a convenient ordinance

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<sup>4</sup>Jews in later centuries excluded as leaven any product made of grain, such as beer, vinegar, porridge, paste, or cosmetics.



for the Israelites who left Egypt to observe. They left in such a hurry their bread was not leavened anyway (12:34).

It rather appears that Moses did not relay God's instructions (given in 12:15-20) concerning the feast of unleavened bread until after their departure was underway. Ex. 12:17 speaks of Israel's departure as a completed act, which had occurred "this day." Moses gave the instructions about the Passover at least four days in advance (12:3, 6), and he gave a last-day reminder about killing the Passover (12:21). But the instructions about the feast of Unleavened bread apparently were delivered the day of Israel's departure (13:5-7). Another possible interpretation is that God said "I have brought you out" (a completed action) before He actually had brought them out, because the predicted act was as good as done in His determined plans. Numerous Bible prophecies are spoken of as completed acts.

During the feast of unleavened bread Israel was to hold holy convocations (assemblies) on the first and seventh days of the feast. Also they were to do only such work as was necessary to eat.

The feast of Unleavened bread was probably impossible to keep fully during the years of Israel's wanderings. They had no "houses" to remove leaven from (12:19). God stressed that they were to observe the feast when they arrived in Canaan (13:5-6).

The New Testament explains leaven as a symbol of corruption and evil influence. (See Matt. 16:6; Mark 8:15; I Cor. 5:7. Matt. 13:33 seems to be an exception.) This suggests the following typology: When we accept Christ (symbolized by the Passover lamb), then we must put out of our lives all ungodliness and worldly lusts (symbolized by the leaven) for ever (symbolized by the seven days). *Seven* is the Biblical number signifying completeness. The seven days of unleavened bread suggest complete and constant conformity to God's word.

Failure to keep the feast of unleavened bread was to be punished by being cut off from the congregation of Israel.

Exactly what this punishment involved is not clearly specified, whether execution, or expulsion from access to the temple sacrifices, or from buying and selling among Israelites, or from all social contacts with the people. These are dire penalties.

Liberal critics<sup>5</sup> maintain that the feasts of Passover and Unleavened bread were both borrowed by the Israelites from the Canaanites or someone else. They maintain that these were originally distinct, unrelated occasions. Passover was supposedly a pastoral feast when blood was placed on the tent flaps to protect herds. Unleavened bread was a cult feast at the beginning of wheat harvest, when the first yearly produce of the land was offered to the gods, and eaten while uncontaminated by addition of leaven. There is no concrete evidence even for the existence of such feasts, much less for the Israelites borrowing them. Certainly this interpretation conflicts with the Biblical information.

18. *What last-day Passover instructions did Moses give the people? (12:21-22)*

Moses called the elders (the older men functioning as leaders of tribes and families) and told them again the information God has given approximately a week before. See 12:3-7. Moses added statements about using hyssop.<sup>6</sup> (See notes on 12:7.) He added instructions about not leaving the houses that night until morning.

"By faith Moses kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of the blood, that the destroyer of the firstborn should not touch them" (Heb. 11:28).

Regarding the *basin* (12:22), or threshold, see notes on 12:7.

Regarding the perpetual observance of the passover (12:24-25), see the notes on 12:14.

Critics ascribe 12:21-27 to a tenth century author ("J") in

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<sup>5</sup>As an example see Martin Noth, *Exodus*, p. 97.

<sup>6</sup>The exact botanical identification of the hyssop referred to in the Bible is somewhat uncertain. It may be the herb majoram. Or it may be a long-stalked, corn-like plant, such as durrah. John 19:29 seems to refer to such a plant.

the Southern kingdom of Judah.<sup>7</sup> But 12:21-27 makes good sense as a continuation of the preceding narrative. Either 12:21-27 is the public announcements by Moses of the instructions God had given him (in 12:1ff), or, much more probably, it was Moses' last-day reminder of those instructions.

19. *Who was the destroyer?* (12:23)

We suppose that the destroyer was an angel sent by God. Psalm 78:49 says, "He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, . . . a band of *angels* of evil." Whether Ps. 78:49 refers to the preceding verse, which refers to the plague of hail, or to the following verse, which refers to the death of the firstborn, can be debated. It may refer to both. Angels have been employed on other occasions by God to execute His judgments. Angels were sent to Sodom (Gen. 18:2; 19:1, 13). An angel of God slew in Jerusalem (II Sam. 24:15-16).

In Ex. 11:4 and 12:12 God said that HE HIMSELF would pass over the land that night. Even 12:23 says that JEHOVAH would pass through to smite the firstborn. But this does not rule out the likelihood that an angel or angels accompanied God in this mission. The scripture does not contain the expression "death angel." "Destroying angel" might be more Biblical terminology.

Certainly this *destroyer* was not some demonic spirit trying to get to the Israelites in their houses while God was trying to fend it off. Evil spirits are real, but they operate only within the limits that God tolerates. Satan could only afflict Job to the degree that God consented to tolerate (1:9-12; 2:6). The universe is not controlled by two powers competing for mastery, but by God alone, who barely tolerates the Satanic evil for a little while. It was God himself, accompanied by HIS destroyer(s), who went forth that night to take vengeance.

20. *How would children be taught about the Passover?* (12:26-27)

When the Israelites observed the unusual supper in future

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<sup>7</sup>Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 372.

generations, the children would ask questions about it, as children do! The parents were to be prepared to answer and eager to do so. There was to be no talk like, "Can't you see I'm busy, Junior? Beat it!"

In the modern Jewish passover ritual there is a prescribed point when a child asks "Why do we keep the Passover?" and the parent then relates the history of it. Originally the passover was not so formally structured, and the question was to be answered at whatever time it came up.

John Davis<sup>8</sup> reminds us that the concern which Moses showed over the meaning of this Passover ordinance should be a warning to us that God's ordinances are not only to be perpetuated in correct form, but to be taught as representing personal experience and correct theology. In our homes and Bible schools we should be quick and eager to answer the questions of our children concerning the religious observances they see. It is God's plan that the children be taught from infancy to serve God intelligently.

Note the rather formal title for the passover: "the sacrifice of Jehovah's passover." Here again the Passover is expressly said to be a sacrifice. Sacrifices deal with SIN. Compare Deut. 16:2. This fact transforms the Passover from a ritual of the past to a reality in the present.

The word *Passover* is applied to (1) the lamb killed in the sacrifice (12:21); to (2) all the events of the feast (Lev. 23:5); to (3) the Lord's act of mercy in sparing the Israelites (Ex. 12:14).

21. *Did the Israelites obey Moses' instructions?* (12:27-28)

They not only obeyed, but obeyed worshipfully.

Their obedience was purely an act of faith in God and Moses. However, after seeing all the plagues Moses had predicted and brought upon Egypt, the people certainly should have had faith. But people do not always respond in a reasonable manner. After people had seen all the miracles Jesus did, they still did not believe him (John 12:37).

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<sup>8</sup>*Moses and the Gods of Egypt*, p. 144.

22. *What happened at midnight in Egypt?* (12:29-30)

The Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. There was not a house where there was not one dead.

These deaths were not painless and silent. The shrieks of the dying awakened every house. And there arose a great cry in Egypt as the firstborn expired. (Compare 11:6)

God had foretold to Pharaoh, "Because thou hast refused to let Israel, my firstborn, go, . . . behold, I will slay thy son, thy firstborn" (4:23). Moses had clearly forewarned Pharaoh (11:4-6). But seemingly Pharaoh had just refused to believe. Therefore, the fearsome threat to Pharaoh came to pass. There is a time-limit on God's mercy to rebels.

Sinners cannot elude the retributions of God. Men cannot avoid the stroke of heaven. It comes at a time when "ye think not," when everyone is "safe" asleep. The second coming of Christ will be like the death of the firstborn in Egypt - sudden, final, and fearsome to those who are not under the blood. (See I Thess. 5:1-3; II Thess. 1:7-8; Rev. 1:7.)

The Egyptians did not see the destroying angel(s) who struck their firstborn with a sudden fatal pestilence. But they knew the source of this calamity: it was from Jehovah, the God of Israel, whose prophet Moses they had disbelieved. (Regarding the destroying angel(s), see notes on 12:23. Regarding the pestilence, see notes on 12:13.)

The firstborn of every social level died, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat upon the throne, to the firstborn of the captive in the dungeon (literally, "house of the pit"). In 11:5 the lowest level of society was "the maid-servant that is behind the (grinding) mill." But on the Passover night social status made no difference. Only the blood mattered.

If Amenhotep II was the Pharaoh of the exodus, his son who died was the older brother of Thutmose IV, who succeeded Amenhotep II. Between the legs of the Sphinx in Egypt stands a large stone bearing an inscription by Thutmose IV. In this inscription, called the dream-inscription, it is evident that Thutmose IV was not the oldest son, the

usual heir to the throne, but that he had to obtain this position by other means. We feel that this came about as the result of the death of the firstborn son.

This inscription<sup>9</sup> tells how Thutmose IV went to sleep beside the Sphinx, whose body was then mostly covered with sand. In a dream as he lay there, the Sphinx told him that he would give Thutmose the kingdom upon earth, at the head of the living. "Thou shalt wear the southern crown and the northern crown." If Thutmose had been the legitimate heir of the throne, he would not have needed such a rationalization as this to claim it.

Liberal critics do not like the story of the death of the firstborn. While we get no joy from it (neither did God!), we do not feel we have the right to sit in judgment upon God's word and dismiss whatever sections offend our natural feelings. To write that this story is "perhaps contradictory to the later and fuller revelation," or that it was written "in the words of men who spoke in pre-Christian cultural, ethical, and theological words,"<sup>10</sup> seems to us like setting our judgment above God's. Surely a comprehension of God's absolute holiness and his hatred for sin would remove the emotional resistance to the revelations about God's punishments upon the ungodly.

23. *What did the Egyptians do when their firstborn died?*  
(12:30-33)

All of the Egyptians, including Pharaoh, rose up in the night, and called for Moses and Aaron, and begged them to leave their land. They seemed to fear that the plague was just beginning, and that before it was over "We are all dead men!"

Pharaoh's spirit was broken. He was no longer arrogant. He called for Moses and Aaron. Pharaoh uttered the long-awaited words: "GO, SERVE JEHOVAH." He pleads, "And bless me also." This is an amazing request in the

<sup>9</sup>*Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, (Princeton, 1955), p. 449.

<sup>10</sup>*Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 365.

light of Pharaoh's assumed divinity. "Bless me also" is a request that God would save them from further disasters, and perhaps restore their plague-battered land.

All of God's predictions came true! There was a loud cry in all of Egypt (11:6). Pharaoh's servants did come and bow down to Moses and ask them to leave (11:8). True to God's prediction, Egypt did let Israel go (3:20). As God predicted, Pharaoh by a strong hand drove them out of his land (6:1).

On the other hand, Pharaoh's prediction (or threat) that he would kill Moses if he saw him again (10:28) was forgotten! "Egypt was glad when they departed, for fear of the Israelites had fallen upon them" (Psalm 105:38).

The statement about Israel's being sent out in *haste* relates to 12:39. The Israelites did not have time enough before their departure to prepare leavened bread or food for their journey.

24. *What food did Israel take out? (12:34, 39)*

They took out only the unleavened dough, which they possibly baked on hot rocks as they stopped briefly in their travels. They had no leftover food from the Passover feast (12:10, 46). They were in a position where they would very soon become utterly dependent upon God to provide their needs.

Israel left on foot, as pilgrims, not in chariots. They left carrying their kneading-troughs (or kneading-bowls) bound up in cloths upon their shoulders. (However, that was surely better than carrying bricks, whether made with or without straw!) Israel's first experiences of freedom involved the labor of long walks, and carrying their goods, and of going forth without an adequate food supply for a long trip. Israel's experiences were much like our own: victory and glory are accompanied by hardships. They were going to need perseverance and fortitude. In giving liberty to His church God may put upon it some hardships.

25. *What did the Egyptians give to the Israelites? (12:35-36)*

They gave them jewels (literally, *vessels*) of silver and gold; and also clothing. (It does get quite cold in the mountainous

parts of the Sinai peninsula. It even snows in spots.)

As Jehovah had instructed them, the Israelites asked for these jewels (3:22; 11:2-3). The Lord gave the Israelites favor in the feelings and thoughts of the Egyptians (3:21), and the Egyptians let them have what they asked. And they *despoiled* the Egyptians. The word *spoil* has the connotation of a conqueror taking the goods of a people defeated in battle. Thus the jewelry given by the Egyptians was not basically a remuneration for long service and a compensation for cruel wrongs, but it was a symbol of triumph. (Note the theme of triumph in 15:1.)

The giving of goods was part of the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham six centuries earlier, that the descendants of Abraham would come out of their land of bondage with great substance (Gen. 15:14).

Psalms 105:37: "He brought them forth also with silver and gold; and there was not one feeble person among their tribes." God was already at work among Israel, and thus none of them were sickly or infirm when they left Egypt.

We gather from 13:18 that some weapons were taken by the Israelites also, although our information about this is very scanty.

26. *What were the first two places in the Israelites' journey out of Egypt? (12:37)*

They journeyed from Rameses to Succoth. The *Rameses* of 12:37 is presumably the same place as that referred to in Ex. 1:11. How thrilling it was to say "Good bye forever!" to a place of cruel slave labor.

Rameses is at present considered to be either the city-site known as Tanis and Avaris (modern San el-Hagar) in the northeast part of the Nile delta, or the site of Qantir, some twelve miles south of Tanis. Extensive temple ruins from the time of king Rameses II have been found at Tanis, but no remains of the XVIII dynasty. At Qantir ruins of a large palace were found. Pottery fragments bearing the name of Per-Rameses (the name of the capital of Rameses II) were found at



Qantir.<sup>11</sup> We have selected Qantir as the proposed site of Rameses on our map. It is nearer to the land of Goshen (the Wadi Tumilat area) than Tanis is. The absence of XVIII dynasty remains at these sites remains a problem for those accepting the early exodus date, as we do, but we feel this problem will be resolved in time, as many other problems have been already.

*Succoth* is generally thought to be the hill-mound of Tell el-Maskhuta, about ten miles west of Lake Timsah. *Succoth* means booths, or tents, or temporary dwellings.

While the Israelites were travelling from Rameses to Succoth (a distance of about thirty-eight miles, or three days travelling), the Egyptians were burying their dead. Numbers 33:3 says that the children of Israel went out with a high hand in the sight of the Egyptians.

#### 27. *How many Israelites left Egypt? (12:37)*

There were six hundred thousand on foot that were men, besides children. This is a round number. The same number is given in Num. 11:21. A census at Mt. Sinai not long after their departure recorded 603,550 men (plus 22,000 Levites). See Num. 1:46; 2:32; 3:39; Ex. 38:26. After adding women and children, the total departing horde of Israelites would surely have numbered two and a half million. This vast number fulfilled God's promise to Abraham: "I will make of thee a *great nation*" (Gen. 12:2).

This enormous number seems incredible to many people.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, we believe it is the correct figure. It is not incredible. J. H. Hertz<sup>13</sup> tells that at the close of the eighteenth century 400,000 Tartars started from the confines of Russia toward the Chinese border in a single night.

In the censuses recorded in the book of Numbers. (chapters

<sup>11</sup>Jack Finegan, *Light From the Ancient Past*, Vol. I (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1974), p. 115.

<sup>12</sup>Even conservative authors like Alan Cole and Bernard Ramm find the number hard to believe. The radical Martin Noth says the number exceeds enormously what is even the slightest degree historically probable. (*Op. cit.*, p. 99)

<sup>13</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 259.

one and twenty-six) the total population of Israel is broken down by tribal divisions into small segments (46,500 for the tribe of Reuben, etc.). The fact that the big total population is the sum of numerous smaller group totals shows the integrity of the whole count; and also it gives evidence of the accurate preservation and presentation of the whole enumeration.

What are some of the objections to the large number of 600,000 Israelite men?

(1) The Sinai peninsula could not have supported such a mass of people, even if it was greener in Moses' time than now.<sup>14</sup> Answer: Parts of the Sinai are greener than is generally realized. But that is beside the point. The scripture unhesitatingly asserts that there was simply NOT enough food for the Israelites in Sinai (Ex. 16:3; Num. 11:6). The Israelites were maintained by the miraculous manna from the LORD for forty years (Ex. 16:35; Compare John 6:31-32, 39).

(2) The number in Ex. 12:37 is thought by some<sup>15</sup> to have been transferred from the census figures taken by King David over four hundred years later (I Chron. 21; II Sam. 24). Statistics from David's census were somehow transferred into the story of the exodus. Answer: the population totals in David's census do not agree with the 600,000 figure in Exodus (II Sam. 24:9; I Chron. 21:5).

Also the notion that the Bible as delivered to us is so scrambled up that statistics from a census taken centuries later might be included in the exodus story casts serious shadows over the general reliability of the whole Bible as God's true revelation. We prefer to accept the words of Jesus about the reliability of God's law: "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail" (Luke 16:17).

(3) Egypt could not have kept in subjection a people numbering over two million. Bernard Ramm asserts that all

<sup>14</sup>Ramm, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-83.

<sup>15</sup>G. E. Wright, *Biblical Archaeology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957), pp. 66-67.

Egypt had only about seven million people, and an army of not over twenty-five thousand. These could not have subjected such a host as 600,000 Israelites. Answer: If Egypt had counted every man in their country as a fighting man, as the Israelites did, Egypt would have had two million fighting men (even by Ramm's figures). But neither nation had *all* of their men armed and ready to fight at all times. In Egypt Israel was not armed to resist the domination of Egypt.

Furthermore, it is not necessary to assume that for one people to subjugate another, that they must greatly outnumber them. Small groups of well-armed, determined, and disciplined revolutionists have taken over whole nations frequently. The Egyptians had the upper hand over the Israelites. As long as that was the case, they did not need to outnumber the Israelites many times over in order to rule them.

(4) The word translated *thousands (eleph)* may also mean family, or clan, or tribal subdivision. Mendenhall suggests that the *eleph* was a "military unit." Thus, Israel supposedly had about six hundred families in its total population, with a population of perhaps six thousand. Others suggest up to twenty-five thousand.

Answer: This argument is weakened by the fact that the large total is broken down into twelve smaller tribal populations in Numbers. Most of the individual tribes numbered more than the total population conceded to Israel by advocates of the low total. Also we read in Joshua 8:3 that an Israelite army of thirty thousand attacked Ai. Five thousand more joined the army (Josh. 8:12). Surely this does not mean thirty families, plus five families.

(5) If Israel had a population of over two million, it would have been almost impossible for it to move as a unit. That many people walking five abreast with their cattle would likely make a speed of one mile per hour, and would take two hundred and thirty hours to pass a given point; and would need for bare subsistence nine hundred tons of food

daily. They could not have crossed the Red Sea in one night.

Answer: We certainly concede the logistical difficulties! This only makes us marvel the more at Moses' amazing ability as a leader to organize and direct this mob. However, it is not necessary to assume that the Israelites marched five abreast (though some have interpreted Ex. 13:18 to say that). They probably marched in a column at least a mile wide. The dry path across the Red Sea was probably a mile or more in width. The people could all see the pillar of cloud and fire which guided their movements (13:21-22). Daily travel instructions did not have to be handed down to every family.

28. *Who went out with the Israelites?* (12:38-39)

A mixed multitude<sup>16</sup> accompanied Israel out. A multitude means MANY. Also they were accompanied by flocks and herds and very numerous cattle. The reference to cattle indicates that the bondage of the Israelites did not extend to confiscation of livestock.

We do not know the racial identity of this mixed multitude. Possibly they were remnants of an old Semitic population left over from the Hyksos occupation. (The Hyksos were expelled in 1580 B.C.) Egyptian writings and paintings tell of numerous Amorites and other Asiatics who entered Egypt. Perhaps they were included in the mixed multitude. Moses' Cushite (Ethiopian) wife may have been included among these (Num. 12:1). We doubt that any Egyptians were part of the mixed multitude; their firstborn had all died in the Passover.

In a very similar manner, when the Jews nine centuries later came back from Babylonian captivity, there came unto them people from among the nations that were round about them (Neh. 5:17). Thus also the Gibeonites joined themselves to Israel (Joshua 9).

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<sup>16</sup>Mixed is from the same root as the word *swarms*, which refers to the plagues of flies in Ex. 8:21.

This mixed multitude proved to be a thorn in the flesh of the Israelites. They lusted (craved) for meat at Kibroth-Hattaavah, being dissatisfied with the manna (Num. 11:4-5). This caused a plague (Num. 11:33).

Why did the mixed multitude leave with Israel? We do not know for certain. Perhaps they had seen God's judgments in Egypt, and wished to escape any future judgments there. Perhaps they just followed the crowd. Many people still do that. When God's people are dominant and triumphant, there are always a lot of hangers-on to them. If there is a genuine Barnabas around, there will probably be Ananias and Sapphira also. Like a net full of mixed fish, or a grain field infested with tares, so God's congregation is often mixed (Matt. 13:25-30, 47-48).

Regarding the Israelites' unleavened bread and lack of victuals, see notes on 12:34.

29. *How long had Israel been in Egypt?* (12:40-41)

They had been there four hundred and thirty years. They came out at the *end* of four hundred and thirty years, on the very self-same day! This implies that there had been a record made of the exact year, month, and day when Israel came in. On that very day exactly four hundred and thirty years later they left. The existence of such a record need not astound us. The Egyptians were the most thorough record-keepers of all antiquity, and family records giving genealogies and business transactions spanning hundreds of years have been preserved.<sup>17</sup>

Note that the Israelites are called the "hosts of Jehovah." What a beautiful honor-bearing title! They were God's by creation and by purchase.

Although there are some problems associated with this four hundred and thirty year period, we believe it is the correct number.

For a study of "How Long Was Israel in Egypt?" see the

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<sup>17</sup>K. A. Kitchen, "Some Egyptian Backgrounds to the Old Testament," *Tyndale House Bulletin*, Nos. 5-6 (April 1960), pp. 14-18.

article at the end of this chapter.

30. *How were the Israelites to commemorate the night of their deliverance?* (12:42)

They commemorated it by an observance<sup>18</sup> to the Lord. "It is a night of observance to the Lord concerning (the way) He brought them from the land of Egypt. That night shall be an observance to Jehovah by all the sons of Israel, unto (all) their generations."

Ex. 12:42 appears to be an exhortation by Moses, inserted when he wrote the book of Exodus some time after the events of the Passover night. Ex. 12:42 leads directly into the instructions about the Passover in 12:43-49.

Notice that 12:42 states *twice* that that night was to be a night of *observance*. Future generations were to make special observance of that night. This should speak also to us about the great significance of the Passover observance, including its significance to Christians.

Skeptical critics see the duplication in Ex. 12:42 not as emphasis, but only as indication of multiple sources for Exodus. Driver ascribes Ex. 12:42 to "E" and calls it a "gloss" (an insertion). Oesterly and Robinson attribute it to "J" (in the "P" section 12:40—13:2). Noth does not separate 12:42 from the rest of the narrative. These authors make positive pronouncements about multiple authorship, but cannot agree even with one another.

31. *Why are supplementary instructions about the Passover given in 12:43-50?*

The reason for giving them here is not clearly stated. But since the instructions primarily concern the participation of foreigners in the Passover, and since a mixed multitude had left Egypt with Israel (12:38), we suspect that these instructions were given at this early point in Israel's journeys, perhaps at Succoth (12:37), to clarify to both Israelites and

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<sup>18</sup>The word-form *shimurim*, translated "to be observed," occurs only in Ex. 12:42. It is plural in form ("occasions to be observed"), though probably singular in meaning ("vigil," "observation"). It has a passive appearance (something to BE observed).

non-Israelites how His passover was to be observed.

Basically, the instructions were that a hired servant or sojourner (alien) living among the Israelites was *not* to partake of the Passover. A sojourner could partake if he consented to be circumcised. Observe the stress on the fact that there was ONE law for both strangers and for Israelites, when it came to eating the Passover (12:49).

Num. 9:14 refers to strangers keeping the passover "according to the statute of the passover." Probably this refers to the laws in Ex. 12:43-48.

The Passover belonged only to covenant-keepers. The instructions in 12:43-48 probably were uttered to persuade the non-circumcised fellow-travellers with the Israelites to get into Israel all the way, or to expect none of the blessings of Israelites. In our times people sometimes attend Christian worship meetings and activities, but never consent to be baptized and really get into the group. Much like the mixed multitude accompanying Israel, they enjoy God's people, but do not desire to acknowledge their need for further obedience.

The instructions about the Passover in 12:43-48 seem to be stated in seven (or six) laws.<sup>19</sup> These are stated succinctly and precisely, and in Hebrew each ends with the suffix *o* (meaning "him" or "it"). In condensed form the commands are as follows: a. No foreigner may eat (12:43). b. The circumcised may eat (12:44). c. No settler or hired servant may eat unless circumcised (12:45). d. Eat it in one house (12:46). e. All the congregation shall keep the feast (12:47). f. Let sojourners be circumcised (12:48). g. The circumcised aliens shall be accepted as are natives of the land (12:48). (The last two regulations may actually constitute only one.)

Certainly these instructions about the future observance of the Passover in Israel's future homeland gave much assurance to Israel that God surely intended to bring them into the land, where they would keep these ordinances. Christians likewise have clear promises about their activities in our

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<sup>19</sup> U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on Exodus* (Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1967), p. 150.

eternal home in the new heaven and earth.

32. *What was the law about the bones of the Passover lamb? (12:46)*

Not a bone of it shall be broken. Compare Numbers 9:12. John 19:33-36 tells that this foreshadowed the fact that the bones of Christ (the true Passover lamb) would not be broken. It is not easy to imagine any other satisfactory explanation for this law.

The Greek wording of John 19:36 is quite similar to the Greek O.T. wording of Ex. 12:46. (The Greek text has the same law about not breaking the bones of the lamb in 12:10. The Hebrew text gives it only in 12:46.)

Psalms 34:19-20 also refers to the unbroken bones of the righteous. ("Righteous" is the singular, "the righteous one.") This verse applies in a general way to all of God's saints, but probably had a specific application to Christ, THE righteous one.

All three of the laws in 12:46 about the Passover lamb - eating it in one house, keeping all fragments of it in one place, and not breaking its bones - suggest the UNITY and integrity of the Passover lamb, and of Christ.

33. *To what chapter and verse does 12:51 refer back?*

It refers back to 12:41. Note the reference to the "selfsame day" in both 12:41 and 12:51. The interruption of 12:42-49 cleared up some of the relationships between the mixed multitude that left with Israel and Israel itself. Ex. 12:51 connects the following laws (in Ex. 13) about the firstborn to the preceding material.

Concerning the *hosts* of Israel, see notes on 7:4.



## SPECIAL STUDY: HOW LONG WAS ISRAEL IN EGYPT?

1. The Hebrew Bible says in Ex. 12:40-41, "The time that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt was *four hundred and thirty years*. And it came to pass at the end of four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day, it came to pass, that all the hosts of Jehovah went out from the land of Egypt." We accept this statement without any qualification.
2. The statement of Stephen in Acts 7:6 is in basic agreement with the chronology in Exodus: "His (Abraham's) seed should sojourn in a strange land, and that they should bring them into bondage, and treat them ill, *four hundred years*." We suppose the number Stephen gave is a round number for the four hundred and thirty in Ex. 12.
3. God's, original covenant with Abraham in Gen. 15:13 foretold that Abraham's seed would be sojourners in a land that was not theirs, and that they would serve them; and that Abraham's seed would be afflicted *four hundred years*. Gen. 15:16 adds that Abraham's seed would return to Canaan "in the fourth generation." Seemingly this makes each of the generations referred to a hundred years long, which is unexpectedly long, but is not impossible.
4. The three foregoing scripture passages seem mutually harmonious. A problem arises when we consider the Greek O.T. (LXX), and the statement of Paul in Galatians 3:17.
5. The Greek O.T.<sup>1</sup> has in Exodus 12:40: "And the sojourning of the children of Israel, while they sojourned in the land of Egypt *and the land of Canaan* was four hundred and thirty years." The addition of the words *and in the land of Canaan* makes the four hundred and thirty years include the total time from Abraham's entry into Canaan until Israel's exodus from Egypt. Since two hundred and fifteen years elapsed from Abraham's entry into Canaan until Jacob's family came

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<sup>1</sup>The Greek O.T. was translated about 275 B.C., over a thousand years after the time of Moses. In most passages it is astoundingly close to the wording of existing ancient Hebrew manuscripts.

into Egypt, this would leave only two hundred and fifteen remaining years as the duration of the sojourn in Egypt (For scriptural chronological data, see Gen. 12:4; 21:5; 25:26; 31:38; 37:2; 41:46-47; 45:6; 47:9.)

As a general rule we regard the Hebrew Bible as being more authoritative than the Greek Bible. Also it seems very improbable that the scripture should refer to the sojourning of the *children* of Israel in *Canaan*, as the Greek O.T. does. How could Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be referred to as children of themselves, or of their descendants? The children of *Israel*, or Jacob, sojourned in Canaan for only about twenty-two years of the two hundred and fifteen years from the time of Abraham's entry until Jacob's migration into Egypt. We do not regard the Greek Bible as correct in Ex. 12:40.

6. Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century A.D., follows the Greek O.T. rendering: "They left Egypt . . . four hundred and thirty years after our forefather Abraham came into Canaan, but two hundred and fifteen years only after Jacob removed into Egypt" (*Ant.* II, xv, 2). Josephus is, however, contradictory with himself, because he also wrote, "Four hundred years did they spend under these afflictions" (referring to their Egyptian slavery). (*Ant.* II, ix, 1)
7. It might appear that the apostle Paul in Galatians 3:17 follows the Greek reading of Ex. 12:40, as opposed to the Hebrew reading. He writes as follows: "A covenant confirmed beforehand by God [referring to God's covenant with Abraham], the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, . . . ." This sounds as if Paul meant that the law which was given at Mt. Sinai shortly after Israel left Egypt, was given four hundred and thirty years after God made his covenant with Abraham. The only reference in Genesis to God's *making* a covenant with Abraham is in Gen. 15:18. Abraham was approximately eighty-five years old at that time. (See Gen. 15:18.) If the four hundred and thirty years before the law was given (Gal. 3:17) started with this covenant in Gen. 15:18, then the 430 years would

include BOTH the time Israel was in Egypt AND in Canaan, as the Greek reading indicates.

8. We are persuaded that the Bible as originally written, and when properly understood, is always in harmony with itself. We believe also that Paul was a true apostle of Christ, and that his writings are therefore completely true, like all the other scriptures. We therefore feel that Gal. 3:17, when properly comprehended, will be in harmony with Ex. 12:40-41 and with the statement of Stephen (Acts 7:6), and all other passages.
9. It seems to us that the key to understanding Gal. 3:17 is to understand what Paul referred to when he spoke of the "covenant [with Abraham] *confirmed beforehand* by God." Is *pre-confirming* only a synonym for the *making* of the covenant? We think not. In Gal. 3:17 Paul uses the Greek verb *prokuroo* to describe this pre-confirming. This word means "to make valid, or sure, or firm, in advance." W. G. Moorhead says<sup>2</sup> that the word (*prokuroo*) is never employed in the New Testament, nor as far as we have discovered, in the Greek version of the Old, to designate the institution of a thing, a first transaction; it signifies to ratify, or confirm a thing already in existence. All of the references to *making* a covenant in the Greek Pentateuch (Gen.-Deut.) use some form of the verbs *tithemi* (to set, put, or place) or *histemi* (to cause or make to stand, to place, put, set). See Gen. 6:18; 9:9; 15:18; 17:2; Ex. 23:32; Jer. 31:31 (38:31 in Gr.) as examples.

The verb *kuroo* (root of *prokuroo*, which is used in Gal. 3:17) occurs only twice in the O.T. In Gen. 23:20 it refers to Abraham's purchase of the cave for burial being *made sure* after Sarah was buried in it. The original purchase is referred to by another word (in the Greek, but not in the Hebrew) in 23:16-17. This use of the verb *kuroo* tends to confirm our interpretation of its meaning as a later confirmation of a previous transaction.

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<sup>2</sup>Outline Studies in the Books of the Old Testament

The other use of *kuroo* is in Lev. 25:30. There the passage concerns the buying back of property sold by any one. In the case of a house in a walled city, there was a one-year time period in which it could be *redeemed* (bought back) from the purchaser. If it was not redeemed in that time, then the house was surely *confirmed* (*kuroo*) to him that bought it for all his generations. This use of *kuroo* shows the same meaning as in Gen. 23:20, the confirmation of a previous transaction.

10. What event could be referred to by Paul as a *confirming beforehand* of the covenant God made with Abraham? A careful reading of Gen. 15:13-21 (which tells of God's making the covenant with Abraham) reveals that the first words God spoke to Abraham were these: "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, . . . ." The seed (descendants) of Abraham did not begin their sojourn in the land of Egypt till 215 years after Abraham entered Canaan. Abraham had died before his grandson Jacob migrated to Egypt with his family. But at the time when Jacob and his family entered into Egypt, the covenant with Abraham was truly confirmed, because God's first prediction in the covenant had come to pass. Four hundred and thirty years after this emigration into Egypt, God led the Israelites out, and gave them the law at Mt. Sinai. We feel that Paul was probably referring to this time period in Gal. 3:17.
11. I Chronicles 7:25 lists *ten* generations between Joseph and Joshua. Gleason L. Archer, Jr. writes that ten generations can hardly be reconciled with a mere two hundred and fifteen years (especially considering the longer life span of pre-Exodus Israelites), but it fits in very plausibly with an interval of four hundred and thirty years.<sup>3</sup>
12. Exodus 6:18-20 names only four generations from Levi to Moses - Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses. As stated in our notes on this passage, we are practically forced to conclude

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<sup>3</sup>A Survey of O. T. Introduction (Chicago: Moody, 1964), p. 212.

that the names of some of the generations from Levi to Moses are not named here, because Levi's descendants numbered 22,000 just after the exodus (and the descendants of Kohath, Levi's son, alone numbered 8600 [Numbers 3:27].) Four generations cannot have produced that many descendants, especially since Levi himself had only three sons (Kohath, Gershon, Merari). Therefore, this genealogical listing does not argue against the four hundred and thirty-year sojourn in Egypt.

13. Finally, there is the argument from the population growth of the Israelites. When they came into Egypt, they numbered only seventy. When they left, there were over six hundred thousand men. Such a multiplication would require longer than two hundred fifteen years. Keil and Delitzsch report that the six hundred thousand population total could be obtained if every married couple among the Israelites produced three sons and three daughters for six generations, and then two sons and two daughters in the last four (making ten total) generations.<sup>4</sup> Such a population increase would have been possible in four hundred and thirty years, but extremely unlikely in two hundred and fifteen years.

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### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**13** And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (2) Sanctify unto me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Is-ra-el, both of man and of beast: it is mine.

(3) And Mo-ses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from E-gypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand Je-ho-vah brought you out from this

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<sup>4</sup>*Op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 30.

place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten. (4) This day ye go forth in the month A-bib. (5) And it shall be, when Je-ho-vah shall bring thee into the land of the Ca-naan-ite, and the Hit-tite, and the Am-or-ite, and the Hi-vite, and the Jeb-u-site, which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month. (6) Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to Je-ho-vah. (7) Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee, in all thy borders. (8) And thou shalt tell thy son in that day, saying, It is because of that which Je-ho-vah did for me when I came forth out of E-gypt. (9) And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thy hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the law of Je-ho-vah may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath Je-ho-vah brought thee out of E-gypt. (10) Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year.

(11) And it shall be, when Je-ho-vah shall bring thee into the land of the Ca-naan-ite, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee, (12) that thou shalt set apart unto Je-ho-vah all that openeth the womb, and every firstling which thou hast that cometh of a beast; the males shall be Je-ho-vah's. (13) And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break its neck: and all the first-born of man among thy sons shalt thou redeem. (14) And it shall be, when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand Je-ho-vah brought us out from E-gypt, from the house of bondage: (15) and it came to pass, when Pha-raoh would hardly let us go, that Je-ho-vah slew all the first-born in the land of E-gypt, both the first-born of man, and the first-born of beast: therefore I sacrifice to Je-ho-vah all that openeth the womb, being males; but all the first-born of my sons I redeem. (16) And it shall be for a sign upon thy hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand Je-ho-vah brought us forth out of E-gypt.

(17) And it came to pass, when Pha-raoh had let the people go, that God led them not by the way of the land of the Phi-lis-tines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to E-gypt: (18) but God led the people about, by the way of the wilderness by the Red Sea: and the children of Is-ra-el went up armed out of the land of E-gypt. (19) And Mo-ses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Is-ra-el, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you. (20) And they took their journey from Suc-coth, and encamped in E-tham, in the edge of the wilderness. (21) And Je-ho-vah went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; that they might go by day and by night; (22) the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, departed not from before the people.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTEEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading propose a brief topic or theme for the chapter.
2. What group of the Israelites was sanctified (or consecrated) unto the Lord? (13:1-2)
3. What day was Israel to remember? (13:3)
4. Name the month when Israel left Egypt. (13:4)
5. What was to be done and what not to be done during the feast of Unleavened Bread? (13:6-7)
6. What were the people to tell their sons? (13:8)
7. On what places were "signs" to be affixed? (13:9, 16)
8. What was to be done with firstborn men and animals? (13:12)
9. What was to be done with firstborn asses (donkeys)? (13:13)
10. Why were the firstborn male animals sacrificed to the Lord? (13:15)

**DEMANDS AND DIRECTION TO THE REDEEMED 13:1-22**

11. By what route did God NOT lead Israel out of Egypt? (13:17)
  12. By what route did God lead Israel out of Egypt? (13:18)
  13. Whose bones were carried up out of Egypt? (13:19; Gen. 50:24-25)
  14. What two places did Israel pass through after leaving Rameses? (13:20)
  15. What led the Israelites in their journeys? (13:22)
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**EXODUS THIRTEEN: DEMANDS AND DIRECTION  
TO THE REDEEMED**

- I. God's demands; 13:1-16.
  1. Consecrate the firstborn; 13:1-2, 11-16.
  2. Keep the feast; 13:3-10.
- II. God's direction; 13:17-22.
  1. Safe direction; 13:17.
    - a. Physically safe; 13:17.
    - b. Spiritually safe; 13:17.
  2. Rigorous direction; 13:18.
  3. Visible direction; 13:21.
  4. Constant direction; 13:22.

**GOD'S CLAIMS ON MAN'S FIRSTBORN:  
"It is mine!" (13:2)**

1. The firstborn must be set apart; 13:12.
2. The firstborn must be redeemed; 13:13.
3. Every generation must be taught this truth; 13:14.  
God claims man's first and best!



## UNLEAVENED BREAD! (13:3-10)

1. A memorial; 13:3, 9.
2. A time for purging out leaven; 13:7.
3. A means for placing God's law in men's mouths; 13:9.
4. A regular annual observance; 13:10.
5. A type of purging out of sin; I Cor. 5:6-8.

## JOSEPH'S BONES! (13:19)

1. A fulfillment of past prophecies; Gen. 50:25.
2. A forecast of future victories; Heb. 11:22.

## GOD'S DIRECTION OF HIS PEOPLE (13:17-18)

1. Directs to a place of rest; (13:5; Deut. 8:8-10).
2. Directs around dangers (Philistines); (13:17).
3. Directs by circuitous routes; (13:18).
4. Directs into hard paths ("wilderness"); (13:18).
5. Directs into places of testing; (16:4; Deut. 8:2).
6. Directs into spiritual growth; (Deut. 8:3-6).

## THE CLOUD - AN ILLUSTRATION OF GOD'S LEADING (13:21-22)

1. Visible obvious leadership; (13:21; 40:38).
2. Light-giving leadership; (13:21; Neh. 9:12; Ps. 105:39).
3. Constant leadership; (13:22; Num. 9:19; Neh. 9:19).
4. A protecting (covering) leadership; (14:19-20; Ps. 105:39; Isa. 4:5; Ex. 40:34; Num. 9:15).
5. A glory-bearing leadership; (Ex. 40:34-35; 16:10).
6. A directing leadership; (Ex. 40:36-37; Num. 9:17-23; 10:11-12, 34; Neh. 9:12, 19; Ps. 78:14).
7. God spoke from the cloud; (Ex. 33:9; Ps. 99:7; Num. 12:5).
8. A leadership to become universal; (Isa. 4:5; Rev. 21:23).

## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. *What is in Exodus thirteen?*

The theme-title DEMANDS AND DIRECTIONS TO THE REDEEMED sums up most of the chapter. God's redeemed people have obligations to Him, as well as direction from Him.

The chapter opens with God's command to Moses to sanctify (or consecrate) all the firstborn of Israel, both of men and beasts (13:1-2)

The chapter continues with Moses' speech to the people (13:3-16). This speech dealt with two matters: (1) the observance of the feast of unleavened bread (13:3-10); (2) the consecration or redemption of their firstborn (13:11-16).

The chapter closes with information as to how God wondrously led the Israelites as they left Egypt (13:17-22).

The words of God to Moses (13:1-2) and Moses' words to the people (13:3-16) seem to have been given at Succoth, Israel's first encampment after leaving their homes in Egypt. We are not told how Moses managed to get the great horde of people all grouped together so he could give them the messages. Perhaps he relayed the messages through their elders. Moses spoke of their coming into Canaan (13:5), and how they would there keep the feast of unleavened bread and set apart their firstborn in that land (13:11-12). These confident assertions by Moses gave Israel courage and purpose in their journeys. The fulfillment of Moses' predictions in later years gave proof that Moses' words had come from God.

2. *What was to be done with the firstborn of Israel?* (13:1-2)

God commanded that all the firstborn be sanctified unto him. They were to be regarded as holy, and kept for holy use.

It seems that the firstborn referred to were the firstborn of males only. See 13:12. Daughters and female animals were apparently not affected by this regulation.

To *sanctify* is explained in 13:15 as being the act of sacrificing the animal (an act permissible only in the case of clean

animals), or by redeeming it by offering another animal as a sacrifice in place of it.

The act of sanctifying the firstborn was a positive act as well as a negative one. They were separated **TO** the Lord at the same time they were separated **FROM** any worldly use.

God's ground for claiming the firstborn as **HIS** lay in the fact that He had spared them in Egypt on the day when He struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. See Num. 3:13; 8:17.

A major purpose for sanctifying the firstborn was to perpetuate the memory of their deliverance in the mind of the nation. Israel tended to forget divine blessings very quickly.

The command about sanctifying the firstborn has an application to Christians, because Christians are described as the *firstborn ones* in Heb. 12:23. Thus, the type suggests that all Christians, as God's firstborn, are the **LORD's**. Some Christians may resent the idea that their children or they themselves should be dedicated to be preachers, missionaries, etc. They do not like religious duties to make demands upon their property or pleasures. They want a cheap religion. But in truth all of us who claim God as our father are the firstborn ones, and dedicated to the **LORD**.

3. *Where and when did Moses speak to the people about sanctifying the firstborn?* (13:3-4)

Moses spoke to the people on the first day of their departure. Literally, Ex. 13:4 says, "*You are going forth. . .*" Presumably this was at Succoth. The Passover had been the night before. Probably Moses spoke at their first stop on the way. We suspect that he spoke to their elders, who relayed the word back to their clans and families. (Compare 12:21.)

How smooth and naturally this chapter develops! First God commanded Moses concerning the sanctifying of their firstborn. Then Moses spoke the words to the people, telling them about the two matters God had spoken to him about: (1) About the feast of unleavened bread (13:3-10); (2) About sanctifying their firstborn to the **LORD** (13:11-16).

Some critics (e.g. Driver) ascribe 13:1-2, 20 to a fifth century B.C. priestly author, and 13:3-16, 21-22 to a tenth century author called the Jehovist. Martin Noth attributes the whole chapter to J, but thinks it has numerous later insertions in 13:1-16 by unknown Deuteronomistic (D) writers, and by an E writer in 13:17-19. There is no proof of such speculations. The disagreements among those who hold such ideas demonstrate their flimsy basis. These suggested multiple sources break up the natural progress in the story as it is given to us.

4. *What were the Israelites to remember?* (13:3)

Remember this day! Compare 12:14.

It was their day of coming out! Note that Egypt is called a "slave house" (literally "house of bondmen"). Israel was free! Certainly they faced hardships and conflicts. But their new freedom was worth more than all the security (?) of Egypt's prison life.

The words "from this place" could only have been uttered at the very time when they were emancipated, but yet on Egyptian soil. No authors after Moses' time could thus have written (assuming that they were honest).

This remembering was to be demonstrated by ACTS, such as abstaining from unleavened bread for the week. Mere mental memory is cheap. Real remembering regulates our resources and routine.

5. *In what month did Israel depart?* (13:4)

In the month *Abib*. See 12:12. This is near the end of March. After the Babylonian captivity this month was called Nisan (Neh. 2:1).

The term *Abib* means *sprouting*. As the name of a month it is found in Ex. 13:4; 23:15; 34:18; Deut. 16:1. In Ex. 9:31 the same word refers to the *ear* (or head of grain): "the barley was in the *ear*." In Lev. 2:14 it refers to the "green ears of corn," that is, the fresh grain.

Much as Israel went forth in the month *Abib* ("sprouting forth," "springing up"), we also accept Christ in a time of springing up to new growth and life.

6. *What observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was to be kept in Canaan?* (13:5)

They were to observe the feast every year in that month!

In their future prosperity and ease ("milk and honey"), they were to keep the ordinances faithfully.

Only five of the seven "nations" in the land of Canaan are named here. The Greek O.T. adds the names of the Gergashites and Perizzites. Concerning these seven "nations," see Ex. 3:8. Compare Gen. 15:19-21 and Ex. 23:23-28.

These people in Canaan (all of whom were collectively called Canaanites) were not actually separate sovereign nations. They were racial groups. Canaan was controlled at that time by small city-states, all of which were nominally under the authority of Egypt, but were independent of one another.

Regarding God's oath to give the land of Canaan to the "fathers" (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), see Gen. 12:7; 15:18; 26:3; 35:12.

Concerning the land "flowing with milk and honey," see Ex. 3:17.

Note that keeping the feast of unleavened bread was a "service." They were to "Serve this service." The Hebrew word for *serve* emphasizes the feature of work and labor.

7. *What was the major feature of the feast of unleavened bread?* (13:6-7)

The eating of unleavened bread for a week was its major feature. No leaven was permitted within the Israelites' property during that time. On the seventh day of this period there was a feast to Jehovah. See Ex. 12:15-20 for more about the feast of unleavened bread. It had a profound meaning.

8. *What were the Israelites to tell their children about the unleavened bread?* (13:8, 10).

They were to tell them the reason for eating the unleavened bread that week. They were to say, "It is because of that which Jehovah did for me when I came forth out of Egypt."

The instruction of Israelite children during the feasts is referred to in 10:2 and 12:26-27. See notes on these verses.

The command to keep the ordinance about the Unleavened bread is given several times and is very strong. See 12:24-25; 13:5, 10.

9. *How were the people to show their devotion to the Lord for bringing them up out of Egypt?* (13:9, 16)

They were to make a *sign*, which would keep their deliverance ever in their minds.

Of course, the *sign* referred to was not some lettered placard or billboard. Their deliverance itself was the sign and memorial. But in some way their deliverance was to be made unforgettable to them throughout future generations. ("Unto thee" in 13:9 means unto Israel as a collective body.)

The purpose of the sign and memorial was that the law of Jehovah might be "in thy mouth." The Israelites, both individually and collectively, were to speak about their deliverance through all future times.

The exact form of the sign which God had in mind is not specified. Jews in later centuries interpreted the verse to mean that they were to make and wear *phylacteries*. These are small leather boxes attached to straps. They are worn upon the forehead and the left arm. They contain strips of paper with certain scripture passages written upon them. (The passages are Ex. 13:2-10; Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21). The arm phylactery is tied to the inside of the left arm, a little above the elbow, so that the scripture passage might be close to the heart.

Our Lord Jesus referred to phylacteries in Matt. 23:5. He pronounced woe upon the scribes and Pharisees for making their phylacteries extra large, so as to be seen by men and be praised for their holiness. Jesus did not actually condemn the phylacteries, only the misuse of them.

The scripture seems to indicate that the *sign* was the deliverance from Egypt (13:8) or was the feast of unleavened bread (13:7). If this is true, then the later Jewish use of this verse as justification for making and wearing phylacteries is

not a very strong argument. God did not specify exactly how this devotion was to be expressed, or what the sign and memorial consisted of. It would have been best to leave the command just as Moses delivered it. See Deut. 4:2. It is equally wrong to insist on an exclusively spiritual meaning in it, or to use the verse as a warrant for elaborate phylacterial ceremonialism. Similarly in the New Testament church, we do not have details for worship ceremonies, only broad guidelines. To insist on a highly structured formal service or on a very loose informal program is equally wrong.

Regarding the *strength* of God's hand in bringing Israel forth, see Ex. 15:6 and Deut. 7:19.

10. *What was to be done with the firstborn of man and beast?* (13:11-12)

The firstborn were to be set apart to the Lord. Ex. 22:9; 34:19; Lev. 27:26. Literally, they were to cause the firstborn to "pass over." Sometimes this expression meant to sacrifice (as in II Kings 23:10), and sometimes it meant to transfer over to (as in Num. 27:8). Both of these meanings seem to be implied here.

God chose the firstborn of each family to be dedicated to full time labor at the tabernacle in administering the sacred services.

This practice of setting apart the firstborn was to be done when they came into the land of the Canaanites. However it was also done in the wilderness (Num. 3:13).

The paragraph 3:11-16 is a detailed exposition by Moses about God's law concerning sanctifying the firstborn. This law was briefly stated in 13:1-2.

At Mt. Sinai God commanded that the entire tribe of the Levites (the descendants of Jacob's son Levi) be set apart to Him instead of the firstborn of each family in every tribe (Num. 3:5-13, 41, 45).

Regarding the Canaanite tribes and God's promise to Israel's forefathers to give them the land, see notes on 13:5.

Ex. 13:12 is quoted in Luke 2:23. There we are told that the infant Jesus was "presented to the Lord" by Joseph and

Mary, by the act of making a sacrifice. This sacrifice was that which was offered following the birth of all children (Lev. 12:6-7). However, it appears that the sacrifice also involved the matter of redeeming (buying back) the firstborn male sons. Even though the Levites replaced them in the actual temple labors, they still had to be redeemed.

11. *How were the firstborn set apart to the Lord?* (13:13)

a. Firstborn lambs, or kids, or cattle were sacrificed. (13:15)  
These animals were killed and their fat burned as an offering made by fire. But their flesh was given to the priests for food. (Num. 18:17-18)

b. The firstborn of an ass or any unclean beast (like a camel; Lev. 11:4; Num. 18:15) was to be killed by breaking its neck. Or a lamb or kid could be sacrificed in its place. The people would surely carry out this law scrupulously, because the ass was a much more costly animal than a lamb.

c. The firstborn of man was to be redeemed by payment of five shekels each. See Ex. 13:15; Num. 3:46-47; 18:15-16.

These laws should cause us to consider our own giving to the Lord. Do we give our firstborn, or an equivalent value, to the Lord? Do we in Christ give less to the Lord than those who lived under the law of Moses? May it never be so! Rather, we ought by love to do more than the law required, and thus to fulfill the law and establish it firmly in our lives. (Rom. 3:13; 13:10).

12. *What connection was there between Israel's deliverance from Egypt and the practice of redeeming the firstborn?* (13:14-15)

Redeeming the firstborn was (1) a *memorial* to Israel's redemption from Egypt; (2) also it was a *response* and repayment to God for sparing the firstborn of Israel in Egypt.

Certainly men can never repay God for His saving acts toward us. But we are under the necessity of rendering unto him whatever we can, both as a debt and as an expression of our gratitude.

Concerning the teaching of children about God's acts, see



notes on 13:8; 12:26-27; 10:2. Also see Deut. 6:20-21.

Regarding the "strength of hand" which God used to get Israel out of Egypt, see Ex. 13:3, 16. This refers to all of God's acts during the ten plagues.

Concerning the death of the firstborn in Egypt, see Ex. 11:4-6; 12:12, 29.

Concerning the *signs* and frontlets which Israelites were to use, see notes on 13:9, 16. The word *token* in 13:16 is from the same Hebrew word as *sign* in 13:9.

13. *What are the "frontlets between thine eyes"? (13:16)*

They seem to refer to some type of object, or strap, or bandage about the head. Wearing such an object on the head to commemorate God's delivering the people would be a useful reminder and testimony, if it did not become an object for show and pride.

Jews in later centuries specified that these "frontlets" should consist of leather phylacteries, or amulets, to be worn on the forehead and left arm during morning prayers. (The Jews call them *tephilin*, from the Hebrew word for prayer.) See notes on 13:9, where the "frontlets" are referred to as a *memorial* between thine eyes. Tregelles (in Gesenius' *Hebrew Lexicon*) aptly says, "It requires proof [which is lacking] that the Jewish phylacteries are intended by these fillets or bandages." God surely intended that His instructions regarding these "frontlets" be left simply in the form in which His divine wisdom stated them, without any official ecclesiastical interpretation and enforcement. See Deut. 4:2.

14. *By what route did God NOT lead the Israelites? (13:17)*

God did not lead them by the short route, along the Mediterranean seacoast linking Egypt and Canaan. This was a heavily-travelled route, approximately one hundred and fifty miles across. This route crosses a sandy desert (the desert of Shur). It would have required only about two weeks to travel this way.

This route was called the Way of the Sea (Via Maris) or the Way of Horus (by the Egyptians). The way was dotted

with Egyptian fortresses. Careful lists were kept by Egyptian guards of arrivals and departures at the northeast frontier forts in Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

The Bible calls this road the Way of the Philistines, because Philistines had settled along the SW coast of Canaan, and the road would pass through the area settled by them. Ex. 15:14 also mentions the Philistines.

The Philistines made their major immigration into Canaan about 1200 B.C., coming from Crete, or Caphtor, and other Mediterranean islands. This was 200 years after the time of the exodus. However, the Bible indicates that a few Philistines had settled into Canaan as far back as Abraham's time, about 2000 B.C. (Gen. 21:32; 26:1, 18) Most liberal critics view these early references to the Philistines as anachronisms.<sup>2</sup> However, some recent archaeological inscriptions indicate the presence of settlers in the area of Philistia considerably before 1200 B.C.<sup>3</sup>

Note that GOD LED the Israelites. He chose their path. "He leadeth me, O blessed thought!" (Psalm 23:2; 37:23)

God knew that the Israelites were not yet able to face war. Ex. 14:11-12 reveals how frightened Israel became when they were under attack. Numbers 14:1-4 shows their terror of "giants." The path into Canaan by the short way of the sea would have led them into southern Canaan, the very center of these giants (Anakim; Num. 13:22, 33). God does not allow His people to be tested more than they can bear (I Cor. 10:13). "He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14).

Furthermore, the Israelites were not yet *spiritually* prepared to occupy the land of Canaan. They had a divine appointment to "serve God on this mountain," Mt. Sinai (Ex. 3:12). There they would receive the law from God and be organized into a holy nation (Ex. 19:5-6), with a

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<sup>1</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

<sup>3</sup>*Biblical Archaeologist*, Sept. 1966, pp. 73-74.

tabernacle worship center and a priesthood. Frankly, they needed to be converted (turned) to the LORD!

Spiritually, Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan was a longer trip than the physical journey. The people had to be converted from the idolatry of Egypt and converted to the service of God. They were to be transformed from slaves to spiritual leaders. They were to become God's holy nation. The harsh Sinai desert became a demonstration area and a school where they could daily see God's power and care, and learn to rely totally upon Him. God did not intend that they should ever return to Egypt, either in body or spirit (Deut. 17:16; Neh. 9:17; Num. 14:4; Josh. 24:14).

In view of the plain assertion that God did NOT lead Israel by the seacoast route, it is astonishing to read some modern (especially Jewish) authors who say that the route of the Israelites was along this very route. They express the view that the Sea of Reeds (or Red Sea which Israel crossed) was Lake Sirbonis or Lake Menzaleh, both of which are on the Mediterranean Sea.

15. *By what route did God lead the Israelites? (13:18)*

He led them by the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. The name *Red Sea* is literally (in Hebrew) *Yam Suph*, meaning Sea of Reeds, or Sea of Weeds. See Introductory Studies VII and VI. Our study has led us to the firm belief that the *Yam Suph* is simply the same body of water which we call the Red Sea, and here in Ex. 13:18 it particularly refers to that arm of the Red Sea called the Gulf of Suez.

What wilderness (or desert area) is referred to as the "wilderness of the Red Sea"? We feel it was the Sinai wilderness lying just north and east of the Gulf of Suez, the area east of the Bitter Lakes.

Admittedly most interpreters (even conservative authors like John J. Davis) feel that the desert referred to was that which lay between Egypt and the Red Sea, and not that of the Sinai peninsula, which we propose.

Ex. 13:20 indicates that they came into the "wilderness" after they left Succoth. The location of Succoth (Tell

Maskhuta) is only about ten miles west of Lake Timsah. The closeness of Succoth to the Sinai wilderness strongly suggests that the "wilderness of the Red Sea" into which Israel came was *Sinai* wilderness.

The term *wilderness* in Exodus generally refers to the wilderness in Sinai, east of Egypt. Compare Num. 33:8, 6; Ex. 3:18; 5:3. This gives additional support to our view that Israel travelled east from Succoth into the Sinai wilderness, travelling probably just south of Lake Timsah into the wilderness. There they turned southward, going along the east side of the Bitter Lakes, and onward toward the Gulf of Suez (Red Sea).

Note that the Israelites encamped in "Etham in the edge of the wilderness." (Ex. 13:20; Num. 33:6) The Wilderness Etham and the Wilderness of Shur are two names for the same desert; or at least the Wilderness of Etham is part of the Wilderness of Shur. See Ex. 15:22 and Num. 33:8. The fact that Israel came out into the wilderness of Etham AFTER they crossed the Red Sea gives support to our view that the place called Etham was in the wilderness area east of the present Suez canal, in the Sinai peninsula.

16. *Did the Israelites have arms when they went out of Egypt?* (13:18)

They surely did. "The children of Israel went up armed (K.J.V., "harnessed") out of the land of Egypt."

The Hebrew word (*chamushim*) translated *armed* is a difficult term, but the meaning *armed* seems correct.<sup>4</sup> It is used in Judges 7:11; Joshua 4:12; 1:14. All of these passages refer to armed men.

The Greek O.T. translated *chamushim* ("armed") as *pempte*, meaning *fifth*, and says that the people went out of Egypt "in the fifth generation." The Hebrew word for *armed* is somewhat similar to the words meaning five and

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<sup>4</sup>In Num. 32:30, 32 and Deut. 3:18 the word *chalutsim* (meaning "armed for battle") is obviously used as a synonym for *chamushim* in Josh. 4:12. This indicates that *chamushim* also means "armed."

fifty, and this may account for the Greek translation from the Hebrew. Since Israel did not leave Egypt in the fifth generation (see Gen. 15:16), we do not feel that the Greek translation is correct.

We can hardly see how Israel could have come out of Egypt *heavily* armed, well-disciplined, and trained for warfare. Our text states that they had some arms, though these were surely very limited. They went out not as fugitives fleeing in disorder, but prepared and orderly, organized into groups. Moses had been trained in all the wisdom and knowledge of the Egyptians, and this surely included military leadership. Josephus tells that Moses defeated an Ethiopian army by clever strategy. (*Ant.* II, x, 2) We can neither verify nor disprove this story.

17. *Whose bones were carried out of Egypt?* (13:19)

The bones of Joseph! What a thrill it must have been to the Israelites when word was circulated among them that the bones of Joseph were in their possession. These would be an inspiration to the people, because they would know that the prophecy uttered by Joseph three hundred and fifty years before was coming to pass in their day. See Gen. 50:24-25. "By faith Joseph when his end was nigh, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel and gave commandment concerning his bones." (Heb. 11:22).

Joseph was later buried in Shechem. (Josh. 24:32). Like Jacob his father, Joseph never looked upon Egypt as his true homeland, and he showed this by his request for burial in Canaan. No mention is made of the bodies of Jacob's other sons. But Stephen's statement in Acts 7:15-16 implies that all of the "fathers" were carried into Shechem.

18. *Where was Etham?* (13:20)

Etham lay in the "edge of the wilderness." The term *wilderness* is usually employed in Exodus to refer to the desert area of the Sinai peninsula, east of the present Suez canal and the Gulf of Suez. See Ex. 3:1, 18; 15:22. The exact location of Etham is not known. We feel that it lay east or southeast of Lake Timsah. It seems reasonable to suppose

that Etham lay in the Wilderness of Etham. This Wilderness of Etham is identified as being a part of the Wilderness of Shur, which definitely lay east of the present Suez Canal. See Num. 33:6, 8; Ex. 15:22.

19. *How were the people led? (13:21-22)*

They were led by the pillar of cloud and fire.

This column in the air above them began to lead the people at Succoth. It had the appearance of smoke (or cloud) by day and of fire by night. There was only one pillar: "Jehovah looked forth . . . through THE pillar of cloud and fire" (Ex. 14:24). The pillar is sometimes referred to as "the cloud," even when it was shining as fire in the dark. See Ex. 14:19; Num. 9:21.

The cloud must have been huge and high to have been visible to all the Israelites. Seemingly in the first few days of travelling, the Israelites did some night marching as well as daytime travelling. They sought to put as much distance between them and Pharaoh as possible. From Succoth (Tell Maskhuta) to the Gulf of Suez by a route along the east side of the Bitter Lakes is about fifty-five miles. This could have been traversed in four days of marching.

The Scripture does not say that the cloud was a type of any one particular thing. We can safely say that it was an illustration of God's leading His people during the present age. God now leads us by the Bible, by the Holy Spirit, and by providential events.

Those who hold the "liberal" view of scripture, that is merely a human production, naturally reject any miraculous views about the cloud. They assert (without proof) such ideas as that the story of the cloud "goes back to observation of an active volcano"<sup>5</sup> "located perhaps as far away as Midian."<sup>6</sup> Always, however, they assert that whatever the cloud and fire was, it was associated with *natural* phenomena. Some feel that the entire story of the cloud is a vivid but

<sup>5</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

<sup>6</sup>Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 381.

*figurative* way of describing the reality of God's presence with his people. The descriptions of the cloud in the scripture certainly present it as real and miraculous.

The cloud LED God's redeemed people. (Psalm 78:14). God does not abandon those whom He saves. The rising of the cloud was a signal for the people to prepare to move. The people followed the cloud as it slowly went before them. Its descent toward the ground was a signal to stop and make camp. The cloud was an infallible and constant guide. See Num. 9:15-23; 10:11-12, 34; Ex. 40:34-38.

"Let the fiery cloudy pillar

Lead me all my journey through."

The cloud GAVE LIGHT to the people by night. See Neh. 9:12. Interestingly, the same cloud which gave light to Israel was darkness to the Egyptians (Ex. 14:40). How much this is like the teaching of the gospel. The truths which bring light to the believers are hidden from the wise and prudent of this world. See Matt. 11:25; II Cor. 4:3-4.

The cloud was for a COVERING. (Psalm 105:39: "He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light by night.")

"Round each habitation hovering,

See the cloud and fire appear;

For a glory and a covering,

Showing that the Lord is near."

(By John Newton, in the hymn "Glorious Things  
of Thee Are Spoken")

God SPOKE from the cloud. Psalm 99:7: "He spake unto them in the pillar of cloud." See Ex. 33:9; Num. 12:15.

The fire and cloud was a visible manifestation of the Lord's presence. The cloud filled the tabernacle with GLORY. There was a shining glow and radiance in it, which indicated God's presence.

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THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**14** And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying (2) Speak unto the children of Is-ra-el, that they turn back and encamp before Pi-ha-hi-roth, between Mig-dol and the sea, before Ba-al-ze-phon: over against it shall ye encamp by the sea. (3) And Pha-raoh will say of the children of Is-ra-el, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. (4) And I will harden Pha-raoh's heart, and he shall follow after them; and I will get me honor upon Pha-raoh, and upon all his host; and the E-gyp-tians shall know that I am Je-ho-vah. And they did so. (5) And it was told the king of E-gypt that the people were fled: and the heart of Pha-raoh and of his servants was changed towards the people, and they said, What is this we have done, that we have let Is-ra-el go from serving us? (6) And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: (7) and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of E-gypt, and captains over all of them. (8) And Je-ho-vah hardened the heart of Pha-raoh king of E-gypt, and he pursued after the children of Is-ra-el: for the children of Is-ra-el went out with a high hand. (9) And the E-gyp-tains pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pha-raoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-ha-hi-roth, before Ba-al-ze-phon.

(10) And when Pha-raoh drew nigh, the children of Is-ra-el lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the E-gyp-tains were marching after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Is-ra-el cried out unto Je-ho-vah. (11) And they said unto Mo-ses, Because there were no graves in E-gypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to bring us forth out of E-gypt? (12) Is not this the word that we spake unto thee in E-gypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the E-gyp-tains? For it were better for us to serve the E-gyp-tians, than that we should die in the wilderness. (13) And Mo-ses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of Je-ho-vah, which he will work for you to-day:



for the E-gyp-tians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. (14) Je-ho-vah will fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

(15) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Is-ra-el, that they go forward. (16) And lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thy hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Is-ra-el shall go into the midst of the sea on dry ground. (17) And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the E-gyp-tians, and they shall go in after them: and I will get me honor upon Pha-raoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. (18) And the E-gyp-tians shall know that I am Je-ho-vah, when I have gotten me honor upon Pha-raoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. (19) And the angel of God, who went before the camp of Is-ra-el, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud removed from before them, and stood behind them: (20) and it came between the camp of E-gypt and the camp of Is-ra-el; and there was the cloud and the darkness, yet gave it light by night: and the one came not near the other all the night.

(21) And Mo-ses stretched out his hand over the sea; and Je-ho-vah caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. (22) And the children of Is-ra-el went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. (23) And the E-gyp-tians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pha-raoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. (24) And it came to pass in the morning watch, that Je-ho-vah looked forth upon the host of the E-gyp-tians through the pillar of fire and of cloud, and discomfited the host of the E-gyp-tians. (25) And he took off their chariot wheels, and they drove them heavily; so that the E-gyp-tians said, Let us flee from the face of Is-ra-el; for Je-ho-vah fighteth for them against the E-gyp-tians.

(26) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Stretch out thy hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the E-gyp-tians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. (27) And Mo-ses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned

to its strength when the morning appeared; and the E-gyp-tians fled against it; and Je-ho-vah overthrew the E-gyp-tians in the midst of the sea. (28) And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, even all the host of Pha-raoh that went in after them into the sea; there remained not so much as one of them. (29) But the children of Is-ra-el walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left. (30) Thus Je-ho-vah saved Is-ra-el that day out of the hand of the E-gyp-tians; and Is-ra-el saw the E-gyp-tians dead upon the sea-shore. (31) And Is-ra-el saw the great work which Je-ho-vah did upon the E-gyp-tians, and the people feared Je-ho-vah: and they believed in Je-ho-vah, and in his servant Mo-ses.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER FOURTEEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. Propose a theme or topic for chapter fourteen.
2. What change of directions did God have the Israelites make? (14:1-2)
3. What place were the Israelites to encamp in front of? (14:2)
4. Between what places were they to encamp? (14:2)
5. On which side of the sea was Baal-zephon? (14:2)
6. What would Pharaoh say when he heard where Israel had gone? (14:3)
7. What would cause Pharaoh to follow Israel? (14:4)
8. What would bring honor to God? (14:4, 18)
9. What would the Egyptians know after their host was destroyed? (14:4)
10. What was told to Pharaoh about the Israelites' activities? (14:5; Compare Num. 33:3-4)
11. What was changed within Pharaoh and his servants? (14:5)
12. What did Pharaoh take to pursue Israel? (14:6)
13. How many chariots did Pharaoh take? (14:7)

14. What did Jehovah do to Pharaoh's heart? (14:8)
  15. In what manner had the Israelites gone out? (14:8)
  16. At what place did Pharaoh overtake Israel? (14:9)
  17. What was Israel's reaction upon seeing Pharaoh? (14:10)
  18. To whom did the Israelites first cry out? (14:10)
  19. What taunt did Israel make to Moses? (14:11)
  20. What was the feeling of the Israelites toward Moses? (14:11)
  21. What words had Israel previously spoken to Moses? (14:12)  
When?
  22. What heroic words did Moses utter? (14:13)
  23. What did Moses predict would be the fate of the Egyptians?  
(14:13)
  24. Who would fight for Israel? (14:14)
  25. What did God tell Israel to do? (14:15)
  26. What did God tell Moses to do? (14:16)
  27. What would Pharaoh do when Israel crossed the sea? (14:17)
  28. Who or what went before the Israelite camp? (14:19)
  29. What separated Israel from the Egyptians? (14:20)
  30. What gave light to the Israelites? (14:20)
  31. What did God use to divide the waters? (14:21)
  32. What was the sea like on the right and left sides? (14:22)
  33. Who followed Israel into the sea? (14:23)
  34. At what hour did the LORD look forth upon the Egyptians?  
(14:24)
  35. What did the LORD do to slow down the Egyptians? (14:25)
  36. What was the reaction of the Egyptians to their difficulties in  
crossing? (14:25)
  37. What was used to cause the waters to return to their usual  
position? (14:26)
  38. Did the Egyptians attempt to escape? (14:27)
  39. How many Egyptians survived? (14:28)
  40. What was Israel's last view of the Egyptians? (14:30)
  41. What was Israel's reaction when they saw all that had hap-  
pened to the Egyptians? (14:31)
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## EXODUS FOURTEEN: BAPTIZED UNTO MOSES

- I. *A point of transition.*
- II. *A place of triumph.*

## GOD'S PEOPLE IN TRYING SITUATIONS (14:2-4)

- I. Situations unexpected; (14:2.)
- II. Situations under enemy observation; (14:3)
- III. Situations where God gets honor; (14:4)

## FEELINGS OF WEAK SAINTS (14:10-12)

- I. Fear; 14:10.
- II. Suspicion of leaders; 14:11.
- III. Forgetting past misery; 14:12.
- IV. Choosing slavery over freedom; 14:12.

## MOSES' MARVELOUS FAITH (14:13-15)

- I. Held in the face of fearful multitudes; 14:10. 10.
- II. Publicly declared; 14:13.
- III. Pointed the people to God; 14:13-14.
- IV. Sought God in private prayer; 14:15.

## DIRECTIONS IN DILEMMA (14:13-16.)

- 1. Fear not; 14:13.
- 2. Stand still (be silent); 14:13-14.
- 3. See the salvation of Jehovah; 14:13.
- 4. Go forward! (14:15)

## GOD'S TROUBLING OF THE WICKED (14:23-28)

- 1. Done in the midst of their sin; 14:23.
- 2. Recognized too late; 14:25.
- 3. Precedes total destruction; 14:27-28.

## THE MIRACLE-CROSSING!!

1. Miraculous light and darkness; 14:20.
  2. Miraculous wind and storm; 14:21; Ps. 77:16-18.
  3. Miraculous wall of water; 14:22, 29.
  4. Miraculous safe crossing; 14:22, 30.
  5. Miraculous motivation upon the Egyptians; 14:4, 17.
  6. Miraculous hindrance of Egyptians; 14:25.
  7. Miraculous return of waters; 14:28.
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## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1. *What is in Exodus fourteen?*

The chapter tells of Israel's miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, and the destruction of the Egyptians who pursued them.

2. *What is the spiritual significance of this chapter?*

The chapter is an eternal illustration of the truth that God is able to deliver his people. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21).

The chapter makes the meaning of baptism clear. We are told in I Corinthians 10:2 that "Our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all *baptized unto Moses* in the cloud and in the sea." By the same words we are said to be "*baptized into Christ*" (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3).

Up until the crossing of the Red Sea Israel was in Egyptian territory and in danger from Egypt. Similarly up until our baptism we are yet in sins. Though Saul of Tarsus came to believe in Jesus upon the road to Damascus, and had changed his mind (repented) toward Jesus, and though he had prayed for three days, yet the preacher sent by the Lord himself said to him, "Arise, and be baptized, and *wash away thy sins, calling on his name.*" (Acts 22:16)

When Israel crossed the sea, they were baptized unto Moses. They came completely under his authority and rule.

Egypt had no more dominion over them. Similarly, in Romans six, where Paul talks about our being baptized into Christ, he writes that "Sin shall not have dominion over you." (Rom. 6:11, 14)

By mighty works done by Moses, God made it possible for the Israelites to step forth in FAITH to forsake Egypt. By mighty works done through Christ (such as raising Him from the dead), God has made it possible for us to step forth in FAITH to escape sin. After that act of faith, we are *baptized into Christ*. It is at that point that we are saved (I Peter 3:21; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16). It is the point of transition. Baptism must be preceded by faith; indeed it is an act of faith. God has called us "unto obedience of faith" (Rom. 2:5; 16:26). Noah and Abraham *by faith* obeyed God's commands (Heb. 11:7-8). We do not have Biblical faith if we take lightly God's commands, such as to be baptized.

3. *What unexpected directions did God give to Israel?* (14:1-2)

The Lord told Moses to tell Israel to TURN BACK toward the sea and camp in front of Pihahiroth, between Migdol (the tower) and the sea, in front of (east of) Baal-zephon.

Israel was to encamp in a vulnerable place, as if just waiting for Pharaoh to respond.

The identifications of Pihahiroth, Migdol, and Baal-zephon are as numerous as the commentaries on the subject! Every body of water along the east edge of Egypt has been identified by some interpreter as the *sea* spoken of. Identifications of the *sea* include Lake Sirbonis (Martin Noth, Aharoni), Lake Menzaleh (G. E. Wright), Lake Timsah (Naiville),<sup>1</sup> the Bitter Lakes (Cassuto, John Davis), and the Red Sea (Gulf of Suez) (S. C. Bartlett, J. W. McGarvey).

We feel that the *sea* referred to in 14:2 (and subsequently) is the Red Sea Gulf of Suez. See Introductory Study II of this book for our reasons for holding this view. Acceptance of this view certainly requires acceptance of miraculous features in the crossing! We assuredly regard the crossing as miraculous

<sup>1</sup> See J. H. Hertz, *Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1969), p. 266.

in many respects.

When God told Israel to "Turn back," he probably meant for them to turn *west*. To the Hebrews the west side of anything was spoken of as the back side. See Ex. 3:1. In Genesis 14:7 we have the account of how the four kings from the east "turned *back*" from Mt. Seir (Edom) to Kadesh (presumably Kadesh-barnea). This was a generally *westward* turn, as a check of a map will show.

Israel had been travelling in the wilderness (13:18, 20), probably going southward in the area east and southeast of the Bitter Lakes. Now they are directed to *turn back*, meaning westward, toward the north tip of the Gulf of Suez.

The Hebrew verb translated "turn back" may simply mean "turn." It has both meanings. We mention this to show that "Turn back" does not necessarily have to mean a complete reversal of direction, as from south to north. A turn to the west would fulfill the command completely.

The exact locations of Pihahiroth, Migdol, and Baal-zephon are not known. We feel that all three were near the north tip of the Red Sea Gulf of Suez.

*Pihahiroth* is a name having a definite Egyptian sound.<sup>2</sup> Numbers 33:8 gives it as Hahiroth, omitting the *Pi*, which is the Egyptian article *the*.

Several places called *Migdol*, meaning watchtower, are known. We propose that a tower on one of the summits of Mt. Atakah, just west of the Gulf of Suez tip, would be a most probable location.<sup>3</sup>

*Baal-zephon*, meaning "Baal of the North," was the name of a Canaanite god that was evidently worshipped in Egypt. G. E. Wright tells of one site called Baal-zephon in later centuries, located on the south tip of Lake Menzaleh.<sup>4</sup> But

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<sup>2</sup>Alan Cole (*op. cit.*, p. 119) says *Pihahiroth* means "region of salt marshes." We have seen no other authorities who confirm this meaning.

<sup>3</sup>*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, IV, p. 2396, concurs with this suggested location.

<sup>4</sup>*Biblical Archaeology*, p. 61. The same view is in *Broadman Bible Commentary*, (1969), 381.

another site named Baal-zephon must be referred to here, since Lake Menzaleh is far more than a three-days' journey from Marah ('Ain Hawwarah). See Num. 33:8; Ex. 15:22. U. Cassuto refers to an Egyptian papyrus which refers to a tower of Baal-zephon located near the Bitter Lakes.<sup>5</sup> The existence of this second site called Baal-zephon certainly shows us that we are not forced to accept Wright's location of Baal-zephon near Lake Menzaleh as the only possible one.

4. *What would Pharaoh think when he heard of Israel's detour? (14:3)*

He would think they were entrapped in the land. Our suggested location of the Israelite camp is in an area hemmed in by Mt. Atakah on the west and south and by the sea on the east. They were definitely shut in by the wilderness. (A *wilderness* is any desert, whether mountainous or level, sandy or rocky.)

5. *Why was God going to harden Pharaoh's heart again? (14:4)*

Three reasons are given: (1) so that Pharaoh would pursue the Israelites (a suicidal mission); (2) so God would get honor through what He did to Pharaoh and his host (compare 14:17; 9:16); (3) so that the Egyptians would know that God was the LORD (Jehovah). This third goal has been mentioned time and again in Exodus (7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; 14:18).

Concerning the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, see notes on 4:21; 7:3. See pp. 116-119.

The paragraph 14:1-4 closes with a picture of the people encamped near the Sea of Reeds (Red Sea) tranquil and trusting in the LORD and in Moses his servant.<sup>6</sup>

If it should seem to you harsh that God should again harden Pharaoh's heart, after having already slain all of Egypt's firstborn, observe the text carefully! We are first told that Pharaoh would take notice of Israel's detour, as if in exultant amazement (14:3). Obviously the Egyptians had spies, trackers, and runners reporting on the journey of

<sup>5</sup>*Commentary on Exodus*, p. 159.

<sup>6</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 160.



Israel. After telling of Pharaoh's own reaction to Israel's detour, God declared that He would harden Pharaoh's heart (14:4). This occurred just as God predicted. When Pharaoh heard of Israel's position, his heart was changed toward the people and he regretted having let them go (14:5). At that point, AFTER Pharaoh had already expressed his own real feelings, God hardened his heart, causing him to pursue Israel suicidally (14:8).

6. *What was Pharaoh's reaction when he heard that Israel had fled?* (14:5)

His heart was changed - maliciously changed - and so were the hearts of his servants, presumably his government officers. Previously they were very glad to get the Israelites out of the land (12:30-34). Now they regret it.

The upper classes of Egypt had depended on the manual labor of Israel to do the physical labor that made their comforts possible. Many nations even now have peasant, or working, classes, whose toils enable the "upper crust" to live grandly. The Egyptians now see Goshen empty, the brickyards deserted, the fields forsaken (1:14). This loss was socially and economically paralyzing.

Besides the pain of the economic loss, the Egyptians had a spiritual and emotional fury in them, a frustration born of defeat in the ten plagues, a desire for revenge, a religious resentment and hatred. The Egyptians said, "I will pursue; I will overtake; I will divide the spoil!" (15:9)

"Fled" does not suggest that Israel left surreptitiously, without Pharaoh's being aware of it.<sup>7</sup> Far from it! They left in full view of the Egyptians, with a high hand, defiantly (Ex. 14:8; Num. 33:3-4). The word *fled* here probably is intended to give the idea that they had utterly left the country. Moses had previously proposed to Pharaoh that Israel should go a

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<sup>7</sup>Martin Noth, *Exodus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), p. 111, argues that "fled" is a fragment from an *E* tradition, that Israel fled without Pharaoh's notice; and that this contradicts the other descriptions of Israel's escape as given in Exodus. This dissection of the text is unnecessary and unproven. "Fled" does not always imply "to flee secretly." Compare Gen. 16:16; Num. 24:11.

three-days' journey into the wilderness to worship the LORD (5:3). Probably when Israel left, Pharaoh supposed that they would only go a short ways, stop, worship, and return. Now he learns that they have FLED the country! Indeed they had. By this time Israel had almost certainly been travelling four days and probably more, and had gone about sixty miles and were still going. But suddenly news comes to Pharaoh that the Israelites are entrapped in the wilderness as the result of an unexpected detour.

7. *What Egyptian forces were sent after the Israelites?* (14:6-7, 9)

Pharaoh prepared his *chariot*, and took his *people* with him. He took six hundred chosen (or tested and selected) chariots of Egypt, and all the chariots of Egypt, with captains (warriors) over all of them. Besides these, there were horses and horsemen (15:1), and an army (footmen) (14:7, 9, 17).

The word *chariot* in 14:6 is singular in Hebrew. But so also is the obviously plural *chariots* in 14:7, 9. The Hebrew *rekeb* often means chariotry, or chariots, in a collective sense. Compare Judges 4:3. Thus here it probably refers to Pharaoh's chariots generally, rather than to Pharaoh's own personal chariot.

*Chosen* chariots refers to those specially tested, or proved, chariots, selected because of their proven effectiveness in battle. Such chariots won many victories for the Egyptian eighteenth dynasty kings in battles in Canaan and Syria.

The *captains* in the chariots were "chariot warriors." The Hebrew word for captains (*shalishim*) resembles the word for *three*, suggesting three men were in each chariot. Since pictures of ancient Egyptian chariots show only two men in each chariot, this led Martin Noth<sup>8</sup> to assert that the Biblical record is here in error. However, the significance of a related word in the Ugaritic texts<sup>9</sup> means only "chariot warriors,"

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<sup>8</sup>*Op. Cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>9</sup>Ugaritic is a Semitic language related to Hebrew, and written by the Canaanites at the ancient city of Ugarit (now called Ras Shamra).

without reference to the number of them.<sup>10</sup> It is a joy to believers to see again and again how false accusations against God's book are always refuted when all the facts are known.

During the ten plagues the military forces of Egypt were never mentioned. They were the "sleeper," the silent threat in the shadows. Now the chariots are a terribly present danger. The memory of this pursuit by the Egyptians was vivid to the Israelites in later centuries (Josh. 24:6).

8. *Where did the Egyptians overtake Israel?* (14:9)

By the sea, by Pihahiroth, before (in front of, east of) Baal-zephon. See notes on 14:2. *Overtake* means only that they drew near enough to see Israel. The time required for preparation of this military force and its pursuit was surely several days in length.

9. *What was Israel's reaction upon seeing the Egyptian host?* (14:10)

They were in great fear and cried out to the LORD. However, their cry seems to have been a cry to dismay and terror, rather than a prayer for deliverance. The Israelites had been enslaved so long that they were not yet emotionally and spiritually conditioned to respond to danger with faith. Nonetheless, God heard their cry and hearkened to them.

10. *What bitter words did Israel say to Moses?* (14:11-12)

"Are there no graves in Egypt, so that you have brought us to die in the desert?"

Probably the Israelites were too frightened to sense the almost humorous sarcasm in these words. No people in the world have ever been more preoccupied with the making of tombs and regular attention to the dead than the Egyptians. There are millions of tombs in Egypt. Even the pyramids were just tombs. Many tombs had an adjoining room where rituals were conducted daily for the feeding and care of the dead in their after-life.

We have no record that the Israelites had spoken the exact words quoted in 14:11-12 in Egypt. However, the fearful

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<sup>10</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

spirit expressed by these words is quite similar to that expressed in Ex. 5:21. Possibly they had indeed uttered these words, even though we have no record of it.

Psalm 106:7-8: "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy loving-kindnesses, but were rebellious at the sea, even at the Red Sea. Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known."

The Israelites had been slaves too long to realize that death in freedom is preferable to existence in slavery. Young Christians facing tests soon after accepting Christ, may, like the Israelites, long for the lack of responsibility in the old life.

11. *With what words did Moses reassure Israel? (14:13-14)*

"Fear not; stand firm, and see the salvation of JEHOVAH!"

Moses' faith is truly remarkable. He urged them to be quiet, for the LORD would fight for them. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (Isa. 30:15). They were to stop their outcries.

The word *salvation* here means deliverance and victory. Compare I Samuel 14:45. However, we must not interpret it as if it referred exclusively to physical and material deliverance. Its use in Psalm 51:12 suggests that it bore a spiritual connotation as well. Their deliverance at the Red Sea was a faith-producing salvation experience. Observe how it produced courage to face future battles. (Deut. 1:30)

Moses said, "You will *see* the salvation of the LORD; but never *see* the Egyptians again."

The concept of the LORD fighting for his people is a common one in the Old Testament. See Josh. 10:14; Ps. 35:1; Neh. 4:20; Isa. 30:22; 63:3-5. Even the Egyptians soon sensed that God was fighting against them and for the Israelites (14:25).

12. *What did God tell Moses and Israel to do? (14:15-16)*

"Go forward!" "Lift up your rod!" "Divide the sea!" "Go across!"

When God's people have learned to trust God and stand still, then they are prepared to go forward.

From 14:15 we learn that Moses had cried (prayed) unto God. Moses prayed a great deal. See 5:22; 8:12; 8:29-30.)

Moses' use of the rod again probably brought back memories to the Israelites of what that rod had done in Egypt. See 4:17; 7:15, 19. Moses stretched out his hand and rod both to open and to close the waters. See 14:21, 26.

13. *What would cause the Egyptians to pursue Israel?* (14:17)

God would harden their hearts. See notes on 14:4. This was to be the final fatal hardening. The words of 14:17 give the first specific clue as to the exact means by which Egypt would be defeated.

The word *I* in 14:17 comes first for emphasis, as *You* was stressed at the start of 14:16. "*YOU* lift up your rod; *I* will harden their hearts."

14. *What would the Egyptians know by their defeat?* (14:18)

They would know that the Israelites' God was the LORD Jehovah! (At least their surviving relatives would know it!) This thought has been stated repeatedly in Exodus. See notes on 7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; 14:4.

Dear reader, I pray that you also know that God is the LORD!

15. *What shielded the Israelites from the Egyptians?* (14:19-20)

The angel of God and the pillar of cloud went between the Israelites and the Egyptians, and separated them all the night.

The *angel of God* is almost certainly the same person as the *angel of the LORD* who appeared to Moses at the burning bush (3:2). "The angel of his presence saved them" (Isa. 63:9.). (The Hebrew word for *angel* means *messenger*.) This "angel" was no one other than Jehovah himself (see 14:24), specifically Jehovah the WORD, the one who was later sent to earth by God the Father, and is known to us as Jesus of Nazareth. Many passages in the Old Testament tell of the angel of Jehovah who appeared unto men, and had all the qualities of God. See Gen. 22:15-16; 32:24, 30; Judges

6:22-23; 13:21-22. No man has ever seen God the father (John 1:18). But God the WORD (Jesus) was indeed seen many times in the world, even before He emptied Himself of His divine glory and was conceived in Mary. Note John 12:41; Isaiah 6:1.

This divine angel of the LORD travelled before Israel in the pillar of cloud (13:21; compare 23:20-23). Thus, when the cloud moved behind the camp of Israel, GOD himself was separating Israel from the Egyptians. Certainly we believe that God's presence is universal (Jer. 23:23-24). But God has often condescended to make His presence perceivable to men by manifesting Himself in limited places, like the cloud. Compare Ex. 25:22.

Ex. 14:20 clearly indicates that during that night it was dark on the Egyptians' side of the cloud. Probably so utterly dark that it stopped movement and reminded them of the plague of darkness. However, the cloud gave light on the Israelites' side of it. They did not walk in darkness.

The Greek Bible (LXX) has a different wording in 14:20: "There was . . . darkness, and the night passed." It does not mention the light. The Revised Standard Version follows this reading. But the Hebrew reading is very definite about the cloud lighting up the night. This was indeed a miracle to top all miracles! We accept the scriptural record of this event with joyful faith.

#### 16. *What divided the sea?* (14:21)

Three things: (1) Moses' rod;<sup>11</sup> (2) the LORD; (3) a strong east wind. The dividing of the sea was fundamentally a miracle by God. No other explanation can fully account for it.

Nonetheless, the east wind played a big part in the dividing of the sea. The strong east wind blew all night, and made the

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<sup>11</sup>Josephus (*Ant.* II, xvi, 2) tells the fanciful story that Moses smote the sea with his rod, and it parted asunder at the stroke. Josephus consistently tries to glorify Moses by unnecessary exaggerations.

sea before the Israelites to be dry land. Undoubtedly this wind was unique and miraculous in its strength, its precise points of applying pressure, and its timing. Nevertheless, it had certain "natural" characteristics.

S. C. Bartlett,<sup>12</sup> who was an eyewitness traveller over the route of the Israelites, refers to the words of M. de Lesseps, who told of the effects on the Red Sea waters by severe storms, such as occur only at intervals of fifteen or twenty years. De Lesseps had seen the northern end of the sea in places blown almost dry. Bartlett refers also to the map of the Maritime Canal Co., which reported that the ordinary difference between high and low tide in a calm sea was only eight-tenths of a meter (about thirty-one inches). However, the difference between the highest and lowest known seas during a storm was 3.24 meters (over ten feet). This is a remarkable confirmation of the Biblical information about the effect of the powerful winds on this part of the sea.

If it should seem irreverent that we state that the wind was such a basic force in making the path dry across the sea, we reply that the greater irreverence lies in a refusal to accept the plain statement of the narrative, which clearly indicates that the result was in a great measure brought about by use of the wind.

#### 17. *Did the waters form a WALL? (14:21-22)*

They surely did - a wall on the right and on the left. "The waters were piled up, the floods stood upright as a heap; the deeps were congealed in the midst of the sea." (Ex. 15:8)

According to the official Israel survey map, the waters at the north end of the Gulf of Suez have a depth of at least five meters (15-20 feet). This would be the height of the wall of water on either side of the Israelites' path.

The views of various interpreters that the "wall" was a figure of speech, or an "exaggeration" simply do not agree with the wording of the text.

From both sides of the sea the sea bottom gently slopes

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<sup>12</sup>*From Egypt to Palestine* (New York: Harper, 1879), pp. 180-181.

down into the water. There are no sudden drop-offs. The crossing place would be about four miles across.

We should not picture in our minds Israel's crossing path as narrow; it was probably more than a mile wide.

18. *What was the sea bottom like where Israel crossed?* (14:22,29)

They walked across on *dry ground*, through the sea!

Dr. Edward Robinson<sup>13</sup> argued very plausibly that the Israelites probably could not have entered the passage much before midnight, because the blowing of the wind would require some time for its full effect. Their march was completed (or nearly so) by the time of the morning watch, about two o'clock. They must have marched slowly because of encumbrances. If the column moved one thousand abreast, it would occupy a space more than half a mile wide, and being at least 2000 people in depth, would extend for not less than two miles from front to rear. It would require an hour for all to enter the sea, and two hours more for the column to traverse a space of four miles across. The whole body of Israelites could have passed over the distance of four miles before the morning watch time, when the Egyptians were troubled as they tried to pursue Israel.

Heb. 11:29: "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as on dry land, which the Egyptians attempting to do were drowned."

Isaiah 63:12-13: He "divided the waters before them to make himself an everlasting name, (and) led them through the depths, as a horse in the wilderness, so that they stumbled not." Compare Ps. 77:19-20; 66:6.

19. *What was the weather like when Israel crossed?*

Psalms 77:16-18 refers to a terrible storm that occurred as the Israelites crossed. There was rain and thunder. "The lightnings lightened the world; the earth trembled and shook. Josephus (*Ant.* II, xvi, 3) also tells of this storm. He says that it struck when the Egyptians tried to cross. (Of course this is uncertain.)

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<sup>13</sup>Cited in Bartlett, *op. cit.*, p. 178.



Inasmuch as the "wind blew all night" (14:21), we might wonder if the Israelites had to buck the east wind in their faces as they crossed eastward. We do not know, but we suspect that God directed the main force of the wind at the walls of water on either side, leaving the center of the path relatively calm.

20. *When did the Egyptians follow the Israelites?* (14:23-24)

They followed after the Israelites when they were mostly all across, if not indeed all completely across. They started across some time before the morning watch, about 2:00 a.m.

We doubt that the Egyptians even noticed the walls of water on either side. A fifteen-foot wall of water a half-mile away might not appear too threatening, especially at night when it was the dark, and more especially if your attention was diverted by lightning flashes and howling wind.

The Egyptian host surely had to be aware that the whole experience had very unusual features! First the dark cloud utterly blocked out their view for hours. Then the cloud moved from before them. And in the middle of the night they see the Israelites several miles away, almost all far across the sea. They surely recalled how the Israelites had been blocked by the sea a few hours before. They probably wondered how in the world the sea had been cleared before them! Then there was that light from the cloud, lighting up the path, even though it was two o'clock in the morning! Besides that, a storm overhead began to flash lightning, and to boom thunder, and pour rain, while the wind blew violently. All of this was so unusual, even eerie, that we feel that if the LORD had not hardened their hearts, they would never have gone in after the Israelites.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Skeptical critics have outdone themselves in seeking to dissect and discredit this passage (14:22-28). For example, Noth (*op. cit.*, p. 119) says the Priestly writer simply thought the Israelites passed through the sea and the Egyptians wanted to follow. The Jehovist writer, or source, is mysterious, and indicates that the Egyptians were driven into the sea by the fear of God. The Elohist writer suggests that they were engulfed by the return of the sea that had been driven back. What such critics seem unwilling to acknowledge is that all of these facts are true, and they all easily harmonize into the one story. There is simply no solid evidence for proposing that such contradictory "sources" ever existed.

21. *What hindered the pursuit by the Egyptians?* (14:24-25)

The LORD *looked* down upon them through the pillar of cloud and fire and “discomfited” the Egyptians. *Discomfit* means to perplex, confound, trouble, confuse, agitate, make to panic, thwart.

The *look*, or glance, of the Lord, which discomfited the Egyptians, often overwhelms evil doers: “Pour forth the overflowings of thine anger, And *look* on every one that is proud, and abase him” (Job 40:11).

This discomfiture came as a result of the thunderstorm (Ps. 77:16-18), and their chariots breaking down. The LORD “took off” their chariot wheels. Wagon wheels can most certainly come off their axles. And the axles can break, leaving the wheels in useless positions. The “chosen chariots” did not prove to be equal to the test. Any effort to move a one-wheeled chariot, or a wheelless chariot, would panic and frustrate both horses and charioteers.

The Egyptians correctly diagnosed the problem: “The LORD fighteth for them.” These were the Egyptians’ last recorded words. They decided to turn and flee, but it was too late. See notes on 14:14.

The Greek Bible says the Lord “clogged” their chariot wheels. This reading is followed in the R.S.V. Possibly the sand may have balled up in their chariot wheels, jamming and immobilizing them, and even producing the breakoff of the wheels. But the Hebrew verb (*sur*) means to “turn aside, turn away, depart, be removed, cease, disappear.” These meanings make good sense without adopting the Greek reading as a substitute.

## THE WORKS OF THE LORD

Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people,

The sons of Jacob and Joseph.

The waters saw thee, O God;

The waters saw thee, they were afraid:

The depths also trembled.

The clouds poured out water;

The skies sent out a sound:  
 Thine arrows also went abroad.  
 The voice of thy thunder was in the whirlwind;  
 The lightnings lightened the world:  
 The earth trembled and shook.

Thy way was in the sea,  
 And thy paths in the great waters,  
 And thy footsteps were not known.  
 Thou leddest thy people like a flock,  
 By the hand of Moses and Aaron.

(Psalm 77:15-20)

22. *How were the Egyptians destroyed?* (14:26-28)

Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The waters that had been walled up were released, and returned to their "strength," to their usual position of overflowing the sea bed.

The word *strength* (Heb. *'ethan*) in 14:27 is rendered "wonted flow" in R.S.V. In Gen. 49:24 it refers to the *strength* of weapons (a bow). Parallels in other Semitic languages suggest it means a stream that never dries up.

The text here in Exodus seems to say that the sea at that place always covered the sea-bed with *strong* waters. They were too powerful for swimmers; the Egyptians were no match for this water.

The Egyptians fled "against it" (R.S.V., "into it"). This expression carries the idea of an encounter, or meeting.<sup>15</sup> Thus, it appears that when the wall of water was released it first filled up along the west shore, making sort of an "end run." As the Egyptians began to retreat they ran right into (or against) this water. Then it rapidly swept eastward, filling all the seabed in a rushing tide. What horror the Egyptians felt as they saw themselves trapped and unavoidably confronted by this water. Their bodies and chariots were swept

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<sup>15</sup>This Hebrew expression (*leqerathu*) is used to tell of meeting people (Gen. 29:13; Ex. 18:7), and to describe the position of things like armies opposite (or against) one another (Gen. 15:10; I Sam. 17:21).

eastward by the waters and dumped on the seashore (15:29). Not so many as one escaped. All there covered - chariots, horsemen, and all the army. See Neh. 9:11; Psalm 106:11; 78:53; Ex. 15:1, 7.

Jehovah *overthrew* the Egyptians. This literally says that he "shook off" the Egyptians. (The same word is in Neh. 5:13 and Ps. 136:15.) We cannot press this figure of speech too literally, but in a very real way God did "shake off" the Egyptians from the Israelites; and he shook them off from himself. They would no longer stick to him as an annoying, persecuting, hard-hearted people. He shook them off as we might shake off a crawling bug from our hand.

23. *Did Pharaoh himself perish in the sea?*

We believe that he did. Absolutely all of those going into the sea perished (14:28). Seemingly Pharaoh went with the host. "*He shall follow after them*" (14:4). "*I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host*" (14:4). The king "*took his people with him*" (14:6). "*When Pharaoh drew nigh. . .*" (14:10). God "*overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea*" (Psalm 136:15).

This poses a big question for us: Who then was this Pharaoh? We have been suggesting in this book that he was Amenhotep II, and we still hold this view. However, the mummy of Amenhotep II (with his great bow alongside it) is preserved to this day, something that would not be true if he perished in the Red Sea. It is most unlikely that his body would have been retrieved from the east shore of the Red Sea (or even be identifiable).

Possibly the verses quoted above that refer to the destruction of Pharaoh mean that he was overthrown representatively when his army was overthrown in the sea, as he beheld from the west shore. Admittedly the text does not convey this impression.

Dr. Donovan Courville<sup>16</sup> proposes that the drowned

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<sup>16</sup>*The Exodus Problem and Its Ramifications*, Vol. 1 (Loma Linda, Calif.: Challenge, 1971), p. 122.

Pharaoh was *Koncharis*, a king listed in the Sothis list of Egyptian kings. Courville dates the exodus about the same time as we do, but maintains that the usually-accepted dates for the kings of Egypt are several hundred years too far back. Some of Courville's ideas could prove correct, but they surely are not held by most Egyptologists.

24. *Why is the record of Israel's crossing repeated in 14:29?*

Probably it is repeated for emphasis. What a marvelous event! What a cause for exultation! Even with repetition the story cannot do justice to the event.

Possibly the repetition is made to stress the contrasting fates of Egypt and Israel. Note 14:28, 29.

Concerning the wall of water, see notes on 14:21-22.

25. *Where did Israel last see the Egyptians? (14:30)*

Dead upon the seashore! Obviously this was the east shore. They could not have seen them four miles away on the west shore. This was final retribution, measure for measure. For casting the infant sons of Israelites into the water (1:12), Egypt had perished in the water.

The Egyptians considered that being exposed in death and fed to the vultures, was the greatest of all misfortunes. According to their beliefs the soul could not find rest till the body was properly interred. One is reminded of Rev. 19: 17-18.

Josephus (*Ant.* II, xvi, 6) says that Moses the next day gathered the weapons of the Egyptians, which were brought to the camp of the Hebrews by the current of the sea and the force of the winds. And Moses conjectured that this also happened by divine providence, that they might not be destitute of weapons. This is a possibility, but not a certainty.

The death of these enemies suggests to OUR minds the death of our "old man," the sinful nature. In being baptized unto Moses, the Israelites beheld the death of their old enemies. In being baptized into Christ, our old man (our old nature and life) was crucified with Christ. We are *dead* unto sin (Rom. 6:3-6, 11).

26. *What effects did the crossing of the Red Sea have upon the*

*Israelites? (14:31)*

(1) They feared the LORD.

(2) They believed the Lord and his servant Moses. Israel had once before believed (Ex. 4:31). Now their faith is renewed and enlarged.

Israel had been saved from the *hand* of the Egyptians (4:30). They had now seen the power (literally, *hand*) of the LORD. Compare 15:6.

27. *Did the crossing of the Red Sea involve a battle between spiritual powers?*

It surely seems to have done so. At its root, the crossing of the sea was a triumph over the old Devil, Satan, who has always opposed God and His people, even more than it was a triumph over Pharaoh. "He hath sent redemption unto His people" (Psalm 111:9).

Some interpreters have attempted to link the story of the Red Sea crossing with ancient legends, such as the Babylonian "creation" story. This story (called *Enuma Elish*) interprets creation as the consequence of a battle between Marduk, the god of the city of Babylon, and Tiamat, a goddess who was the personification of the deep, the sea waters.<sup>17</sup> After this battle Tiamat's body was cut in half, and the halves made into the heavens and earth.

Even Cassuto,<sup>18</sup> a usually careful interpreter, links the crossing of the Red Sea with ancient mythological legends about the rebellion of the Sea against the Lord. He thinks the Song in Ex. 15 is an adaptation of a lost ancient epic Poem on "The Lord's Triumph Over the Rebellious Sea."

Several scripture verses are thought to allude to this legendary battle between the Lord and the Sea. These include (1) Isaiah 51:9-10; (2) Ezek. 29:3; (3) Ps. 74:13-14; (4) Ps. 93:3-4; (5) Hab. 3:13-15.

A check of all of these passages (all of which are poetic) will show that they do not positively teach such a view.

<sup>17</sup>As an example, see *Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 385.

<sup>18</sup>*Op. cit.*, pp. 178-181.

(1) Isaiah 51:9-10 refers to Rahab, a *monster*, that was destroyed, apparently when the Red Sea dried up. *Rahab* seems here to be a poetic name for Egypt. See Ps. 87:4; 89:10. (2) Ezek. 29:3 figuratively refers to Egypt as "the great *monster*." (3) Psalm 74:13-14 pictures the division of the Red Sea waters as killing numerous sea-monsters (which it surely did). These monsters became "food for the people, for inhabitants<sup>19</sup> of the desert," probably referring to wild beasts that ate their carcasses. (4) Ps. 93:3-4 says that the floods have lifted up their voices (roaring waves), but God is high above even these. There is no clear indication here that the sea was in conflict with God. It says only that God's voice was greater than the sound of the roaring sea. (5) Habakkuk 3:13-15 alludes to God's acts in punishing the enemies of His people, without any reference to a mythological battle: At the sea "Thou didst tread the sea with thy horses" (probably angelic horses; Compare II Kings 6:17).

In none of the references suggested is there clear and certain statement about an ancient battle between the LORD and the sea. It seems to us that this idea has little or no support from the holy scriptures.

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### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

- 15** Then sang Mo-ses and the children of Is-ra-el this song unto Je-ho-vah, and spake, saying,  
 I will sing unto Je-ho-vah, for he hath triumphed gloriously:  
 The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.  
 (2) Je-ho-vah is my strength and song, And he is become my salvation: This is my God, and I will praise him; My father's God, and I will exalt him.

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<sup>19</sup>The Hebrew words in Ps. 74:14 translated "people inhabiting the wilderness" (*tseyim*) refer to wild beasts in Isa. 13:21; 34:14. Probably they also do so in Ps. 74:14. The RSV translation "creatures of the wilderness" probably gives the correct meaning.

- (3) Je-ho-vah is a man of war: Je-ho-vah is his name.
- (4) Pha-raoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea;  
And his chosen captains are sunk in the Red Sea.
- (5) The deeps cover them: They went down into the depths like a stone.
- (6) Thy right hand, O Je-ho-vah, is glorious in power, Thy right hand, O Je-ho-vah, dasheth in pieces the enemy.
- (7) And in the greatness of thine excellency thou overthrowest them that rise up against thee: thou sendest forth thy wrath, it consumeth them as stubble.
- (8) And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were piled up,  
The floods stood upright as a heap; The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea.
- (9) The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; My desire shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.
- (10) Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: They sank as lead in the mighty waters.
- (11) Who is like unto thee, O Je-ho-vah, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?
- (12) Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, The earth swallowed them.
- (13) Thou in thy lovingkindness hast led the people that thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in thy strength to thy holy habitation.
- (14) The peoples have heard, they tremble: Pangs have taken hold on the inhabitants of Phi-lis-ti-a.
- (15) Then were the chiefs of E-dom dismayed; The mighty men of Moab, trembling taketh hold upon them: All the inhabitants of Ca-naan are melted away.
- (16) Terror and dread falleth upon them; By the greatness of thine arm they are as still as a stone; Till thy people pass over, O Je-ho-vah, Till the people pass over that thou hast purchased.
- (17) Thou wilt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, The Place, O Je-ho-vah, which thou hast



made for thee to dwell in, The sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established.

(18) Je-ho-vah shall reign for ever and ever.

(19) For the horses of Pha-raoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and Je-ho-vah brought back the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Is-ra-el walked on dry land in the midst of the sea. (20) And Mir-i-am the prophetess, the sister of Aar-on, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. (21)

And Mir-i-am answered them,  
Sing ye to Je-ho-vah, for he  
hath triumphed gloriously;  
The horse and his rider hath he  
thrown into the sea.

(22) And Mo-ses led Is-ra-el onward from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. (23) And when they came to Ma-rah, they could not drink of the waters of Ma-rah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Ma-rah. (24) And the people murmured against Mo-ses, saying, What shall we drink? (25) And he cried unto Je-ho-vah; and Je-ho-vah showed him a tree, and he cast it into the waters, and the waters were made sweet. There he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them; (26) and he said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of Je-ho-vah thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his eyes, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon thee, which I have put upon the E-gyp-tians: for I am Je-ho-vah that healeth thee.

(27) And they came to E-lim, where were twelve springs of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees: and they encamped there by the waters.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER FIFTEEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading, propose a topic for Exodus chapter 15.
2. Specifically, who sang the song in Exodus 15? (15:1)
3. Why did Israel sing to the LORD? (15:1)
4. What had the LORD become unto Israel? (15:2)
5. What significance was there in God's name being the LORD? (15:3; Compare 6:2, 7)
6. Exactly who drowned in the Red Sea? (15:4)
7. How had the waters reacted at the "blast of God's nostrils"? (15:8)
8. What had Israel's enemies said they would do to Israel? (15:9)
9. What had the Egyptians sunk like? (15:10)
10. According to 15:13, what three things had God done for His people?
11. How did the various nearby nations react to Israel's crossing the Red Sea? (15:14-16)
12. What confidence did the song express about Israel's future occupation of the land? (15:16-17)
13. How does 15:18 relate to the verse immediately preceding it?
14. What office did Miriam have? (15:20)
15. What did Miriam take into her hand? (15:20)
16. In what act did Miriam lead the women? (15:20-21)
17. Into what wilderness (or desert) did Israel come after crossing the Red Sea? (15:22; Compare Numbers 33:8)
18. How long did they journey without finding water? (15:22)
19. What was the water at Marah like? (15:23)
20. What does the name *Marah* mean? (15:23; Ruth 1:20)
21. By what means were the bitter waters sweetened? (15:25)
22. What statute did God make at Marah? (15:25-26)
23. What conditional promise did God make at Marah? (15:26)
24. By what title did God call himself at Marah? (15:26)
25. What was found at Elim? (15:27)

## EXODUS FIFTEEN: FROM TRIUMPH TO TESTING

1. Songs of triumph; 15:1-21.
2. Situations of testing; 15:22-26.  
(Often God's children experience severe testing shortly after times of spiritual triumph. Even Jesus went from His baptism to his temptations in the wilderness.)

## EXODUS FIFTEEN: FROM SONG TO BITTERNESS

1. Songs by the Red Sea; 15:1-21.
2. Bitterness at Marah; 15:22-26.

## THE SONG OF MOSES (Ex. 15:1-17)

1. Triumph of the LORD; (15:1-3)
2. Tragedy of Egypt; (15:4-12)
3. Terror of the Canaanites; (15:13-16)
4. Transition (and transfer) of the Israelites; (15:17-18)

## THE SONG OF REDEMPTION (Ex. 15:1-17)

1. The LORD's part: Divinity and decisive action: (15:1-3)
2. The enemies' part: Destruction (15:4-13) and dismay (15:14-16)
3. Israel's part: Direction and destination; (15:17-18)

## MY LORD AND I (15:2-3)

1. My strength.
2. My song.
3. My salvation.
4. My God.

## THE LORD'S RIGHT HAND (15:6)

1. Glorious in saving Israel.
2. Fearsome in destroying the enemy.

## THE PRIDE OF PERSECUTORS (15:9-10)

1. Makes them cruel.
2. Makes them boastful.
3. Brings them to destruction.

## FROM TRIUMPH TO TESTING 15:1-27

### GOD'S WORK FOR HIS PEOPLE (Ex. 15:13)

1. Redeeming.
2. Leading.

### THE LORD'S ETERNAL REIGN (15:18)

1. His past triumphs guarantee it.
2. His promises declare it.

### EXPERIENCES SHARED BY GOD'S PEOPLE (15:22-26)

1. Lack of life's necessities; 15:22-23.
2. Temptations to murmur; 15:24.
3. Opportunity to pray; 15:25.
4. The Lord's help and healing; 15:25-26.

### GOD'S TEST FOR HIS PEOPLE (15:25)

(Check your score on this examination!)

1. Do you trust me during hardships? (15:22-23)
2. Do you pray? (15:25)
3. Do you hearken to my commandments? (15:26)

### THE LORD OUR HEALER (15:26)

1. Heals those that hearken.
2. Heals those who keep His statutes.

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## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### 1. *What is in chapter fifteen?*

The chapter contains the following sections:

- (1) The song of Moses and the children of Israel (15:1-18). (They sang this after they crossed the Red Sea.) One verse of prose connects this song to the song that follows it (15:19).
- (2) The song of Miriam and the women (15:20-21). (This was probably a response to the song of Moses.)
- (3) The record of Israel's travels from the Red Sea, through Marah, to Elim (15:22-27).

We entitle this chapter FROM TRIUMPH TO TESTING. It starts with the song of God's triumph and closes with bitter complaining because of the *testing* they endured at the bitter Marah waters. This transition from triumph to testing is a common experience in the lives of many of God's people.

2. *How is the song of Moses divided?*

The song is not divided so clearly that interpreters agree about its divisions. Some interpreters divide it up into stanzas (strophes) on the basis of the repeated phrases in 15:6 and 15:11. Using these verses as dividing points, we could outline the strophes thus:

- (1) The triumph of the Lord; 15:1-6.
- (2) The tragedy of the Egyptians; 15:7-11 (or 12)
- (3) The transfer (or transition) of Israel; 15:13-17.

We prefer to divide the song into sections on the basis of its thought divisions, somewhat as follows:

- (1) What the LORD *IS*; 15:1-3.
- (2) What the LORD *DID*; 15:4-16a.
- (3) What the LORD *WILL DO*; 15:16b-18.

3. *What is the purpose of the Song in Exodus 15?*

It is to declare the greatness of the Lord Jehovah in bringing Israel across the Red Sea. In times of great emotions - joy or sorrow - men turn to poetry and music. Ordinary prose cannot convey the volume of feeling. Redemption and salvation set the heart to singing.

In pagan songs of triumph the glory of victory is ascribed to the conquering king. But here there is not a word of praise or glory given to Moses. These are rendered to the LORD alone.<sup>1</sup>

Exodus fifteen is so highly esteemed by the Jews that Jewish literature speaks of it as The Song, and the Sabbath on which it is read as the Sabbath of the Song. Many other passages in the scriptures contain poetic sections about Israel's deliverance at the Red Sea. See Neh. 9:9ff; Ps. 78:11ff; 77:16ff; Ps. 105; 106:7ff; Habakkuk 3:8ff. Probably in our Christian

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<sup>1</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

hymn singing we should incorporate more allusions to God's victory at the Red Sea than we generally use.

As Moses and Miriam led in praise, ministers of God should still lead the church in praise.

From Ex. 15:20-21 it appears that there was musical accompaniment to this song. Male and female choruses sang antiphonally. Note that 15:21 is almost identical to 15:1. The women may have repeated the words of 15:21 after each line or stanza of Moses's song, or just after the whole song.

The song is full of brief, bold, strong thoughts. Its language contains very archaic Hebrew expressions. The English translations cannot reflect the majestic rhythm and dramatic diction of the original poem.

4. *What sort of triumph had the Lord had?* (15:1)

He had triumphed triumphantly! The Hebrew quite literally reads, "I shall sing to Jehovah, Because triumphing he has triumphed." The word *triumph* means to *rise up* (like a river; Ezek. 47:5), to swell, increase, be great, exalted. God's triumph on this occasion was His work of casting Egypt's "horse and his chariot" into the sea. This brought honor to God, as God had predicted (14:4, 17).

5. *What had God become to Israel?* (15:2-3)

a. He was their *strength* and *song*. (This expression recurs in Ps. 118:14 and Isa. 12:2.)

b. "He has become to me (for) a *salvation*." (This word *salvation* has strong spiritual overtones.)

c. "This is my *God*," "and I will praise (adore) Him."

d. "My father's God and I will exalt him."

e. "Jehovah is a *man of war*." (15:3)

The Hebrew word for LORD (Jehovah) in 15:2 is YAH (or Jah), which is a shortened form of the name Jehovah (Yahweh), here used for the first time in the Bible, but found later in poetic passages (Ps. 77:11; 89:8; 94:7). *Yah* is the last syllable in *Hallelujah*, meaning "Praise ye JAH!" The name carries the idea of *being*. See notes on 4:14-15.

How powerful and beautiful it is to read that "Yahweh (the LORD) is His name!" God had declared (in 3:15) that

this name was His name forever. God had desired that Israel know His name. Now they do know it, and know the meaning associated with the name. Compare Ps. 83:18.

Note the continuity of faith implied in the phrase "my father's God." The word *father's* is singular. See notes on 3:6 and 18:4.

The King James translation (of 15:2) "I will prepare him an habitation" is probably not as good a translation as the A.S.V., which has "I will praise him." The KJV reading does not correspond to the parallel thought of the next line ("I will praise him"). Hebrew poetry often has successive lines parallel in thought in some way. The reading "I will build thee a sanctuary" first appeared in the Targum of Onkelos, and then in later rabbis.<sup>2</sup>

God had promised that He would fight for Israel (14:4), and now He is praised as a man of war.

6. *What had happened to Pharaoh's host?* (15:4-5, 10)

God cast Pharaoh's chariots and army into the sea. He "cast" them into the sea by impelling them to enter the sea bed (14:17). His chosen captains (R.S.V. "picked officers") were sunk (or drowned; the verb is passive) in the Red Sea (*Yam Suph*, the Sea of Weeds). See Introductory Study VII and notes on 3:18 concerning the Red Sea. Note that the stormy wind contributed to the Egyptians' destruction (15:10; Ps. 77:16-18).

The "deeps" (KJV "depths") "are covering them."<sup>3</sup> The word *deeps* suggest the deep sea waters, not a swampy marshy reedy area. *Deeps* is the plural of the *deep* referred to

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<sup>2</sup>The reason for the translation "I will build him a sanctuary" lies in the double meaning of the Hebrew verb *nawah*, which may mean to  *dwell*, abide, or rest; its cognate noun *naweh* means dwelling or habitation, and refers to the temple in I Sam. 15:25. However, *nawah* (in Hiphil, as here) also means to make beautiful, or adorn. This is something that can be done to God only by *praising* Him. This seems to be its correct meaning here.

<sup>3</sup>The Hebrew verb translated above "are covering them" is in the imperfect tense, as if indicating incomplete action, as if the event were taking place before the eyes of the singers. Mentally they were reliving this victorious experience.

in Gen. 1:2.

The Egyptian host went down into the depths like a stone. Perhaps their armor weighted them down. More probably the moving currents made swimming impossible, even without armor. At any rate, they sank like lead. Compare Neh. 9:10-11; Ex. 14:28.

7. *What is stated about God's right hand?* (15:6-7)

God's right hand is glorious in power, and dashes the enemy in pieces. Compare Ex. 15: 12; 14:31; 3:20. (The Hebrew word for *hand* is translated *work* in 14:31.) The phrase "right hand" (of God) is common in Psalms, where it occurs over twenty times. Ps. 20:6; 118:15-16; 48:10. Inasmuch as the scripture uses such expressions in referring to God, we should not hesitate to use them, even though we know that God is spirit (John 4:24), and fills heaven and earth (Jer. 23:23-24), and does not necessarily have hands like ours.

The word *excellency* (or *majesty*) in 15:7 is from the same root as *triumphed* in 15:1, and refers to God's splendor, highness, and glory. Note the reference to God's *wrath* in 15:7. God's wrath consumes (or eats up) his enemies, like fire consumes stubble.

8. *What position had the sea waters taken?* (15:8)

They were "piled up" in a "heap" and were "congealed." (*Congeval* means to thicken, or condense.) They were a "wall" (14:22). The term *heap* is a word chiefly limited to descriptions of the Red Sea crossing and the crossing of Jordan (Psalm 78:13; 33:7; Joshua 3:13, 16). We agree with Cassuto that the word *heap* plainly suggests a miraculous piling up of the waters. We should not try to weaken its force by calling it a poetic anthropomorphism.<sup>4</sup> See notes on 14:21-22.

9. *What had the enemy planned to do to Israel?* (15:9)

To pursue. To overtake. To divide the spoil. To destroy.

In the Hebrew reading the threats of 15:9 are short, crisp words, expressing the eagerness of the exultant foe and his

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Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 124.



assurance of complete victory. His threat "My hand shall destroy them" uses a word (*yarash*) often used later to refer to Israel's expulsion of the Canaanites (See Ex. 34:24). It has a strong irony when applied here to Israel.

On 15:10, see notes on 15:4-5.

10. *Who is like unto the LORD?* (15:11)

No one! Not even any among the gods. The "gods" (or mighty ones) are probably the idols and false gods of the heathen. Whether the word *gods* (Hebrew, *elim*, plural of *el*) refers to mighty men (as in Ezek. 32:21), or to mighty angels (as probably in Ps. 29:1), or to other supposedly-existing mighty gods, NO ONE is like the LORD.

Many Biblical references assert that there is no one like the LORD. See Deut. 3:24; Ps. 71:19; 86:8; 89:6, 8; Jer. 10:6; Micah 7:18; II Sam. 7:22; I Kings 8:23. Let us learn this truth for ourselves.

The LORD is glorious in holiness. *Holiness* means uniqueness, separation, distinction, and moral perfection. See Lev. 19:2.<sup>5</sup>

The Lord is fearsome, or wonderful, in praises. Probably this means that the praises justly given to the LORD are such as to create reverent fear in the beholder. See Rev. 4:8-11; 5:11-14; Isa. 6:2-3.

11. *Did the earth swallow the Egyptians, or the sea?* (15:12)

"The earth swallowed them." Certainly they were swallowed up in the sea, but the sea is part of the earth.

The word *earth* in the literature of Semitic peoples living around the Israelites sometimes served as a designation for Sheol, the underworld.<sup>6</sup> This meaning makes good sense here.

Concerning God's right hand, see notes on 15:6.

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<sup>5</sup>The idea set forth in *Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1(1969) that moral perfection and righteousness were applications of the term *holiness* used only in centuries later than Moses is contradicted by its use in Leviticus, a book written by Moses. See Lev. 19:15. Of course, the skeptical critics affirm (without proof) that Leviticus was written during or after the Babylonian exile!

<sup>6</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

Ex. 15:12 probably is the end of stanza two (15:7-12) of the song, a stanza dealing with the destruction of the Egyptians.

12. *What had God done for His redeemed people?* (15:13)

He had LED the people whom he had redeemed. Ps. 77: 15, 20). He GUIDED them to his holy habitation. This verse could well be called the KEY VERSE in Exodus, because it sums up much of what is related in the book.

Concerning *redeemed*, see notes on Ex. 6:6.

God's leading His redeemed people was an act of "loving-kindness" (or "steadfast love"; Heb. *hesed*). See Ex. 34:7. *Hesed* is the great covenant word of the O.T. to describe God's unfailing attitude of love toward His people. In turn, this is what God expects from His people. See Hosea 6:6. *Hesed* has no exact equivalent in Greek or in English. It combines the ideas of loyalty, steadfastness, mercy and love. For uses of *hesed* see Psalm 5:1; 6:5; Gen. 19:19; Deut. 7:9, 12. The term generally refers to a covenantal type of love, an unfailing love based on pledged commitment.

God's "holy habitation" referred to in 15:13 probably refers to the promised land of Canaan, as in Jeremiah 25:30. The term *habitation* in later literature frequently refers to the temple sanctuary at Jerusalem. See II Sam. 15:25. Ex. 15:17 refers to the promised land as "the mountain of thine inheritance." Since God's people had not actually entered and "inherited" this land in Moses' time, some scholars assume that 15:13-18 was written AFTER Israel's occupation of Canaan. (For an example, see *Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 [1969], p. 392.) But this is an unnecessary assumption. After all of God's triumphs in Egypt and at the sea, why should not Moses speak of God's promise to bring them into the land (see 6:8) as being "as good as done"? Faith gives substance to things hoped for.

The verb tenses in 15:13-15 shift back and forth, between perfect (indicating completed action) and imperfect (incomplete action). "Led," "guided," "heard" are in the perfect tense. However, "tremble" (KJV "be afraid") in

15:14, and “take hold” in verse 15, and “shall fall” and “be still” in verse 16 are imperfect.

This shifting of the tenses when all of the verbs refer to the same series of events, shows that the time of the events was partly in the past, partly in process, and partly future. The past (or perfect) tenses also may be “predictive perfects,” which are used to refer to predicted future events as if they had already taken place. Faith in God’s promises and predictions can lead us to view the promises as already fulfilled.

13. *What effect did the crossing of the Red Sea have on nearby nations? (15:14-16)*

They had heard about it, and had become very fearful, realizing that if the Israelites and their God could overcome the mighty Egyptians, they could overcome them also. For similar thoughts, see Habakkuk 3:7; Joshua 2:9, 11, 24; Num. 22:3; 1 Sam. 4:6-8.

Philistia was the area along the southern coast of the Mediterranean in Canaan. The major immigration of the Philistines into this area occurred about 1200 B.C., about 250 years after the exodus date. However, there had been groups of Philistines (or similar peoples) settle there from Crete and other Mediterranean islands as far back as Abraham’s time (2000 B.C.). See Gen. 21:35. It is untrue to say, as many writers have, that the reference here to the Philistines is a historical error, or indicates that this verse in Exodus was written long after the time of the exodus, even after their settlement into Canaan. There is some archaeological evidence of Philistine presence in this area before 1200 B.C., as well as the Biblical testimony. See notes on 13:17.

Edom lay just SW of the Dead Sea, east of the Arabah valley joining the Dead Sea and the Red Sea gulf of Akabah, in a mountainous area called Mt. Seir. The title *chiefs* (or dukes; Heb. *’aluphim*) of Edom seems to be a technical title for Edomite rulers. It is used in Gen. 36:15-19.

The phrase “melt away” in 15:15 is explained in the next line to mean that the people were in terror and dread of the approaching Israelites. Their courage and will to resist

melted away. See Ex. 23:27.

The "passing over" of the people (15:16) is explained to mean the entry of the people into the land of Canaan. Certainly they had to "pass over" Jordan to enter this land. (Joshua 3:17). Moses may not have been referring to passing over the Jordan, but he knew they would pass over the territory between Egypt and the promised land (Ex. 3:8; Num. 32:20-21, 27).

The word *purchased* in 15:16 means to procure, buy, acquire, get, obtain. Truly God had obtained Israel as a people by His wondrous deeds. A participial form of the word translated *purchase* (*qanah*) is used in Gen. 14:22 as a title ("possessor" or "maker") for God. Possibly therefore the meaning is that God "created" the people Israel, as well as "purchased" them.

14. *By what terms is Israel's promised homeland called? (15:17)*

(1) "The mountain of thine inheritance." (2) "The place of thy dwelling." (3) The "sanctuary." It is striking that each of these three titles asserts that this land was GOD'S land in a special way; it was *God's* inheritance, *God's* dwelling-place, and *God's* sanctuary (or holy place). Why the land of Israel should be a place that God specially favored, we know not. But numerous passages confirm that this is so. See II Kings 17:25-26.

The term *mountain* is an interesting title for the land of Israel. Psalm 78:54: "He brought them to the border of his sanctuary, to this *mountain* which his right hand had gotten." Perhaps it was given this title of *mountain* because of its prominence among nations, like a mountain among hills. Compare Isaiah 2:2 and Psalm 68:16.

The term *sanctuary* (holy place) seems to refer to all of the land of Canaan, and not just Jerusalem or the temple. *Sanctuary* in later times did often refer to the temple (Psalm 73:17). This fact causes some skeptical authors to assert that Ex. 15:17 was written after the time of Solomon's temple. But even Martin Noth, a rather extreme critic, says that *sanctuary* here may mean the whole of the land and not just

Jerusalem.

15. *What sublime spiritual thought closes the song?* (15:18)

Jehovah shall reign for ever and ever! Ramm correctly asserts that the whole exodus experience is a commentary on what the reign of God is. We must be cautious not to think of the reign of God as being totally in the future, either in a millenium or in heaven. The kingdom of God existed in Moses' time (Ex. 19:6; I Chron. 29:11), exists now as the church (Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:28; Rev. 1:9), and shall exist hereafter (II Pet. 1:11, II Tim. 4:18).

16. *Why is the restatement of the Red Sea story placed after the Song?*

Probably it is inserted to make the transition into the following prose narrative. It certainly also strengthens the assertion of 15:18 that Jehovah shall reign for ever. This verse has three clauses, each of which ends in Hebrew with the word *sea*.<sup>7</sup>

17. *How does the Song of Miriam relate to the Song of Moses?* (15:20-21)

The words of Miriam's song are almost identical to Moses' words in 15:1. Only the verb is changed from indicative to imperative. This similarity suggests that they sang antiphonally, Miriam and the women responding to the words of Moses and the "sons" of Israel. We do not know whether we have all or just part of Miriam's song. We suspect it is only partly given.

Numerous speculations about the relation of Miriam's song to Moses' song have been made. One radical proposal is that Miriam's song is the oldest part of Ex. fifteen, and was written by a different author than the writer of 15:1ff.<sup>8</sup> Another writer (S. R. Driver) gives a contradictory, though equally radical view, saying that verse 19 is a "later redactional addition," written AFTER 15:1-18.<sup>9</sup> Alan Cole

<sup>7</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>8</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

<sup>9</sup>*An Introduction to the Literature of the O. T.* (New York: World, 1965), p. 29.

proposes that Moses' song was a "theological expansion" of Miriam's song.<sup>10</sup> It is difficult to see how anyone could say that and still give credence to the plain statement of 15:1 that Moses and the children of Israel sang the song. The variations in these speculations show the futility and folly of men's judgments upon God's word.

In 15:21 Miriam is mentioned for the first time by name and by title. She is called the "prophetess." Compare Num. 12:2; Judges 4:4; II Kings 22:14; Isaiah 8:3. She was a prophetess because of God's divine gift, and not because of natural poetic and musical ability. Micah 6:4 indicates that when the Lord delivered Israel out of Egypt, he sent before them Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. This suggests that she played a rather important role in these events.

Although Miriam is here referred to only as the sister of Aaron, Numbers 26:59 specifically identifies her as also the sister of Moses. Miriam had watched over Moses as a babe in the river (Ex. 2:4). She would have been about ninety years old at this time.

A *timbrel* is a small hand drum, similar to a Salvation Army tambourine (without the jingling metal pieces). See Ps. 81:2; 68:25; 149:3. Its Hebrew name (*toph*!) resembles its sound (*thump*!).

The Hebrew women and men *danced* on occasions of victory (I Sam. 18:6) and on special religious holidays (Judges 21:21; Psalm 30:11; 150:4; II Sam. 6:14). These dances seem to have been practiced by each sex alone, and hardly resemble our modern social dancing, which is more like the evil dancing referred to in Job 21:7, 11, and is spoken of in the New Testament as "revelling" (Gal. 5:21; I Pet. 4:3).

18. *What area did Israel enter after crossing the Red Sea?* (15:22)

They entered the Wilderness of Shur. The part of the Wilderness of Shur they entered was also called the Wilderness of Etham (Num. 33:8). *Shur* means *wall*. It may have acquired this name from the abrupt wall-like rise in the land

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 123.

ten to twelve miles east of the Red Sea and the Suez Canal line. The Wilderness of Shur lies in the NW part of the Sinai peninsula, south of Mediterranean coastline, between the present Suez canal and the River of Egypt (Wadi el-Arish). The direct route from Egypt to Canaan runs through Shur. Its southward extension ran along the Red Sea east coast almost to Marah.

It is about thirty-seven miles from Israel's crossing place to Marah.

There are springs (called the 'Ayun Musa, or Springs of Moses) lying about one and a half miles from the east shore of the Red Sea, just east of the point where we think Israel crossed the sea. The scripture makes no mention of these springs. S. C. Bartlett<sup>11</sup> found them to be in a hillock some sixteen feet above the level of the surrounding plain, containing a basin twelve to fifteen feet in diameter, surrounded by a rocky rim. Their water is brackish and disagreeable because of mineral salts in it. Different travelers have described these springs differently, because the flow of water differs from year to year, and sandstorms choke up the springs in different patterns.

The surface from the Red Sea to Marah is hard compacted sand, sprinkled with gravel and some boulders scattered about. Sharp flints are occasionally seen on the surface, such as that used by Zipporah in circumcising her son (Ex. 4:25).

We must remember that Israel passed through this area in springtime, the most delightful time of year. S. C. Bartlett reported that when he passed through in February, the temperature some days dropped to the freezing point at night, and then shot up to 98 degrees in the sun at noon. The heat would certainly have continued up into March/April when Israel passed through. Little wonder the Israelites were

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<sup>11</sup>We have found Bartlett's book *From Egypt to Palestine* (New York: Harper, 1879) particularly helpful in its descriptions of the places in Israel's journeys. Bartlett was a very careful observer and recorder. Also he was thoroughly acquainted with the reports of other travellers; and he visited the area before modern roads and oil wells altered so much of it.

**CARAVAN AT SPRINGS OF MOSES**

**15:1-27**



**Caravan at the Springs of Moses (Ayun Musa)  
(Matson Photo)**

**330A**





Elim (now called Wadi Gharandel). Here Israel found twelve springs and seventy palm trees. (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)

dreadfully distressed when they reached Marah and found no good water.

Between the place of Israel's crossing and Marah are at least two dozen smaller or larger depressions (valleys, or wadies) to be crossed. All of these have lines of vegetation along their courses. These would have had new spring vegetation in them as Israel passed through. The area is NOT good pasture land, but there was some pasture for Israel's flocks in transit.

19. *What did Israel find at Marah? (15:23)*

They found a spring of bitter water. The name *Marah* means bitter, or bitterness (Prov. 14:10). Most of the flowing springs in Sinai are bitter and unpleasant because of mineral salts dissolved in the water.

Marah is generally identified with the spring 'Ain Hawwarah.<sup>12</sup> Bartlett<sup>13</sup> reported it as being in the center of a low, flat-topped mound, which was largely a calcareous deposit. The water was in a hole five or six feet in circumference and was some two feet deep. The mineral deposit suggests that the flow of the spring was formerly larger. The water is so bitter that men cannot drink it unless they are very thirsty.

Besides its bitterness, it has laxative qualities, resembling those of Epsom Salts. Its bitterness varies from year to year, depending on the amount of rainfall and the volume of its flow. There are other springs in the immediate vicinity, which would furnish additional water, and may be included in the name *Marah*.

Ex. 15:23 says literally, "He called its name Marah." This suggests that Moses named it. However, this wording probably should be taken indefinitely to mean "It was called Marah."

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<sup>12</sup>Other identifications of Marah include the Springs of Moses (*'Ayun Musa*); Bir-Huwara, about 47 mi. SE of the Springs of Moses and seven miles from the coast; or El-Churkudah, a fountain of brackish water ten mi. SE of the town of Suez and fifty miles from Lake Timsah. We definitely prefer the 'Ain Hawwarah location as being the actual site.

<sup>13</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 199.

20. *How did Israel respond to the bitter waters?* (15:24).

They murmured. In murmuring against Moses, they actually murmured against God himself. This was their second murmuring: they murmured before at the Red Sea (14:11). There are over a dozen passages in the story of Israel's wanderings where murmuring is mentioned. It was characteristic of them. Psalm 106:13: "They soon forgot his works: they waited not for his counsel." But in their murmurings they were, sadly, a picture of all humanity; and their punishments are a warning to us (I Cor. 10:11).

21. *How were the waters sweetened?* (15:25)

By casting a certain tree into the water. No known tree can instantly (or even gradually) sweeten spring water. Hence, this was a miracle. Compare II Kings 2:19-22.

Medieval commentators on Exodus delighted in seeing in this tree a reference to the cross of Christ, by which the bitterest of life's waters are sweetened. As an illustration it is edifying; but the comparison cannot be called an exegesis of the Biblical text.

Moses received the instructions to cast in the tree as an answer to his cry (prayer) to the LORD. We admire Moses' action of turning to prayer, rather than to rebuke and contention with the unreasonable people.

The fact that the LORD showed Moses the tree was God's method of teaching Israel that they constantly needed divine guidance and instruction. This awareness of their need for instruction prepared the people spiritually for their acceptance of the law at Mt. Sinai.

This experience at Marah was a *testing* for Israel. There God *proved* them. Similarly he tested them again soon after this by the manna (16:4), as to whether they would walk in his law (torah) or not.

At Marah God made for them a statute (or law) and an ordinance (or judgment). Possibly the words of God in 15:26 constitute the law and ordinance. If so, the ordinance is extremely general in nature. If 15:26 is not the ordinance referred to, then we simply do not know what the ordinance

was. Possibly God's *act* of sweetening the water was in itself the ordinance, since there was a message from God implied in the miracle: "Thou shalt always trust the LORD and seek His deliverance in thine every affliction."

22. *What did God promise Israel if they obeyed His commandments?* (15:26)

God would put none of the diseases which He had brought upon the Egyptians upon them.

Deut. 7:15 extended this promise into the time after Israel entered and occupied Canaan. Deut. 28:58 warned that they would get plagues in Canaan if they were disobedient there.

Why are the words about Jehovah being their healer inserted here? It may have been a broader application of the healing of the bitter waters of Marah. God would heal ALL their bitter diseases, just as He had sweetened the Marah waters. Also it may have been a warning to the Israelites as they journeyed: they were not morally superior to the Egyptians. They could suffer diseases like those which killed Egypt's firstborn. See Ps. 78:49-50. See notes on Ex. 12:29. A redeemed people must be a holy, spiritual people.

23. *What happened to Israel at Elim?* (15:27)

They camped there by the waters from twelve springs, in an area graced by seventy palm trees. The specific details about these numbers sound like the record of an eyewitness.

It is about seven miles from Marah to Elim, an easy day's journey. S. C. Bartlett found much shrubbery between Marah and Elim.

Elim is generally considered to be the Wady Gharandel. This wady (or winter-flowing brook channel) has water issuing from it in several spots, forming brisk rivulets, flowing several barrels a minute. Several considerable pools of water overgrown with rushes lie by the wady channel.

The water of Elim is as good as that of the Nile, and nowhere in the Sinai peninsula, except in the wadi Feiran, is it so abundant.

Elim can be an illustration of the Lord's Day, a time of refreshment amidst the toils of life's journey.

"Elim! Sweet foretaste of rest and blessing:  
 Soon must be left for the lengthening way.  
 But it is well that the pilgrims may gather  
 Courage and strength for the wearisome day."<sup>14</sup>

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THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
 TRANSLATION

**16** And they took their journey from E-lim, and all the congregation of the children of Is-ra-el came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between E-lim and Si-nai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of E-gypt. (2) And the whole congregation of the children of Is-ra-el murmured against Mo-ses and against Aar-on in the wilderness: (3) and the children of Is-ra-el said unto them, Would that we died by the hand of Je-ho-vah in the land of E-gypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

(4) Then said Je-ho-vah unto Mo-ses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or not. (5) And it shall come to pass on the sixth day, that they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily. (6) And Mo-ses and Aar-on said unto all the children of Is-ra-el, At even, then ye shall know that Je-ho-vah hath brought you out from the land of E-gypt; (7) and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of Je-ho-vah; for that he heareth your murmurings against Je-ho-vah: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? (8) And Mo-ses said, *This shall be*, when Je-ho-vah shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that

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<sup>14</sup>From *Preacher's Homiletic Commentary*, Vol. II, p. 293.

Je-ho-vah heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against Je-ho-vah. (9) And Mo-ses said unto Aar-on, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Is-ra-el, Come near before Je-ho-vah; for he hath heard your murmurings. (10) And it came to pass, as Aar-on spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Is-ra-el, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of Je-ho-vah appeared in the cloud. (11) And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (12) I have heard the murmurings of the children of Is-ra-el: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am Je-ho-vah your God.

(13) And it came to pass at even, that the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the camp. (14) And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness a small round thing, small as the hoarfrost on the ground. (15) And when the children of Is-ra-el saw it, they said one to another, What is it? for they knew not what it was. And Mo-ses said unto them, It is the bread which Je-ho-vah hath given you to eat. (16) This is the thing which Je-ho-vah hath commanded. Gather ye of it every man according to his eating; an o-mer a head, according to the number of your persons, shall ye take it, every man for them that are in his tent. (17) And the children of Is-ra-el did so, and gathered some more, some less. (18) And when they measured it with an o-mer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating. (19) And Mo-ses said unto them, Let no man leave of it till the morning. (20) Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Mo-ses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and became foul: and Mo-ses was wroth with them.

(21) And they gathered it morning by morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted. (22) And it came to pass that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two o-mers for each one: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Mo-ses. (23) And he said unto them,

This is that which Je-ho-vah hath spoken, Tomorrow is a solemn rest, a holy sabbath unto Je-ho-vah: bake that which ye will bake, and boil that which ye will boil; and all that remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. (24) And they laid it up till the morning, as Mo-ses bade: and it did not become foul, neither was there any worm therein. (25) And Mo-ses said, Eat that to-day; for to-day is a sabbath unto Je-ho-vah: to-day ye shall not find it in the field. (26) Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. (27) And it came to pass on the seventh day, that there went out some of the people to gather, and they found none. (28) and Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? (29) See, for that Je-ho-vah hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. (30) So the people rested on the seventh day.

(31) And the house of Is-ra-el called the name thereof Man-na: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers *made* with honey. (32) And Mo-ses said, This is the thing which Je-ho-vah hath commanded, Let an o-mer-ful of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread wherewith I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Epgypt. (33) And Mo-ses said unto Aar-on, Take a pot, and put an o-mer-ful of man-na therein, and lay it up before Je-ho-vah, to be kept throughout your generations. (34) As Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses, so Aar-on laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept. (35) And the children of Is-ra-el did eat the man-na forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat the man-na, until they came unto the borders of the land of Ca-naan. (36) Now an o-mer is the tenth part of an e-phah.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER SIXTEEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading propose a brief title or topic for the chapter.
2. Into what wilderness did Israel go from Elim? (16:1)
3. How long did it take Israel to reach the wilderness of Sin? (16:1; 12:6)
4. Who participated in the murmuring in the wilderness? (16:2)
5. Why did Israel murmur? (16:2-3)
6. Where did the Israelites say that they wish they had died? (16:3)
7. What had Israel eaten in Egypt? (16:3; Numbers 11:5)
8. How much did Israel say they had to eat in Egypt? (16:3)
9. What was the purpose of the manna? (16:4; Deut. 8:3)
10. How much manna was to be gathered on the sixth day of each week? (16:5)
11. What would cause them to know that the LORD had brought them out of Egypt? (16:6)
12. What would Israel see in the morning? (16:7)
13. Against whom had Israel really murmured? (16:7-8)
14. How much bread would be provided for them? (16:8)
15. For what purpose were the Israelites summoned together? (16:9)
16. What did Israel see when they assembled? (16:10)
17. What would Israel know because they ate flesh and bread? (16:12)
18. How many quails came into the camp? (16:13)
19. What did Israel say when they saw the manna? (16:15, 31)
20. Do some research to discover what the word *manna* means.
21. How much manna was gathered for each man? (16:16)
22. Who gathered manna for each tent? (16:16)
23. Why did some gather more or less than others? (16:17)
24. What result happened, even though some gathered more and some less? (16:17)
25. What was the rule about leftover manna? (16:19)
26. What happened to leftover manna kept over to the next day? (16:20)



27. What happened to manna that was not gathered each day? (16:21)
  28. Who reported to Moses that twice as much manna was gathered on the sixth day? (16:22)
  29. How is the seventh day described? (16:23)
  30. In what ways could manna be prepared for eating? (16:23)
  31. Were the Israelites warned that there would be no manna on the seventh days? (16:25-26)
  32. Did all heed the warning about gathering manna on the Sabbath? (16:27)
  33. What was God's response to Israel's disobedience about gathering manna? (16:28)
  34. What restriction was imposed upon movements on the seventh days? (16:29)
  35. What did the house of Israel name the bread? (16:31)
  36. What did the manna taste like? (16:31; Num. 11:6-8)
  37. What is the true manna, or bread, from heaven? (John 6:49-51; I Cor. 10:1-3)
  38. Who gathered a pot of manna to be kept throughout future generations? (16:33)
  39. Where was the pot of manna to be kept? (16:34; Heb. 9:4)
  40. How long did the Israelites eat manna? (16:35; Neh. 9:20-21)
  41. Where did the manna cease? (16:35; Joshua 5:11-12)
  42. How much is an omer? An ephah? (16:36)
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#### EXODUS SIXTEEN: BREAD FROM HEAVEN

1. Murmuring in the Wilderness of Sin; 16:1-3.
2. God's promise of provisions; 16:4-12.
3. Quails and manna sent; 16:13-21.
4. No manna on the Sabbath; 16:22-30.
5. Pot of manna preserved; 16:31-36.

## EXODUS SIXTEEN: THE BREAD FROM HEAVEN

1. Given to the undeserving; 16:2-3.
2. Given as a test; 16:4, 28; Deut. 8:16.
3. Given to teach; 16:6, 12, 32; Deut. 8:3.
4. Given without fail; 16:35.

## GOD'S PURPOSES IN GIVING MANNA

1. To fill them with food; 16:12, 16; Matt. 6:31-33.
2. To see if they would walk in His laws; 16:4; Deut. 8:16.
3. To show that the LORD had led them out of Egypt; 16:6.
4. To show that He was Jehovah their God; 16:12.
5. To show God's glory; 16:7.
6. To silence their murmurings; 16:7, 8, 12.
7. To introduce the sabbath law; 16:23, 25, 29.
8. To humble them; Deut. 8:16, 3.
9. To teach that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word of God; Deut. 8:3.
10. To point toward Jesus, the living bread from heaven; John 6:41, 48-51.

## MURMURINGS! (Ex. 16:1-3)

1. Murmurers forget past blessings.
2. Murmurers forget past pains; 16:2.
3. Murmurers accuse their true benefactors; 16:3.
4. Murmurers fear imaginary evils; 16:3.

## THE MANNA, A TYPE OF JESUS!

"I am the living bread which came down out of heaven"  
(John 6:51).

1. The manna met a need. Jesus meets our needs.
2. The manna came from "heaven." Jesus came from heaven.  
(Jn. 6:49-51)

3. The manna provided for ALL Israel. Jesus provides for ALL mankind.
4. The manna gave temporary life. Jesus gives eternal life.
5. The manna was not recognized or known. Jesus was not recognized or known. (Matt. 8:27; John 12:37)
6. The manna was a test for Israel. Jesus is the test of our relationship with God. (I Cor. 1:22-23)

#### THE MANNA: A TYPE OF GOD'S WORD

1. From heaven, not earth.
2. Came to the people.
3. Had to be eaten.
4. To be gathered (read) daily.

#### THE MEMORIAL MANNA (16:32-36)

What did the pot of memorial manna teach to Israel?

1. The infinite resources of God.
2. The goodness of God.
3. The faithfulness of God.
4. The abiding presence of God.
5. That they could trust God in the future.

#### EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER SIXTEEN

1. *What is the subject matter of Exodus 16?*

The entire chapter deals with the giving of the manna. We entitle the chapter **BREAD FROM HEAVEN**. See Neh. 9:15. The whole chapter directs our minds toward Christ Jesus, who is the living bread which came down from heaven.

2. *Where did Israel journey from Elim? (16:1)*

From Elim they first went to an encampment by the sea.

See Numbers 33:10. Going southward from Elim, Israel passed the mount now called the Mount of Pharaoh's Hot Bath (Jebel Hamman Farun) on their right (west). They came on into the Wady (valley) et-Taiyibeh, which provided an open course to the seaside. Travelers have made the trip from Elim to the seaside in seven and a half hours. It is about twenty miles and probably took Israel two days. This area by the sea at the mouth of the Valley Taiyibeh is a sandy plain extending some four or five miles from the shore, shut in by a range of wild cliffs. Here was room for a great camp. The modern town of Abu Zenima lies in this area.

From the encampment by the seaside, Israel could either have gone north and east, via the sandy table land of Debbet er-Ramleh; or they could have gone on southward across about five miles of hills into the plain of El-Murkhah. To us it seems much more probable that they went southward into the El-Murkhah plain, and that this plain is to be identified with the *Wilderness of Sin*.

The name *Sin* has no connection with the English word *sin*. The names *Sin* and *Sinai* are very similar. (The meaning of these names is uncertain.)

Admittedly the location of the Wilderness of Sin is rather debatable. As stated above, we feel that it is the dry barren coastal plain of El Murkhah. The modern town of Abu Rudeis is in this plain. The plain is about six miles EW and about fifteen miles NS. S. C. Bartlett<sup>1</sup> says that its surface is a dead level, covered only with occasional tufts of desert shrubs. It had a temperature of 96 degrees when he visited it in February. It would be a natural place for Israelitish murmuring. The plain extends on south to the mouth of the Wady Feiran, which is the largest wady in the southern part of Sinai, and was probably the passage route of Israel from the Red Sea coastal area up to Mt. Sinai.

In the El Murkha plain there is a spring about three miles from the sea, which is next in importance only to the Springs

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<sup>1</sup>*From Egypt to Palestine* (New York: Harper, 1879), p. 213.

of Moses (*Ayun Musa*, near Israel's crossing place) and Elim (Gharandel). The traveller Burkhardt told of finding in this area many fissures in the rocks filled with winter rains.<sup>2</sup> Thus Israel probably had water in the Wilderness of Sin, but no food.

Other suggested identifications of the Wilderness of Sin include the interior desert tract called Debbet Er-Ramleh (mentioned above). This is a long desert area running SE-NW along the north side of the granite mountains of the Wilderness of Sinai. This is a possible location, but seems to us less likely than El Murkha, because to get to Debbet er-Ramleh from Israel's encampment by the sea would require considerable backtracking.

Another proposed identification of the Wilderness of Sin is the dry barren coastal plain of El-Qaa, north of the present city of Tor. But this lies much too far south to be on the route to Sinai.

Yet another proposed location of the Wilderness of Sin is the Wady Serabit,<sup>3</sup> containing the famous ruins of Serabit El Khadim. Serabit el-Khadim is sometimes proposed as the location of Dophka (Num. 33:12). The ruins there include a temple to the Egyptian goddess Hathor and abandoned copper and turquoise mines. Egyptian soldiers were stationed at Serabit el Khadim both before and after Moses' time. Some inscriptions in one of the oldest known alphabets known (similar to Hebrew) are found there. This route by Serabit seems very unlikely to us.

Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin on the fifteenth day of the second month of their journey, almost exactly a month after their departure. See Ex. 12:6. They had covered approximately 175 miles during that month.

3. *What did Israel complain about in the Wilderness of Sin?* (16:2-3)

They complained about lack of food. Observe that the

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<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Bartlett, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

<sup>3</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-179, proposes this as the site.

WHOLE congregation murmured. After seeing all the plagues in Egypt, and the crossing of the Sea, and the leading of the cloud, they still lacked faith in God.

Although their murmurings were directed against Moses and Aaron, they really were complaining against God. It was God himself who had promised to bring them to Sinai (3:12). How could God be God, and yet fail to keep His promise by letting them die of hunger on the way to Sinai?

This was Israel's third grumbling. They had already grumbled at the Red Sea (14:11) and at Marah (15:24). Moses could well say of them, "Ye have been rebellious against Jehovah from the day that I knew you" (Deut. 9:24).

Israel had left Egypt in haste and carried no leftover food. See 12:10-11, 33-34. Now a month later their food is exhausted. They still had livestock, but seemed very reluctant to slaughter their flocks for food.

In their bad state of mind they attributed the worst possible motives to Moses, as if he had deliberately set out to kill them. See 17:3. How utterly unreasonable!

In their distress they recalled only certain good things about Egypt, forgetting all their slavery and crying there (2:23-24; 4:31). They remembered only that they had had food in Egypt - fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, garlic (Num. 11:5). But had they actually had bread to the FULL? Surely not! This was a thoughtless exaggeration, a propanganda blast to hurt Moses.

They even declared that they wished they had died in Egypt by the hand of the LORD, presumably in the ten plagues. Compare Num. 14:2. This statement cannot be taken as a serious wish, but only as a bitter emotional outburst.

It is a wonder that God did not rain fire and brimstone on them, instead of raining manna upon them. (Pink)

4. *From whence would God give Israel bread? (16:4)*

God would rain bread *from heaven* upon them. We suppose that this means from the atmospheric heavens, although the power that brought it about came from God's

abode in the heaven of heavens! Neh. 9:15: "Thou didst provide bread from heaven for them for their hunger." See Ps. 105:40.

This bread is called "angels' food" in Psalm 78:25. This expression could be translated "bread of God" or "bread of the mighty ones" (Heb., *elohim*). I Cor. 10:3 calls it "spiritual food."

In America bread is a side dish to the main meal. In countries of the Middle East, bread is the basic item in the diet of many.

5. *How much bread was to be gathered daily?* (16:4)

A day's portion was to be gathered on each day. This instruction reminds us that we are to pray for our daily bread (Matt. 6:11). A day's portion of manna was an omer full (16:16). This would be approximately six and a half pints, about three-fourths of a gallon.

6. *What purpose besides nutrition would the bread have?* (16:4)

It was to be a *test*, whether they would walk in God's law or not. Would they gather just enough for each day at the start of every day? Or would they hoard it on some days because they did not completely trust God to provide more on subsequent days? Would they gather twice as much on the sixth days, when once they had learned that any excess collected on other days spoiled after one day? Would they rest on the seventh days, or go out searching for bread? These were God's tests! See Deut. 8:3, 16.

God reveals Himself here as a *tester* of men. Psalm 7:9: "The righteous God trieth the hearts and reins." No testing seems pleasant to those who are being tested. But we must expect testing. It is God's way with His people.

7. *What was Israel to know and see by God's providing food for them?* (16:6-8)

They were to know that Jehovah had brought them out of Egypt! It surely had taken a long time for some Israelites to realize that they were truly OUT of Egypt, and that the LORD had delivered them. They would know this by events to occur yet that very evening.

Israel said, "Moses, YOU brought us out of Egypt to kill us." Moses said, "You shall know that the LORD brought you out." The exodus was not an event that had happened by chance. The LORD was not some incompetent deity.

Also Israel was to see the GLORY on the morning to follow. Moses did not specify at first exactly how this "glory" would be revealed to them. This glory was to be something visible, something they could see.

Verse seven emphasizes that Israel would see the glory of Jehovah at the very time when He was hearing their murmurings against Jehovah. The repetition of the name Jehovah in the verse stresses the fact that the murmuring was against Jehovah. God graciously hearkened to them even while they were murmuring.

Also in verse seven the word *WE* is stressed. This emphasizes the denials by Moses that their murmurings were against him and Aaron.

After his opening announcement in 16:7 that Israel would see the glory of Jehovah, Moses, like a skillful speaker, brought his speech to a climax by giving specific details of how they would see God's glory. The Lord would in that very evening give them flesh to eat, and on the next morning He would give them bread "to the full."

8. *How did Moses know what God would give Israel for food?* (16:9-12)

He knew it because God had revealed it unto him. (See 16:12) God communicated with Moses face to face (Num. 12:8). Note that the message which God told Moses to tell Israel (in 16:12) is the very message that Moses delivered (in 16:8).

Probably we should translate 16:11 to read, "Now Yahweh had spoken unto Moses, saying. . . ." Hebrew has no past perfect (pluperfect) tense form. The perfect tense (indicating completed action) sometimes had a past perfect significance (as in Isaiah 38:21; Gen. 6:6; Num. 22:2; and others).

Some critics have suggested that we should rearrange



the Biblical text, placing 16:9-12 before 16:6-8.<sup>4</sup> We have no evidence in ancient manuscripts that the text was ever so rearranged. We do not feel we should lay violent hands on God's word, to rearrange its contents or make emendations in its words just because our present limited knowledge and understanding hinders our ability to comprehend it in the way the ancient Hebrews grasped it.

The command to "Come near before the LORD" was God's call for all the Israelites to assemble together with Moses and Aaron, having the LORD on their minds, for the purpose of learning the LORD's will. Certainly we understand that the LORD is everywhere, but God provided a focus point to which Israel could assemble before Him. That focus point was near the glory cloud, and with His men Moses and Aaron.

When Aaron issued the call for Israel to gather, the "glory of Jehovah" appeared in the cloud which had been leading Israel. Probably this glory was a display of fire and lightnings. See 19:16 and 24:15-17, where God's glory is said to have been "like a devouring fire." The cloud stood apart from Israel, "toward the wilderness," probably toward the east and south.

Israel was at this moment in deep unbelief. God was extremely perturbed, and declared, "Ye shall know that I am the LORD your God" (16:12).

9. *When were quails provided for Israel?* (16:13)

In the evening the quails came up and covered the camp. Ex. 16:12 had said, "Between the two evenings ye shall eat flesh."<sup>5</sup>

In the spring each year quails migrate in great numbers from the interior of Africa and Arabia, across the Sinai peninsula and into southern Europe. They return from

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<sup>4</sup>Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 396, following the proposal of S. R. Driver.

<sup>5</sup>"Between the two evenings" is the exact phrase used to describe the hour of the Passover sacrifice (Ex. 12:6). As indicated before, this phrase is indefinite as to exact time, and refers only to the period near sunset.

the northern countries in autumn.<sup>6</sup>

The occurrence of quail in Sinai at the time the Israelites passed through was not unusual. The miracle consisted in the precise timing of their arrival, and the announcement of God beforehand that they would have flesh to eat that evening.

When the quails migrate across the Sinai peninsula, they often become exhausted; and when they alight they can be caught easily. The birds are good eating and were a favorite delicacy of the Egyptians.<sup>7</sup> Ancient Egyptian paintings show people hunting quails with hand nets thrown over the bushes where they were nesting.<sup>8</sup> See p. 444B.

Psalm 78:27: "He raineth flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea."

10. *When did the manna appear?* (16:13-14)

It became visible the next morning when the dew evaporated. The Israelites did not realize anything unusual had happened the next morning when they saw the usual dew on the ground. Numbers 11:9 says that when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it (the camp). (The presence of the dew shows that the Sinaitic peninsula is not a totally arid desert.)

The manna appeared as small, fine, flake-like fragments on the ground, as small as the crystals of hoarfrost (white frost).

In Psalm 78:24 the manna is called the "corn (food, or grain) of heaven." It is called "angels' food" (or "bread of the angels") in Ps. 78:25.

The manna was white, and resembled the coriander seed (a strong-smelling seed, which is about the size of a peppercorn.) It had the appearance of bdellium (Num. 11:7);

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<sup>6</sup>The fact that Israel encountered quail migrations in the spring does not support the theory that the Israelites travelled a route along the Mediterranean coast. Quails would have been found along the coast more probably in the autumn, as they started their return from Europe.

<sup>7</sup>Herodotus 2:27.

<sup>8</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

which seems to be a fragrant and transparent resin, resembling wax.<sup>9</sup> It had a sweetish taste, like wafers made with honey (Ex. 16:31), and like fresh oil (Num. 11:8). It could be baked or boiled, or ground in a mill (a stone hand grinder).

11. *What does the name MANNA mean?* (16:15)

Its name means "What is it?" When the Israelites first saw it, they did not know what it was, and said, "*Man Hu?*" These were Hebrew words meaning "What is it?" This question became the name for it: it was called "Whatizit?" The name was sometimes shortened to *Man* (as in Ex. 16:31), which just means "What?" (Most English versions translate the word in 16:31 as *manna*, but the Hebrew just has *man*.)

The usual Hebrew interrogative word meaning "What?" is *Mah*, rather than *Man*. But the form *man* is found in the El Amarna letters,<sup>10</sup> and is a recognized ancient form of the interrogative. The Greek O.T. renders *man hu* by the Greek words for "What is this?"

12. *How much manna was collected by each person?* (16:16-17)

The amounts varied somewhat from person to person, "each man according to his eating."<sup>11</sup> But generally it was an *omer* for each "head" (or person). As a unit of measure the *omer* was the tenth part of an *ephah* (16:36), that is about six and a half pints. The *omer* is referred to in the Old Testament only in this chapter.

An *omer* for each person for each day seems like a lot of food, but probably it was rather fluffy.

Each man gathered enough for all those in his tent. We do not suppose that every household in Israel possessed a pot holding exactly one *omer*. Thus, some gathered more and some less.

Pink calculates that at one *omer* a head daily, Israel would have collected twelve million pints, or nine million pounds daily, and over a million tons were gathered annually!

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<sup>9</sup>The exact identification of bdellium is uncertain. Many think it is a waxy-looking resin. Others think it is a precious stone or pearl. Gen. 2:12 suggests such a possibility.

<sup>10</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 135. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

13. *Was the manna a natural phenomenon?*

Certainly not. It was supernatural and miraculous. This is evident from several facts:

(1) The enormous volume of manna produced and consumed. The secretions of all the trees and insects in Sinai could never have produced such a mass of food.

(2) The fact that the manna was provided the year round for forty years. Secretions from trees that some people call manna only occur during brief seasons in some years.

(3) The fact that the manna first appeared on a particular day, the very day after God had predicted the appearance of it.

(4) The fact that the manna could be found for six days each week, but was not there on the seventh days (16:26).

(5) The fact that the manna spoiled after one day most of the week, but after two days following the sixth and seventh days (16:24).

(6) The fact that the manna could be *boiled* in cooking, but melted in the heat of the sun (16:21, 23).

Very many writers have said that the manna consisted of drops of sugary material exuded by certain kinds of aphids on the tamarisk bushes. In the hot desert air they become whitish or yellowish globules and fall to the ground where the ants get them. Arabs call them *bread (mann)* or bread of heaven. Others say that the droplets are produced by the exudations of the tamarisk itself. These are pea-sized or smaller. These droplets are abundant in the rainy season, but in many years cease altogether. They appear mainly in June for three to six weeks. At peak season of each year a steady worker could only collect about half-pound of the "manna" a day. It cannot be baked or boiled. It does not spoil and stink after one day. The droplets do not melt in the sun's heat, but only dehydrate and harden.

Some extreme writers have said that the unique aspects of the Biblical account of the manna are the result of later theological expansion of the original event.<sup>11</sup> No proof is

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<sup>11</sup>Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 398.

offered for such a dogmatic assertion. Also it makes the theologians sound bad, as if they were always exaggerators!

14. *How did the manna equalize out?* (16:18)

When the amounts which the people gathered were measured with an omer (a jar of that size), there was enough manna for each person, with none left over.

This verse is difficult to understand fully. Some have proposed that the Israelites pooled their manna collectively, and each kept the ration of an omer per head.<sup>12</sup> It is suggested that Paul seemed to understand it that way (II Cor. 8:14-15). But the idea of pooling the manna is not definitely stated in the verse. Also the enormous size of the Israelite camp (five or six miles across) and the number of people involved would seem to make pooling very difficult, inconvenient, and improbable. There would have been some large heaps of collected manna!

We doubt that every family went through a ritualistic check on the volume of manna it collected each day. Occasional spot checking would be all that is necessarily implied by the statement "When they measured it with an omer. . . ."

The way the manna supply in each home equalized out certainly hints at some degree of miraculous control of the matter.

The apostle Paul in II Cor. 8:14-15 refers to Ex. 16:18 as an illustration for Christians who have an abundance of this world's wealth to share with those who have needs. The comparison is not identical in every particular, since manna (unlike money) was freely available to everyone. They only had to go out and pick it up. Nonetheless, the fact that all Israelites had about the same amount of manna each day is a valuable illustration to us, urging us to share of our abundance with those in want, that there may be an equality.

It surely seems rather miraculous that the manna collected

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<sup>12</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 132. Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 68.

by each family equalized out in the way it did, and everyone's needs were supplied, whether he gathered much or little of it. This seems to have been a rather obvious and noticeable fact. Their food supply, like their clothing (see Deut. 29:5!), was always adequate for the needs.

15. *Could manna be stored up?* (15:19-20)

No. This was prevented both by direct command and by the fact that any leftover manna became foul and bred maggots by the next morning. Like the flesh of the Passover lamb, there were to be no leftovers (12:10). They were to live in a situation wherein they had to depend on God every day for that day's needs. Do WE trust God enough to depend on HIM for every day's needs, one by one? (Matt. 6:34)

Some Israelites failed this first test with the manna. They tried (vainly!) to store some up. Moses became angry with these people.

The word *melted* in 16:22 may mean "became loathsome."<sup>13</sup> The Hebrew word is similar to a word used in I Sam. 15:9, to refer to the *vile* and *worthless* animals of the Amalekites.

16. *How much manna was collected on the sixth day?* (16:22)

Two omers, or twice as much as usual. The manna was twice as plentiful on the sixth day as on other days (16:29). Ex. 16:22 refers back to 16:5. The scripture does not mention the fact that Moses told the people the words of 16:5, but we assume he did.

The *rulers* of the congregation reported to Moses that the people had collected twice as much. Perhaps Moses had requested them to report to him about this. The reference to these rulers raises questions about the organization of the Israelites. Ex. 34:31 refers to the rulers. We really know very little about the organization of the Israelites and their tribes.

17. *What was the seventh day called?* (16:23, 25)

The *sabbath*. *Sabbath* is a word derived from the Hebrew

<sup>13</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

*shabath*, meaning to cease or rest.

A stronger word, *shabbaton*, is used in 16:23 just before the usual word for *sabbath*. Elsewhere this word is used only of New Year's day and other particularly holy festivals.<sup>14</sup> By this word God stressed the great importance of this first sabbath rest day in the wilderness.

Here in Ex. 16:23 we have the first actual appearance of the word *sabbath* in the scriptures. Nehemiah 9:14 says that God *made known* the holy sabbath at Mt. Sinai. Certainly in Ex. 16:23 there is no general prohibition of all work, only of gathering manna. 16:29-30 indicates a more general cessation of work. This preliminary command concerning rest helped prepare the people for the comprehensive commandment about Sabbath given in Ex. 20:8-11.

We certainly agree with Keil and Delitzsch<sup>15</sup> that it is perfectly clear from the event that the Israelites were not acquainted with any sabbath observance at that time, and that it was only through the decalogue (the ten commandments) that the Sabbath was raised to a legal institution.

Modern religious groups which keep the seventh day (Saturday) as holy day of assembly and rest, generally seek to prove that the Hebrews (and their forefathers) know of a weekly Sabbath before Mt. Sinai. The sabbath is called *holy* in vs. 23, but it is NOT at all certain that it had been revealed or observed as a national sacred day before Sinai. For more on the sabbath, see notes on Ex. 20:8-10.

18. *Did the Israelites obey the sabbath law? (16:27-29)*

Not all did. Some went out to gather manna on the seventh day, as on the preceding six days. We marvel at their behavior. Had they not collected enough on the sixth day for two days? Were they frankly testing Moses' predictions and perhaps his authority? Why did they not yet have faith? Had they not considered the miraculous features about the manna that they had already seen?

<sup>14</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>15</sup>*Op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 68-69.

God was angry because of the people's disobedience. He said to Moses, "How long refuse ye (plural) to keep my commandments?" Deut. 3:26 says "Jehovah was angry with me (Moses) for your sakes." Moses was not personally guilty of any wrongdoing. But the principle of collective guilt is quite frequently found in the scriptures. When one member of a people (or church) sins, the whole body shares its guilt and punishment to some degree. Thus God included Moses in His rebuke of Israel. Compare Joshua 7:1; II Sam. 21:1.

19. *How was the seventh day kept?* (16:29-30)

Every person was to abide in his own place (tent); and the people rested that day.

Regarding 16:31, see notes on 16:13-14.

20. *What memorial of the giving of the manna was kept?* (16:32-34)

An omer of manna was to be kept in a pot throughout the generations to follow. This was to be laid up "before Jehovah," "before the Testimony." Aaron was to do this.

The moral significance of the manna - that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word from the mouth of God - was to be kept vivid for all future generations.

Heb. 9:4 says the manna was kept in a *golden* pot. This is also the Greek reading of Ex. 16:32.

The *Testimony* is a name applied to the stone tablets bearing the ten commandments. See Ex. 31:18; 25:16, 21; Deut. 10:5.

"Before the LORD" refers to the same place as "before the Testimony," namely in the tabernacle, in the ark of the covenant. Ex. 40:20; Heb. 9:4.

Since the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant were not yet constructed at the time of the giving of the manna, we realize that Ex. 16:33-34 tells of events occurring some months, or longer, after the original giving of the manna. But this is no problem. Not every event related in the Bible (or any other history book) is related in precise historical sequence. We should not expect to find every event in such order. But this does not discredit the Bible's accuracy or inspiration.



During later centuries the ark was moved about from place to place - from Shiloh to Ebenezer, Ashdod, Gath, Ekron, Beth-Shemesh, Kiriath-Jearim, Jerusalem. During that time the jar of manna seems to have been lost, as was Aaron's budded rod (Num. 17:10). Thus in Solomon's time there was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses placed there (I Kings 8:9).

21. *How long did the Israelites eat manna?* (16:35)

They ate forty years (Nehemiah 9:21). They ate manna until they entered the land of Canaan after the death of Moses and ate the fruit and produce of the land. Joshua 5:10-12.

Exodus 16:35 sounds as if it was written after the manna had ceased to be provided. If so, this one verse was inserted into Moses' book of Exodus by Joshua or some other writer after Moses' death. This probability no more casts doubt on the overall Mosaic authorship of Exodus than does insertion of the facts about Moses' death cast doubt on the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy (Deut. 34:4-12).

22. *Why is the description of the omer inserted at 16:36?*

Possibly because the omer was a unit of measure not generally familiar to and employed by the Israelites. The word is used throughout this passage (16:16, 18, 22, 23); but it occurs nowhere else in the scriptures. Edward J. Young<sup>16</sup> says that the omer was not actually a measure, but a small cup; and it is perfectly understandable that Moses might have remarked upon the size of this cup when it was used to gather the manna.

Some writers assume that those acquainted with the exodus would have been acquainted with the omer; and that this tends to indicate a later date for composition of 16:36, or that the verse is a later explanatory addition.<sup>17</sup> This seems to us much less likely than our suggestion that the omer is described because it was not generally familiar to the

<sup>16</sup>*Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), p. 77.

<sup>17</sup>*Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 399.

Israelites (any more than it is to us now).

23. *What does the manna mean to Christians?*

The manna means to Christians everything it meant to the Jews. See the brief outlines after the questions on Ch. 16.

The manna is certainly a type of Jesus, the living bread who came down from heaven. (John 6:41, 48-51).

The Lord Jesus promises to give His people who overcome "the hidden manna" (Rev. 2:17). This seems to be a symbol of the blessings of our heavenly home.

## THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**17** And all the congregation of the children of Is-ra-el journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, by their journeys, according to the commandment of Je-ho-vah, and encamped in Reph-i-dim: and there was no water for the people to drink. (2) Wherefore the people strove with Mo-ses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Mo-ses said unto them, Why strive ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt Je-ho-vah? (3) And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Mo-ses, and said, Wherefore hast thou brought us up out of E-gypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? (4) And Mo-ses cried unto Je-ho-vah, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they are almost ready to stone me. (5) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Pass on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Is-ra-el; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thy hand, and go. (6) Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Ho-reb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Mo-ses did so in the sight of the elders of Is-ra-el. (7) And he called the name of the place Mas-sah, and Mer-i-bah, because of the striving of the children of Is-ra-el, and because they tempted Je-ho-vah, saying, Is Je-ho-vah among

us, or not?

(8) Then came Am-a-lek, and fought with Is-ra-el in Reph-i-dim. (9) And Mo-ses said unto Josh-u-a, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Am-a-lek: to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand. (10) So Josh-u-a did as Mo-ses had said to him, and fought with Am-a-lek: and Mo-ses, Aar-on, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. (11) And it came to pass, when Mo-ses held up his hand, that Is-ra-el prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Am-a-lek prevailed. (12) But Mo-ses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aar-on and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. (13) And Josh-u-a discomfited Am-a-lek and his people with the edge of the sword. (14) and Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Josh-u-a: that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Am-a-lek from under heaven. (15) And Mo-ses built an altar, and called the name of it Je-ho-vah-nis-si; (16) and he said, Je-ho-vah hath sworn: Je-ho-vah will have war with Am-a-lek from generation to generation.

EXPLORING EXODUS : CHAPTER SEVENTEEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. Propose a topic or theme for chapter 17.
2. Where did Israel go from the Wilderness of Sin? (17:1; Compare Num. 33:12-13)
3. Who directed Israel to Rephidim? (17:1)
4. What disaster faced them in Rephidim? (17:1)
5. Who "tempted" the Lord? How did they tempt the Lord? (17:2, 7)
6. How did the Israelites feel toward Moses? (17:3, 4)
7. What did Moses do when the Israelites strove with him? (17:4)

## TWO TESTS: WATER AND WAR 17:1-16

8. Who went with Moses as he went to smite the rock? (17:5, 6)
  9. Where did God stand when Moses struck the rock? (17:6)
  10. What place is Horeb? (17:6; 3:1)
  11. How abundant was the flow of water from the rock? (Ps. 78:15-16)
  12. What two names did Moses give to the place where the waters came forth? What do these names mean? (17:7)
  13. Who fought against Israel? (17:8; Deut. 25:17-18)
  14. Who led Israel's armed forces? (17:9, 13)
  15. How did Moses help in the battle? (17:9)
  16. What was Joshua's original name? (Num. 13:16; Ex. 17:9)  
See if you can find the meanings of Joshua's names.
  17. Who held up Moses' hands? (17:10, 12)
  18. What did Moses sit on? (17:12)
  19. How long did the battle last? (17:12)
  20. What was to be written in a book? (17:14)
  21. When was the prophecy against Amalek fulfilled? (17:14; I Sam. 15:8-9; I Chron. 4:43)
  22. What was the name of the altar that Moses built? (17:15)
  23. What did the LORD swear that he would have? (17:16)
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## EXODUS SEVENTEEN: TWO TESTS: WATER AND WAR

### I. Water; (17:1-7)

1. The danger; 17:1.
2. The disagreeable debate; 17:2-3.
3. The deliverance; 17:4-6.
4. The memorial names; 17:1.

### II. War; (17:8-15)

1. The danger; 17:8.
2. The deliverance; 17:9-13.
3. The memorial name; 17:15-16.

WATER FROM THE LORD  
(John 4:10, 14; 7:37-39)

1. Given to the undeserving; Ex. 17:1-3.
2. Given miraculously; 17:4-6.
3. Given abundantly; Ps. 78:15-16.

TEMPTING THE LORD Vs. FAITH

1. Tempting the LORD: "Is God among us or not?" (Ex. 17:7)  
Faith: "God exists!" (Heb. 11:6)
2. Tempting the LORD: "It is vain to serve God." (Mal. 3:14-15)  
Faith: "God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."  
(Heb. 11:6)
3. Tempting the LORD: "Give us food that we crave!" (Ps. 78:18)  
Faith: "Feed me with food that is needful for me." (Prov. 30:8)
4. Tempting the LORD: "Leap from the pinnacle!" (Matt. 4:5-6)  
Faith: "You shall not tempt the LORD." (Deut. 6:16)

TWO PLACES TO AVOID! (Ex. 17:7)

1. Massah - The place of Tempting (testing).
2. Meribah - The place of Strife (quarrelling).

AMALEK: THE PROTOTYPE OF GOD'S ENEMIES

1. Cruel (Attacked the weary stragglers); Deut. 25:17-19.
2. Determined (Fought all day); Ex. 17:12.
3. Powerful (Only God's power can defeat); 17:11.
4. Doomed; 17:13-14.

JEHOVAH-NISSI: JEHOVAH IS MY BANNER! (17:15-16)

1. He gives me triumph.
  2. He forgets not evil.
  3. He lives through every generation.
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## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

1. *What is the subject matter of Exodus 17?*

The chapter contains two distinct sections: (1) Concerning the giving of water from the rock of Israel; 17:1-7. (2) Concerning Israel's battle with Amalek; 17:8-16.

2. *Where did Israel go from the Wilderness of Sin? (17:1)*

The whole congregation journeyed by stages ("By their journeys") and encamped in Rephidim. By *stages* we mean the most significant stopovers and encampments, which became starting points for travel to their next major encampment.

Numbers 33:12-13 names two of these stages, Dophka and Alush. These lay between the wilderness of Sin and Rephidim.

3. *Where was Rephidim? (17:1)*

No one knows for certain. Ex. 17:6 indicates that it was very near to Horeb (Mt. Sinai). Also 18:5 relates that Moses was camped at the "Mt. of God" when his father-in-law Jethro came to him. This occurred at Rephidim (19:2).

We feel that Keil and Delitzsch<sup>1</sup> are correct in suggesting that Rephidim lay near the point about ten miles north of Mt. Sinai where the great Wady es Sheikh opens into the Plain of Er Rahah, which lies at the north end of Mt. Sinai.

Others have located Rephidim at a small wady (valley) called Wady Rephayid.<sup>2</sup> This lies some fifteen miles NW of Sinai. It is an inconsequential wady. We see little to commend the identification except a partial resemblance between the names Rephidim and Rephayid.

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<sup>1</sup>*Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup>John Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt* (Baker, 1971), p. 184.

## SPECIAL STUDY: ISRAEL'S PASSAGE ROUTE TO SINAI

From Israel's encampment by the seaside (which we have suggested was near modern Abu Zenima) there are two main routes by which Israel could have passed up to Mt. Sinai, a northern route and a southern route. Each of these two routes could have been entered by two different valleys (wadies). Both would be about the same length, about one hundred and ten miles. We feel the southern route is much the more probable. But no one can be completely certain.

## The Northern Route

The northern route would primarily pass through the sandy plain of Debbet er Ramleh (the "Plain of Sand"). This lies south of the mountain range called Jebel et-Tih ("Mt. of the Wandering") and north of the granite mountains of southern Sinai. If this route is the true one, then the Wilderness of Sin is probably the Debbet er-Ramleh.

This northern route could have been entered from Israel's seaside encampment, by "backing up" northward via the Wady Taiyibeh. After six or seven miles this wady turns abruptly eastward, where it is called the Wady Hamr (or Humur), and goes into the sandy plains.

This northern route could also have been entered if Israel had travelled SE along the seacoast about ten miles into the barren plain of El Murkha (which we feel is the true Wilderness of Sin). They could go east across this plain, and enter a narrow wady and follow it northeastward twenty miles (or thereabouts), where it enters the sandy plains near Debbet er Ramleh.

The northern route would have taken Israel to within ten miles of the ruins now called Serabit-el-Khadim. Numerous scholars suggest that this is the site of Dophka (Num. 33:12). We can see no cause for this identification. Serabit is off from the main trails. It was an Egyptian mining location (turquoise and copper). An Egyptian temple to the goddess Hathor was there. Egyptian troops were stationed there both before and after the

time of Moses. They would not have really gone "*from* the Wilderness of Sin" (Debbet el Ramleh) in going to Serabit, for the sandy plains extend far on east of Serabit. Therefore, it does not appear to us as even a remote possibility of being the site of Dophka.

The northern route would primarily move southeastward. Eventually it would enter the valley of the *Wady 'Esh*. Some identify this with *Alush* on the basis of the remote resemblance between the names.

Finally the route would join the Wadi esh-Sheikh about fifteen miles north of Mt. Sinai. The Sheikh valley goes directly south into the plain of Er-Rahah at the north foot of Mt. Sinai.

### The Southern Route

The southern passage route is the route via the Wady Feiran and its north branch, the Wady esh-Sheikh. The Wady Feiran is the largest Wady in southern Sinai, and extends a little over eighty miles from its mouth to the region of Jebel Musa (the Mount of Moses, or Mt. Sinai).

To enter the Wady Feiran passage, we feel that Israel came southeastward from its seaside encampment into the great barren plain of El-Murkha (which contains the modern town of Abu Rudeis and its oil fields). This plain is about six by fifteen miles. We feel it is the true site of the Wilderness of Sin, where Israel first received the manna. Israel could depart from this plain at its south end, and after going no more than ten miles, with ridges of hills on their left (east), they would come to the mouth of the Wady Feiran, where they would turn eastward.

The Wady Feiran is one to two miles broad much of its way up to Sinai, but frequently narrows between mountains to the width of half or a third of a mile.<sup>3</sup>

Another route by which Israel might have entered the Feiran valley would have been to have left the Wilderness of Sin from its east side, near its south end, via the Valley (Wady) Sidri.

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<sup>3</sup>Bartlett, *Op. cit.*, p. 238.



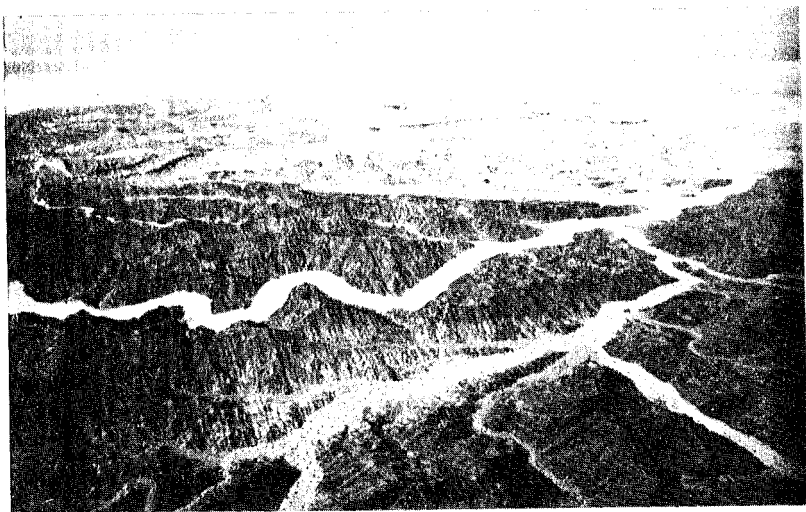
After going eastward about ten miles between hills, they would veer north to bypass a mountain. After going around northeast of this mountain, they would enter the Valley (Wady) *Mukkatab* (the "Written valley," so-called on account of the numerous Sinaitic inscriptions in it). This broad rather flat valley gradually rose as they journeyed SE about fifteen miles, where, after crossing a watershed, it would descend to the Wady Feiran. This entry into Feiran may have been Israel's actual passage route.

The Feiran zig-zags a great deal, but has an overall easterly direction. About forty miles up the Wady Feiran is the magnificent Oasis of Feiran ("The Pearl of the Desert"). Here pure sweet water flows in the valley. There are many lovely palm groves and other trees. High cliffs (800-900 feet) rise on every side.

Just to the south of this oasis about five miles stands the great Mt. Serbal (6,790 feet). From its peak one has a view spanning almost the entire length of the Gulf of Suez.

Just on the north side of the Oasis of Feiran is Mt. Tahuneh. A spot on this mountain has been called the Place of Moses' prayer (Ex. 17:11). The Oasis of Feiran has been identified as Rephidim, the place where the Amalekites attacked Israel. These proposed identifications are known to have been made at least as far back as A.D. 600. Nonetheless, we cannot accept the identifications, because Rephidim, where Moses prayed, seems to have been very much closer to Sinai than the Feiran Oasis. See Ex. 17:6; 18:5. It is possible that this Oasis was the site of *Alush*. *Dophka* would then have been some small oasis downstream (westward).

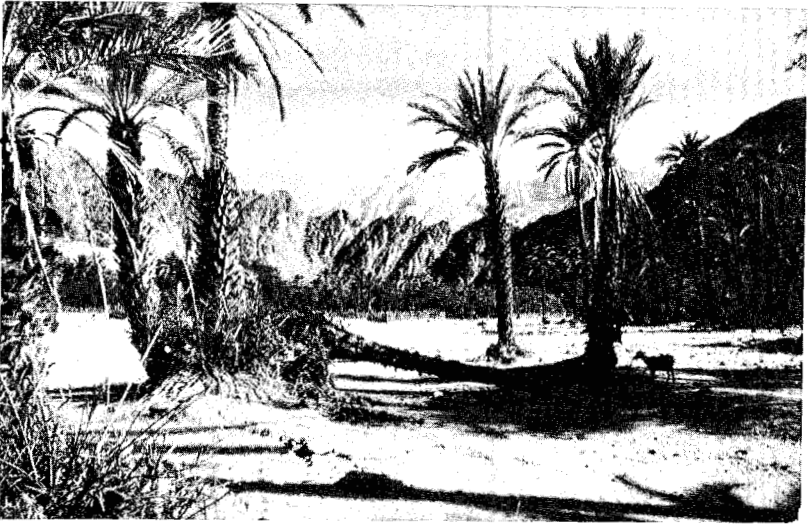
Israel most probably detoured left (north) off the Feiran into its northern branch, the Wady esh-Sheikh. This is the route usually followed by caravans even today. The Sheikh circles around the rugged hills lying northwest of Mt. Sinai, and then turns directly south toward Mt. Sinai, and enters into the plain Er-Rahah, lying at the north foot of Mt. Sinai. Er Rahah was almost certainly Israel's place of encampment before Mt. Sinai.



Exit of Wadi Feiran into the coastal plain. (Feiran is the light-colored dry brook channel coming in from the left.) The Red Sea Gulf of Suez is in background. View westward. (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)



Oasis in Wadi Feiran. The Israelites probably went through this wadi on their way up to Mt. Sinai. View west. (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)



Oasis in Wadi Feiran. This might be the site of Dophka or of Alush (Numbers 33:12-13). (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)



Summit of Mt. (Jebel) Serbal, looking SW towards the coastal plain south of modern Abu Rudeis. (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)

4. *What did the Israelites chide with Moses about? (17:2-3)*<sup>4</sup>

They had no water, and they demanded that Moses give them water. It was an angry confrontation. They did not just murmur; they *strove* with Moses. The verb translated "strove" (or "did chide" or "found fault") is the Hebrew *rib* (or *riv*), meaning to quarrel, strive, or contend. This word is the key to the passage, because it explains why the place was called *Meribah*, meaning strife, or argument. (Note the *rib* in *Meribah*.)

In demanding water, the Israelites used the plural pronoun: "You (plural, referring to both Moses and Aaron), give us water!"

Note that in 17:3 the Israelites accused Moses of trying to kill them. Compare 16:3. They asked, "Why did you bring *us* up out of Egypt, to kill *me* (singular) and *my* children?" The singular pronoun *me* seems to be used following the plural *us* to give special emphasis to the suffering of the children. For if the text had read *us*, the children would also have been implied.<sup>5</sup>

The reference to the Israelites' cattle indicates that they had many animals. See 12:38.

The previous deliverances of the Israelites from Egypt, and at the Sea, and at Marah should have produced in them a habit of trusting God in every emergency, and of trusting Moses. Surely Moses' leadership was by then thoroughly vindicated. Sadly, they were still ruled by an evil heart of unbelief (Heb. 3:12). They were never fully delivered from

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<sup>4</sup>Some critics assert that the first part of 17:1 is by one author (P), and then 17:1b-7 is by yet another author (J); but even this J section has been mixed with the writings of a third (E) author. Thus 17:1b-2 is assigned to J, and 17:3-6 to E. Cassuto (*Op cit.*, p. 201) well says concerning these unproven allegations, that in conformity with Biblical usage, which expresses things in coordinate rather than subordinate clauses (since Hebrew lacks many subordinating conjunctions), the opening part of Vs. 3 is to be understood as a subordinate clause, to wit, "Since the people thirsted for water, they complained against Moses. . . ." Verse two contains the general information about the accusations against Moses. Verse three gives a detailed account of the general statement. There is no necessity for assuming the existence of multiple sources.

<sup>5</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

this lack of faith in that whole generation. Forty years later at Kadesh-Barnea, they murmured for water once again, even after water was provided for them this time. See Num. 20:2-3.

God's people must expect to face problems, discomforts, dangers, and tribulation. They must be spiritually prepared to trust God when such experiences arrive.

5. *Did Moses trust God when they were without water? (17:2, 4)*

Definitely he did. He reproved the people saying, "Why do ye tempt the LORD?" ("Why do you put the LORD to the test?") In this situation Moses went and cried (prayed) to the Lord: "What shall I do for this people? They are almost ready to stone me!" The Israelites on several occasions were ready to stone leaders with whom they were displeased. See Num. 14:10; I Sam. 30:6.

Prayer was very characteristic of Moses. See Ex. 15:25; 32:31-32.

6. *How did Israel TEMPT God? (17:2, 7; Deut. 6:16; Psalm 78:18, 41)*

They tempted (or tested) the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?" To question God's reality, his presence, power, and concern for us is to *tempt* him.

Psalm 78:18 says that they tempted God by asking food for their desire (Heb. *nephesh*!) Seemingly they did not really need all they were demanding. They were asking for food to spend it on their pleasures (James 4:3).

God wanted to prove (test, tempt) Israel. Instead Israel proved the LORD. This was God's right, but not Israel's right. "Ye shall not tempt Jehovah your God, as ye tempted him in Massah." (Deut. 6:16; Matt. 4:7). Testing God shows a lack of faith.

7. *Who was with Moses when he went to provide water? (17:5-6)*

He took with him some men from the elders of Israel (not all of the elders). Regarding the elders, see 24:1,11; 4:29; 18:12.

The elders were to be the eyewitnesses of this miracle, that they might bear testimony to the unbelieving people.

Certainly there was not enough room around the rock for 600,000 men to crowd around Moses and see him do this. The fact that water did not flow from the rock until MOSES struck it was surely a powerful evidence that Moses was a divinely appointed leader.

Moses was to take with him the rod with which he had smitten the Nile river (7:20).

8. *What happened when Moses struck the rock?* (17:6)

The answer to this is vividly stated in Psalm 78:15-16: "He split the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink abundantly, as out of the depths (the sea). He brought forth STREAMS also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers."

The text says the waters went out FROM the rock. This suggests that the waters flowed TO the people, probably several miles.

I Cor. 10:4: "They did all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ." It was not Moses who produced the stream of water. Rather, the water was provided by Christ, who is the spiritual rock. Christ "followed them" so as to be with them always to provide their needs. In the same way he is always available to us to provide our spiritual and material needs.

9. *Where was God when Moses struck the rock?* (17:6)

He stood before Moses upon the rock in Horeb (Mt. Sinai). We suppose that the statement "I shall stand" meant "My pillar of cloud shall stand." Here again God condescended to man's level by manifesting Himself in one spot, though He fills heaven and earth.

10. *By what names did Moses call the place where water was provided?* (17:7)

He called it *Massah* (meaning tempting, or proving) and *Meribah* (meaning strife, chiding, or quarrelling).

The word *Massah* is derived from the verb (*nasah*) meaning to prove or test. This verb is used in 17:3 and 16:4. We must not read into the word *tempt* here the idea of moral

temptation, but only the idea of testing.

Ps. 95:8: "Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness. Compare Num. 20:13.

Ps. 81:7: "I proved thee at the waters of Meribah."

Num. 14:22: "... because all those men that have seen my glory, and my signs, which I wrought in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have *tempted* me these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice."

The name *Meribah* was also given to a second place where God miraculously provided water from a rock (See Numbers 20:1, 13). But the events occurred in different places and forty years apart in time. It may seem a little surprising that two places should get the same nickname. But it is by no means impossible.<sup>6</sup>

The two stories of God's providing water for Israel (in Ex. 16 and Num. 20) occur near the start of the wilderness wanderings and near its close. This suggests the continuity of God's care and of Israel's unbelief.

#### 11. *Was the water-from-rock event a miracle?*

This seems like an obvious question to which the answer would be YES. We accept it as a miracle. Christ, the spiritual rock, brought water from a rock of flint (Deut. 8:15).

However, some semi-natural explanations for it have been suggested. Cassuto tells of an English army officer over a Sudanese camel corps in southern Sinai, who, when seeking to discover the source of water dripping between pebbles in a gravel heap by a cliff, struck the outer face of the cliff a hard knock, fracturing it, and an abundance of water began to flow. The scripture does not suggest that Moses fractured the rock, releasing a barely-shut-in vein of water.

A very extreme view is that of Noth, who felt that the water came from the rock in such a way that those who went there could only think that at one time the rock had been made to

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<sup>6</sup>Martin Noth (*op. cit.*, p. 140) thinks that the two events were actually only one event but that we have two versions of the one story. The scripture, however, clearly distinguishes the two events.

produce water in a miraculous way. This is an example of the astounding lengths to which people will go to avoid accepting the scripture accounts of miracles.

Josephus (*Ant.* II, i, 7) says that Moses informed the people that a river should run for their sakes out of the rock. Also, when it happened, "they were astonished at this wonderful effect; and, as it were, quenched their thirst by the very sight of it." (That is a BIG yarn!)

12. *What hostile tribe fought with Israel at Rephidim? (17:8)*

Amalek (the Amalekites) fought Israel. Amalek was a grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:12); the Amalekites were his descendants. These people are mentioned at least twenty-five times in the Old Testament. Amalek feared not God (Deut. 25:17-18). As Israel passed through the wadies (valleys) on the way to Mt. Sinai, they got strung out into a column perhaps ten miles long. Amalek smote the stragglers at the rear of the column when they were weary and faint (Deut. 25:19). These Amalekites were nomads. We read of their presence in northern Sinai, near Kadesh (Gen. 14:7). They dwelt in the Negev, the semi-desert area of southern Palestine from Beersheba south (Num. 13:29).

The exact cause of Amalek's hostility is not stated. Perhaps it harks back to the ancient feud between Jacob and Esau over the birthright and blessing (Gen. 27:41). More probably it was precipitated by the fear of the Amalekites that the Israelites would occupy all the good pasture spots and springs in Sinai. There the grass dries up in the lower districts by the beginning of summer, and the nomads seek pasture at the cooler heights, the very area where the Israelites were now entering. Therefore, they fell upon Israel, to destroy them if possible. We suppose that this occurred in the Sheikh valley (Wady) north of Mt. Sinai.

God had provided Israel with food and water. Now He must save them from attack by an enemy. This was absolutely necessary, if God was to be triumphant for His people.

13. *Whom did Moses send to lead Israel in battle? (17:9-10)*

He sent Joshua, who is mentioned here for the first time in



the scripture. Moses did not need to explain to the original readers of Exodus who Joshua was. By the time the book had been written, Joshua had become well-known to them.

Joshua had been a tribal chieftan of the tribe of Ephraim (Num. 13:8). His name had originally been *Hoshea* (meaning salvation). To the name *Hoshea* Moses added God's name *Yah* (or *Jah*), making his name Joshua (Heb. *Yehoshua*'), meaning "Jehovah is salvation."

We are impressed with Joshua's faith, courage, and immediate obedience. For forty years he was Moses' principal minister. See Ex. 24:13; 32:17. He became the leader of Israel after Moses died, and led in the conquest of Canaan. His name in Greek is *Jesus*, and the King James Bible refers to him as *Jesus* in Acts 7:45 and Heb. 4:8.

14. *Where did Moses go during the battle?* (17:9-10)

He went to the top of the hill with the rod of God in his hand.

Note that the rod is again called the "rod of God," as it was back in Ex. 4:20. We suppose that Moses had received instructions from God about going up onto the hill while Joshua was fighting Amalek.

We suppose that the hill was the height now called Fureia (or Feria), on the very north side of the plain Er-Rahah. The traditional location is just north of the great Oasis in Wady Feiran, on Mt. Tahuneh. S. C. Bartlett, who climbed these hills, thought that a hill called Jebel Shiah, just to the west of Mt. Tahuneh, was more likely the place, since it commanded a much wider range of view than Mt. Tahuneh. Bartlett felt that the Amalekites were contesting the Israelites for possession of the great Oasis of Feiran, which was certainly a prize worth fighting for.

These proposed locations of the hill of Moses' prayer do not seem to us to harmonize with the clear statements that the site of the battle at Rephidim was very close to Mt. Sinai (Horeb).

15. *Who accompanied Moses to the hill top? Why?* (17:10-12)

Aaron (Moses' brother) and Hur accompanied Moses, to

help him keep his arms uplifted.

Hur is mentioned again in Ex. 24:14: "Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a legal matter, let him approach them." A man named Hur is named in Ex. 31:2 as the grandfather of Bezalel, a builder of the tabernacle. So also in I Chron. 2:3-5, 18-20. However, we cannot be certain that the Hur of Ex. 31 is the same man as Hur in Ex. 17:10. Josephus (*Ant.* III, ii, 4) says that Hur was the husband of Miriam. We do not know whether this tradition is true or false.

16. *What was the significance of Moses lifting up his hands? (17:11)*

It meant victory if he did and defeat if he did not!

We feel that the lifting up of his hands was an act of prayer. The expression "lifting up the hands" frequently refers to prayer. (See Ps. 28:2; I Tim. 2:8; Ps. 63:4). The lowering of the hands was a sign of ceasing to pray.

The weariness that soon comes when we try to hold our arms up-lifted for long periods is familiar to all. Moses' hands soon became "heavy." When his hands came down, Amalek began to win the battle. So Aaron and Hur seated Moses upon a stone, and helped him hold his hands uplifted till the sun went down that day.

Because the text does not specifically mention Moses as praying, some interpreters feel that the lifting of his hands and the rod had other significance. Some say it was a signal to do battle (as in Joshua 8:18). Others propose that some mysterious force was thought to radiate from the rod of Moses. (This view is sheer blasphemy.) Yet others have thought that the lifting up the hand and rod was the sign of some oath (Gen. 14:22), putting Amalek under a ban or curse of complete destruction. None of these views seem very satisfactory.

At the very least, we can say that Moses' lifting up his hands pointed toward God as their only strength for victory. It is difficult for us to think that Moses was not praying, considering how often he prayed on other occasions.

Ponder the mixture of human effort and divine power needed for victory. Israel had to fight, but they won only by the power of God. The dividing line between natural effort and supernatural help is often difficult to pinpoint in our experience. The child of God must perceive that both are real and both are necessary for victory.

17. *How severe was the battle with Amalek? (17:11-13)*

It lasted all day. This indicates both the strength and determination of their assailants. It started as a hyena-like attack on the Israelite stragglers, but it developed into a massive battle. Israel had full opportunity to use the weapons they took as they went up armed out of Egypt (13:18). There are times when God's people must fight. See Luke 22:36.

Joshua "discomfited" Amalek. This unusual verb seems to mean "prostrated," or "mowed down," or "disabled." There were many casualties inflicted in close combat "with the edge of the sword." (This expression often indicates a great slaughter of the enemy. See Josh. 6:21; 8:24; Num. 21:24.)

18. *What was to be written in a book? (17:14)*

Moses was told by God to write in a book that He would utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. They would be exterminated from the earth.

The prophecy of Amalek's future annihilation was also given in later prophecies. See Num. 24:20. Deut. 25:17-19.

It was centuries before this prophecy was fulfilled. In the time of king Saul (1050-1010 B.C., about 400 years after Moses' time), God sent Saul to wipe out the Amalekites (I Sam. 15:2-3). Saul did not fully do this. In the time of king Hezekiah (728-696 B.C.) the remnant of the Amalekites (in one area anyway) were smitten. We read no more about them after that. (I Chron. 4:41-43)

Ponder the fact that God's promises and threats will certainly be fulfilled, even if it takes centuries, and even if we do not live to see it done. God does not look at time as we do (II Pet. 3:8).

Does the Bible say that Moses wrote the words in A book

or in THE book? Was this the start of a new book, or was it added to the book Moses already was writing? As the Hebrew text now reads, it says "in *the* book." However, this reading depends on the vowel marking, and the vowels were not added to the Hebrew Bible until A.D. 500-900. Obviously, the later Jewish rabbis who added the vowels to the text thought that it meant "in *the* book," although the consonants can be read either way. (Ancient Hebrew was written with consonants only.) The Greek Bible is similarly indefinite as to whether it says *A* book or *THE* book.

19. *What does the command to write indicate about the writing of the book of Exodus?* (17:14)

It indicates that Moses was proficient in writing, but it really tells little about the composition of Exodus. Num. 33:2 says that Moses wrote all the places where Israel encamped, by the command of the Lord. Probably Moses had therefore been doing a little writing as they journeyed, although he surely had very little time to do this during their marches.

Other references to writing in Exodus include 24:4 ("And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD"), and 34:27 ("The Lord said to Moses, Write down these words").

The Egyptians were thorough recorders of all types of family and business records. Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. He surely knew several languages.

We suspect that the document Moses wrote about the Amalekites was a separate roll at first, and was later incorporated into the entire book of Exodus. This was done most likely during the forty years of wandering around Kadesh-Barnea, after Israel left Mt. Sinai.

20. *What did Moses build, and what did he call it?* (17:15)

He built an altar after the victory over Amalek, and called the name of it *Jehovah-nissi*, which means The LORD is my banner.

The meaning seems to be that the name of Jehovah is the true banner under which victory is certain.

There are numerous cases in the scripture where memorial names were given to altars or special spots. Jacob built an

altar and called the place "God of the house of God" (*El-Bethel*). See Gen. 35:7; 31:46-47; 22:14; 16:14; 29:18-19.

21. *What did Moses prophesy about Amalek?* (17:16)

Very literally translated, 17:16 says,

"For (because) a hand upon (or against) the throne of Jah;  
War for Jehovah with Amalek from generation, generation."

To us this seems to say simply that because the hand (or power) of Amalek was lifted against the throne of Yah, or Jehovah, Jehovah would have war with Amalek through every generation. The expression, "God's *throne*" implies His kingdom, which included His people Israel.

The verse is confessedly difficult, and anyone acquainted with it knows that there are several interpretations of it.

The first difficulty is this: Whose *hand* is referred to in the phrase "A *hand* upon the throne"?

(1) Is it *God's* hand upon the throne? Some understand it this way, and take the verse to mean, "Jah hath sworn (with his hand upon his throne), Jehovah will have war. . . ." As we take an oath with our hand upon a Bible, so Jehovah makes an oath with his hand upon his throne. To us this seems a poor interpretation. Jehovah can swear by nothing greater than Himself (Heb. 6:13). Why should it strengthen His oath to lay his hand upon his throne? Furthermore, we have no other examples of God's taking an oath in this manner.

(2) Is it the hand of *Israel* (or Moses)? This view would give the meaning that Israel lifted up its hand toward the throne of God in heaven, in cooperation with God's war against Amalek. This view is more acceptable. It does leave unanswered the question as to why there should be a shift between *Israel's* declaration in the first line of the prophecy, and *God's* declaration in the second line.

(3) Is it the hand of *Amalek*? We prefer this view. It makes clear why Jehovah decreed war against Amalek from generation to generation. (To adopt this view we must assume that the preposition *al* means *against*. This is a common meaning for it, as in Ezek. 5:8, although it usually means on, or upon, or above, etc.)

(4) Could the *hand* refer to the altar just built by Moses? The Hebrew word for hand (*yad*) also means *monument*. According to this view, the altar was a monument (or hand) to Jehovah's throne, or rule, which had been challenged by Amalek.

Another difficulty is in the word translated *throne* (Heb., *kes*). This is an unusual spelling for *throne*, which is usually *kise'*. Cassuto thinks that *kes* means a plan or reckoning, and thinks that it refers to the Lord's plan to blot out Amalek's memory. This interpretation makes the first part of the quotation difficult to understand.

Other interpreters propose altering the spelling of throne (*kes*) to the word for banner (*nes*), and thus making it refer back to the *banner* of the LORD mentioned in vs. 15. R.S.V. accepts this conjectural change, and translates the passage "A hand upon the banner of the LORD." We feel that the verse makes good sense without making changes in the Hebrew text that have no support in the ancient manuscripts.

Even the translators of the Greek O.T. seem to have had difficulty with Exodus 17:16. The Greek reads, "For with a *secret* hand the LORD wages war upon Amalek from generation to generation." There was surely nothing secret about the way the LORD fought with Amalek!

The general idea that the Lord was going to fight Amalek always is clear from the verse. The exact wording for a translation remains a problem.

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## THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**18** Now Je-thro, the priest of Mid-i-an, Mo-ses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Mo-ses, and for Is-ra-el his people, how that Je-ho-vah had brought Is-ra-el out of E-gypt.  
(2) And Je-thro, Mo-ses' father-in-law, took Zip-po-rah, Mo-ses'

wife, after he had sent her away, (3) and her two sons; of whom the name of the one was Ger-shom; for he said, I have been a sojourner in a foreign land: (4) and the name of the other was E-li-e-zer; for *he said*, The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pha-raoh. (5) And Je-thro, Mo-ses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife unto Mo-ses into the wilderness where he was encamped, at the mount of God: (6) and he said unto Mo-ses, I, thy father-in-law Je-thro, am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her. (7) And Mo-ses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent. (8) And Mo-ses told his father-in-law all that Je-ho-vah had done unto Pha-raoh and to the E-gyp-tians for Is-ra-el's sake, all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how Je-ho-vah delivered them. (9) And Je-thro rejoiced for all the goodness which Je-ho-vah had done to Is-ra-el, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the E-gyp- tians. (10) And Je-thro said, Blessed be Je-ho-vah, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the E-gyp-tians, and out of the hand of Pha-raoh; who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the E-gyp-tians. (11) Now I know that Je-ho-vah is greater than all gods; yea, in the thing wherein they dealt proudly against them. (12) And Je-thro, Mo-ses' father-in-law, took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God: and Aar-on came and all the elders of Is-ra-el, to eat bread with Mo-ses father-in-law before God.

(13) And it came to pass on the morrow, that Mo-ses sat to judge the people: and the people stood about Mo-ses from the morning unto the evening. (14) And when Mo-ses' father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand about thee from morning unto even? (15) And Mo-ses said unto his father-in-law, Because the people come unto me to inquire of God: (16) when they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between a man and his neighbor, and I make them know the statutes of God, and his laws. (17) And Mo-ses' father-in-law said unto him, The thing that thou doest

is not good. (18) Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for the thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. (19) Harken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God be with thee: be thou for the people to Godward, and bring thou the causes unto God: (20) and thou shalt teach them the statutes and the laws, and shalt show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. (21) Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: (22) and let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge themselves: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear *the burden* with thee. (23) If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people also shall go to their place in peace. (24) So Mo-ses hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said. (25) And Mo-ses chose able men out of all Is-ra-el, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. (26) And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Mo-ses, but every small matter they judged themselves. (27) And Mo-ses let his father-in-law depart; and he went his way into his own land.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER EIGHTEEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading propose a topic or theme for Ex. 18.
2. What had Jethro heard about? (18:1)
3. Whom did Jethro bring with him when he came to Moses? (18:2-3)



4. What did the names of Moses' two sons mean? (18:3-4)
  5. What formalities began the meeting of Moses and Jethro? (18:5-7)
  6. What did Moses tell Jethro about? (18:8)
  7. What was Jethro's reaction to Moses' report? (18:9)
  8. What did Jethro learn about the LORD from Moses' report? (18:11)
  9. What priestly act did Jethro perform? (18:12)
  10. How long did the people stand around Moses? Why? (18:13)
  11. From whom did Moses get knowledge to make judgments? (18:15)
  12. What did Jethro advise Moses to do? (18:20, 22)
  13. Over what groups were judges and rulers to be appointed? (18:21, 25)
  14. Did Moses hearken to the advice of his father-in-law? (18:24)
  15. Who judged the small cases? (18:26)
  16. Where did Jethro go after the visit? (18:27)
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#### EXODUS EIGHTEEN: JETHRO'S VISIT AND JUDGES APPOINTED

- I. Jethro's Visit; 18:1-12, 27.
  1. His coming; 18:1-6.
  2. His conversation with Moses; 18:7-11.
  3. His worship; 18:12.
- II. Judges Appointed; 18:13-26.
  1. Moses' labor; 18:13-16.
  2. Jethro's advice; 18:17-23.
  3. Moses' compliance; 18:24-26; Deut. 1:9-18.

#### EXODUS EIGHTEEN: JETHRO, A GOOD MAN

1. Kept informed about God and His people; 18:1.
2. Recognized Moses' just claims to his wife and sons; 18:2.
3. Courteous; 18:5-6.

4. Rejoiced in others' blessings; 18:9.
5. Praised the Lord; 18:10.
6. Worshipped; 18:12.
7. Gave good advice; 18:19-22.
8. Recognized God's final and supreme authority; 18:23.

## GODLY FAMILIES (Ex. 18:1-12)

1. Keep informed about one another; 18:1.
2. Seek association with one another; 18:2-5.
3. Courteous; 18:6-7.
4. Converse on the things of God; 18:8.
5. Bring spiritual blessings to one another; 18:10-11.
6. Worship together; 18:12.

## THE FOLLY OF ONE-MAN RULE (18:13-23)

1. Overburdens one individual; 18:18.
2. Delays justice; wears out the people; 18:18.
3. Interferes with the most important work; 18:19-20. Acts 6:2, 4.
  - a. Going "Godward" for the people; 18:19.
  - b. Teaching statutes and laws; 18:20.
4. Leaves many useful people unemployed; 18:21.

## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

1. *What is the subject matter of Exodus 18?*

It tells of the coming of Jethro with Moses' wife and sons to Moses (18:1-12). Then it tells of Jethro's suggestion to Moses that he appoint judges to help him govern the people. We entitle the chapter JETHRO AND THE JUDGES.

2. *What spiritual implications can we observe in chapter eighteen?*

We can see one of the fulfillments of God's promise to Abraham: "I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse" (Gen. 12:3). Jethro blessed the

LORD and His people Israel. As a result Jethro and his descendants received rich blessings after that.

We can also see the fulfillment of another part of God's promise to Abraham: "In thy seed shall all the *nations* of the earth *be blessed*" (Gen. 22:18). Jethro was a non-Israelite who was blessed because of his association with the "seed" (descendants) of Abraham.

Consider the *joy* which God brings to nations that are friendly to His people: "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people" (Deut. 32:43).

In the coming of Jethro to Moses there is a resemblance between Moses and the Lord Jesus. Many nations hated Moses and the Israelites (for example, the Amalekites). Many peoples hated Christ Jesus (Acts 4:26-27). But a few, like Jethro, came to Moses. Similarly a few people of other nations came to Jesus, "ill at ease in the old dispensation," seeking the things of God. See John 12:20-21; Matt. 2:1-2. Jethro was the first-fruits of many heathen who would later come seeking the living God.

### 3. *What had Jethro heard about?* (18:1)

He had heard about all that God had done for Moses and for Israel his people. Jethro had kept informed of the progress and fortunes of Israel since they left Egypt. The news about Israel's deliverance from Egypt was widely known in all the nations around Egypt. See 15:14ff.

Regarding the name of Jethro and his office as priest, see the notes on 2:16-18; 3:1.

It is notable that Jethro had heard that the LORD (Jehovah) had brought Israel out. Even the word-of-mouth reports about Israel gave credit to Jehovah and not to Moses only. Apparently even Jehovah's name had become known.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Greek LXX translates both the Hebrew words *elohim* (God) and *Yahweh* (the LORD) in Ex. 18:1 as *kurios*, or Lord. This is an illustration of the frequent lack of consistency in the LXX renderings of the divine names. This creates problems for those who desire to divide up the Biblical text according to the "sources" they think they can detect on the basis of the use of different divine names.

The name *Jethro* and the title *father-in-law* give some interpreters a bit of trouble. There is only one Hebrew word (*hothen*) for both father-in-law and brother-in-law. This term is applied to Hobab in Judges 4:11, where it is translated *father-in-law* in King James and R.S.V., but *brother-in-law* in A.S.V. Since Hobab was the son of Reuel (or Jethro; Ex. 2:18; 3:1; Num. 10:29), we are sure that Hobab was Moses' wife's brother, Moses' brother-in-law.

4. *Whom did Jethro bring with him?* (18:2-4)

He brought Zipporah, Moses' wife, and her two sons, Gershom and Eliezer.

We last read of these in 4:24-26. Moses had sent them back to Midian after the difficulty at the inn. Some have felt that Moses sent them back from Egypt during the conflict with Pharaoh. There is, however, no hint that they were with Moses when he met Aaron at the mount of God, or any time after that. See 4:27. We feel that Zipporah and the sons returned to Midian shortly after the inn experience.

We admire Moses' self-restraint and faith in getting along without dissatisfaction on his part because of his separation from them. This separation had lasted no less than six months, and probably longer. (Mark 10:29-30)

Regarding the meanings of the names *Gershom*<sup>2</sup> and *Eliezer*,<sup>3</sup> see notes on 2:22.

John Davis wisely cautions that it is precarious to attempt to analyze the whole character and disposition of some Old Testament person on the basis of the etymology of his name alone. That is true; but sometimes the names do have significance which we ought to notice clearly.

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<sup>2</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 187, suggests that Gershom's name is derived from the verb *garash*, meaning to drive or thrust away. This is possible, but we still prefer the usual explanation, "a stranger there."

<sup>3</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 187, argues that Moses' use of the name *Eliezer* (a name containing *El* as the divine name) supports the view that the name *Yahweh* was unknown until Moses' vision (sic!) at the burning bush at Sinai! To assert this is to deny the historical accuracy of all the uses of the name *Yahweh* (Jehovah) in Genesis (as in Gen. 22:14).

It appears to us that Gershom was probably much older than Eliezer, having been born near the start of Moses' stay in Midian and Elizer near its end. This would make Zipporah a rather elderly mother at Eliezer's birth, perhaps sixty years old. All this is rather uncertain, however.

5. *Where did Jethro meet Moses?* (18:5)

He met him at the mount of God, at Rephidim. See 19:2. This location appears to have been very close to Sinai, in the Wady esh-Sheikh, perhaps within ten miles of Sinai. Probably Moses' camp was somewhat in advance of most of the Israelites' tents. See 19:1; 18:5.

The events at Rephidim - the water from the rock, the war with Amalek, and Jethro's visit - all occupied only fifteen days. See 16:1 and 19:1.

6. *How did Jethro greet Moses?* (18:6-7)

With all the ceremony and exuberance of an Arab greeting!

First, Jethro, as he came near to Moses' dwelling, sent word ahead: "I, thy father-in-law Jethro, am come unto thee. . . ." (The Greek and Samaritan Bibles render this, "Behold, thy father-in-law Jethro is come." This puts the announcement into the mouths of others, rather than from Jethro himself.)

Moses then went out to meet Jethro. Moses bowed before Jethro. (Compare Gen. 43:26, 28.) Then he kissed him (probably on both cheeks). (Compare Ex. 4:27.) They asked one another about their welfare. Arabs still make a big ceremony out of greetings. No business can be discussed until all the personal news has been inquired into. (We rather like this. People are more important than business anytime.) The word translated *welfare* ("they asked each other of their *welfare*") is the Hebrew *shalom*, or peace.

Moses respected Jethro for his wisdom as well as his age and for being his father-in-law. Such humility and respect for age is not popular in our times, but it is highly commended in the scriptures, and needs to be restored.

7. *What did Moses report to Jethro?* (18:8)

He reported all that JEHOVAH had done. He gave all the credit to Jehovah, which was surely the right thing to do. Notice that Moses used the divine name *Jehovah* (Yahweh) in reporting God's deeds for them. Note also that the text says God had done these things "for Israel's sake." Israel was God's son, His firstborn (4:23), His people (7:4). How gracious God had been to Israel on their journey in the face of Israel's almost-constant murmuring and disobedience! Moses also told Jethro of the travail and hardship they had endured on the way, and how Jehovah had delivered them from all of it. Compare Num. 20:14. Interestingly, the text does not suggest that Moses related to Jethro about the rebelliousness of the people,

8. *How did Jethro react to the news from Moses?* (18:9-10)

He *rejoiced*.<sup>4</sup> Then he blessed Jehovah for delivering the people. Compare I Kings 8:56.

Jethro was a good man. He could rejoice with them that rejoice. He had no jealousy or cynicism. He was a lover of good. He was glad to see how greatly his son-in-law had advanced from sheepherding!

The R.S.V. reading of 18:10-11 is an example of the numerous arbitrary renderings in that version that so impair the usefulness of the R.S.V. Old Testament. The last phrase of verse ten ("who hath delivered . . . from . . . Egyptians") is removed and placed in the middle of verse eleven. The King James and A.S.V. follow the Hebrew reading. The Greek reading omits the last clause of vs. 10, and in this the R.S.V. follows the Greek. But the insertion of the last phrase of verse ten into the middle of eleven has neither the support of the Greek nor the Hebrew Bible.

Cassuto<sup>5</sup> helpfully says that the three-fold use of the word *deliverance* in vss. nine and ten is intended for emphasis, and

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<sup>4</sup>The Greek Bible here reads "He was amazed" (or "shuddered"). This is based on a Jewish interpretation, which is recorded in a *Midrash* written in later centuries. See Cassuto, *op. cit.*, pp. 215-216.

<sup>5</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 216.

that the omission of the last clause in the LXX, although accepted by many scholars, is only due to lack of understanding! We agree.

9. *What testimony about Jehovah did Jethro make? (18:11)*

Jethro said, "Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all gods, yea (He is greater even) in the thing wherein they (the gods) acted haughtily against them" (against the Israelites).

Jehovah excelled the gods of Egypt in the very thing in which their gods (and their worshippers) haughtily claimed superiority (such as the power to preserve their people). Jethro rightly perceived that the struggles among nations were conflicts of principalities and powers, conflicts between spiritual powers in high places.<sup>6</sup> Compare Ephesians 6:12; 3:10.

Jethro's declaration that he now recognizes Jehovah's great superiority is in conflict with the so-called Kenite theory, namely that Moses first learned of Jehovah as a God from the Midianites, or Kenites, of whom Jethro was one. Jethro learned about Jehovah from Moses and not Moses from Jethro. The Bible clearly indicates that Israel's forefathers had known Jehovah since the very beginning.

On the other hand we do not assume that Jethro did not at least know the name of Jehovah and a little bit about Him. The use of the word *now* in 18:11 contrasts present knowledge with former knowledge, not present knowledge with former total ignorance of Jehovah.

10. *What religious ceremony did Jethro perform? (18:12)*

He offered a burnt offering and sacrifices to God. After this Aaron and the elders came and ate bread with Jethro.

The fact that Aaron and the elders came stresses the validity of Jethro's priesthood. He was a legitimate priest before God, like Melchizedek.

The act of eating together shows that a bond of community and harmony was established between them and Jethro.

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<sup>6</sup>Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

Aaron had not actually met Jethro previously.

Jethro offered his sacrifices to *God (elohim)*. This is a very striking expression. In no other account of sacrifices in the book of the law (Gen. to Deut.) is a sacrifice offered to *God*; it is always to *Jehovah* (the LORD, Yahweh). Inasmuch as *Jehovah* is the covenant name which God used to designate Himself as the God of the chosen people, we suppose that the unique use of the term *God* here with reference to sacrifice was employed because Jethro was an alien. Despite his declaration about Jehovah's greatness, he had not yet attained to the covenant relationship with Yahweh that Israel had.

What were the sacrifices that Jethro offered like? We surely know very little about the sacrifices practiced before the time of the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai. Details of how the offerings were made and what was offered are not preserved for us. We read of offerings by Abel, Noah, Abraham, and others. From archaeological sources we know that even the pagan Canaanites (at Ugarit) in the time of Moses made offerings which had names like those made by the Israelites - peace offerings, trespass (or guilt) offerings, burnt offerings, etc.<sup>7</sup>

We do know this much: since the very beginning God has required *blood* sacrifices from His worshippers. Without shedding of blood there is no release from sins (Heb. 9:22). In our times we cannot be right with God without accepting the blood of His son Jesus as our covering (or atonement) for sins.

The expression "before God" in 18:12 does not imply that the tabernacle had yet been built and that this visit of Jethro occurred later and is out of chronological position, as numerous interpreters assert. Any sacrifice offered in genuine worship of God or in an act of seeking God's favor will be "before God."

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<sup>7</sup>Millar Burrows, *What Mean These Stones?* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1957), p. 234.



11. *What was the significance of Jethro's visit to Israel and Moses?*

Certainly it must have been very reassuring. Moses had had nothing but trouble and contention with Israel from the outset of their trip. There had been hunger, thirst, quarrelling, and attack by enemies. Jethro's friendly visit was surely a lift for their spirits.

Cassuto (a Jewish scholar) feels that the favor shown to Israel by Jethro was indicative of the wonderful destiny of the children of Israel, and of their election (God's choosing them) shortly to come up at Mt. Sinai. Cassuto entitles chapter eighteen "Israel welcomed as one of the nations of the world." To a degree he is correct in this. However, Israel's "welcome" was by NO means the unanimous sentiment of the surrounding nations!

12. *What did Jethro see Moses doing? (18:13-14)*

He saw him the next day spending all the day judging disputes between Israelites. The Israelites had said harsh things against Moses, but they sought him in times of disagreement among themselves.

It has been supposed that the division of the spoil of the Amalekites created numerous disagreement which demanded impartial decisions on the part of Moses. This may have been true, but we do not know for certain.

Note that the people *stood* before Moses, but he *sat*. These were customary positions for litigants and judges.

Probably the expression "from morning unto evening" should not be taken to mean every second of all that time.

13. *What did Moses make known to the people? (18:15-16)*

He made known unto them the will of God in cases of dispute. He taught them the statutes (ordinances) of God and His laws.

Moses was unique among prophets in that God spoke to him face to face (mouth to mouth). Num.12:7. The Lord knew Moses face to face (Deut. 34:10). If Moses did not know God's judgment on a matter, he would pray and then listen to what the Lord commanded about it. See Num. 9:6, 8.

The people seemed to accept Moses' judgments as God's, at least in their cooler moments.

At the foundation of this passage is the profound truth that all justice issues from God! Every judge, lawyer, and citizen needs to recognize this. Without God there is no real justice.

Of course, the statutes of God had not yet been issued in written form in the manner that they were soon written thereafter at Sinai (Ex. 21:1ff).

14. *Why was Moses' work as judge not good?* (18:17-18)

It was not good because he could not handle it all alone as he was trying to do. He was wearing himself out, and wearing the people out too, because they had to stand in line for long hours in the desert sunshine waiting for their cases to be heard.

Like many a Christian leader, Moses was wearing himself out by unnecessarily trying to do everything single-handedly. This is not always the sign of overambition. Sometimes it is the mark of the overconscientious and the overanxious.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, it was wearing out the people, a problem often overlooked. Delay in administering justice was one of the causes of Absalom's revolt against David (II Sam. 15:1-6).

We feel that Jethro's warning and his advice to Moses were good. Moses himself acknowledged that he could not "carry" all the people "because it is too burdensome for me" (Num. 11:14). Another time he asked, "How can I bear the load and burden of you?" (Deut. 1:12) Even our Lord once told His apostles to "Come ye yourselves apart . . . and rest" (Mark 6:31).

15. *What responsibility was Moses to keep for himself?* (18:19-20, 22)

(1) He would be the representative of the people before God. No one else could do that job as Moses could. (2) He would bring their causes unto God by prayer. (3) He would teach them statutes and laws. (4) He would judge

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<sup>8</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

only the hardest cases that other judges could not decide. Moses, like the apostles later (Acts 6:2, 4), dared not neglect the most important jobs of prayer and of teaching.

Jethro recognized Moses' unique relationship with God. By this relationship Moses could come "before God," or "Godward."

Jethro's words "And God be with you" seem to be a polite way of urging Moses to do as Jethro proposed. But it also carries the idea of submission to God's will, if God would not confirm his advice. See 18:23.

For Moses to show them "the way" was quite literal in Israel's case. But metaphorically it meant the way of life. Compare Gen. 6:12.

16. *What were the qualifications for Israel's judges?* (18:21-22)

(1) *Able* men. The word here translated "able" often means strength, usually physical. The Greek O.T. translates it *dunatos*, meaning strong, mighty, powerful. We suppose that the strength was more strength of character than of body. A judge must be tough-minded (but sometimes physically tough too!).

(2) *God-fearing*. (3) *Men of truth*. (4) Those *hating bribes*, unjust gain, or filthy lucre.

After the judges were selected, Moses gave them a marvelous charge. Read Deut. 1:16-17! Compare II Chron. 19:5-7.

17. *How many people did each judge handle?* (18:22, 25)

Some were over thousands, some hundreds, some fifties, some tens. Dividing these totals into Israel's population (600,000 men), we get about 78,600 judges!<sup>9</sup> This averaged out to about one judge in every family. Everyone in Israel was either involved as judge or was related to someone who was.

"At all seasons" (18:22) means "at all ordinary times."

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<sup>9</sup>Keil and Delitzsch and others argue that we need not assume the existence of many thousands of judges, because the judges were taken out of the heads of the tribes (Deut. 1:15), and these can hardly have amounted to many hundreds, to say nothing of many thousands. To this we can only ask, How can there have been judges over *tens* without using one-tenth of the total population?

Moses handled the most difficult cases.

18. *What would be the results of Moses' taking Jethro's advice?* (18:23)

(1) Moses would be able to endure his work load.

(2) The people of Israel would go to their place in peace. "Their place" was Canaan, of course. Jethro recognized this as the appointed and true home of Israel.

19. *When did Moses appoint all these judges?* (18:24-25)

Moses appointed them later, at Mt. Sinai. See Deut. 1:9-18. One gets the impression here in Ex. 18 that Moses at once appointed the judges. However, the text does not actually say that he did it that day. And upon a moment's reflection we realize that setting up a system of over 70,000 judges was not the work of a few minutes or even of a few days! We are not surprised therefore to find in Deut. 1:9-18 that the judges were appointed much later, near the end of their stay at Mt. Sinai of nearly a year.<sup>10</sup> We also learn that the people themselves selected their judges after Moses laid down the qualifications for them, an example later followed by the apostles (Acts 6:3). Moses probably did not even personally know very many of these judges.

This type of historical record, wherein related incidents are all fully presented in an unbroken section, even though that may mean getting ahead of the overall progress of a narrative, is not unusual in the Old Testament. One other example of this is the story of Caleb's inheriting Hebron. Compare Joshua 15:13-19 and Judges 1:1, 8-15.

Ex. 18:24 says "Moses hearkened" to Jethro. Meekness was a notable quality in Moses (Num. 12:3). Moses' willingness to obey God and to take good advice was part of his great strength of character.

20. *How did Jethro's visit end?* (18:27)

Moses let Jethro depart unto his own land, Midian. (See notes on Ex. 2:15 regarding the location of Midian.) We

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<sup>10</sup>The account in Numbers 11:10-16, 24-25 of Moses' appointing seventy elders to help him govern Israel has no connection with the event here.

suppose that Zipporah and the two sons stayed with Moses, though we read nothing more about their being with Moses. In the land of Canaan years later, we read of Moses' grandson (Gershom's son) Jonathan becoming an idolatrous priest. See Judges 18:30.

When Israel left Mt. Sinai, Moses requested Hobab, the son of Reuel (Jethro), to accompany them. See Num. 10: 29-32. The family of Hobab grew into the Kenite tribe dwelling among the Israelites. See Judges 1:16; 4:11, 17; I Sam. 15:6.

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### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**19** In the third month after the children of Is-ra-el were gone forth out of the land of E-gypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Si-nai. (2) And when they were departed from Reph-i-dim, and were come to the wilderness of Si-nai, they encamped in the wilderness; and there Is-ra-el encamped before the mount. (3) And Mo-ses went up unto God, and Je-ho-vah called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Is-ra-el: (4) Ye have seen what I did unto the E-gyp-tians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. (5) Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be mine own possession from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine: (6) and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Is-ra-el.

(7) And Mo-ses came and called for the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which Je-ho-vah commanded him. (8) And all the people answered together, and said, All that Je-ho-vah hath spoken we will do. And Mo-ses reported the words of the people unto Je-ho-vah. (9) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people

may hear when I speak with thee, and may also believe thee for ever. And Mo-ses told the words of the people unto Je-ho-vah. (10) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their garments, (11) and be ready against the third day; for the third day Je-ho-vah will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Si-nai. (12) And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: (13) no hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, he shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount. (14) And Mo-ses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their garments. (15) And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not near a woman.

(16) And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud; and all the people that were in the camp trembled. (17) And Mo-ses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. (18) And mount Si-nai, the whole of it, smoked, because Je-ho-vah descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. (19) And when the voice of the trumpet waxed louder and louder, Mo-ses spake, and God answered him by a voice. (20) And Je-ho-vah came down upon mount Si-nai, to the top of the mount: and Je-ho-vah called Mo-ses to the top of the mount; and Mo-ses went up. (21) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto Je-ho-vah to gaze, and many of them perish. (22) And let the priests also, that come near to Je-ho-vah, sanctify themselves, lest Je-ho-vah break forth upon them. (23) And Mo-ses said unto Je-ho-vah, The people cannot come up to mount Si-nai: for thou didst charge us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it. (24) And Je-ho-vah said unto him, Go, get thee down; and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aar-on

**with thee: but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto Je-ho-vah, lest he break forth upon them. (25) So Mo-ses went down unto the people, and told them.**

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**EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER NINETEEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE**

1. After careful reading propose a short topic or theme for the chapter.
2. In what month did Israel come into the Wilderness of Sinai? (19:1)
3. On what day of the month did they arrive? (19:1)
4. Where did Israel make its camp? (19:2)
5. Where did Moses go from the camp? (19:3)
6. Why was Israel called the "house of Jacob"? (19:3; 1:1-7; Gen. 46:1-4)
7. How had Israel been borne along on their journey? (19:4; Deut. 32:11)
8. To whom had Israel been brought? (19:4)
9. What conditions did Israel have to fulfill to become God's people? (19:5)
10. What would Israel be unto God? (19:5-6)
11. What is a "kingdom of priests"? (19:6; Compare I Peter 2:9)
12. To whom did Moses first report God's words? (19:7)
13. What was the response of the people? (19:8)
14. Where did Moses go after hearing the people's acceptance? (19:8)
15. In what manner would God come to Moses and Israel? (19:9)
16. How would God's coming affect the status of Moses? (19:9)
17. What preparations were the people to make before God's revelation of Himself? (19:10, 14)
18. When was God coming down? Who would see God come down? (19:11)
19. What was to be built around the mount? (19:12)

20. What was to be the punishment for touching the mount? (19:12-13)
  21. How were mountain-touchers to be handled? (19:13)
  22. What was to be the signal for them to draw near the mountain? (19:13)
  23. What restriction was imposed upon the people before God came down? (19:15)
  24. What was the appearance and the sound on Mt. Sinai as God came down? (19:16, 18)
  25. What was the reaction of the people as God came down? (19:16)
  26. What did Moses do when the cloud came down? (19:17)
  27. What voice came from the mount? (19:19)
  28. What warning was given to Moses? (19:21) Why the repetition of the command? (See 19:12)
  29. What *priests* are referred to in 19:22?
  30. What protest did Moses make about God's warning concerning the people's breaking through? (19:23)
  31. Was the warning really needed? (19:24-25)
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EXODUS NINETEEN: ISRAEL READY FOR GOD'S COVENANT  
(ISRAEL AT THE DOOR OF NATIONHOOD)

1. The journey completed; 19:1-2.
  2. The divine offers; 19:3-6.
  3. The personal pledges; 19:7-8.
  4. The sanctifying preparations; 19:9-16.
  5. The descent of God; 19:16-25.
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## THE LORD'S OFFER TO HIS PEOPLE (19:3-6)

## I. BACKED UP BY GOD'S PAST ACTS: (19:3-4)

1. What I did to the Egyptians.
2. How I bore you on Eagles' wings.
3. How I brought you to myself.

## II. CONDITIONED UPON OBEDIENCE: (19:5a)

1. Obey my voice.
2. Keep my covenant.

## III. BRINGS RICH HONORS: (19:5b-6)

1. You will be my own possession.
  2. You will be a kingdom of priests.
  3. You will be a holy nation.
- 

## SANCTIFIED TO MEET GOD (19:10-15)

1. Wash garments; (19:10; Rev. 7:14)
  2. Set bounds about the mount; (19:12)
  3. Abstinence; (19:15)
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## WHEN GOD COMES DOWN!! (19:16-25; John 6:38; 3:13)

1. Nature demonstrates; (19:16-18; Matt. 8:27)
  2. God's men are summoned; (19:19-20; Mark 3:13-14)
  3. Men must keep their distance; (19:21-24; Acts 5:13)
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## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER NINETEEN

1. *What is in Exodus nineteen?*

The chapter tells of the things that occurred just before God gave the covenant of the ten commandments. We call the chapter READY FOR GOD'S COVENANT. The people were made ready by (1) their arrival at the destination, Mt. Sinai (19:1-2); (2) God's promise to take them as His own (19:3-6); (3) Their public promise to obey God (19:7-8); (4) The Lord's last-minute instructions (19:9-15); (5) The Lord's descent upon the mount (19:16-25).

The Greek version of Ex. 19:1 contains the word *exodos*, from which we get the name *Exodus*, meaning "going out."

2. *When did Israel arrive at Sinai?* (19:1)

They arrived in the third month after going forth from Egypt. Moses had kept a log book. See Num. 33:2. They had left Egypt on the fourteenth day of the first month (See 12:6, 51), and arrived in the third month. On the "same day" they came to the wilderness of Sinai. If this expression means "the first day of the month," their trip had taken about forty-five days. But the Hebrew simply says "in this day." It is by no means certain that this means Israel arrived at the desert of Sinai on the *first* day of the month. Later traditions affirmed that the giving of the law was fifty days after the Passover. We feel that this is about correct, but it cannot be proved from the text. Ex. 19:11 indicates that the Lord came upon Mt. Sinai on the third day after their arrival. These three days, plus about forty-five days for the journey, give a total of approximately fifty days.

God's promise to Moses about Israel's serving Him "in this mountain" (3:12) was fulfilled upon their arrival there.

3. *What place is the Wilderness of Sinai?* (19:1)

We think that the name refers here to the plain of Er-Rahah at the north edge of Mt. Sinai, at the foot of the peak Ras Safsafah. Ras Safsafah is 6540 feet high, and is part of an oval-shaped ridge with a second (and higher) peak - Jebel Musa, or the Mt. of Moses - at its south end. Jebel Musa is

7647 feet high.

The name Wilderness of Sinai is sometimes applied to the entire southern area of the Sinai peninsula covered by granite mountains. But here the term seems to be restricted to the area just beside Mt. Sinai.

There is a small plain at the south side of Jebel Musa called Wady es-Sebaiyeh. This has been often said to be the plain of Israel's encampment. But travellers in the area report it is only about 7000 feet long and four to six hundred feet broad; and its whole surface is covered with sharp rough stones. There is scarcely a good place for three tents to be pitched together; and its whole area is about 145 acres.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, a small hill lies between es-Sebaiyeh and Jebel Musa, so that there was no possibility of the people coming up to the Mount without a previous process of hard climbing or a long walk around. See Ex. 19:12, 21. Es-Sebaiyeh is in no wise fitted for a major camping ground.

On the other hand the plain er-Rahah on the north of Ras Safsafah comes up to the very foot of the mountain. It is two miles long and one-half broad, and slopes gradually down from the plateau to the north. The slopes of the enclosing mountains afford further space and seating for an almost unlimited multitude. The Wady (valley) Leja, which opens into er-Rahah on the west, is an extensive recess about a mile and a half long and three-fourths broad. This would add substantially to the camping ground.<sup>2</sup>

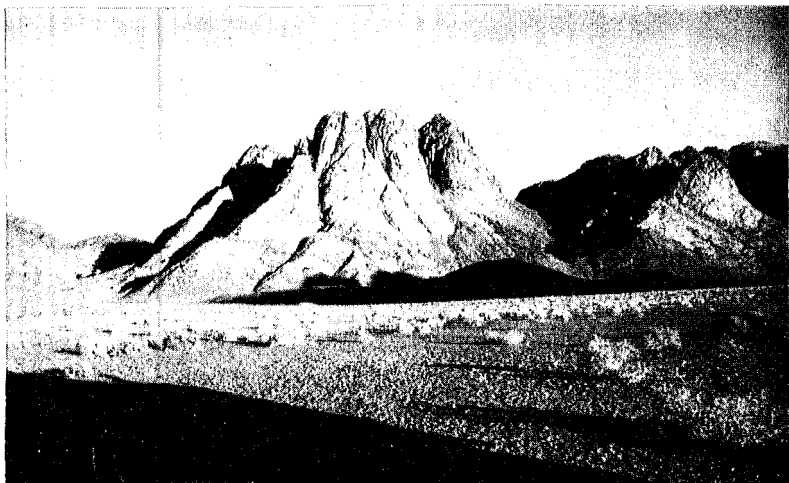
No other district in the premises affords such excellent pasturage as the immediate neighborhood of Mt. Sinai. There are four streams of running water there and several springs and cisterns.

4. *What place had Israel left just before reaching Sinai? (19:2)*

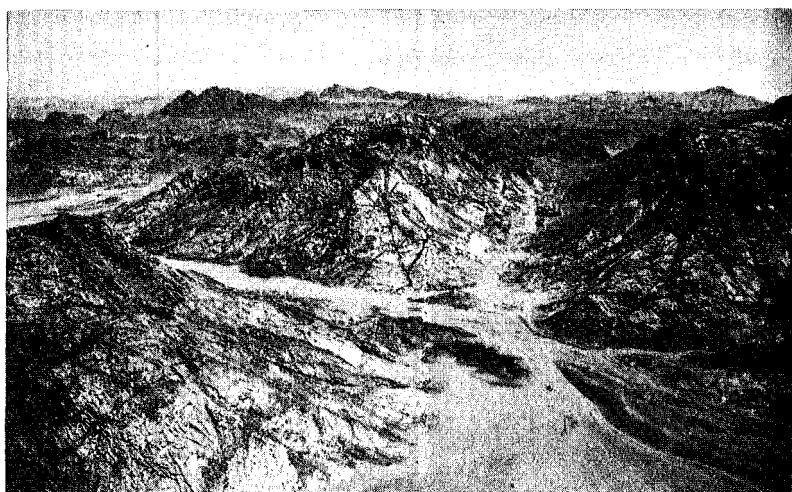
They had left Rephidim. Rephidim had been a place of several events—water from the rock, war with Amalek, Jethro's visit, a system of judges set up. Now they leave

<sup>1</sup>S. C. Bartlett, *From Egypt to Palestine* (New York: Harper, 1879), pp. 270-271.

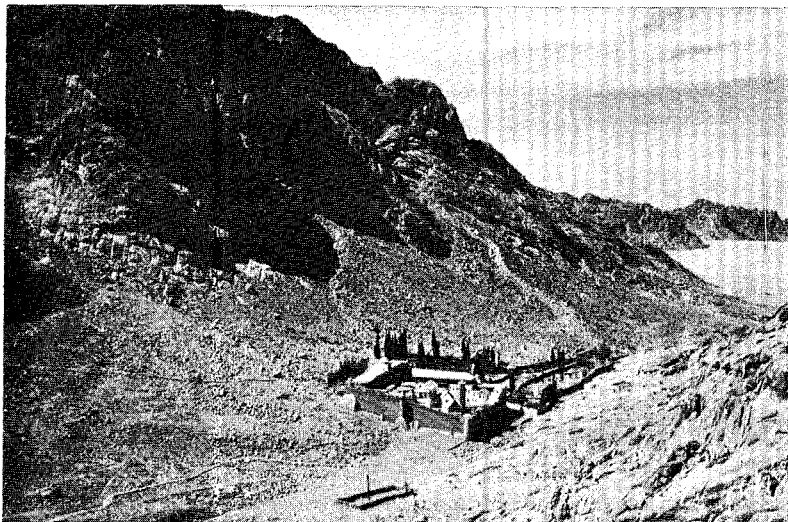
<sup>2</sup>Bartlett, *op. cit.*, p. 272.



Mt. Sinai. This view is SE across the plain of Er-Rahah. Mt. Sinai has two peaks (or summits). The peak in the foreground is Ras Safsafah. The other peak, Jebel Musa, lies behind Ras Safsafah, barely protruding at left of mount. Monastery of St. Catherine lies to left of mount. (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)



The Mt. Sinai ridge. View NW. Jebel Musa is in center of picture, and St. Catherine's monastery in the valley. Note rugged terrain of the wilderness of Sinai. (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)



Monastery of St. Catherine in the valley east of Jebel Musa (mount of Moses). View NW. (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)



Plain before Ras Safsafah (Mt. Sinai). Probably this flat area was part of the area where the Israelites gathered before Mt. Sinai when the ten commandments were given. The peak of Ras Safsafah lies to the left. This view is just to the right of the picture above. View NW. (Courtesy Pictorial Archive: R.L.W. Cleave)

Rephidim. It was not far from there to the "mount of God" (Sinai), probably only one day's journey of about ten miles. See 17:6; 18:5.

5. *From where did the LORD call Moses?* (19:3)

Jehovah called Moses from the mount. The text implies that Moses heard the voice of the LORD (Jehovah) as he was ascending the mount unto God. We are not told why Moses went up into the mountain. It probably seemed to be the obvious thing to do inasmuch as God had said, "Ye shall serve God upon this mountain." (3:12)

The expression "house of Jacob" is not found elsewhere in the Pentateuch, but it is very appropriate in the light of God's promises to Jacob (Gen. 46:4).

Note that Moses went up unto *God* (the general term for God as creator and ruler), but the *LORD* (Jehovah, or Yahweh) called unto him. *Jehovah* is God's covenant name, used when dealing with His people. We can almost always detect reasons for the use of the one name or the other.

6. *What had the Israelites seen God do?* (19:4)

Three things: (1) What He had done to the Egyptians; (2) How He bore them on eagles' wings; (3) How He brought them unto Himself!

The expression "upon the wings of eagles" is a figurative but vivid description of the strong and loving care of God. The mother eagle will fly beneath her newly feathered eaglet as it makes its first attempt to fly. The *eagle* may refer to the Palestinian vulture.

Deut. 32:11: "As an eagle that stirreth up her nest, that fluttereth over her young, He spread abroad his wings, he took them, and bare them on his pinions." The mother eagle will tear up her nest and thus force the eaglets to fly. In a similar way God had impelled Israel to leave Egypt. Then He protected them in their spiritual immaturity as they journeyed.

The reference in Ex. 19:4-5 to eagles' wings and the conditional nature of God's covenant reminds us of Deuteronomy, which stresses the same points. How consistent is

God's revelation through it all!

Note God's purpose in delivering Israel: He brought them unto Himself!

Ex. 19:3 begins a great block of divine teaching that stretches clear into Numbers ten.

7. *What did God want Israel to keep?* (19:5)

He wanted Israel to keep his COVENANT, and to become His own covenant people.

This word *covenant* refers to a formal arrangement of relationship between two parties. Covenants can be made between individuals or groups. A national constitution is a covenant. So also is a peace treaty, and a will (or testament).

The principle of *covenant* has always been the basis of God's dealings with his people. God made a covenant with Noah (Gen. 9:9), and with Abraham (Gen. 15:18), and others. Unless we grasp the idea of *covenant*, we simply will not understand Exodus.

The law which God gave through Moses to Israel is presented as a *covenant* (Ex. 24:7-8; 34:27). Exodus chapters nineteen through twenty-four tell of the giving of the covenant and its ordinances. Ex. 32-34 tell how the covenant was broken by making the golden calf and then how the covenant relationship was restored.

There are two main types of covenants:

(1) Parity covenants (or treaties), between parties of equal importance.

(2) Suzerainty treaties (covenants), by rulers for the subjects beneath them.

In the first type of covenant the contracting parties each agree to do certain things, and the covenant is in effect only if both parties keep their bargains. Abraham and Abimelech made such a covenant together (Gen. 21:27).

God's covenants are more like the second type of covenant. God as a ruler makes certain promises and then demands particular acts of obedience. The covenant is imposed by the superior upon the inferiors. Such covenants may be basically offers of grace to an undeserving people; God's covenants are

always such. A will, or testament, is a covenant of the second type because the blessings promised to the heirs after the death of the testator are offered solely upon the basis of the wishes of the testator.

Archaeologists have observed that the suzerainty treaties (covenants) made by ancient Hittite and other kings with their vassals follow the same general format and literary pattern as God's covenant with Israel.<sup>3</sup> These generally contain a preamble (like Ex. 19:3), a historical introduction (19:4), general principles for future conduct (19:5), specific stipulations (Ex. 20-23), divine witnesses (24:9-11), and curses and blessings (23:22-31).

The similarities between the treaties of men and the covenant of God prove very little, except that God has chosen to express His proposals in terms familiar to men; or that the essential features in any complete and logical covenant are similar.

The ancient covenants of human kings which have been preserved show a slight difference in form between those made in the second millenium B.C. (the time of Moses), and those made in the first millenium B.C. (after 1000 B.C.). The fact that the form of the Mosaic covenant more closely corresponds to the form of the covenants of the second millenium than to those of the first millenium supports our belief that the Exodus covenant was indeed written in the time of Moses, rather than by several unknown "sources" (J, E, D, P) living centuries later, as many critics allege.

K. A. Kitchen lists several differences between covenant forms of the first and second milleniums. (1) In late second millenium forms, as far as preserved, the divine witnesses *almost always* come between the stipulations and the curses, whereas in first millenium covenants, so far as known, they never do. (2) A historical prologue is typical of late second millenium covenants, but is unknown in our first millenium

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<sup>3</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 193. K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1966), pp. 90-96.



examples.

8. *What did God propose to make of Israel?* (19:5-6)

Three things: (1) Mine own possession; (2) A kingdom of priests; (3) A holy nation. All of these titles are now applied to the people of Christ's church (I Peter 2:9).

"Mine own possession" means my own special (or peculiar) treasure, one belonging privately to a king. The same expression is found in I Chron. 29:3; Deut. 7:6; Eccl. 2:8. How we guard and protect our treasures! Israel was very precious to God. The expression "mine own possession" sounds more partial than it really is. There was no thought of favoritism in God's choice of Israel (Deut. 7:6-8). Israel had not been called to privilege and rulership, but to being an example and rendering service.

God owns all the earth (Ex. 9:29). God could exalt any people by choosing them, but no people could exalt and elevate God. God is by nature supreme and ultimate. What man says or does cannot change God's power, glory, or authority. Man can neither cause God to be glorious nor diminish His glory. Thus for God to choose one people as HIS people was a great favor, one demanding a grateful response.

God's ownership of Israel has an exact parallel in the church. We are now a people for God's own possession (I Peter 2:9; Acts 20:28; I Cor. 6:20).

"A kingdom of priests" means more than merely a nation of priests governed by Jehovah. It implies that the people had kingly qualities as well as priestly qualities. This is evident by the fact that the Greek O.T. translates the phrase as a "royal priesthood," and the inspired apostle Peter adopted the Greek translation as the true meaning of the verse. See I Pet. 2:9. The Israelites were a *royal* people, who would devour the nations that were their adversaries and crush their bones in pieces (Num. 24:8; Deut. 33:29). Similarly, Christians have a *royal* as well as a priestly character. Christians shall have authority over the nations and rule them with a rod of iron (Rev. 2:26-27). They shall sit

down with Jesus upon His throne.

The fact that Israel was a kingdom of *priests* suggests that their individual and collective purpose was to function as a go-between between God and men of all nations. They were to be living examples of what God would do with and for obedient mankind, and were to teach the ways of God to men, and otherwise help men come to God.

The "fly in the ointment" (Eccl. 10:1) in this glorious honor for Israel was that Israel was as sinful and as far from God as the nations to whom they were to be priests and light! (Rom. 2:19)

The same self-contradictory situation exists in the cases of worldly, covetous, lustful, disobedient, lukewarm "Christians" (?). While they may consider themselves as being the light of the world, the light that is in them is darkness.

Israel was to be a *holy* nation. The primary meaning of *holy* is not *separated*, but "to be pure, splendid, untarnished."<sup>4</sup> The meaning of *holy* is not to be weakened by saying that a thing is *holy* only insofar as it is the exclusive property of God. Sin opposes holiness, and the sinner resists sanctification. God intends that holiness shall prevail and the unholy be destroyed if they will not repent. Holiness means being like God! (Lev. 19:2; I John 3:3). That means more than belonging to an exclusive clique labelled *Holy* (or Private Property).

The concept of Israel's becoming a NATION looms large in Exodus. God had promised Abraham that He would make him to become a great NATION (Gen. 12:2). But when Israel left Egypt, they were hardly a nation! They were a band of escaped slaves without homeland, national constitution, an established system of government, judges, or priests. The story of how Israel became a NATION is really the grand theme of the book of Exodus. The events at Mt. Sinai brought Israel into nationhood.

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<sup>4</sup>C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, Vol. II in *The Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), pp. 99-100.

9. *How did Israel respond to God's covenant offer? (19:7-8)*

ALL the people answered TOGETHER, "All which Jehovah hath commanded we shall do." Their spontaneity and unity rejoice us, until we recall how quickly they forget their promises.

Israel's religion was openly presented by God. There were no secret doctrines to a favored class, no books of mysteries, but a divine offer to rich and poor, young and old, learned and unlearned. Though it could never be earned, it had to be personally accepted. It was not an imposed religion.

Note that the statement is made twice that Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD (19:8, 9). Probably there is a hint in this that Moses rejoiced to report their good words to the Lord. Maybe he felt that the people had finally been converted.

Regarding the *elders*, see 4:29-30.

The Hebrew *Jehovah* (Yahweh, LORD) in 19:7 is translated God (*theos*) in the Greek, instead of *Lord* (*kurios*) as usual. See footnote on p. 378.

10. *In what manner would God come unto Moses? (19:9)*

He would come in a thick cloud.

This verse makes quite plain the fact that God spoke primarily with Moses rather than with Israel. God said, "I come unto *thee* . . . that the people may hear when I speak with *thee*." God, of course, foreknew that the people could not long endure hearing His voice (20:19). Their sin was such that they were both incapable and unwilling to hear God's voice.

One major purpose of the miraculous display of cloud, smoke, etc. was to certify Moses unto the people as God's mediator, "that they may hear when I speak with thee and believe thee for ever." We still must accept Moses as God's spokesman of that time.

God's appearances are often associated with clouds and smoke. See Isaiah 6:1-4; 19:1; Num. 11:25; I Kings 8:10; Psalm 97:2; Rev. 1:7.

There is no way that anyone can *prove* that God came

down upon Mt. Sinai in a cloud and lightning and thunder and earthquake. This is a matter of faith. We accept this record because we have faith in Jesus, who said that the Old Testament was all true (John 10:35; Luke 16:17). We accept it because the fulfilled prophecies of the O.T. give us faith. We rejoice that we can live by faith in what God's word says.

11. *What preparations were to be made for Jehovah's coming down?* (19:10-11, 15)

The people were (1) to wash their garments, and (2) to abstain from sex relations, and (3) to set bounds, that is, a fence or barrier, around the foot of the mountain.

The washing of clothes before holy ceremonies was a fairly common practice in Bible times. Levites washed their clothes as part of their consecration (Num. 8:7). Those who touched the dead washed their garments (Num. 19:19). The reasons for washing of garments seem obvious: all nations have sensed the outward joys of cleanliness, and its symbolic resemblance to the cleansing of mind and heart. See Rev. 7:14.

"Sanctify" (or consecrate) means to separate, make holy, pure, and set apart for God's use.

"The third day" in 19:11 obviously meant two days after the day God spoke. This expression can illustrate the Jewish way of speaking of time, and is helpful in understanding the time meant when our Lord said He would rise on the "third day" (Matt. 16:21).

"Against the third day" means "for the third day" or "on the third day."

Abstinence from sex relations prior to God's descent upon Mt. Sinai does not indicate that this is evil or even questionable. Both the O.T. and the N.T. approve of sex relations of married people as good, necessary, protective, and enjoyable. See Prov. 5:18-20; I Cor. 7:2-5.

Nonetheless, as we sometimes fast from eating lawful food as a means of devoting our total energies and mind to God, so on some occasions sex relations are to be left off. See I Cor. 7:5. Thus it was at Mt. Sinai. In the same way David

was permitted to eat the showbread reserved for the priests "if the young men have kept themselves from women" (I Sam. 21:4-5). According to Lev. 15:18 a man was regarded as ceremonially unclean "until evening" after lying with a woman. Certainly no such uncleanness was to be present at the grand forthcoming appearance of God.

Note that Jehovah was to "come *down*" upon the mount in the sight of all the people. When a covenant is made, the parties must meet. Man cannot ascend to heaven.<sup>5</sup> This is the heart of the Biblical concept of revelation. God comes down to man. "No man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven," Jesus said of Himself in John 3:13.

Certainly it was a condescension on the part of God to localize His appearance at Mt. Sinai, seeing that He fills heaven and earth (Jer. 23:23-24). But God has done this often for man's sake, even sending His own son into the world in human form.

12. *How were the people to be kept away from the mountain? (19:12-13)*

By two means: (1) A bound, or fence, was placed about the foot of the mountain; (2) Quick execution was threatened if they even touched the mount.

It was possible to set a boundary about the north end of Mt. Sinai because the rock mass of the mountain rises rather abruptly from the plain beside it.

The people were neither to go up into the mount or even to touch the edge of it while God was appearing upon it. Death by stoning or shooting with arrows was the penalty for this.

This command was quite terrifying to the people. "They could not endure that which was commanded, that if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart" (Heb. 12:20).

The reason for this stern restriction was very basic: Sinful

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<sup>5</sup>Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

mankind cannot approach near God's presence, and God's presence was upon Mt. Sinai. Moses did not even dare come too close to God's presence at the burning bush (3:5). Flesh and blood, such as we are now, cannot inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 15:50). We should not seek explanations in some ancient concepts of taboo. It seems unfounded to offer explanations such as that because the mountain had become "holy," then anything that touched it became "holy" also; and that for living creatures this meant sacrifice and death.<sup>6</sup> If that were true, then carrying "holy" flesh (or meat) would endanger the bearer (Haggai 2:12), but it did not.

"Touch it" in King James version is better translated "touch him."

13. *What would the trumpet sound signal? (19:13)*

"When the trumpet (Heb. *yovel*, or ram's horn trumpet) sounds a long blast, they shall ascend to the mount." This is a difficult verse. We suppose that the "they" spoken of are the people, but that is not without question. Only Moses and Aaron went up (19:24). The close connection of this statement to the command about not coming onto or touching the mount makes it a surprising switch of thought.

Probably the verse merely refers to what is related in 19:17: At the blowing of the trumpet Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the lower part of the mountain.

The Greek O.T. reads, "When the voices and trumpets and the cloud departs from the mountain, they shall come up on the mount."<sup>7</sup> This meaning is very clear, maybe so clear as to be trite. However, there were probably numerous people who would feel that even after God's revelation of himself at the mount was completed, the mount was still too "holy" to climb up into. We could question whether that

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<sup>6</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

<sup>7</sup>We are always reluctant to adopt the Greek reading in preference to the Hebrew when they differ. However, in some cases the Greek reading is preferable. Thus in Romans 10:18 Paul quoted the Greek ("sound") of Psalm 19:5 rather than the Hebrew "line."

was a relevant issue at that particular point of time.

Regarding 19:14-15, see notes on 19:10-11.

14. *What happened when God descended upon the mount?* (19:16, 18)

There were thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud, and the voice of a trumpet (Heb., *shofar*, a horn or cornet), and an earthquake.<sup>8</sup> The whole mountain smoked, for Jehovah descended upon it in fire (probably lightning; see II Kings 1:12). The smoke rose like smoke from a furnace (that is, a kiln or melting furnace). Compare Gen. 19:28 where Sodom and Gomorrah appeared burning with the same appearance. Deut. 5:4: "The Lord spake to you face to face at the mountain from the midst of the fire."

Observe that it was morning when God descended on the mount.

The people trembled at this spectacle. What Israelite could doubt that God was there when he saw this display! God intended that His fear should be before their eyes (20:20). That surely took place.

This was no ordinary thunderstorm on Sinai. Thunderstorms are not uncommon there in winter; but the Israelites arrived in early June, when the season for these was past. Besides that, no thunderstorm was ever like the appearance of God's coming.

The awesome events at the giving of the law are referred to in Hebrews 12:18-19 as a contrast to the less spectacular and gentler giving of the gospel. The contrasting modes of giving the law and the gospel illustrate the contrasting characters of the law and the gospel. "Ye are not come unto a mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that no more word should be spoken unto them."

15. *Where did Moses assemble the people?* (19:17)

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<sup>8</sup>Ex. 19:8 says "The whole mount quaked greatly." The Greek and several Hebrew manuscripts read this "The people quaked greatly" (or "were exceedingly amazed").

Moses brought them to the lower (nether) part of the mount, but not where they could touch it. Their encampments surely extended out quite some distance (several miles) in front of the mount and in the adjoining valleys. But Moses directed them into a compact group.

16. *What signal called Moses to the top of the mount? (19:19-20)*

The voice, or sound, of a trumpet continued and waxed (grew) very strong. Then Moses spoke. We do not know what he said. Perhaps he asked the Lord what he should do. The Lord answered him with a voice. The Hebrew word for *voice* may also be translated *thunder*, as in Ex. 9:23 and I Sam. 12:17. But the voice (or thunder) was intelligible; and Jehovah called Moses to the top of the mount and Moses went up. Compare John 12:28-29.

The trumpet definitely appears to have been a supernatural trumpet of God rather than a trumpet of man. This trumpet will sound again at our Lord's second coming (I Thess. 4:16; I Cor. 15:52). The Hebrew word for trumpet here (as in 19:16) is *shofar*, not *yovel*, as in 19:13. However, *shofar* and *yovel* are used synonymously in Joshua 6:5, and probably are so used here also.

Neh. 9:13: "Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right ordinances, and true laws, good statutes, and commandments."

17. *Why is the command about keeping the people from the mountain repeated in 19:21-24?*

We think it was necessitated by man's perverse desire to look upon forbidden things and by God's determination to keep the people off the mountain. The command to keep off the mountain had indeed already been once given, and the barricade had been set up about the mountain (19:12). But just as Eve longed for the forbidden fruit, and the men of Beth-Shemesh looked into the ark of the covenant when they certainly knew better (I Sam. 6:19), so some Israelites on this occasion were thinking about taking a little peek beyond the fence.



Moses thought that everything was secure (19:23). But God had a deeper knowledge of what was in man than Moses did. Some were tempted with the plan to "break through" and "gaze" (19:21).

Unbelieving critics have taken aim at 19:21-25, declaring it to be a "secondary passage" from a different source, and unnecessary and repetitious. This attitude arises not from any concrete evidence that such sources ever existed, but from a lack of spiritual comprehension and meekness toward God's word.

18. *Who are the priests referred to in 19:22?*

Certainly they were not the sons of Aaron (Ex. 28:1), nor were they the firstborn of every family (Num. 3:12-13). The exact identity of these priests is not made clear. We can only say that they were the ones who had been discharging the duties of the priestly office according to rights and customs previously employed.

Ex. 24:5 tells of the *young men* of the sons of Israel offering burnt offerings and sacrificing young bulls and peace-offerings to the LORD. Perhaps they were the "priests" referred to in 19:22. Others suggest that the *elders* were the priests; or that the heads of families served in that function. See 19:7; 6:14.

The repetition of the command for all the people, priests included, to stay off the mountain shows their unholiness. Like the people the priests were to "sanctify themselves." Compare 19:10. They were NOT exempt from the commands of God to all the other people. Nor were they too holy to yield to the temptations that attracted other people.

19. *Who was to accompany Moses back up on the mount? (19:24-25)*

Aaron was to go with him. Aaron did not go up the mount until after Moses himself had received the laws of Ex. 21-23. See 20:21. Then God called Moses to come up with Aaron, and Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu, and seventy

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<sup>9</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

elders (24:1). But even then these were to worship afar off, and only Moses came near to Jehovah (24:2).

Exodus 19:25 ends rather abruptly. The words of Moses to the people are not recorded, but they surely consisted of God's repeated warning in 19:21.

As we come to the end of chapter nineteen, we should be in eager expectancy. All things are ready for the declaration of the covenant of the law. The awesome appearance at the mount shows the greatness of the occasion. The miracles of the deliverance from Egypt and the wilderness journey all point toward this great moment. We shall not be disappointed as we proceed into chapter twenty!

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### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**20** And God spake all these words, saying,  
(2) I am Je-ho-vah thy God, who brought thee out of the land of E-gypt, out of the house of bondage.

(3) Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

(4) Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness of *any thing* that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: (5) thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I Je-ho-vah thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me, (6) and showing lovingkindness unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

(7) Thou shalt not take the name of Je-ho-vah thy God in vain; for Je-ho-vah will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

(8) Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. (9) Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; (10) but the seventh day is

a sabbath unto Je-ho-vah thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: (11) for in six days Je-ho-vah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Je-ho-vah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

(12) Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which Je-ho-vah thy God giveth thee.

(13) Thou shalt not kill.

(14) Thou shalt not commit adultery.

(15) Thou shalt not steal.

(16) Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

(17) Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

(18) And all the people perceived the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the voice of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they trembled, and stood afar off. (19) And they said unto Mo-ses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die. (20) And Mo-ses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before you, that ye sin not. (21) And the people stood afar off, and Mo-ses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

(22) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Is-ra-el, Ye yourselves have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. (23) Ye shall not make *other gods* with me; gods of silver, or gods of gold, ye shall not make unto you. (24) An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt-offerings, and thy peace-offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in every place where I record my name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee. (25) And if thou make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stones; for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. (26) Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not uncovered thereon.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. What did God, as He began the ten commandments, remind Israel that He had done for them? (20:2)
2. Does "before me" in 20:3 indicate that other gods really exist?
3. What does *graven* mean in "graven image"? (20:4). Compare "molten image" in Deut. 27:15.
4. What is the "water under the earth" in 20:4? Compare Deut. 4:18.
5. What acts involving idols are forbidden? (20:5)
6. Of what is God jealous? (20:5; Compare Ex. 34:14; Ezek. 39:25)
7. Why should God punish the third and fourth generations? Can you give any example of God's doing this? (20:5; Compare Deut. 24:16; Ezek. 18:20)
8. To whom does God promise great mercy (lovingkindness)? (20:6)
9. What does "in vain" mean? (20:7; Compare Lev. 19:12; Ps. 60:11; Prov. 30:8)
10. What day of the week is the Sabbath day? (20:8-10)
11. How was the Sabbath to be kept? (20:8)
12. What was forbidden on the Sabbath days? (20:9-10)
13. What reason is given for not working on the Sabbath? (20:11) What reason is given in Deut. 5:15?
14. What reason is given for honoring father and mother? (20:12)
15. What does honoring father and mother involve? (20:12; Compare I Tim. 5:4; Matt. 15:3-6; Eph. 6:1-3)
16. Does "not kill" forbid only murder, or all killing? (20:13; Num. 35:16, 22-24; I John 3:15)
17. What was the penalty for adultery? (Lev. 20:10)
18. How did Christ modify the command against adultery? (Matt. 5:27-32)
19. Is the command against bearing false witness limited to courtroom statements, or is it applicable in other situations?

- (20:16; Matt. 5:33-37; Eph. 4:25)
20. What does *covet* mean? (20:17)
  21. What items are named that are not to be coveted? (20:17)
  22. What did the Israelites see that frightened them? (20:18). Where did the Israelites move to?
  23. Whom did the people ask to speak to God? (20:19)
  24. For what three purposes did God come unto Israel, according to 20:20?
  25. Where was God as Moses drew near to Him? (20:21; Compare Jer. 23:23-24.)
  26. Who had talked with Israel from heaven? (20:22; Compare Deut. 4:33, 36; 5:24)
  27. Of what materials specifically were idols not to be made? (20:23; Compare Ex. 32:2-4)
  28. Of what were altars to be made? (20:24-25)
  29. At what places only would God come and bless them when they offered sacrifices? (20:24)
  30. What prohibition was given about stones used in making altars? (20:25)
  31. By what means was an altar not to be approached? (20:26) Why not?
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#### EXODUS TWENTY: THE TEN WORDS (COMMANDMENTS)

1. The ten commandments given; 20:1-17.
  2. The people's fear; 20:18-21.
  3. Instructions about worship; 20:22-26.
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#### THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, A PROTECTION

1. First commandment: Protection from false gods; 20:2-3.
2. Protection from false worship; 20:4-6.

3. Protection from misusing God's name; 20:7.
4. Protection of rest and the remembrance of creation; 20:8-11.
5. Protection of parents; 20:12.
6. Protection of human life; 20:13.
7. Protection of marriage; 20:14.
8. Protection of property; 20:15.
9. Protection of truth; 20:16.
10. Protection from evil desires; 20:17

(Adapted from John Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*  
[Grand Rapids; Baker, 1971], pp. 200-210)

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#### THE TEACHING OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AS GIVEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. No other gods. I Cor. 8:5-6; Acts 14:15; Matt. 22:36-37; I Tim. 2:5.
  2. No graven image. I John 5:21; Acts 15:20, 29; I Cor. 5:10, 11; Rev. 2:14.
  3. Name not in vain. James 5:12; Matt. 12:36; Rev. 13:6.
  4. Sabbath. Heb. 4:9; Col. 2:16; Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10.
  5. Honor parents. Eph. 6:1-3; Matt. 15:4-6; I Tim. 5:3-4.
  6. Kill. Matt. 5:21-22; Rom. 13:19; I John 3:15.
  7. Adultery. Matt. 5:27-28; I Cor. 6:9, 18; Heb. 13:4.
  8. Steal. Eph. 4:28; Titus 2:10; Rom. 12:17.
  9. False witness. Matt. 5:33-34; Col. 3:9; Eph. 4:25.
  10. Covet. Eph. 5:3, 5; Luke 12:15, 16-21; Rom. 13:9; I Cor. 5:10.
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#### GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF (20:18-20)

1. Is plain and obvious; 20:18.
2. Comes in striking display; 20:18.

3. Brings fear; 20:18-19.
  4. Creates desire for a mediator; 20:19.
  5. Tests his people; 20:20.
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#### WHY GOD COMES TO US (20:20)

1. To *prove* (test) us.
  2. To put *fear* into us. (Prov. 16:6)
  3. That we *sin not*.
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#### MEN'S RESPONSES TO GOD'S REVELATION (20:18-19)

1. Fear; 20:18.
  2. Request for a mediator; 20:19.
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#### GOD'S VOICE, BUT NOT A FORM! (Ex. 20:22-23; Deut. 4:12, 15)

1. No form seen; 20:22.
  2. No forms to be made; 20:23.
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#### THE ALTAR OF GOD (20:24-26)

1. Made of simple materials; 20:24.
2. Used only for God's specified offerings; 20:24.
3. Used only where God designated; 20:24.

4. Made of unadorned materials; 20:25.
  5. Approached with modesty; 20:26.
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#### PUBLIC WORSHIP (20:24-26)

1. Offered in simplicity. 20:24.
  2. Offered only with commanded sacrifices; 20:24.  
(For us this is CHRIST.)
  3. Offered only where God designated. 20:24.
  4. Offered without men's adornment; 20:25.
  5. Offered in decency; 20:26.
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#### SPECIAL STUDY: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. *Where do we find the ten commandments in the Bible?*  
We find them in Exodus chapter twenty and Deuteronomy chapter five. (Please memorize this and do not ever forget it!)
2. *How significant are the ten commandments?*
  - a. They are recognized as the basis of all public morality in the Western world. Their influence is too great for calculation. Probably our society could not survive without these simple comprehensive regulations.
  - b. They are a *unique* thing in all the religious teachings of the world. They are without any real parallels.  
They are unique in their teaching that it is impossible to separate morality from religion.  
They are unique in making duties to mankind on a par with duties to God.  
They are unique in the awe-inspiring manner in which they were delivered.  
They are unique in both their comprehensiveness and



their conciseness.

3. *How does the world feel about the ten commandments?*

Most people will say, "Oh, the ten commandments are great!" But in their hearts they really do not like some of the commandments. The philosopher Will Durant said, "The world has never quite come to terms with the ten commandments." This is not surprising. The apostle Paul in Romans 8:7 declared, "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be."

4. *What are the names that are given to the ten commandments?*

We believe in using Bible names for Bible things. We believe also that names tell us very much about the character and function of the things that are named. What are the names?

- a. The *ten words* (or commandments). (Ex. 34:28; Deut. 4:13; 10:4). This is the Biblical name for them. The term *words* does not refer to single words, but to utterances, or sayings. We use the term *word* with the same signification in such statements as "Bring me word."
- b. The name *Decalogue* is a good title for the ten commandments. It comes from the Greek words *deka* (meaning ten) and *logos* (meaning word). It is first found in the writings of Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 160-210), and was commonly used by the church "fathers" who followed him.
- c. "The words of the covenant" (Ex. 34:28)
- d. "The tables of the covenant" (Deut. 9:9)
- e. "The covenant" (Deut. 4:13)
- f. "The two tables" (Deut. 9:10-17)
- g. "The testimony" (a very common name for them; Ex. 16:34; 25:16)
- h. "The tablets of the testimony" (Ex. 31:18)
- i. "The commandments" (Matt. 19:17)

5. *How are the ten commandments to be divided?*

The scripture does not set forth any division of the ten commandments, either as to which commandment is number

one, two, . . . ten; or as to how the commandments were divided up and arranged on the original stone tablets.

We do know that there were TEN commandments, but opinions differ as to how these are divided.

a. *Which commandments are to be numbered one, two, etc.?*

- (1) Most Protestants and the ancient Jewish authorities Philo and Josephus treat 20:3 as the first commandment, 20:4-6 as the second, and thus on to 20:17 as the tenth. We prefer this arrangement.
- (2) Jewish scholars regard Ex. 20:2 as the first commandment. Then 20:3-6 is treated as the second commandment. The remainder are divided up as most Protestants do, with all of 20:17 being the tenth commandment.
- (3) Roman Catholic and Lutheran theologians treat 20:3-6 as the first commandment; 20:7 as the second, and thus on to 20:17, which is divided into two commandments, the ninth and tenth. The ninth is "Thou shalt not covet they neighbors' house," and the tenth is "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife." Most non-Catholics suspect that this method of dividing the commandments was made to deemphasize the commandment against image-making. When stated as a separate command, the law against image-making seems somewhat more definite than it does as part of the commandment about having no other gods.

As for dividing the commandment against coveting into two commandments, the form of the commandments in Deut. 5:21 argues against this. There the order of the two primary objects of coveting (house and wife) is reversed from that in Exodus. Also a synonym for *covet* (*desire*) is used instead of *covet* in one of the statements. This seems to us to weaken the probability that there are two commandments there.

b. *How were the ten commandments arranged and divided on the original stone tablets?*

The undeniable truth is that we do not know. Some have

proposed that five were on one slab and five on the other. This arrangement would have placed 137 words on the first tablet and only 26 on the second. Others have suggested that the first three laws were on the first tablet and the last seven were on the second. This arrangement would come as near to equalizing the writing on each slab as could be done, and still allow the first tablet to end at the bottom with a completed commandment.

Others have proposed that the first tablet had the first four commandments, which concern men's duties to God; and the second tablet had the last six, which involve men's duties to men. To this we can only say "Maybe so." This arrangement would place 122 words on the first tablet and 41 on the second.

We see no reason for assuming that the first tablet had to end its writing at a division between commandments. Many ancient tablets ended in mid-sentence, and then the writing continued on the next tablet.

6. *What is the relation of the Decalogue to the rest of the laws in Exodus?*

The law of Moses (the Torah) makes no clear line of separation between the ten commandments and the laws in the chapters that follow it. All alike disclose the will of God.

Admittedly the ten commandments stand out most prominently among the precepts of the Torah because of the awe-inspiring manner in which they were given and because of their fundamental and far-reaching importance. Only the ten commandments were placed in the ark of the covenant (Ex. 40:20). The conciseness and comprehensiveness of the Decalogue are unique in all the world's literature.

Nonetheless, there is still no clear demarcation between the authority and permanence of the Decalogue and that of the other laws of Moses. The Decalogue is called the *covenant* in Ex. 34:28, but the other laws also constitute the "book of the *covenant*" (24:7). While the Decalogue was kept *IN* the ark, the other laws were kept *BY* the side of the ark of the covenant (Deut. 31:26).

The two greatest commandments of all are not even included among the ten commandments. See Matt. 22:37-40; Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18.

Interpreters have sometimes tried to maintain that the ten commandments are the permanent MORAL law, and that this was not done away with as were the CEREMONIAL laws when Christ died on the cross. This is simply not a valid division of the law. There are many MORAL laws outside of the ten commandments. See Ex. 23:1-3 for example. Also the Sabbath law in the ten commandments has a partly CEREMONIAL character. Furthermore, in God's laws, ceremonial laws often have distinctly moral character about them. Note Ex. 23:10-12. The law is simply not divisible into distinct categories. The law is a unit, and the ten commandments, in spite of all their distinctive features, are an integral part of the larger undivided LAW given in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

7. *How do the ten commandments differ in Exodus from the form given in Deuteronomy?*

- (1) The fourth commandment (about the Sabbath) is different in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy says (in 5:12) to *keep* (or observe) the Sabbath, rather than to *remember* it, as in Ex. 20:8. Deut. 5:12 adds "as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee." Deut. 5:14 adds "your ox or your ass" and "that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou." Deut. 5:15 says that the Sabbath is to be observed in memory of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, rather than because Jehovah made heaven and earth in six days and rested the seventh day (Ex. 20:11).
- (2) In the fifth commandment (Deut. 5:16), the words "that it may go well with thee" are added. Also Deuteronomy has the words "as the LORD thy God commanded thee" added.
- (3) In Deut. 5:18-21 the last four commandments are all introduced by "and" (sometimes translated "neither").
- (4) The tenth commandment (about coveting) is

considerably different in Deuteronomy 5:21 from Ex. 20:17. Deuteronomy reverses the order of "wife" and "house." Deut. adds "field." Deut. also uses "desire" as a synonym for *covet* at the second occurrence of the word *covet*.

8. *How shall we account for the differences between the form of the ten commandments in Exodus and in Deuteronomy?*

Probably it is to be accounted for by the fact that in Deuteronomy Moses was citing somewhat extemporaneously God's words that had been given at Mt. Sinai. Often in such cases the very words themselves are not cited, but certain variations and changes are introduced.

The version in Exodus twenty is said to have been written by the very finger of God (Ex. 31:18). We accept this as true and therefore regard the commandments there as being the exact original wording.

When Moses repeated the law nearly forty years later in the Plains of Moab (as given in Deuteronomy), he enlarged upon many parts of it and paraphrased it somewhat. For an illustration, compare the laws about the Hebrew slave in Ex. 21:1-6 and Deut. 15:12-18. Compare also the laws about the Feast of Weeks in Ex. 23:16 and Deut. 16:9-12. Compare also Ex. 20:24-26 and Deut. 27:5-8. We should not be surprised to find some minor variations between the ten commandments as given in Exodus and in Deuteronomy.

This does NOT imply that the Deuteronomy version of the ten commandments is inferior, or represents only Moses' own imperfect memory of them or his own personal interpretation of the Exodus twenty commandments! Jehovah spoke through Moses at the Plain of Moab just as certainly as He spoke on Mt. Sinai. See Num. 36:13; Deut. 29:1. God allowed Moses or caused Moses to speak some new words in Deuteronomy five. But the ideas are unchanged, or are merely enlarged upon. There is no conflict of truth between Exodus and Deuteronomy.

Cassuto (*op. cit.*, pp. 250-251) calls attention to the fact that the two laws which differ most in Deuteronomy from

Exodus (the laws on obeying parents and the sabbath law) both insert in Deuteronomy the words "as Jehovah thy God commanded thee." Thus Moses alluded to the fact that although the commandments were expressed one way in Deuteronomy, he was not quoting their precise words.

9. *Were the ten commandments given at first in the words in which we now have them?*

It is a popular opinion that the ten commandments as originally given were all brief, succinct, one-line commandments. Supposedly the enlargements and explanations given with some of the commandments (like those in the commandments about graven images, the sabbath day, and coveting) were added later.

We do not feel that this is a correct opinion. The text says of itself that God spake ALL these words (20:1). When Moses repeated the ten commandments in Deuteronomy 5, he declared that "These words Jehovah spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire." Moses referred to the ten commandments in the form in which we now have them.

Also we feel that the idea that the commandments were originally all brief one-line assertions rests upon a basic misunderstanding of the commandments that are somewhat elaborated. The commandments that are elaborated (the ones about graven images, sabbath day, coveting, etc.) are the very ones which expressed NEW religious ideas. Laws about stealing or killing were familiar. But the ideas of a God who must not be represented in any material form, and of a regular day of rest to commemorate the rest of God after creation, and of a law against *desiring* other people's possessions - these were new and revolutionary ideas which required some elaboration, even in the concise presentation the ten commandments make. Compare Cassuto, *op. cit.*, pp. 235-237.

10. *Are Christians under the ten commandments?*

To this vital question we must give a paradoxical answer: Yes and No.

To the Christian the law is *holy* and *righteous* and *good* (Rom. 7:12-13). We do not nullify the law through faith. God forbid! Rather, we *establish* the law (Rom. 3:31). Christ came not to destroy the law, but to *fulfill* it (Matt. 5:17). He came "that the ordinance (or requirement) of the law might be *fulfilled* in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit" (Rom. 8:4). We *delight* in the law of God in our inward man (Rom. 8:22). We can speak with all the intensity of King David: "Oh how I *love* thy law! It is my meditation all the day!" (Ps. 119:97). The scriptures of the O.T. law are "able to make us wise unto salvation" (II Tim. 3:15). We could never praise God's law enough!

In spite of the preceding sincere praise of the ten commandments and the other laws of Moses, we must declare categorically that **WE ARE NOT UNDER THE LAW**, including the ten commandments. Romans 6:15: "We are not under the law but under grace."

Please consider the following argument carefully:

- (1) Ex. 34:28 and Deut. 9:9 specifically refer to the ten commandments as being the *covenant*.
- (2) Jer. 31:31-32 prophesied that God would make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel, not like the covenant he made when he brought them out of Egypt.
- (3) Heb. 8:6-13 declares that Christ is now the mediator of a *new* and better *covenant*, and contrasts this new covenant with the very one God made when He led Israel out of Egypt. In II Cor. 3:6 Paul declared that he was a minister of a *new covenant*, not of a covenant written on stones (and only the ten commandments were written on stones).

When the present United States were colonies of Great Britain, the Continental Congress enacted laws against various crimes. Our present laws include ordinances against some of the same crimes. Does this mean that we are still under the laws of the Continental Congress because some of our present laws have provisions like those of the Continental Congress? Similarly, although numerous laws in the old

covenant are repeated in the new covenant, that does not mean we are under the old covenant. Our Christian laws get their authority from being in the new covenant, whether they were in the old covenant or not.

As a matter of fact, nine of the ten commandments are repeated in the New Testament in one form or another. Only the Sabbath law is not repeated. So, as a matter of fact, we are under most of the ten commandments, not because we are legally under the covenant that included the ten commandments, but because the new covenant includes most of these commandments.

When the apostles and elders held the big conference in Jerusalem to determine whether Gentile Christians had to keep the customs of Moses or not (Acts 15:1, 5), their decision (which was reached by the guidance of the Holy Spirit [Acts 15:28; Gal. 2:2]) was that the Gentiles did not have to keep any of the laws of Moses except to avoid idolatry, and fornication, and things strangled, and eating blood (Acts 15:20). Not a word was uttered about keeping Sabbath days, or diet laws, or feast days, or sacrifices, or circumcision.

Failure to understand these things will cause us to seek to return to the law of Moses, which is a ministration of death (II Cor. 3:7), a ministration of condemnation (II Cor. 3:9). The law of Moses passes away (II Cor. 3:11). It brings us under a curse (Gal. 3:10). It causes us to be cut off from Christ (Gal. 5:4). It was only a shadow of things to come (Col. 2:17; Heb. 10:1). Let us hold on to Christ, and in so doing we shall fulfill the law.

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#### EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY

##### 1. *Who uttered the ten commandments?* (20:1)

God (Heb., *Elohim*, God, the powerful creator, God of nature, and God of all nations) spoke all these words, saying "I am *Jehovah* (Yahweh, the LORD) thy God." Yahweh is



the covenant name of God as God of Israel. See Ex. 3:13-15.

Note how the Bible text links GOD to the WORDS which were spoken. Deut. 5:22: "These words Jehovah spake unto all your assembly in the mount."

2. *Were the words of the law given by angels?*

Acts 7:53: "Ye who received the law as it was ordained by angels, . . ." Gal. 3:19: (The law was) "ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator." Heb. 2:2: "If the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, . . ." Deut. 33:2: "Jehovah came from Sinai, . . . And he came from the ten thousands of holy ones." ("Holy ones" frequently refers to angels.)

From these passages we learn that the law was in some way communicated by God through angels. We do not know the process by which this was done. It does not appear that the Decalogue (ten commandments) was delivered by angels, but directly to the people by God's voice, "face to face." (Deut. 5:4).

3. *What was the purpose of God's declaration of Himself in 20:2?*

It would seem that God declared His great acts to cause the Israelites to pay strict attention to the great words He was about to say.

Although God had brought Israel out of Egypt, that did not mean that they had no responsibilities to Him. Far from it! Redemption introduces new motivations and responsibilities upon us.

Exodus 20:2 starts with an emphatic *I* in the Hebrew.

The LORD had declared many times in earlier chapters that the people would know that He was Jehovah! (6:7). Surely by now that name had become extremely meaningful to Israel.

Jewish scholars usually regard 20:2 as the first commandment of the ten. However, the eminent Jewish commentator Cassuto<sup>1</sup> says (correctly we feel) that verse two is not a

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<sup>1</sup>U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967), p. 241.

command, but only a proclamation introducing the speaker. Nevertheless, the Jewish designation of 20:2 as the first commandment does emphasize the truth that we cannot have the moral values of the ten commandments without having faith in the LORD who gave the commandments.

4. What does "before me" mean in "Thou shalt have no other gods before me"? (20:3)

Literally it reads "before my face" or "near my face." Since God's face (or presence) is everywhere (Jer. 23:23), to have no other gods "before me" actually means to recognize no other gods at all.

In Hebrew "before me" is *al panay*. Very similar Hebrew expressions are found in Gen. 11:28 ("Haran died *before the face* of his father Terah."); also in Job 1:11 ("He will renounce thee *to thy face*."); also Ezek. 40:15 ("And *from the front* of the gate. . ."); and Ex. 18:13 ("the people stood *before* Moses."). These passages illustrate the meaning of "before me."

The expression may also imply "against me" or "in opposition to me." The Heb. preposition *al* has this meaning in Ezek. 5:8 and Ps. 3:1. It could also mean "in addition to me." This meaning is implied by the preposition *al* in Gen. 31:50. The Greek O.T. translates it "besides me." (The Greek preposition is *plen*, meaning besides, except, or save.)

The verse clearly teaches that God did not tolerate recognition of any god except Him. Israel was to practice a genuine monotheism. The "liberal" view of this verse is that the command does not state that only one God exists, but rather that the LORD was supreme among the gods of the ancient Near East; and that only in the later centuries did Israel affirm that only the Lord existed (as in Isa. 45:5; 46:1).<sup>2</sup> It surely appears to us that Ex. 20:2 teaches a pure and exclusive monotheism.

The fact that Israel worshipped other "gods" in later centuries (Joshua 24:15) does not prove that a commandment against such practices had not been given. Note Judges 17:4.

<sup>2</sup>Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 411.

The expression "Thou shalt have" (literally, "There shall not be to thee") has a singular verb, although its subject ("other gods") is plural. This appears to forbid acceptance of all other gods as a collective body of nonentities.

When Israel remained true to the one exclusive God, she was victorious and united. When she forsook the LORD, she was defeated and fragmented. (Judges 2:11-15; Chs. 17, 18)

5. *What are "graven" images? (20:4-5)*

A graven image is a carved image of wood, stone or such material. (Our word *engrave* is from the same root.) Compare Judges 17:3; II Kings 21:7. Cast (or molten) images were also forbidden (Ex. 34:17).

A "likeness" is a form seen by man, rather than an image made by man.<sup>3</sup> (Num. 12:8; Deut. 4:12, 15ff; Job 4:16; Ps. 17:15). In 20:4 "likeness" refers to a statue or painting of anything they may have seen.

The command forbidding the making of any graven images was in total opposition to the religious practices of all the world at that time. It is little wonder that God elaborated upon this commandment (in 20:4-6) more than He did upon obvious commandments, such as "Kill not." (The two commandments that are lengthily elaborated - the graven image and Sabbath commandments - are the very ones that deal with completely new religious ideas, and therefore needed a more thorough presentation.)

Israel was not forbidden to make all statues or paintings. They were just forbidden to make such things "unto thee," that is, as objects of worship. God Himself commanded them to make golden cherubim (angel figurines) upon the ark of the covenant. Presumably these were made by an "engraver" (Ex. 38:23). Also in Solomon's temple there were decorations of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers (I Kings 6:32), and also of lilies (I Kings 7:22). Decoration of lions, oxen, and cherubim decorated the lavers by Solomon's temple (I Kings

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<sup>3</sup>C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. II (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), p. 115.

7:29). Moses made a brass snake at God's command (Num. 21:8-9). Thus it appears not all statues and art work was forbidden in Israel, only those which were objects of worship. (Even the brass snake was destroyed when it became an object of worship (II Kings 18:4).

6. *What is the "water under the earth"? (20:4)*

The "water under the earth" is simply the water lying below the surface of seas, rivers, etc. This is made clear by Deut. 4:18, which refers to the "fish that are in the water under the earth." It is "under (or below) the earth" because it is lower than the ground level at the surface of the water.

Occasionally we read the view that the "waters under the earth" refer to one of the "three stories" which ancient people thought the universe consisted of, namely of heaven above, the earth, and the world "beneath the earth," as if there were some great subterranean cavity under the earth full of water. The Bible presents no such unscientific and superstitious world-view.

7. *In what way is God jealous? (20:5)*

He is jealous in that He is full of zeal and ardor against those who give to graven images the recognition and worship that He alone deserves as God.

This word *jealous* is a term applied exclusively to God. Compare Deut. 34:14. The word does not suggest the pettiness and nastiness that we often associate with jealousy.

Isaiah 42:8: "I am Jehovah, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise unto graven images." Compare Isa. 46:5; 44:9-17; 42:8; Deut. 6:15; Josh. 24:15; Nahum 1:2.

8. *Is it fair for God to recompense the iniquity of the fathers upon the children? (20:5-6)*

Assuredly it is just and fair. It would be just and fair even if we did not understand why God did it, because God is always just (Rom. 3:26).

Consider first Deut. 24:16: "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his

own sins." Compare Ezekiel 18:4, 20!

The word translated "third generation" (*shillesh*) means a great-grandchild. The expression "third and fourth generation" seems simply to refer to indefinite future generations. Compare Amos 1:3, 6.

The best way to understand the threat of 20:5 is to see how God carried it out. From later history we learn that God often endured the wrongdoing of people with great longsuffering. However, His patience had a definite limit. And when God finally brought down punishment upon the later generations, He inflicted upon those generations the punishment for their own sins and also those of their fathers. But - and this is very important - God only did this to the descendants who continued to walk in the wicked ways of their fathers. To those who loved Him and kept His commandments He showed great lovingkindness. ("Lovingkindness," or "mercy," or "steadfast love" is *hesed* in Hebrew, an enduring covenant-love. See notes on 15:13 and compare Ex. 34:7.) (Loving God means keeping God's commandments. I John 5:3).

The histories of the Biblical kings illustrate Ex. 20:5-6. King Manasseh was a very evil king, whose evils brought the sentence of destruction upon the kingdom (II Kings 21:10-15). However, Manasseh's good grandson, Josiah, who kept God's covenant, was not punished (II Kings 22:16-20). Nonetheless, Josiah's goodness did not turn away the wrath upon Manasseh's sins (II Kings 23:26-27); and the penalty for the wrongdoings of *all* the kings fell in the time of Josiah's son Zedekiah (who was Manasseh's great-grandson, "the third generation"), who "did that which was evil" (II Kings 24:19).

Similarly, God threatened doom on the house of king Ahab for his sins (I Kings 21:19, 22-26). But Ahab repented somewhat and "walked softly" (I Kings 21:27). Therefore God postponed His judgment (II Kings 21:29), but brought it down upon Ahab's son Jehoram who "walked in the ways of Ahab" (II Kings 3:2-3; 9:24).

Likewise, because of king Jehu's sins and excessive bloodshed (II Kings 10:29; Hosea 1:4), his great-grandson

was slain (along with the entire dynasty) because "he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, as his fathers had done." (II Kings 15:9).

The children "fill up the sins of their fathers" so that when they are punished for doing as their fathers did, the consequences of both their sins and those of their fathers fall on them at once. Compare Lev. 26:39; Amos 7:17; Jer. 16:11ff; Dan. 9:16. If the children would only keep God's covenant, they would receive mercy from God, regardless of what their fathers had done.

The "thousands" in 20:6 has no reference to the sequence of generations, that is, it does not refer to a "thousand generations." There have been less than two hundred generations in the entire time since Moses' life.

9. *What does taking the LORD's name IN VAIN mean? (20:7)*

"In vain" (or "for vanity") means at least three things:

- (1) It means to use God's name to back up a LIE. The following are some of the verses that illustrate this meaning of "vain": Isa. 59:4: "They trust in vanity and speak *lies*." (The word *lies* here is the same Hebrew word *shav* translated "vain" in Ex. 20:7). Hosea 10:4: "swearing *falsely* in making covenants." Ex. 23:1: "Thou shalt not take up a *false* report." Compare Job 31:5.
- (2) It means to use God's name in an idle, useless, flippant, irreverent utterance. This meaning of "vain" is illustrated by the following passages: Psalm 60:11: "for *vain* (useless) in the help of man." Compare Ps. 108:12. Malachi 3:14: "Ye have said, It is *vain* (useless) to serve God." Psalm 119:37: "Turn away mine eyes from beholding *vanity*."

The Greek O.T. confirms this meaning of the word *vain*, by translating the phrase *epi mataio*, "for something worthless" (idle, foolish, trifling).

- (3) "In vain" also means to use God's name for any wicked purpose, in defiance, blasphemy, etc. Ps. 139:19: "For they speak against thee wickedly. And thine enemies take thy name *in vain*."

Ex. 20:7 condemns the cursing and much of the slang that is so popular in our time. Read Psalm 19:14.

A person's name is closely associated with the person who bears it. Thus to use the name wrongly is to use the person wrongly. Note Ex. 3:13-15.

The Old Testament saints could swear by God's name if they swore the truth. (Lev. 19:12; Jer. 4:2; II Sam. 2:27). The New Testament forbids taking oaths in God's name (Matt. 5:34-37; James 5:12).

Instead of uttering God's name in vain, we should reecho Psalm 111:9: "Holy and reverend (fearsome) is his name;" also Matthew 6:9: "Hallowed be thy name."

Jewish interpreters have felt that the law against using God's name in vain meant that God's name is not to be uttered unnecessarily in common conversation. In fact, in centuries after Moses' time the Jews pronounced the divine name (Yahweh) only once a year, by the high priest when he gave the blessing on the day of atonement. It appears to us that Jehovah's name was used quite freely by Godly people in the Old Testament age. See Ruth 2:4; Gen. 14:2; II Sam. 16:12; and others also. Of course, we agree that it would be better not to use the name at all than to use it irreverently.

Some liberal commentators think they detect implications of evil or magical powers in the uttering of the divine name; and hence it was not to be uttered "in vain." We feel that this notion is apparent only to those who are looking for some such idea.

#### 10. *What was the law about the Sabbath day?* (20:8-10)

Two things: (1) Keep it *holy*; (2) Do not work on that day. It was to be a day not profaned by usual workaday activities.

What day of the week is the Sabbath day? It is the seventh day of the week, Saturday on our calendars. It is a mistake to call Sunday, the first day of the week, the Lord's day, the Sabbath day.

See the Special Study on the Ten Commandments concerning the differences between the wording of the commandments (especially the Sabbath law) in Exodus and

Deuteronomy, and concerning whether Christians are obligated to keep the ten commandments or not.

11. What does REMEMBER imply in "Remember the Sabbath day"? (20:8)

*Remember* may simply mean to observe faithfully. See Malachi 4:4 for an example of this meaning of *remember*.

More probably *remember* implies that the people already knew something about the Sabbath, which they were to remember by appropriate obedience. They knew that the manna had not been provided on the Sabbath days, and that they were to rest on that day. (See Ex. 16:22-23, 29). This they were to remember, along with other things about it.

There is no scriptural indication that men knew anything about the Sabbath day until the giving of the manna, as related in Exodus sixteen. Neh. 9:13-14 says, "Thou camest down also upon Mt. Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, . . . and MADEST KNOWN unto them thy holy Sabbath, . . ." See also Ezek. 20:10-12.

Thus it seems that although God had rested on the seventh day after creation, He had not commanded man to keep the seventh day until Exodus sixteen and twenty. Israel may have known that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, but no commandment had been given to man to sanctify that day.

Is there archaeological information which suggests that men were acquainted with the Sabbath day before the time of Moses? We do not feel that any such evidence exists. The Babylonians and the Assyrians applied the name *shabattu* (or *shapattu*) to certain days, and this name is etymologically related to the Hebrew word *Sabbath*. But the applications of the Babylonian and Hebrew words were fully as different as *Sunday* is different from *sun-god's day*.

U. Cassuto<sup>4</sup> sums up the archaeological evidence by noting that the Babylonians and Assyrians applied the name

<sup>4</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, pp. 244-245.



*Shabbattu* to the day of the full moon, the fifteenth of the month, which was especially dedicated to worship of the moon-god and of related deities. Also the seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first and twenty-eighth days of the month had a particular significance in the Mesopotamian calendar. They were connected with the four phases of the moon, and were seven days apart, except for the seventh of the month, which came eight days after the twenty-eighth day of the preceding month, if that month was defective (that is, consisted of 29 days), or nine days thereafter if that month was full (that is, comprised 30 days). All these days, both the day of the full moon, and the other days mentioned above, were considered days of ill luck, on which it befitted a man to fast, to abstain from pleasures, and to avoid performing important works, for they would not succeed. It seems that the Israelite sabbath was instituted in opposition to the Mesopotamian system, and its character was completely original. It was not on the day of the full moon, nor any other day dependent on the moon's phases. It was the seventh day in perpetual sequence, and had no connection with the signs of heaven. It was not a day for the worship of the host of heaven, but a day consecrated to Him who created the Host of heaven. It was not a day of fasting and of misfortune, but a day of rest and blessing. No work was to be done, not because of the danger it would fail, but because it was a day on which the people rose above the need for hard work that they were called upon to do on other days for a living, and thereby shared the divine refreshment with the creator of the world. (Summary adapted from Cassuto)

12. *Why was the Sabbath given?* (20:9-11)

- (1) It was given to provide *rest* for men and beasts. See Deut. 5:14. The Hebrew word *sabbath* means a day of *rest*. The related verb means to cease, or to rest. This principle of a day of rest each week is a valuable, necessary, and joyful arrangement. It was a day of delight (Isa. 58:13), a precious boon to the weary.

On the sabbath days all work activities were to be

suspended except those utterly unavoidable. Forbidden work included plowing and reaping (Ex. 34:21), pressing wine and carrying goods (Neh. 13:15), bearing burdens (Jer. 17:21), carrying on trade (Amos 8:5), holding markets (Neh. 13:15ff), gathering firewood (Num. 15:32), and kindling fires for cooking (Ex. 35:3).

While the Lord's day, the first day of the week, is not strictly a sabbath (rest) day, we are of the opinion that Christians ought to keep it holy, and that this can probably be best done by keeping the day somewhat as the Jews kept their sabbaths. Many of the early Christians were slaves or soldiers and did not have the opportunity of rest on the Lord's day. Thus, God did not command a particular legal rest day for Christians. But the principle of rest still deserves our serious attention.

"Six days shalt thou *work*." Certainly work is a necessary part of the life of God's people, and is commanded in both the old and new Testaments. Gen. 3:17-19; I Thess. 4:11; II Thess. 3:10. But the principle of rest is also important.

- (2) A second reason for the Sabbath is to attest the fact that the LORD is the creator of the world (Ex. 20:11). In fact, if it had not been for this link with God as creator, we doubt that the Sabbath law would have had a place in the Decalogue, any more than the laws about the other holy days.

The fact that the LORD blessed a *day* of rest after six *days* of creation, and then used the Sabbath *day* as a direct comparison to the seventh *day* of creation surely indicates that the *days* of creation in Genesis one are the same duration as our days now. This means that we should regard the earth as "young" in contrast to the speculations of many, who assume the earth is several billion years old. There is no cause to assume that the earth is much over 6,000 years old. All theories to the contrary disregard much scientific evidence as

well as Biblical evidence.<sup>5</sup>

- (3) A third reason for keeping the Sabbath was stated in Deut. 5:15. This was to cause Israel to remember that they had been slaves in Egypt and that the LORD had brought them out of Egypt. This reason for keeping the Sabbath would apply to Israel only, and shows that the Sabbath day was never designed to be observed by all races and nations.

13. *Are Christians to keep the Sabbath (Saturday) as a holy day?*

The answer is No. We live under a new covenant (II Cor. 3:6), and the new covenant does not include the commandment to keep the Sabbath day. The early Christians, who were under inspired apostolic oversight and direction, met on the first day of the week, our Sunday (Acts 20:7). The first day of the week is not called by the name *Sabbath* in the New Testament, but is referred to as the Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10). The Sabbath, like the other Hebrew feast days, such as the new moon, and the laws about meat and drink, was only a shadow of things to come. But the "body" (which cast the shadow) is Christ's. (Col. 2:16-17) Hebrews 4:9 speaks of a "sabbath rest" which now remains for the people of God. The setting of that verse indicates that this "sabbath rest" was a rest that was different from God's rest on the seventh day of creation, and was instituted long after that. It came into being even after Joshua gave Israel "rest" in the conquered promised land. Thus our Christian "sabbath rest" is not the seventh-day rest commanded in Moses' law, but is probably our spiritual rest in Christ (Matt. 11:28), or our eternal rest (Rev. 14:13), or both.

14. *What was the law about parents? (20:12)*

They were to be *honored*. The reason for honoring parents was that the children's days might be long in the land which

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<sup>5</sup>There are many books now available which give scientific as well as Biblical evidence that the earth and the universe are young in comparison to the billions of years proposed by evolutionary dates. We mention here only a few: John C. Whitcomb, Jr., & Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1961); Henry M. Morris, *Biblical Cosmology and Modern Science* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970); Melvin A. Cook, *Prehistory and Earth Models* (London: Parrish, 1966).

Jehovah their God was giving them.

The command to *honor* is a very impressive significant command. The same word *honor* that is here applied to parents is frequently applied to the honor due to God. See Prov. 3:9; Isa. 43:23. The Hebrew noun translated *honor* (*kabod*, from the verb *kabed*) is also translated *glory*, and is applied to *God's* glory (Ex. 16:7; 24:17; 40:34; I Kings 8:11; and others). The Greek O.T. translated "honor" as *timao*, a verb referring to honor rendered to superiors, of men to gods, of men to elders, rulers, and guests. The use of these words shows that honoring parents was a very meaningful act.

How is this honor to be shown to parents?

- (1) Negatively, parents were not to be cursed or struck. See Ex. 21:15; Lev. 21:15, 17.
- (2) By showing them respect. Lev. 19:3: "Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father."
- (3) By obeying them. Deut. 21:18-21; Ephesians 6:1.
- (4) By caring for them in their advanced years. Mark 7:10-12; I Timothy 5:4, 8. The honor due to parents continues on into their elderly life, even after their children are grown.

A persistently disobedient, stubborn, drunken, gluttonous son could be stoned to death. God views disobedience in sons as very serious. See Deut. 21:18-21.

The command about honoring parents comes immediately after the law about the Sabbath. The same two commandments are mentioned together in Lev. 19:3. Probably God intended that they should be associated together. In societies where divine worship is not practiced, the elderly are sometimes neglected, rejected, and "turned out."

In our modern society youth is worshipped and old age is dreaded or despised. The result is a folly in which men and women strive to remain eternally youthful, only to find it is an impossible task. We need to return to the Biblical ideal of honoring parents and respecting the elderly.

As the apostle Paul stated (in Eph. 6:2) this command about honoring parents is the "first commandment with a

promise," the promise that their days would be long in the land which the LORD their God gave them. Also there is the promise "that it may go well with thee" (Deut. 5:16).

Obedience by children will generally result in good health, safety, and wisdom. These things, plus the blessing of God, will generally make the days of our life longer.

It must not be assumed, of course, that obedience to parents guaranteed longevity in every case, any more than that lack of obedience guaranteed a short life for all wicked men.

The promise probably had a collective national application. If Israelite children obeyed Godly parents, their nation (or land) would survive longer. If they disobeyed, their land would go into captivity and they would not "dwell long in the land."

If the promise of long life seems to be too material and earthly for those who feel they are more spiritually minded, remember that in the O.T. age God's promises were usually of a material nature because the people were yet spiritual children, as it were yet in God's school. See Gal. 3:23-25. Most of us are still in that state!

15. *What is forbidden in the command "Thou shalt not kill"? (20:13)*

It seems to forbid murder, manslaughter, and suicide.

Certainly the Hebrew word *ratsah* translated *kill* referred to *murder*. It has this meaning in numerous references. See Num. 35:16, 17, 18; and others. In the laws in the following chapters more detailed laws about murder are given. Note 21:12, 14; and others.

The word *kill* also applies to *manslaughter*. It has this meaning in at least a score of references. See Num. 35:16-21; Deut. 4:42; Josh. 20:3; Num. 35:6, 11; and others. In the laws in the following chapters more specific details are given about manslaughter. See 21:13, 20, 29; and others. We have a divinely ordained obligation to respect and protect the lives of others in all our life's activities (including our auto driving). We must not kill in carelessness, anger, hatred, or vengeance.

Inasmuch as there is no specific object named after "Thou shalt not kill," the verse surely forbids killing ourselves

(suicide) also.

In the O.T. life is viewed as sacred, as a gift from God. "All souls are mine," God said in Ezek. 18:4. The ending of any man's life must be left to God's decision.

"Thou shalt not kill" does NOT forbid capital punishment when that punishment is administered by authorized judges following God's directions. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. 9:5-6). In the following three chapters alone there are at least eight offences named for which God commanded that men be executed. The apostles Paul and Peter believed in capital punishment. Acts 25:11; Rom. 13:4; I Pet. 2:13-15.

Neither does "Thou shalt not kill" forbid war. Wars were frequently instituted by God himself. Ex. 15:1; Deut. 20:1; Ex. 17:16; Num. 10:9. The question as to what circumstances might now be the basis of a "just war" is a topic that lies outside the scope of this book.

We must not conclude our comments about "killing" without referring to our savior's words. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; . . . But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and . . . whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." (Matt. 5:21-22, King James, vers.)

#### 16. *What is adultery?* (20:14)

In the O.T. *adultery* meant sex relations between a man and a married woman (other than his wife) or a betrothed woman. See Gen. 39:9. Both an adulterer and the adulteress were to be put to death. See Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22. To lie with a betrothed virgin brought death to both man and woman, unless she cried out for help (Deut. 22:23-27). A betrothal (engagement) was regarded as being as binding a contract as the marriage. If a man lay with a virgin, he had to pay a dowry to her father and take the woman as his wife, and could never leave her (Deut. 22:28-29; Ex. 22:16-17).

The law of Moses did not directly forbid concubinage and polygamy, although the ideal of one wife for one man with

no divorce ever occurring had been God's intention for men from the beginning. See Matt. 19:7-8; Malachi 2:15-16; Deut. 24:1-4.

While adultery, strictly speaking, is limited to relations with a married woman, the law also dealt with other types of sexual offenses. These include bestiality (Ex. 22:19), homosexuality (sodomy) (Lev. 20:13), sex relations with near relatives (incest) (Lev. 20:14-21), and rape (Deut. 22:25-29). While there is no specific law in the Torah forbidding seeking prostitutes, God did indicate that this was a detestable practice to Him, and its practice would fill the land with wickedness (Lev. 19:29). No Israelites were to make prostitutes of their daughters (Lev. 19:29; Deut. 23:17-18). In the later writings by the prophets (like Hosea 4:11, 14) and other writings (Prov. 6:26; 29:3) God expressed His condemnation of prostitution clearly. The New Testament condemns lying with harlots in the severest language (I Cor. 6:15-18; Eph. 5:5-6).

The law against adultery is an absolute necessity for the security and happiness of homes and family life.

Matt. 5:27-28: "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

17. *What was the law about stealing?* (20:15)

The law was "Don't do it." Every unlawful acquisition of property by violence, cheating, embezzlement, forgery, etc., is forbidden. Even "sophisticated" methods like moving over a neighbor's property boundary marker (usually just a rock pile) were forbidden (Deut. 19:14). The law forbade stealing people (kidnapping) (Ex. 21:16). The laws and penalties for stealing are expanded in 22:1-4.

Eph. 4:28: "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor." II Cor. 8:21: "Take thought for things honorable . . . in the sight of all men."

The eighth commandment protected the right of private property. Not even a king dared to steal the property of one

of his people without just compensation (I Kings 21:15-19). In our times of communist propaganda and growing socialism and agitation for government ownership of everything, we need to proclaim loudly that the right of private property is a God-given right, and is the basis for the only social and economic system that will produce enough wealth to supply a nation.

18. *What is meant by bearing false witness?* (20:16)

Since witnessing generally referred to testimony in courts of law, bearing false witness meant lying in court, or perjury. See Ex. 23:2; I Sam. 12:3; Prov. 14:5; Deut. 19:18.

However, the command about bearing false witness is broad enough to include all lying in daily conversation (Ps. 40:4; 101:7; Prov. 6:16-17), the flattery of a false tongue (Ps. 12:2-3), and even tattling and unfounded unkind gossip (Lev. 19:16). "Putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor" (Eph. 4:25). Compare Col. 3:9; Rev. 21:8, 27.

Who is "thy neighbor" against whom we are not to bear false witness? It seems that "neighbor" probably means "all men." Thus "neighbor" in Ex. 11:2 referred to anyone near to a person. In Lev. 19:18 "neighbor" is made parallel to "children of thy people" (or Israelites). Lev. 19:34 says that the Israelites were to love the stranger that sojourned with them "as thyself." Therefore, Jewish scholars have interpreted the "neighbor" in this command to refer to all men, and we think this is correct. Jesus in the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) taught that our "neighbor" is anyone who needs our help.

The commandment to be truthful always in dealing with our neighbor is so contrary to usual human conduct that it surely bears the marks of God's divine authorship right on the face of it.

19. *What is coveting?* (20:17)

To covet means to desire. The Hebrew word for covet (*hamad*) is translated "desire" in Psalm 68:16. The word itself does not necessarily suggest an EVIL desire. Like the



Greek *epithumeo*, it indicates evil only when the desire is directed toward unlawful things.

Sin begins with wrong thoughts and wrong desires. This commandment cuts off sin at its root - our own desires and cravings. See Eph. 5:5; James 4:1-2. Only God would issue a law against coveting. Can you imagine the U.S. congress passing a law against coveting?

Many interpreters (generally those of a "liberal" persuasion) feel that *coveting* refers not just to a mental state but to activities by which we seek to acquire what we desire. Thus coveting is (to them) the attempt to take property. We agree with Cassuto (*op. cit.*, p. 248-249) that this is NOT implied in the word *covet*. If it were, it would only be a repetition of the commands about stealing and adultery. The use of the word *desire* in Deut. 5:21 as a synonym for *covet* also argues against the idea that coveting primarily refers to actions to take things. The verses set forth to prove this view (such as Deut. 7:25; Josh. 7:21; Micah 2:2) merely indicate that coveting preceded seizure. We fear that it is easier to reinterpret the word *covet* than it is to discipline our spirits to stop coveting.

The commandment about coveting as stated in Deut. 5:21 differs somewhat in arrangement of words from Ex. 20:17. In Deuteronomy the reference to a neighbor's wife comes first and then the neighbor's house. Deuteronomy adds "field" which is not in Exodus. The Greek O.T. of Ex. 20:17 follows closely the order of items as listed in Deut. 5:21, but adds *cattle*, which is not mentioned in the Hebrew of either Deuteronomy or Exodus. As stated in our special study on the Ten Commandments, we do not regard the changes in Deuteronomy from the text in Exodus as having any real significance.

The variations between the commandment about coveting in Exodus and Deuteronomy suggest that the Roman Catholic division of the commandment in Exodus into two commandments is probably not valid.

20. *How did the people react to the thunderings, voice, etc.?* (20:18)

They trembled and stood afar off. The spectacle was too much for them. (Ex. 19:16-19). They shrank back away from the mountain in near-panic.

Josephus (*Ant.* III, v, 6) says that when the multitude heard God himself giving these precepts [the decalogue], they *rejoiced* at what was said! That is an astounding contradiction to the Biblical story, and suggests that Josephus' writings are frequently pure propaganda to make Israel look good.

The word "perceived" (or "saw") has the idea of perceiving a continuous viewing. (It is a Hebrew participle.) The sentence is worded so as to indicate that their "perceiving" was not after the preceding account of hearing the ten commandments, but during the course of it.<sup>6</sup>

Ex. 20:18-21 forms the introduction to the "book of the covenant," that body of laws given by God and recorded in Ex. 20:18—23:33. This "book of the covenant" contains numerous enlargements upon the ten commandments, but it is more than just that. It has new subject material of its own. The actual phrase "book of the covenant" appears in Ex. 24:4, 7.

The clause which the A.S.V. translates "When the people saw it," the R.S.V. translates "the people were *afraid*, they trembled. . . ." This is really a very small and even possibly legitimate alteration. The change was made because the R.S.V. translators felt that the vowels attached to the Hebrew consonants of the verb should be altered to read "They feared" rather than "They saw." The R.S.V. reading is supported by the Greek reading (*phobethentes*). However, it does involve changing the vowels that were added by the Jewish Masoretic rabbis A.D. 500-900, and are in the common Hebrew Bible now.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>The "and" in the Hebrew is attached to the pronoun *all* rather than to the verb, as is done to indicate consecutive action.

<sup>7</sup>The R.S.V. reads the verb as *yira'* (from *yare'*, to fear) instead of *yar'* (from *ra'ah*, to see). This involves no changes in the Hebrew consonants. We do not assume that the vowel markings in modern Hebrew Bibles are part of the inspired Biblical text. Nonetheless we are not disposed to alter the vowel markings without rather strong cause for doing so.

21. *How did the people want to hear God's words?* (20:19)

They wanted to hear them from Moses. They wanted Moses to listen to God's awesome voice and then have Moses to speak to them. They feared (unnecessarily) that they would die if God spoke more to them. Deut. 5:23 says that when they heard the voice, they came near unto Moses, that is, the heads of their tribes and their elders came unto him.

It is easy to criticize Israel's fear of God's voice. But it probably is not fair to do so. Even Moses felt some fear (Heb. 12:21). At least Israel desired to hear what God would say. We doubt that any of us now living would have been less fear-struck than they. But what Israel dreaded, Moses desired! See Ex. 33:18.

At this point please read Deut. 5:28-33. God very graciously accepted the Israelites' words and promise to Moses, saying "They have well said all that they have spoken." God knew that the people would not live up to their promises, but He was gracious nonetheless. The people were sent back to their tents, while Moses was called to stand by the Lord and hear His commandments.

Moses' position as the *mediator* through whom the law was given becomes very apparent at this time. See Gal. 3:19.

Israel's terror at God's voice (see Heb. 12:18-21) should be a warning to the ungodly of our time. We shall ALL hear God's voice in the time to come. That voice will then not shake the earth only (as at Mt. Sinai) but the heaven itself (Heb. 12:26). If the Israelites, a people who had committed themselves to accept God's covenant (Ex. 19:8), were terrified by God's coming, what will be the fears of those who have scorned His gracious covenant offers?

22. *For what purposes had God come to the people at Mt. Sinai?* (20:20-21)

(1) To prove (or test) you; (2) that his fear may be before you; (3) that ye sin not.

*Proving* Israel is a frequent theme in Exodus. See 16:4. God did not test Israel to discover for Himself how they would react in any situation. That He already knew. But, as

any experienced teacher will know, a test is a powerful training tool in itself. It intensifies study and thought. God's awesome demonstrations at Sinai brought the Israelites face to face with realities of His power and majesty that many of them had simply not yet faced up to (not that they had lacked opportunity).

Note that God wanted to put the "fear of God" into the people. Prov. 16:6: "By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil."

The use of the name *God* (Heb., *elohim*) in 20:21 rather suggests that God spoke then as the Lord of all creation, rather than as YAHWEH, the LORD of Israel. However, 20:22 starts, "And Jehovah said, . . . ." Thus all aspects of God's name and nature are on display.

Moses drew near "unto God," that is unto the place where the infinite omnipresent God had designated for finite man to meet him. And Moses drew near the "thick darkness." Compare Ex. 19:9.

23. *What was Israel not to make? (20:22-23)*

They were not to make gods of silver or gold. These shall not be "with me" (a slightly different expression than "before me" in 20:3). Twice in 20:23 God declared, "You shall not make. . . ." The building of the golden calf (Ex. 32) soon violated this command.

When Israel left Mt. Sinai, she began to encounter many pagan peoples of that region. All of these had their own religions, idols, altars, and temples. There was strong probability that Israel would pick up practices of these religions and corrupt her own true worship. Therefore God gave the restrictions on worship in 20:23-26.

24. *What were altars to be made of? (20:24-25)*

Altars were to be made of earth or unhewn stones ("Cyclopean" altars). These would be the humble altars of wanderers, to be used and then abandoned.

We do not know the exact reasons why God commanded them to use earth and uncut stones. Certainly such humble materials would restrain a common feeling that men get,

thinking one spot is more holy than another because it has some impressive statue or monument on it. It would be very humbling to a skilled stone cutter to be told that his chiseling upon stones would pollute them and make them unacceptable in God's altar! This suggests that human works and human skill cannot in any way bring God's salvation to us. It is God's gift altogether (Eph. 2:8-9). No human shall glory in God's presence.

Not long after this God gave to Israel the instructions about the altar to be built for use in their tabernacle. It was made of wood and brass. See Ex. 27:1-8.

25. *What types of offerings were to be made on the altar? (20:24)*

Two types: burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. These are two very ancient types of offerings. (Gen. 8:20; 22:2; Ex. 18:12). These were the very two kinds of offerings that the young men offered on the altar soon afterwards (Ex. 24:5). Offerings with names like "peace-offerings" and "burnt-offerings" were offered by the ancient Canaanites. These were, of course, corrupted forms of the ancient offerings to God.

Burnt-offerings are described in Lev. 1:3-17 and 6:8-13. Peace-offerings are described in Lev. 3:1-17; 7:11-18.

The offering of sacrifice indicates a break of fellowship between God and men. Burnt-offerings involved the death and destruction of sacrifices to cover the separation between man and God. Peace-offerings were given in gratitude when that separation between God and man had been covered (atoned for) through burnt-offerings.

26. *Where was sacrifice to be made? (20:24)*

"At every place where I cause my name to be remembered." Compare Jer. 7:12. As God led Israel from encampment to encampment by His guiding cloud (Num. 9:17-18), they would set up their altar at each stop. It is noteworthy that only ONE altar for all the people is mentioned in 20:24. God did not say, "Ye shall build *altars* of earth unto me," but "an altar (singular) of earth shalt thou (a collective singular pronoun, referring to all the people) make unto

me." Note in Ex. 24:4 that they set up twelve pillars, but only one altar.

Thus from its very outset Israel's worship was supposed to be centralized. This is in perfect agreement with the restriction in Deut. 12:11 that all offerings in the promised land of Canaan were to be made in the place which Jehovah would choose. God's word is consistent within itself.

The site of the one altar was, of course, transferred from place to place - from wilderness camps, to Mt. Ebal (Josh. 8:30-31!), to Shiloh, to Gibeon, and to Jerusalem.

The people later disobeyed this law about the single altar and built many altars, many of them to other gods. But that did not occur because God had not given commandment to build only one altar.

We stress this point, because one of the basic ideas in the "critical" interpretation of the Old Testament is that the idea of a single sanctuary and a single altar developed much later in Israel's history, long after the time of Moses. Supposedly the "primitive" people in the day of Moses had many altars and many gods. "Critics" think that they can see evidence of this in some passages, and they attribute these to authors they call J (for Jehovist) or E (for Elohist). Then supposedly in the time of king Josiah (621 B.C.) a new document called D (for Deuteronomy) was sprung on the people in an effort to shut down the many sanctuaries and altars outside of Jerusalem and to centralize worship there. By attributing this D document to Moses, the priests overcame the popular resistance and centralized worship at Jerusalem. Some scholars now think this "Deuteronomistic reformation" occurred earlier, in the time of King Hezekiah (728-696 B.C.) or thereabouts.

Admittedly kings Josiah and Hezekiah shut down the out-of-Jerusalem sanctuaries. But they did this because they were obedient to the word of God given through Moses. Their actions in no way prove that Deuteronomy and other passages advocating a single place of worship were written long after Moses' time.

One particularly valuable book showing that Deuteronomy (and other passages teaching the idea of a single place of worship) could not have been written centuries after the time of Moses is G. T. Manley, *The Book of the Law* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957).

We suspect that the solitary altar of ancient Israel served as a type of Christ, who alone is our altar. (Heb. 13:10-12).

27. *Why were steps not to be made up to God's altar?* (20:26)

"So that your nakedness be not revealed while you are on the altar." "Nakedness" is a euphemism for the sex organs. See Lev. 18:6.

We know that priests in Ancient Mesopotamia (Sumer) sometimes were naked.<sup>8</sup> But among the Israelites even immodesty by priests, much more nakedness, was forbidden by the holy God of Israel. God's priests even wore pants! (Ex. 28:42)

God made clothes for Adam and Eve after they sinned (Gen. 3:21). When people get away from God, they want to throw off their clothes and "break loose" and act like animals (Ex. 32:25, King James vers.). God's people should dress modestly (I Tim. 2:9).

The Canaanites built steps up to their altars (like those at Megiddo and Petra). The Israelites' equipment for worship was to be as distinctive as the God whom they worshipped.

## THE LAW OF MOSES AND THE LAW CODE OF HAMMURABI\*

The law code of Hammurabi is one of the most helpful archaeological discoveries ever found to aid us in understanding the law of Moses.

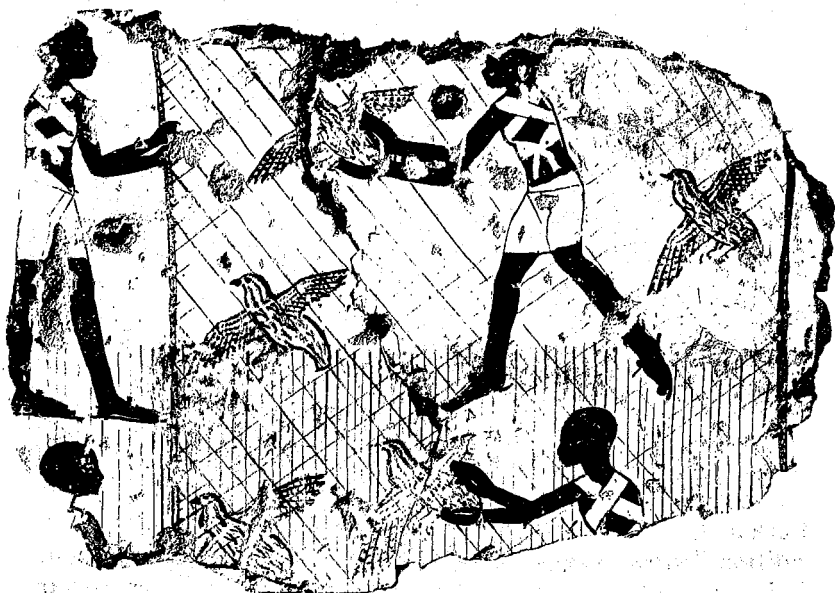
<sup>8</sup>James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near East in Pictures*, 2nd ed., with Supplement (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), p. 197.

\*The entire Code of Hammurabi and the Laws of Eshnunna are given in an English translation in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, James B. Pritchard ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1955), pp. 163-180.



Two altars with steps. The Israelites were not to build altars with steps (Ex. 20:26). The lower picture shows the great Canaanite altar at Megiddo (about 1900 B.C.). The upper shows a stone altar at the "high place" of Petra (probably Nabatean, about 300 B.C.). (Photos by author.)





*"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh . . . And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp"* (Exodus 16:11-13).

Quails are found not only in Europe but also, as has been observed from ancient times, in Egypt and Arabia. Every spring, flocks of these migratory birds cross the Red Sea on their way to the Sinai peninsula, where they land exhausted near the coast and are easily caught. This is exactly how the Bible describes what happened during the Israelites' sojourn in the desert (Exodus 16:13 and Numbers 11:31). The birds were on their way northwards: "and there went forth a wind . . . and brought quails from the sea". This wall-painting from a grave at Thebes shows that the trapping of quails was a normal occurrence on the Nile and indicates how it was done. Four men are walking through a cornfield holding a square fine-meshed net, extended in a horizontal position. When the birds fly up they are entangled in the net and can be readily caught.

FROM: THE BIBLE AS HISTORY IN PICTURES  
By Werner Keller - Wm. Morrow Co.

Hammurabi (1728-1696 B.C.) was the greatest king of the Old Babylonian empire. He was a great conqueror, but was also a builder and a lawgiver for his people.

The significance of Hammurabi's law code to us lies partly in the change its discovery made in the thinking of scholars about the Old Testament law.

In the last century (the nineteenth) Bible critics confidently declared that ancient Israel did not have any written law code in the time of Moses. Such codes did not exist that long ago. They believed that Deuteronomy was the first written law in our sense of the word, and that Deuteronomy was not written till nearly 600 B.C. (eight hundred years after Moses' time)!

Julius Wellhausen, the famous German critic, wrote, "Ancient Israel was certainly not without God-given bases for the ordering of human life; only *they were not fixed in writing*." (Emphasis ours.) He also said, "There was no Torah as a ready-made product, as a system existing independently of its originator and accessible to every one; it became actual only in the various utterances, which naturally form by degrees the basis of a fixed tradition." (*Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (Edinburgh, 1885), pp. 393, 395). Views like these came to be accepted far and wide.

In A.D. 1901-2 the Frenchman Jacques de Morgan found at Susa (the Biblical Shushan) fragments of a black stone pillar about seven and a half feet tall and two feet in diameter. It had been inscribed by King Hammurabi. It contained a prologue dedicating it to Shamash, the sun god. The main body of its writing consisted of about 282 brief laws dealing with many social issues. An epilogue heaps praise on Hammurabi for his noble deeds. Fragments of two other duplicates of this code have also been found. It must have been widely known.

When this code was translated, it was found to contain numerous laws resembling those in the law of Moses. This caused a great change in the thinking of scholars about the Old Testament law. No longer could men allege that law codes such as that of Moses were nonexistent in those ancient times.

Since the discovery of Hammurabi's Code, more than half a

dozen other ancient codes of law have been found, many of which are older even than that of Hammurabi. Law codes presently known include (besides that of Hammurabi) the following:

- (1) Code of Ur-Nammu, king at Ur. Dated about 2050 B.C. It is a mutilated fragment having only five fairly readable laws.
  - (2) Laws of the city of Eshnunna (near the Tigris river). These are dated about 2000 B.C. There are over sixty laws in this, three of which closely resemble the laws in Ex. 21:28, 29, 35.
  - (3) Code of Lipit-Ishtar, king of the city of Isin. About 1900-1850 B.C.
  - (4) Later Babylonian laws (after the time of Hammurabi).
  - (5) Assyrian laws, from Cappadocia (about 1800 B.C.), and from the City of Ashur (about 1350 B.C.)
  - (6) Hittite laws, found in Asia Minor. Dated about 1350 B.C.
- A large group of these were found.

In the course of our commentary on Exodus we shall refer to numerous laws of Hammurabi and others which shed light on the verses in the Bible, either by similarities or by differences. These are quite striking in many cases.

We list here just a few of Hammurabi's laws that seem to be comparable to laws in Exodus:

- a. Smiting parents. Hammurabi 195; Ex. 21:15.
- b. Stealing people. Ham. 14; Ex. 21:16.
- c. Wounding people. Ham. 206; Ex. 21:18-19.
- d. Law of retaliation. Ham. 196; Ex. 21:24.
- e. Knocking out someone's eye. Ham. 199; Ex. 21:26.

Was Moses familiar with law codes such as that of Hammurabi? We feel that he was. Both certain similarities and certain contrasts are so striking that we hardly see how it could have been accidental. This need not trouble us. God did not give His laws in a vacuum, to a people who had never had contact with any other cultures and never would. Educated people in Egypt like Moses were familiar with the Babylonian language and literature. If Israel's law was to be truly meaningful to them, it

had to relate in some ways to the laws of the world with which they were familiar. Thus God gave to Moses a law which resembled other law codes in occasional good points, and differed from them noticeably in points where men's laws had departed from God's standards. Overall, there is not much relationship either way.

Did Moses copy from Hammurabi or adapt some of Hammurabi's laws? We definitely think not. The scripture declares that God directly gave His law to Moses. Furthermore, most scholars who have studied Hammurabi's code feel that the differences between Moses and Hammurabi are so basic that it is unbelievable that Moses could have borrowed from Hammurabi. George A. Barton wrote as follows:

A comparison of the code of Hammurabi as a whole with the Pentateuchal laws as a whole, while it reveals certain similarities, convinces the student that the laws of the Old Testament are in no essential way dependent upon the Babylonian laws. (From *Archaeology and the Bible*, 7th ed. [Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1937], p. 405.)

Hammurabi's code is altogether secular. It does not give spiritual or religious reasons for obedience, as the Torah does. Note Ex. 22:7.

Hammurabi's code shows much partiality toward the upper classes of society. Those who harm them receive severer punishment than those who harm poor citizens or slaves. Moses' law shows very little of such class distinctions.

The law of Moses presupposes that life is sacred. No one is to be executed for taking property, as Hammurabi commanded. Even the life of a slave is sacred in the Torah. Hammurabi is often more interested in protecting property than people.

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THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**21** Now these are the ordinances which thou shalt set before them.

(2) If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. (3) If he come in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he be married, then his wife shall go out with him. (4) If his master give him a wife, and she bear him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. (5) But if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: (6) then his master shall bring him unto God, and shall bring him to the door, or unto the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever.

(7) And if a man sell his daughter to be a maid-servant, she shall not go out as the men-servants do. (8) If she please not her master, who hath espoused her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a foreign people he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her. (9) And if he espouse her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters. (10) If he take him another *wife*; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish. (11) And if he do not these three things unto her, then shall she go out for nothing, without money.

(12) He that smiteth a man, so that he dieth, shall surely be put to death. (13) And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver *him* into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee. (14) And if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbor, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.

(15) And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death.

(16) And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.

(17) And he that curseth his father or mother, shall surely be

put to death.

(18) And if men contend, and one smite the other with a stone, or with his fist, and he die not, but keep his bed; (19) if he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that smote him be quit: only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed.

(20) And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall surely be punished. (21) Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money.

(22) And if men strive together, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart, and yet no harm follow; he shall be surely fined, according as the woman's husband shall lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. (23) But if any harm follow, then thou shalt give life for life, (24) eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, (25) burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

(26) And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, and destroy it; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake.

(27) And if he smite out his man-servant's tooth, or his maid-servant's tooth; he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake.

(28) And if an ox gore a man or a woman to death, the ox shall be surely stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit. (29) But if the ox was wont to gore in time past, and it hath been testified to its owner, and he hath not kept it in, but it hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and its owner also shall be put to death. (30) If there be laid on him a ransom, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatsoever is laid upon him. (31) Whether it have gored a son, or have gored a daughter, according to this judgment shall it be done unto him. (32) If the ox gore a man-servant or a maid-servant, there shall be given unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

(33) And if a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein, (34) the owner of the pit shall make it good; he shall give money unto the owner thereof, and the dead *beast* shall be his.

**(35) And if one man's ox hurt another's, so that it dieth, then they shall sell the live ox, and divide the price of it; and the dead also they shall divide. (36) Or if it be known that the ox was wont to gore in time past, and its owner hath not kept it in; he shall surely pay ox for ox, and the dead *beast* shall be his own.**

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. What does Ex. 21:1 entitle the section that follows it?
2. For how many years was a Hebrew servant (slave) obligated to serve his master? (21:2)
3. What did the servant have to pay upon his release? (21:2)
4. Could a Hebrew slave take his wife and children with him when he left free? (21:3-4)
5. Did the Hebrew slave have a choice of going free or remaining as a servant? (21:5-6)
6. To whom did a slave's owner bring a servant who did not want to be freed? (21:6)
7. What act was done to indicate that a slave had bound himself permanently to his master? (21:6)
8. Were maidservants freed in the seventh years as menservants were? (21:7)
9. What was to be done and NOT done with maidservants who were displeasing to their masters? (21:8)
10. To whom might a man arrange for his maidservant to be given? (21:9)
11. From 21:10 we see that the "maidservant" was regarded as practically equivalent to what?
12. What was the penalty for striking a man fatally? (21:12)
13. Can a man's death be an "act of God"? (21:13). How might this occur?
14. What was to be done by a man who unintentionally killed another? (21:13; Compare Num. 35:9-28).

GOD'S COVENANT ORDINANCES 21:1-36

15. Was a murderer safe while at the altar of God (21:14; I Kings 2:28-34)
16. What was the penalty for striking parents? (21:15) For cursing parents? (21:17)
17. What was the penalty for kidnapping? (21:16)
18. What was the penalty for wounding a man or disabling him in a fight? (21:18-19)
19. What was the penalty for fatally beating one's own slave? (21:20-21)
20. Who determined the fines upon men who caused a woman to suffer injury and miscarriage? (21:22)
21. Did the laws about "eye for eye," etc. entitle people to take revenge for themselves? (21:22-25; Compare Matt. 5:43-46)
22. What was the penalty for destroying the eye or tooth of one's slave? (21:26-27)
23. What was the penalty upon a man-killing ox and upon its owner? (21:28)
24. What intensified the penalty upon the owner of a man-killing ox? (21:29). Was any variation allowed in this penalty? (21:30)
25. What penalty was imposed upon an ox and its owner if it killed a slave? (21:32)
26. What rule was given concerning the deaths of animals that fell into pits that were not covered over? (21:32-34)
27. What was the rule about one ox killing another ox? (21:35-36)

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EXODUS TWENTY-ONE: GOD'S COVENANT ORDINANCES

1. The Hebrew servant; 21:2-11
  2. Capital offenses; 21:12-17
  3. Injuries to people; 21:18-27
  4. Injuries by and to oxen; 21:28-36.
-



## EXODUS TWENTY-ONE: SERVANTS, SECURITY, SAFETY

## I. Servants; 21:2-11.

## II. Security; 21:12-22.

1. Security guaranteed by capital punishment; 21:12-17.
2. Security guaranteed by punishment of smiters; 21:18-27.

## III. Safety; 21:28-36.

1. Safety from animals; 21:28-32.
  2. Safety from hazards; 21:32-34.
  3. Safety for property; 21:35-36.
- 

## EXODUS TWENTY-ONE: GOD'S ORDINANCES, A PROTECTION!

1. Protection for servants; 21:2-11.
  2. Protection from killers; 21:12-14.
  3. Protection for parents; 21:15, 17.
  4. Protection from kidnappers; 21:16.
  5. Protection from financial loss; 21:18-19.
  6. Protection for slaves; 21:20-21, 26-27.
  7. Protection for women; 21:22-24.
  8. Protection from animals; 21:28-32.
  9. Protection from negligence; 21:33-34.
  10. Protection from property loss; 21:35-36.
- 

## GOD'S CARE FOR THE SLAVE; 21:2-11

1. His term of service as strictly limited; 21:2.
2. He was set free without charge; 21:2.
3. His service was such that it might be preferred to freedom; 21:5.
4. Women could be slaves only on condition of marriage; 21:7-11.

## GOD'S COVENANT ORDINANCES 21:1-36

5. Kidnapping and selling into slavery was a capital offense; 21:16.
  6. A slave's life and limb were protected by law; 21:20; 26-27.
- 

### EXODUS TWENTY-ONE: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

#### I. RIGHTS.

1. Freedom; 21:2, 11.
2. Service at the place of one's own choice; 21:5.
3. Protection from assault; 21:12-14.
4. Protection from kidnapping; 21:16.
5. Protection from injuries; 21:18-19, 22.
6. Payment for damages; 21:18-19, 22, 32, 35.
7. Protection from hazards; 21:33.

#### II. RESPONSIBILITIES.

1. Respect men's right to freedom; 21:2, 7, 8.
  2. Respect for parents; 21:15, 17.
  3. Must pay for damages; 21:18-19, 22-24, 32.
  4. Must practice safety; 21:22-25.
  5. Must avoid negligence; 21:29, 33, 36.
- 

### CRIMES THAT FORFEITED LIFE!

1. Smiting and killing a man; 21:12.
2. Smiting father or mother; 21:15.
3. Stealing and selling a man; 21:16.
4. Cursing father or mother; 21:17.
5. Neglecting warnings about dangerous animals; 21:29.
6. Sorcery (witchcraft); 22:18.
7. Lying with a beast; 22:19.

## 8. Sacrificing to other gods; 22:20.

(Note: God still hates these sins, and they will be punished in hell. But the "church" does NOT now have authority from God to execute wrongdoers, for example witches!)

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## GOD'S INDIGNATION AGAINST ABUSING PARENTS!

1. Against smiting father or mother; 21:15.
  2. Against cursing father or mother; 21:17.
- 

## GOD'S DISAPPROVAL OF BRUTE FORCE!

1. The smiter who kills must die; 21:12.
  2. The smiter who injures must pay damages; 21:18-19, 26.
  3. The fighter may be afflicted as he afflicts others; 21:23.
  4. The laws protect all victims - men, women, even slaves.
- 

## NEGLIGENCE! (21:28-36)

## I. Examples of Negligence

1. Not keeping in a goring ox; 21:29, 36.
2. Not covering a pit; 21:33.

## II. Penalties for Negligence

1. A goring ox must be killed; 21:28.
  2. A heedless ox-owner slain; 21:29.  
(A ransom might be paid instead.)
  3. Money charged for damages; 21:32, 34.
-

THE ORDINANCES OF GOD  
(EXODUS 21-23)

1. The ten commandments are simple and comprehensive principles. But human character and life is crooked and complex. Is all killing murder? Are all sexual wrongs of the same seriousness? To bridge the gulf between the simple absolute principles of the ten commandments and everyday life, many ordinances were needed. These are found in the "book of the covenant" (Ex. 21-23; 24:7), and in Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. (Adapted from Ramm, *op. cit.* p. 132)
2. Many of the ordinances in Ex. 21-23 are extremely attractive to us. Read Ex. 23:1-9 for example! All of these laws derive their force from a personal relationship with God. See Ex. 23:25.
3. Some of the laws in Ex. 21-23 will seem strange to you at first, perhaps even shocking.

Remember that God revealed His will in many "divers portions" (Heb. 1:1). Things which we have known as God's truth for centuries had not all been revealed in Moses' time.

Also many of the laws which seem at first glance to be harsh and even sub-Christian served a very beneficial purpose. For example, the laws about slavery, as strange as they seem to us, served a very needful social purpose. See Ex. 21:2-4, 20-21. Every nation must do something about its destitute people, and Israel's "slavery" system cared for this need. And besides this, the Israelites were to carry out these laws in a kind, non-rigorous manner. See Lev. 25:39-55; Deut. 15:12-15.

4. The laws in Ex. 21-23 dealt with a wide variety of subjects, covering practically all aspects of life. There were laws about servants (21:2ff), criminal laws (21:12), property laws (21:35), moral laws (22:16), laws of personal conduct (22:21-27; 23:1-9), laws about religious ceremonies (23:14ff), etc.

No people can have a functioning society without a culture system of rules and beliefs. The ordinances of God provided an instant, ready-made cultural basis for Israel as a society.

5. The principles illustrated by these laws have endless applications. For example, the law about releasing your enemy's overloaded and fallen donkey (23:4-5) establishes a principle of kindness that is applicable in countless situations.
6. We must not assume that the covenant ordinances in Ex. 21-23 constitute a complete and systematic code of law. Numerous regulations are mentioned without giving enough details to make clear how the commandments were to be carried out. For example, Ex. 22:16 speaks of "the dowry of virgins" without indicating how much it was. (Compare Deut. 22:28-29). Ex. 23:14-17 mentions the three annual compulsory feasts to be kept by all Israelites. But the text tells very little about how they were to be observed. These details were added later in the laws in Leviticus (Chap. 23) and Deuteronomy.

Unless we realize that the ordinances in Ex. 21-23 are only a "sampler" of the more complete laws given later, we may be perplexed by their lack of completeness and orderliness.

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#### EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

1. *What is in Exodus chapter twenty-one?*

Exodus 21 contains the first group of the "judgements" (or ordinances) of the LORD. These extend on through chapter 23. This chapter contains laws about slaves, crimes requiring the death penalty, offenses involving injuries, and property losses.

We must keep in mind that as Christians our conduct is to "establish" the law (Rom. 3:31). We cannot be less concerned about the lives and safety of people than God required people under the law of Moses to be. While we are not under the law, we *fulfill* the law by loving our neighbor as ourselves (Rom. 13:9-10).

2. *What are ordinances (or judgments)?* (21:1)

*Judgments* (Heb., *mishpatim*) are judicial decisions, decisions at law, legal rulings. The uses of this word in Ex. 21:31 and Deut. 1:17 illustrate this meaning.

But the word *judgments* implies yet another conception: that of JUSTICE. The Hebrew word for *judgment* is often translated *justice*. See Ex. 23:6; Deut. 16:19. This fact implies that perfect justice for all social relationships is found in God's ordinances. It surely has not been found in men's ordinances!

The word *Now* (Heb., *and*) at the start of 21:1 links the ordinances that follow with the words of God that preceded them in chapter twenty. All are from God and all are part of the same covenant.

Radical critics assume that these "judgments" presuppose a society settled a long time into the land, and that they were therefore written long after the time of Moses. We cannot accept such a notion. Moses had already judged many cases (Ex. 18:13). He knew the types of questions that would arise and need written precedents to guide future judges. Furthermore, Moses had very probably studied the legal system in Egypt, and he had observed Midianite tribal laws. He was probably acquainted with Near Eastern law codes, such as that of Hammurabi.

But all of these arguments are second-rate evidence of the Mosaic origin and divine authority of these "judgments." The plain assertions that GOD gave these ordinances to Moses is the basis of our faith in them. They were revealed words of Jehovah (23:3).

3. *How long did a Hebrew servant serve his master?* (21:2)

He served six years. In the seventh year he went out free, for nothing, without payment of any redemption or ransom price. In fact, he was to be given liberal gifts of food and livestock (Deut. 15:12-15). The same rule applied to women servants (Deut. 15:12).

The word translated *servant* means a bondservant or slave. But we should not picture in our minds the Hebrew slave as as victim of a harsh cruel system. The slavery actually served

the social purpose of caring for the destitute. The service of Hebrew bondmen to their masters was rather mild. Their masters were not to treat them as bondservants, but as hired servants. They were not to rule over them with harshness (Lev. 25:39-43). Servants were to rest on the Sabbath days and be refreshed like the rest of the family (Ex. 23:12).

The year of a servant's release was the seventh year of his service, which was not necessarily the Sabbatical year, which occurred every seventh year and was observed by all Israel (Ex. 23:10-11).

Servants were also to be freed in the year of Jubilee, every fiftieth year, even if that occurred one year after they signed on. Lev. 25:10, 39-41.

The Law of Hammurabi (No. 117) said that if because of obligations a citizen sold his wife, or son, or daughter to service to someone else, they would serve *three* years in the house of their purchaser, and then go free in the fourth year. Hammurabi did not provide for generous gifts to be given to the liberated servant, as the Hebrew law did. Neither did his law ordain the generous loans and credit assistance that were in the Hebrew law (Lev. 25:35-37; Deut. 15:7-11). These provisions probably kept many poor people from having to sell themselves or members of their family into servitude.

Laws like 21:2ff that are formulated from cases and are introduced by "If," are called *casuistic* (or case) laws. The law codes of the ancient Near East (like Hammurabi's law) have almost all of their laws in this casuistic form: "If such and such an event occurs, then this is what the law requires to be done." Casuistic law is distinguished from apodeictic laws, which concisely state principles for conduct, often in negative form. Laws like "Thou shalt not kill" are apodeictic. The presence of many apodeictic laws in Exodus suggests the intrinsic, divine authority of the laws. The presence of casuistic laws in Exodus shows that God expressed His word and laws to Moses in literary and legal forms familiar to men. God's word comes to men in men's language!

4. *What was a HEBREW servant? (21:2)*

We feel that *Hebrew* is here synonymous with *Israelite*. Indeed, Jer. 34:9 later equated Hebrew with Jew. This identification is supported by the parallel passage Deut. 15:2, which says, "If thy *brother*, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, . . . ." This is further indicated by the fact that Lev. 25:44-46 says that strangers and foreigners bought by Israelites were kept as bondmen *for ever*, in distinction to the requirement to release a *Hebrew* in the seventh year.

This question might seem to be a matter of no significance. Our reason for bringing it up is that some interpreters (Cassuto, for example) feel that the word *Hebrew* is here equivalent to a broader term *Habiru* (or 'Apiru, or Khapiru), which is found frequently in writings of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Canaan prior to Moses' time. The Habiri were alien peoples who were employed as servants or took other subordinate service. They existed outside of the normal societal system, something like "gypsies." Sometimes they are referred to as predatory conquerors. In the Amarna letters (written by Canaanite city-rulers to the kings of Egypt shortly after the time of Moses), the Habiri are said to be taking over the land. We feel that the Habiri referred to in these letters included the Israelites, but also included other invading settlers.

If the term *Hebrew* in 21:2 were equivalent to *Habiri*, then the command about releasing slaves in the seventh years had a very broad application to peoples of numerous races. However, the evidence cited above makes us think that the term *Hebrew* here meant only an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham.<sup>1</sup> The Egyptians and Babylonians would have considered the Israelites as Habiri (or Hebrews), while including other racial groups within that term. Thus Joseph was called a Hebrew (Gen. 39:14), as was Abraham (Gen.

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<sup>1</sup>In the Hebrew language the name *Hebrew* seems to come from the verb *eber*, meaning "to cross over." Abraham was presumably a *Hebrew* because he crossed over the Euphrates to come to Canaan. The name of Abraham's forefather Eber (Gen. 11:16) is probably in some way also linked to this meaning.



5. *Could a liberated Hebrew slave take his family with him?* (21:3-4)

If he became a servant alone (not married), he was liberated alone. If he was married when he became a slave, his wife went out free with him. If during his slave-service his master gave him a wife and she bore him children, the man went free alone. The wife and children stayed with the master. Note that the slave had no right to contract a marriage for himself. The master had to give him the wife.

This law about not letting the slave's wife go free with him may seem severe to us. But it would have been a very expensive loss to the master when he was already rendering a valuable service to the bondman by providing for him an opportunity to work himself out of debt. Also any woman that the master may have given to him would probably have been a foreign permanent bondwoman. It is improbable that the master would have had authority to give away a Hebrew woman indentured to him for only six years. Certainly marriage to such foreign women by Israelite servants could raise racial difficulties in Israel. Also one other practical effect of keeping slave women as slaves was that the rule prevented the contracting of many marriages which could not well continue after the servant went free. We assume that in the administration of the law about marriages of bondmen that the Israelites were basically kind to their bondmen. (Ex. 22: 21; Lev. 19:33-34).

6. *How could a Hebrew slave commit himself to a lifetime of service?* (21:5-6)

He could do this by having his ear pierced through before the judges (or "before God").

The bondman's master brought him "unto God" (or, "unto the judges"), and there took him to the door and pierced through his ear with an awl. Compare Deut. 15: 16-17.

The very fact that this law is given in the law of Moses is indicative of the fact that slaves would desire permanent servitude frequently enough that a law was needed to tell the

procedure for bringing it about. The law indicates that many Hebrew masters were kind. (This is like our service to Christ, our kind master.)

The exact meaning of the expression "unto the judges," or "unto God" (Heb. *elohim*), is a bit uncertain.

In the Code of Hammurabi (law #120) we are told that a dispute over loss of grain was to be settled "in the presence of *god*," that is, in the court of the local idol. Similarly in the laws of Eshnunna (#s 36-37) a disputed property loss was to be settled by an oath taken in the gate of the main god at Eshnunna. These literary examples suggest that the Hebrew bondman went to the tabernacle of God to make his declaration and have his ear bored.

The Greek O.T. says that they were to bring the bondman to the tribunal (*kriterion*) of God. This strengthens our view that the bondman came before God's tabernacle for commitment of himself.

On the other hand, the uses of *elohim* in Ex. 22:28, 8, 9 indicate that the word sometimes meant *judges*, and this idea is as old as the Targum of Onkelos (a paraphrase of the law in the Aramaic language, dated about 400 B.C.). Perhaps the judges were looked upon as God's agents in this matter.

Commentators disagree on whether the servant's ear was bored at the door of his master's house or at the door of God's house. We feel that the Biblical text says it was at God's house. We suppose that the boring was done as the ear was placed against the door post.

"For ever" (21:6) seems to mean "for life," although the Jewish rabbis interpreted it to mean "till the year of jubilee."

Psalm 40:6 quotes God's servant (whoever he may be) as saying, "Sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight in. Mine ears hast thou opened."

This passage is applied to Jesus in Heb. 10:5, 8. On the basis of this some interpreters (e.g. Pink) have thought that the servant who pledged himself permanently to his master by having his ear bored is a type of Jesus Christ. We do not think this is a legitimate or true type. We do not see any

definite connection between Ex. 21:6 and Psalm 40:6. The word translated "opened" in Psalm 40:6 is not the same word as the word translated "bore" in Ex. 21:6. Also the type seems incongruous. Admittedly Jesus committed himself to a master (God) so that he might gain a bride (the church). But when Jesus did this the bride was in no way already in the service of the master, as was the bride in Ex. 21:4-6.

7. *Why were maidservants not released after six years? (21:7-8)*

They were not released because these women became concubines, or secondary wives, to the master. Note that the master *espoused* her to himself or to one of his sons.<sup>2</sup>

The word *maid-servant* used here (*'amah*) is applied to the slave woman Hagar (Gen. 21:10, 12, 13); to Bilhah, Rachel's maid (Gen. 30:3). Both of these women bore children in the house. Gideon's son Abimelech was born of a maid-servant (Judges 9:18). These examples show one common meaning of the term *maid-servant*.

However, the term was also employed by such primary wives as Hannah (I Sam. 1:11), Abigail (I Sam. 25:25), Bathsheba (I Kings 1:13), and Ruth (Ruth 3:9), when speaking of themselves. So the term does not always indicate a servant-concubine.

8. *What did a master do with a maid-servant who displeased him? (21:8)*

He permitted her to be redeemed (bought back). Probably she was purchased by some Israelite outside of his family because her father was too poor to buy her back. The law forbade the master to sell her to a foreign power. Hertz tells of the Saxons in England, who at the time of the Norman conquest would sell maid servants on their estates into a life of shame or into foreign slavery after associating with them

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<sup>2</sup>A.S.V. margin says, "Another reading is "so that he hath *not* espoused her." This appears to be the reading of the written Hebrew text (the kethib). But the marginal reading in the Hebrew (the qere) gives "to himself," and this definitely seems to be the correct reading. See Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

themselves.<sup>3</sup> The Hebrews were forbidden to practice such abominations.

9. *What was to be done with maid-servants taken as wives for sons?* (21:9)

They were to be treated like daughters. Ex. 21:10 seems to say, "If he (the father-purchaser) take for him (that is, for his son) another wife, her (the first maid-servant's) food, . . ."

The old Chinese custom of buying a slave girl as a future wife for a son is an exact parallel. By buying the girl thus, he avoided paying a higher price in the years to come, and guaranteed that she would "fit in" in the future. Such a system abolished slavery in all except its name.<sup>4</sup>

10. *What rights did the hand-maid have?* (21:10-11)

She had the right to (1) food, (2) clothing, and (3) participation in family life. If the master did not grant these things, she could go out as a free woman, without anyone's paying money for her.

"Food" is literally *flesh*, suggesting that she was not to get a mere subsistence diet, but meat and other quality food.

"Duty of marriage," or "marital rights" (as in R.S.V.) probably simply means (1) a place to live and (2) the right to associate with the family like all the other members of it. The Hebrew word *'onah* (unique here) comes from a verb meaning "to dwell," suggesting an abode.<sup>5</sup> The Greek O.T. translated it *homilia*, meaning association or companionship. Later traditions interpreted it to mean times of cohabitation. This seems quite unlikely to us. The Bible does not present sex as a "right" that women (or men either!) cannot live without. But ostracizing and snubbing a young woman, refusing to talk with her and refusing to treat her as part of the household she dwells in is an intolerable hurt, and is forbidden here.

11. *What was the penalty for killing a man?* (21:12-14)

<sup>3</sup>J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1969), p. 307.

<sup>4</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

<sup>5</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

A person who struck another and caused him to die was to be put to death, unless it happened accidentally and unintentionally. In that case the manslayer had to flee to a place of safety prepared for this situation. But the presumptuous (willful) slayer was to be put to death, even if he fled to the Lord's altar for safety from vengeance. The "and" at the beginning of 21:14 is better rendered as "but."

This law was applied to non-Israelite foreigners, as well as Israelites. (Lev. 24:17, 21, 22).

Gen. 9:6: "Whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." This law goes back to the time of Noah, when it was given to the whole human race.

In ancient times if a man was killed, his close relatives sought to avenge his death by killing the killer.

Human life is sacred according to the Torah (law of Moses). Whoever assails this sanctity forfeits his own life. But the life of the slayer is sacred too, and so his life was not to be taken if the death was accidental. But human life is so sacred that even an accidental killing brings drastic consequences, and the normal life pattern of the manslayer was interrupted.

The place for the manslayer to flee to was called a city of refuge. There were six of these designated to be set up in the land of Israel. See Num. 35:10-34; Deut. 19:1-10; 4:41-43; Joshua 20:1-9. Perhaps in the wilderness wanderings some temporary place of safety was designated.

But there was no place of security for a murderer! See Numbers 35:16-21. Killers have fled to sacred places hoping to escape punishment, both in eastern and western countries. David's general Joab and David's son Adonijah both did this, fleeing to the altar and clutching its horns. (I Kings 1:50; 2:28-34). It did not save Joab.

Ex. 21:13 describes an accidental killing as an act of God: "If . . . God deliver him into his hand; . . ." We do not know enough about God's workings in men's experiences to state positively how far this statement about God's actions should be applied. Is every man's every misfortune or

death under God's direction? Or do "time and chance" bring about events without any definite purpose or pattern? (Eccl. 9:11). We understand the scriptures to teach that "a [righteous] man's goings are ordered by the LORD" (Ps. 37:23), while recognizing that many choices are left up to us. King Saul declared that the Lord had delivered him into David's hand (I Sam. 24:18).

The idea that calamities (lightnings, windstorms, floods, etc.) are "acts of God" was widespread in the ancient Near East. Hammurabi's law (number 266) spoke about a "visitation of god" occurring in a sheepfold.

12. *What was the penalty for striking father or mother?* (21:15)

Those who smote father or mother were to be put to death. This act was a specific breaking of the commandment about honoring father and mother. (Ex. 20:12).

The verb translated *smite* (*nakah*) sometimes means to smite hard enough to kill. See Ex. 2:12. This suggests that the beating of parents referred to here was a violent striking and beating. Note that in 21:12 "smiting" could lead to death. The Jewish rabbis interpreted 21:15 to mean that only when a blow left a bruise upon parents was the death penalty to be inflicted. Certainly we do not regard their interpretation as being authoritative like the divine word itself. Neither do we consider that a non-injurious blow struck at parents is less reprehensible to God than a severe blow. It is the attitude of the heart that mattered most.

We must not disregard and dismiss this law about killing a child for smiting its parents as a "temporary cultural practice." Certainly in our Christian age we do not execute children for smiting parents. On the contrary, the prodigal son was allowed to live and was received back home with much joy (Luke 15:11-32). But God's hatred of smiting and cursing parents still continues. And unless there is a repentance (as in the case of the prodigal son), the smiter's punishment in hell will be infinitely worse than killing his body on earth!

Hammurabi's law (#195) prescribed that if a son struck

his father, his hand should be cut off. God took a more serious view of this offense than even Hammurabi did.

Compare Ex. 21:17 for more information concerning offenses against parents.

13. *What was the penalty for kidnapping? (21:16)*

The kidnapper was certainly to be put to death. God so hated this crime that He prescribed dire consequences. Men may not execute the kidnapper, but God will recompense him.

Deut. 24:7: "If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and he deal with him as a slave, or sell him, then that thief shall die: so shalt thou put away the evil from the midst of thee."

The kidnapper was condemned even if he had not yet collected his ransom and still had his victim.

The kidnapping law, of course, recalls to our minds the case of Joseph's brothers selling him (Gen. 37:25-28). God hated this act.

The Jewish rabbis held that this verse (21:16) meant that only if a person stole a man AND he was seen by witnesses in possession of the kidnapped one was he to be slain. Admittedly, the Hebrew conjunction is *and* and not *or*. Furthermore, criminals were not to be executed without witnesses to prove their guilt (Num. 35:30). Nonetheless, most commentators and translators think that the man-stealer was to be slain, even if his victim was not found with the abductor, if clear evidence of his guilt could be obtained. Possibly the ransom money or sale price money could be traced. We feel that the translation "or" in the middle of 21:16 is correct.

Other law codes in the ancient Near East also forbade kidnapping. Hammurabi's law (#14) directed that if a citizen stole the young son of another citizen, that he should be put to death. However, stealing a slave was not looked upon so seriously. Eshnunna law (#49) directed that a man caught with a stolen slave or slave girl was to surrender one slave for each one stolen.

14. *What was the penalty for cursing parents? (21:17)*

The one cursing father or mother was most certainly to be put to death.

Lev. 20:9: "For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him."

What does it mean to CURSE father or mother? The Hebrew verb (*qalal*) translated *curse* has several applications. Often it referred to language much like our modern slanderous profanity. See I Samuel 17:43; II Sam. 16:5. The dictionaries define it to mean "to esteem lightly, hence to revile, curse, or execrate." In Deut. 23:4 to *curse* refers to a curse of supernatural type, like voodoo or hexing. In I Sam. 2:30 the word *qalal* is translated "lightly esteem" and is set forth as the opposite of honoring. Jesus quoted Ex. 21:17 in Matt. 15:4 and Mark 7:10 to condemn the Pharisees for neglecting to care for their parents. obviously, therefore, to *curse* parents had a very broad meaning.

Respect for parents is commanded in the New Testament in Eph. 6:1. God does not feel less strongly now about those who curse their parents than He did in Moses' time.

15. *What was the penalty for injuring someone in a fight? (21:18-19)*

One who inflicted a non-fatal injury upon someone in a fight was to pay for the loss of the injured man's time off from work and to cause him to be completely healed, that is, pay for his medical care. Aside from these requirements, he was "quit," that is, clear and free from further penalty. The guilty party had to pay workman's compensation and health benefits, to express it in modern jargon. God cares about injuries and injustices, as well as about the loss of life.

If the smitten man died, then 21:12 would apply as the rule.

It seems to us that Ex. 21:18 refers to an unplanned, impromptu fight. The use of impromptu weapons like the fist<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Both the Hebrew and the Greek have a word meaning *fist*. The Aramaic Targums and some other versions understand it as a stick or cudgel.



and the stone suggests that the blow was not premeditated.<sup>7</sup> If the smiter had planned the deed he would have carried a knife or a club. Martin Noth<sup>8</sup> does not feel that the text clearly indicates by mentioning fist and stone that there was no evil intent in the smiter. We concede that the evidence is not positive. But the law could be applied, whether the blow was planned or unplanned.

Laws about personal injuries were common in ancient Near Eastern law codes. Hammurabi's law #206 asserted that if a citizen struck another citizen in a brawl and inflicted an injury upon him, that the citizen was to swear that he had not struck him deliberately, and should pay for the physician. This stipulation is similar to that in Moses' law. Hammurabi added (in laws 207-208) that if the smitten one died because of his blow, that the smiter was to swear that it was not deliberate; and if the slain man was a member of the aristocracy, the slayer should pay one-half mina of silver; but if the slain man was a member of the commonality, the slayer was to pay one-third of a mina of silver. Thus Hammurabi made class distinctions which God did not make in the Torah. (Also we wonder how honest some of the oaths were!)

16. *What was the penalty for beating a slave to death? (21:20-21)*

For beating a slave to death, his master shall "certainly be punished." However, if the slave survived the beating for a day or so, the master was not to be punished because the financial loss incurred by the slave's death was considered punishment enough. "They are your possession."

We think that this passage refers to foreign slaves. Lev. 25:44-46 declares that Israelite bondmen were not to be made to serve with rigor.

The manner of inflicting the punishment on the slave-killing master is not specified. Some think the master was executed, as 21:12 directs. But this seems unlikely to us. If the punishment for killing a slave were the same as for killing

<sup>7</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

<sup>8</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 181.

any other person, there would seem to be no purpose in this distinct law applying to slaves.

The word for *punish* is a word usually meaning "to take vengeance." This might make it appear therefore that some members of the slave's family would punish or kill the master in the usual ways of taking blood vengeance. But we doubt that foreign slaves would have relatives available to take such action.

We suppose that it was left to the Israelite authorities to instigate investigation and determine punishment in such cases.

The "rod" referred to was probably the instrument customarily used to chasten and impress a slave. See Prov. 10:13; 13:23. "Under his hand" means during the act of the beating, or very quickly thereafter.

The fact that a beaten slave lived a day or two was taken as proof that his master had not intended to kill him, and he therefore was exonerated from further penalty.

If all of this seems harsh and sub-Christian to you, consider the additional fact that the law (in 21:26-27) stated that permanent physical injuries to the slave, like loss of an eye or tooth, brought about his release from slavery. Also this very law in 21:20-21 hints that a strong public sentiment might arise in behalf of a slain slave and indignation might rise so high as to be difficult to repress without specific rules about the matter. The Israelites were not indifferent to the rights of a slave. Much less was God indifferent!

The protection of slaves afforded by this verse may seem to us a slight one. But it is the earliest trace of such protection known in legislation. God had to educate His people little by little, line upon line. He overlooked many things in olden times of which he now commands all men to repent (Acts 17:30).

Babylonian law was not concerned about the slave at all, but only about the loss to his master. If someone killed another man's slave, he had to pay one-third mina of silver and also forfeit other valuables. (Hammurabi's law #116). To the

Israelite a slave was a person, a human being created in the divine image, and whoever assaulted this divinely-given life was answerable for it and would surely be punished. This attitude and approach to the matter of slavery could eventually lead only to total emancipation.

17. *What was the penalty for accidentally causing a woman to have a miscarriage? (21:22)*

If two men were fighting and accidentally injured a woman in the fracas and caused her to have a miscarriage, the one who had caused the miscarriage was to be fined according as the woman's husband demanded and the judges gave sentence.<sup>9</sup>

If, however, harm followed, then the one who injured the woman was punished by being injured in a manner similar to the injury that he had inflicted.

What is this "harm" that might follow? This word (*'ason*) translated "harm" is found elsewhere in scripture only in Gen. 42:4, 38 and 44:29. In these passages it seems to signify serious harm, perhaps even death. We assume that it has this meaning here.

Was the *harm* that done to the mother, or to the unborn child, or both? We feel that it was the harm done to the mother because her violently-aborted fetus probably would die in nearly all such cases. The Jewish rabbis and the Targum of Onkelos understood the "harm" as referring to the death of the mother.<sup>10</sup> We think that this certainly was one possibility that the verse relates to, and that this is indicated by the "life for life" judgment in 21:23. But the other penalties that are suggested ("eye for eye, tooth for tooth, etc.") suggest that this law dealt with other possible injuries and effects besides the woman's death. The text says that the woman was *hurt* so as to have a miscarriage. She was not just frightened to the point of losing her baby (something that

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<sup>9</sup>"As the judges determine" is a permissible but loose translation. Literally the text says only "In (or among, amidst) judges. . . ."

<sup>10</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

does indeed happen).

The law was general enough that it could apply in many different situations, both in cases when the women just happened to be too near men who started fighting; or when as wife of one she interfered with their quarrel. (Compare Deut. 25:11-12.)

The expression "that her fruit depart" could be literally translated "and her children go out" (of her womb). The word "children" is plural because it might be twins.

The word translated "fruit" is *yeled*. This word is almost always translated "child." (It is rendered that way seventy-two times in the King James Bible. See Gen. 21:8; Ex. 2:3, 10.) Sometimes it is rendered "boy" (Zech. 8:5), "son" (Ruth 1:5), or "young man" (Gen. 4:23; I kings 12:8).

The use in Ex. 21:22 of the word *yeled* to describe the woman's aborted fetus is surely no comfort to the advocates of "legalized" abortion. Some writers have used Ex. 21:22 to argue that a fetus is not really a child, and that the abortion of a fetus is not regarded in the law as equally serious to the death of a person after birth.<sup>11</sup> (Note Ex. 21:12). But the same term (*yeled*) describes the unborn child that refers to the child after birth.

The Greek O.T. renders 21:22, "And the child come out not perfectly formed." We do not consider this to be an authoritative translation; but it is worth noting that the Greek-speaking Jews understood the verse to refer to a non-liveable fetus.

Hammurabi (Laws 209-212) dictated that if a citizen struck another citizen's daughter and caused her to have a miscarriage, he was to pay ten shekels of silver for her fetus. If the woman died they were to put the striker's *daughter* to death. Hammurabi then decreed that if a citizen caused a commoner's daughter to have a miscarriage, he was to pay five shekels of silver; but if that woman died, he was to pay one-half mina of silver. The law of Moses did not make such

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<sup>11</sup>Surprisingly even Keil and Delitzsch, *ibid*, makes this allegation.

class distinctions among people.

18. *What was to be done if harm followed a miscarriage?* (20:23-25)

In such a case, the one who brought on the miscarriage by hurting the woman was punished in a degree according to what he had done - "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, etc." This is the so-called *lex talionis*, a Latin expression meaning law of retaliation. Compare Lev. 24:17-21.

The *lex talionis* may seem severe, but it is not a bad law. It makes the penalty fit the crime. It prevents extreme harsh retaliations. It was more valuable as a deterrent than as a penalty.

Cassuto<sup>12</sup> thinks that it is very unlikely that accidentally killing a pregnant woman was punishable by "life for life," when 21:13 says that accidental killers were not to be executed. Also Num. 35:31 indicates that a ransom was to be refused only for the life of a murderer. This led Cassuto to hold that the formula "life for life" is a stereotyped legal saying meaning that the punishment for a crime was to correspond generally to the crime itself, but did not always require exactly the same infliction as punishment. Thus "life for life" sometimes meant only a fair monetary compensation. We feel that this is probably correct; and that "life for life" here probably meant that the slayer was to spend his life in a city of refuge working to repay to the husband the loss of the life of the mother and baby.

Although there is no mention of the decision of *judges* in 21:23-25, the reference to judges in 21:22 causes us to think that the penalty to be inflicted was decided upon by judges. The references in Deut. 19:18-21 to judges deciding in another situation how to administer the "life for life, eye for eye" law strengthens our view that the judges decided the punishments of Ex. 21:23-25.

In ancient times wrongdoings were sometimes punished by the *law of unlimited revenge*. According to this system a

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<sup>12</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 276.

wrongdoer's entire family was wiped out for his misdeed (Gen. 34:25-31). In later times the "eye for an eye" law prevented such extreme punishments, and functioned as a *law of limited revenge*. While this was progress in human relationships, even it will not solve the fightings and enmities of society. To achieve this, men must accept the law taught by Christ, the *law of unlimited forgiveness*: "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." (Rom. 12:20).<sup>13</sup>

Matthew 5:38-39: "Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

The Jewish rabbis regarded "eye" and "tooth" as typical of all sorts of injuries, and this is probably true. They enumerated twenty-four bodily organs which come within the operation of this law. Probably that did not exhaust all the possible applications of the law.

Hammurabi gave several laws about personal injuries. He also employed the *lex talionis*, and decreed that if a citizen destroyed the eye of a member of the aristocracy, they should destroy his eye; and if he broke another citizen's bone, they should break his bone. Also if a citizen knocked out a tooth of a citizen of his rank, they were to knock out his tooth. (Laws 196-197, 200). Hammurabi's application of this law shows it was *not* always interpreted to mean that one paid the *value* of a tooth when he knocked one out. His own tooth was knocked out!

19. *What was the penalty for injuring slaves? (21:26-27)*

If a man inflicted permanent injury upon his slave, like destroying his eye or knocking out a tooth, the slave or slave girl was set free for the sake of the eye or tooth. We presume that other permanent injuries also brought about emancipation. Compare this law with 21:20-21.

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<sup>13</sup>The author learned these three laws of human relationship from Dr. Najib Khouri, a gracious, wise, elderly Arab Christian of Beit Hanina, Israel.

Hammurabi (law 199) decreed that if a citizen destroyed the eye of another citizen's slave or broke the bone of another man's slave, he was to pay one-half his value. Hammurabi says nothing about a man's injuring his own slave.

20. *What was the penalty if an ox gored a man to death? (21:28-29)*

The ox was to be stoned to death, and its flesh was not to be eaten. The owner was then clear of further responsibility. However, if the ox was known to be a gorer in times past, and its owner had not kept it shut up, and it gored a man or woman to death, then the ox was stoned and its owner was also put to death. Probably injuries inflicted by other animals were settled by the example of the law about the ox.

Gen. 9:5-6: "Surely your blood, *the blood* of your lives, will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it: and at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man."

The ox that killed a man was slain because it had killed a human life, that which is a divine gift and has the image of God. So extreme is the act of taking a life that even the beast, though it has no moral sensibilities, was removed from existence to implant horror for killing. Guilty negligence on the part of the owner was reckoned to be a capital offense, though it could be commuted by a fine.

We suppose that the ox was not eaten because in being stoned it would not be properly bled for slaughtering. Also its carcass would be bruised. Also bloodguiltiness was imputed to the ox.

Law codes in the ancient Near East had several laws similar to Ex. 21:28-29. Hammurabi's law (No. 250) said that if an ox, when it was walking along the street, gored a citizen to death, the case was not subject to claim. The law of Moses required the ox to be slain in such cases.

Hammurabi also commanded (laws #251-252) that if a citizen's ox was a gorer and the city council made it known to him that it was a gorer, but he did not dehorn it or tie up the

ox, and that ox gored to death a member of the aristocracy, he should pay one-half mina of silver. (This law resembles Ex. 21:32). Eshnunna law 54 is quite similar. We notice in these laws a somewhat less positive view of the sacredness of human life than the Torah presupposes.

21. *How might the owner of a killing ox escape execution? (21:30-31)*

The owner of the ox could escape execution if the other people involved (the family of the dead man and the authorities) agreed to lay upon him a ransom for his life. In that case he had to pay whatever was laid upon him as the redemption of his life (soul, Heb. *nepesh*). The words *redemption* and *ransom* are important words for the later teachings about salvation. Note Psalm 49:7-8.

Ex. 21:31 emphasizes the impartiality of the law. The owner of an ox that killed someone after the owner had been warned was either sentenced to death or had a ransom charged for him, regardless of whether the ox gored a son or a daughter. It is barely possible that the law in 21:31 may reflect an acquaintance with a Babylonian law (Hammurabi #229-230). This law sentenced the *son* of a house builder to death if the builder built a house and it collapsed and killed the son of the house owner; the law sentenced the builder himself to death if the house he built collapsed and killed the house owner. The Babylonian law was a severe deterrent, but it did punish the innocent son for the sins of his father. The Hebrew law put the penalty where it belonged, upon the negligent manslayer. The children were not to be put to death for the sins of the father (Deut. 24:16).

22. *What was the penalty if an ox gored a slave? (21:32)*

The owner of the ox gave to the master of the slave (whether the slave was male or female) thirty shekels of silver and the ox was stoned.

This law is one of the very few rules in Israel's law which shows a differentiation in the evaluation of bond and free men. But the slave was still a person, and the ox that gored the slave was slain.



Ex. 21:32 reveals the price of a dead slave - thirty pieces (shekels) of silver! See Zech. 11:12; Matt. 26:15.

Hammurabi's law (No. 252) prescribed a payment of one-third of a mina of silver as payment to a slave's owner if he were fatally gored, but the goring ox was not to be destroyed.

23. *What was the penalty for causing an animal's death in a pit?* (21:33-34)

If a man dug a pit and did not cover it adequately, and an animal belonging to someone else fell into it, the owner of the pit had to pay for the dead animal, and the dead beast was given to the pit owner. (A dead ox would probably be more trouble than benefit! Imagine trying to remove a dead ox from a pit!) The text does not indicate what judgment was to be given if the animal in the pit was only injured.

Pits of various types were common in Israel. They were dug into the bed rock (which is often very near the surface), for water cisterns, for grain storage, for traps for animals (II Sam. 23:20), or prisons for men (Jer. 38:6), or military defences (Jer. 41:9).

The principle of personal liability for the physical safety of people and animals is clearly stated in God's law. We who are Christians do not have in the New Testament all the detailed instructions about safety which are given in the law, such as rules about covering pits or building railings around the edges of flat roof tops. But we who are under the gospel of Christ are more obligated to protect the safety and lives of people than were the people under the law. We can receive guidance from the law and internal motivation from the Holy Spirit within.

Romans 13:9-10: "If there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law."

24. *What was the judgment if one man's ox killed another man's ox?* (21:35-36)

In such a case the live ox was sold and the money was divided between both men. The dead ox was also divided

between them. This provision very probably ended up with both men being losers, but not losers to the degree that they would have been without this protective law.

If the ox that killed the other ox was known to be a gorer in times past and the owner had been warned and had not kept it in, then the owner assuredly paid for the dead ox totally, but the dead beast was to be his (21:36).

One of the laws at Eshnunna (No. 53) was very similar to the Hebrew law. It decreed that if an ox gored another ox and caused its death, that both ox owners should divide among themselves the price of the live ox and also the equivalent of the dead ox.

The concern often expressed in the O.T. prophets for fair dealing had its roots in the law of Moses, and, of course, ultimately in the very nature of God. To a struggling Israelite farmer a fair payment for the death of an ox might mean the difference between subsistence and hunger, or between freedom and slavery for debt.<sup>14</sup>

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### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**22** If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall pay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. (2) If the thief be found breaking in, and be smitten so that he dieth, there shall be no bloodguiltiness for him. (3) If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be bloodguiltiness for him; he shall make restitution: if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. (4) If the theft be found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall pay double.

(5) If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall let his beast loose, and it feed in another man's field; of the

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<sup>14</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution.

(6) If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the shocks of grain, or the standing grain, or the field are consumed; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution.

(7) If a man shall deliver unto his neighbor money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen out of the man's house; if the thief be found, he shall pay double. (8) If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall come near unto God, *to see* whether he have not put his hand unto his neighbor's goods. (9) For every matter of trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, *or for any manner of lost thing, whereof one saith, This is it,* the cause of both parties shall come before God; he whom God shall condemn shall pay double unto his neighbor.

(10) If a man deliver unto his neighbor an ass, or an ox, or a sheep, or any beast, to keep; and it die, or be hurt, or driven away, no man seeing it: (11) the oath of Je-ho-vah shall be between them both, whether he hath not put his hand unto his neighbor's goods; and the owner thereof shall accept it, and he shall not make restitution. (12) But if it be stolen from him, he shall make restitution unto the owner thereof. (13) If it be torn in pieces, let him bring it for witness; he shall not make good that which was torn.

(14) And if a man borrow aught of his neighbor, and it be hurt, or die, the owner thereof not being with it, he shall surely make restitution. (15) If the owner thereof be with it, he shall not make it good: if it be a hired thing, it came for its hire.

(16) And if a man entice a virgin that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely pay a dowry for her to be his wife. (17) If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins.

(18) Thou shalt not suffer a sorceress to live.

(19) Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death.

(20) He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto Je-ho-vah only, shall be utterly destroyed. (21) And a sojourner shalt thou not wrong, neither shalt thou oppress him: for ye were sojourners in the land of E-gypt. (22) Ye shall not afflict any widow, or

fatherless child. (23) If thou afflict them at all, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; (24) and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

(25) If thou lend money to any of my people with thee that is poor, thou shalt not be to him as a creditor; neither shall ye lay upon him interest. (26) If thou at all take thy neighbor's garment to pledge, thou shalt restore it unto him before the sun goeth down: (27) for that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious.

(28) Thou shalt not revile God, nor curse a ruler of thy people. (29) Thou shalt not delay to offer of thy harvest, and of the outflow of thy presses. The first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me. (30) Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, *and* with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with its dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me. (31) And ye shall be holy men unto me: therefore ye shall not eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs.

# EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading propose a brief title or topic for the chapter.
2. What was the penalty (or required restitution) for stealing a sheep? An ox? Why the difference? (22:1)
3. What distinction was made in the responsibility upon one who smote a thief in the night so that he died, from the responsibility upon who killed a thief in the daytime? Why? (22:2-3)
4. What punishment was imposed upon a thief if a stolen animal was found in his possession? (22:4)
5. What was the penalty for letting one's animal graze in another's field? (22:5)
6. What penalty was imposed for letting fire burn in a neighbor's

grain field? (22:6)

7. Who decided what was to be done when goods entrusted to someone were stolen? (22:7-9)
8. What was to be done if entrusted animals died while under the care of someone? (22:10-11)
9. What were people to do about borrowed things that were damaged or hurt? (22:14-15).
10. What requirements were imposed upon those who seduced virgins? (22:16-17)
11. What was the law about sorceresses (witches)? (22:18)
12. What was the penalty for immorality with a beast? (22:19)
13. What punishment was given to those who sacrificed to other gods?
14. What treatment was to be given to sojourners? Why? (22:21)
15. Who claimed the poor people as "my people"? (22:25)
16. What interest was to be charged to poor people? (22:25)
17. How long could garments held as security for a loan be kept? Why? (22:26-27; Compare Lev. 25:35-37)
18. What was the law about reviling rulers (and God)? (22:28)
19. Who quoted this law? (Acts 23:5)
20. What was to be done with the firstborn? (22:29-30)
21. What sort of men were the people to be unto God? (22:31)
22. What rule was given about eating torn flesh? (22:31)

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#### EXODUS TWENTY-TWO: GOD'S COVENANT ORDINANCES (CONTINUED)

1. Laws about theft; 22:1-4.
2. Laws about damaging others' produce; 22:5-6.
3. Loss of thing entrusted to others; 22:7-15.
4. Seduction of a virgin; 22:16-17.
5. Capital crimes; 22:18-20.
6. Laws protecting the weak; 22:21-27.
  - a. The sojourner; 22:21.

## GOD'S COVENANT ORDINANCES 22:1-31

- b. The widow and orphan; 22:22-24.
  - c. The poor debtor; 22:25-27.
  - 7. Duties to rulers and to God; 22:28-31.
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### EXODUS TWENTY-TWO: PROPERTY, PEOPLE, POTENTATES

#### I. Property.

- 1. Restitution for stolen goods; 22:1, 4.
- 2. Repayment for pasturing or burning fields; 22:5-6.
- 3. Responsibility for goods left in trust; 22:7-13.

#### II. People.

- 1. A homeowner - Right to self-protection; 22:2.
- 2. A thief - His life is to be spared; 22:3.
- 3. A virgin - Seduction brings consequences; 22:16-17.
- 4. A sorceress - Execution; 22:18.
- 5. A sodomite - Execution; 22:19.
- 6. An idolater - Execution; 22:20.
- 7. A sojourner - Kind treatment; 22:21.
- 8. A widow or orphan - Not afflicted; 22:22-24.
- 9. A poor man - Kind credit treatment; 22:25-27.

#### III. Potentates.

- 1. Rulers - Do not curse; 22:28.
  - 2. God; 22:29-31.
    - a. Offer your produce.
    - b. Offer your firstborn.
    - c. Be holy; eat no torn flesh.
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### THE SACREDNESS OF HUMAN TRUSTS (22:7-13)

- 1. God recognizes the owner's possession of entrusted goods; 22:7.

2. God gives judgment in disputes over trusts; 22:8-9, 11.
  3. God holds a trustee responsible for theft; 22:12.
  4. God excuses the trustee in cases of violence; 22:13.
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### CRIMES THAT FORFEIT LIFE (22:18-20)

1. Sorcery; 22:18.
  2. Sodomy; 22:19.
  3. Idolatry; 22:20.
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### WITCHCRAFT! (22:18)

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|---------------|---------------|------------|
| 1. Dangerous; | 2. Deceptive; | 3. Doomed. |
|---------------|---------------|------------|
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### GOD'S EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAN'S WORSHIP! (22:20)

1. Based on God's nature.
  2. Based on non-reality of other gods.
  3. Based on fact of God's creating man.
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### TREATMENT OF THE WEAK AND THE MIGHTY (22:21-31)

- I. Treatment of the weak; 22:21-27.
  1. The sojourner - Not wronged or oppressed; (22:21).
  2. The widow and orphan - Not afflicted; (22:22-24).
  3. The poor debtor - Gentleness in lending; (22:25-27).

II. Treatment of the mighty; 22:28-31.

1. Treatment of rulers - Curse not; (22:28)
  2. Treatment of God; (22:28-31)
    - a. Do not revile; (22:28)
    - b. Bring your offerings and firstfruits; (22:29-30)
    - c. Be holy in diet; (22:31)
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EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

1. *What is in Exodus 22?*

Exodus twenty-two continues God's *covenant* ordinances, which are given in Ex. 21-23. The chapter deals with punishment of thieves, damage to field produce, goods left in care of non-owners, etc. The chapter has a section of laws protecting the weak (22:21-27), and closes with ordinances about duties to God (22:28-31.)

It might be helpful to remember the contents of this chapter by saying that it has ordinances about property, people, and potentates (rulers and God).

2. *What was the penalty for stealing an ox or sheep?* (22:1)

For stealing an ox and killing or selling it, a man had to restore or pay five oxen for the stolen one. The penalty for stealing and selling a sheep was four sheep. The word *sheep* (*seh*) may also refer to a goat. Killing or selling the animal would indicate that the theft was deliberate.

The difference in penalty for stealing an ox from that of stealing a sheep is probably due simply to the greater value of the ox. It took years to train an ox well.

The fourfold restitution for a stolen sheep is referred to in King David's condemnation of the man who stole the little ewe lamb: "He shall restore the lamb fourfold" (II Sam. 12:6). Prov. 6:30-31 mentions a *sevenfold* restitution of stolen things. Perhaps that passage uses the larger number to emphasize the seriousness of theft, without meaning to be



legally precise in defining the punishment.

People have always made harsh laws against thievery, because it hits them where it hurts, in the pocketbook. They may wink at immorality (if no one is physically injured), but theft is not so excusable among men. Hammurabi's law (No. 8) reflects this common human feeling toward theft, and declared that if a man stole an ox or a sheep, or ass, or such, and it belonged to the church or state, he had to make a *thirtyfold* restitution. If it belonged to a private citizen, he had to make it good *tenfold*; and if he did not have enough to make restitution, he was put to *death*!

Possibly the law of Moses contained the law in 22:1 to oppose the extreme sentence of Hammurabi, which was probably a prevailing approach to punishing thieves. Certainly God's law never allowed that a man's life be taken for offenses against property.

Ex. 22:4 gives a related law about stealing animals. See below.

3. *How might the time of a theft affect its consequences? (22:2-3)*

If a thief was caught breaking in at *night* and was killed in the act, his slayer was not held accountable for the thief's death. If the sun had risen and the thief was smitten and slain, his slayer had bloodguiltiness (Heb., *blood*) upon him. The dead thief's relatives could attempt to take the life of the one killing the thief. Compare 21:12.

The proper punishment of a thief caught stealing in the daytime was that he had to make restitution (repay double; see 22:4, 7). If the thief could not repay, then he was sold for his theft. Compare 21:2.

The principle is that human life is greater than property. If the thief were breaking in at night, there was the possibility that he was going to harm or kill the householder or his family; thus the householder was not held accountable for striking and slaying the thief because this may have been necessary self-defence. But in the daytime the thief's intentions (whether he was just stealing or seeking to harm people)

would probably be visible by his actions. He was not to be smitten just to make certain that he did try to kill someone.

Admittedly 22:2 does not mention the *night* time, but the contrast of 22:2 and 22:3 indicates that 22:2 does refer to a nighttime breakin.

"Breaking in" (literally, "digging in") presupposes the houses were made of mud brick or other easily removeable materials.

The way Hammurabi's law dealt with thieves breaking in makes us shudder. If a citizen made a breach in a house, they put him to death in front of that breach, and then walled him up in the breach! (Law No. 21). If a citizen committed robbery and was caught, he was put to death.

4. *What was the penalty for a thief "caught with the goods"?* (22:4)

Whatever he was caught with (ox, or ass, or sheep), he had to pay double. (It seems that this was in addition to restoring the stolen animal.)

Possibly the reason for the lesser penalty (double instead of fourfold) was that if the stolen item was still with the thief, he yet might repent of his crime, acknowledge his guilt, and restore what he had stolen. He could not do this after the animal was disposed of.

The R.S.V. of the Bible places 22:3b-4 right after 22:1. The reason for doing this is that verse four deals with the same subject as verse one. We do not feel that anyone has the right to rearrange the Biblical text. The Greek Bible gives the verses in the same order as the Hebrew Bible and most English versions. Furthermore, the laws in Ex. 21-23 are not set forth as a comprehensive and systematic presentation of all Israel's laws. They are sort of a "sampler" of the fuller code of laws in Leviticus, Deuteronomy, etc. It is an indication of misunderstanding of the section (chs. 21-23) to assume that the section originally had all laws on the same topics grouped together in a polished and systematic legal and literary style.

5. *What was the penalty for pasturing another man's field?* (22:5)

The one who pastured another man's field or vineyard was to make restitution out of the *best* part of his own field or vineyard.

It appears that the pasturing of the field was intentional. The text could be translated literally, "If a man . . . shall *send* his cattle and cause them to eat in a field of another, . . . ." The Greek translates *send* as *aphiemi*, meaning to send away or let go. The law would be applicable, whether the pasturing was intentional or unintentional.

The words *eat* in 22:5 and *consume* in 22:6 are in Hebrew the same word (*ba'ar*). This word usually (but not always) means to consume by fire. The New English Bible translates 22:5 as "burn off."

*Beast* in 22:5 is a collective word referring to cattle.

The law of Moses set a stiff penalty for presumptuously grazing another's field. Isa. 3:14 speaks of elders and princes in the land who ate up the vineyards of the poor. Probably some inconsiderate people thought they could profit more by pasturing another man's field than the law would possibly exact from them in punishment. Therefore God decreed that they had to make restitution from the best part of their fields.

No one pastures his neighbor's field and still loves his neighbor as himself. Lev. 19:18.

6. *What was the judgment for burning another man's field?* (22:6)

He that kindled the fire was surely to make restitution.

The fire referred to "got away" and "went forth." Small fires started for cooking or burning off stubble might break out in a strong breeze (and such a breeze is customary in Palestine), and catch in thorns, and quickly spread to fields of standing grain. Burning off fields of grain was a sure way to arouse an agitated response! See Judges 15:4-6; II Sam. 14:30-31.

Palestinian thorns are very flammable in the dry season and are used as fuel by the poor. The author has vivid memories of helping fight a fire in the thistles and thorns on Tell

Gezer in Israel. The strong breeze had caused a fire set in a nearby wheat field to burn off stubble to break out into the adjoining uncultivated hillside. The thorns and thistles and sheep dung in the hot dry late June air were almost explosively flammable, and the flames could hardly be beaten out.

7. *What was to be done if goods left in someone's care were stolen? (22:7)*

If the thief were caught, he had to pay double. This refers back to 22:4, where a thief caught with the goods was sentenced to pay double to the owner.

8. *What was to be done if goods left in someone's care were stolen and the thief was not caught? (22:8-9)*

In such a case the keeper of the goods had to clear himself. The keeper of the goods would come "unto God" (K.J.V., "Unto the judges") to determine whether he had stolen or embezzled the goods left in his care. The Greek and Latin translations add that the keeper was to swear that he had not taken the goods. God would reveal in some way who had transgressed, and whoever was condemned had to pay his neighbor double. Possibly this was done by the priests by their Urim and Thummim or other means of obtaining information from God (Ex. 28:30; Ezra 2:63; Deut. 1:16-17).

We prefer the translation "unto God" rather than "unto the judges" in 22:8. "Before God" is the Greek rendering here. Compare 21:6 and 22:28 on the translation of *elohim* as *God* or as *judges*.

If an owner of goods had entrusted the goods to someone and the goods disappeared, and then the owner located his lost livestock (or clothing or whatever it was), he could declare, "This is it!" "That's mine!" The Israelites did not follow the Anglo-Saxon practice of "Finders-keepers." A lost object remained the possession of its original owner, who could claim it on sight.

The practice of settling disputes over property in the presence of God (or "the gods") was common in the ancient Near East. Hammurabi's law (No. 120) commanded that a dispute about grain that disappeared while in the care of

someone was to be settled "in the presence of god," that is at the local idol sanctuary, which doubled as the court of justice. Certainly there is no evidence here that Moses borrowed his law from Hammurabi. Hammurabi decreed that the owner of the grain should go to their gods for the truth. Moses had the accused keeper to go before God to clear himself. The Torah here protected the accused man.

9. *How was a case involving uncertainty about the loss of livestock to be settled? (22:10-13)*

If livestock in the care of someone besides its owner died or was hurt or driven away (by enemy raiders or attacked by animals), and no one saw it happen, an oath in Jehovah's name was sworn out as to whether the keeper had stolen or slaughtered the animal for himself. In some way Jehovah would make known the truth of the matter. If the keeper was innocent, no restitution was made. Natural losses (from beasts or sickness, etc.) were not the responsibility of the keeper.

If wild beasts had killed a sheep or other animal, the keeper could bring the remaining pieces of the animal as evidence of what had happened. The keeper might rescue "two legs or a piece of an ear." (Amos 3:12).

If the animal(s) had been stolen from the one keeping them, the keeper had to make restitution to the owner. The keeper was responsible to protect against thievery.

Jacob spoke to his father-in-law, Laban, about animals stolen while under his care: "Of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night" (Gen. 31:39).

The Jewish Talmud applied 22:7 to an unpaid custodian and 22:10 to a paid keeper of goods.<sup>1</sup> This has no authority to us, but it was probably generally true, because objects (as in 22:7) would usually be cared for without pay, but livestock would probably be kept by a paid guardian.

10. *What was done about borrowed animals that died or were hurt? (22:14-15)*

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<sup>1</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

If the owner was not present when they were hurt, the one who borrowed the animals had to make restitution. If the owner was there when it happened, the borrower was not held responsible for the damage. Presumably the owner could have done something in such a case to prevent the loss.

If the keeper had hired (or rented) the animal and it was hurt or died, the renter did not have to make it good. The owner assumed this risk in return for the hire given to him.

"Borrow" in 22:14 is from the same verb that is used in 3:22 with reference to "asking" (or "borrowing") jewelry of the Egyptians. The verb itself leaves open the question as to whether the object was to be returned or not. But we feel that in this passage (22:14-15) the return of the goods is certainly implied.

An alternate translation of 22:15b has been suggested by Noth and others: "If the man [through whom the damage came] is a hired man, the damage shall be charged to his hire." This reading suggests the carelessness of a hired man as opposed to the care of the owner (John 10:12). The word translated "hired thing" does frequently mean a hired laborer or hireling (Job 14:6; Lev. 25:53). But it does not always mean that. See Isa. 7:20 where it just means "hired." We must agree with Keil and Delitzsch that this is not a good translation. The Hebrew simply reads, "If [it is] a hired [thing], it came in (or with) its hire." The past tense of the verb *came* argues against the idea that the verse refers to a future repayment coming out of a hired man's wages.

11. *What were the consequences if a man seduced a virgin?* (22:16-17)

He had to pay her father the bride-money (dowry), and take the woman as his wife, and could never divorce her. See Deut. 22:28-29. The dowry was fifty shekels of silver. If her father absolutely refused (the *absolutely* is stressed) to give her to him, the man still had to pay the marriage price.

If the woman had been a betrothed virgin, then both the

man and the woman were put to death. See Deut. 22:23-24. If the man forced the woman and she cried for help, only the man was slain. See Deut. 22:25-27.

It might seem strange to insert this section about seducing a virgin right after discussing the property laws. But a man's daughters were his property, although few men looked upon children as no more than property. In their culture a young woman who was not a virgin was generally rejected as a candidate for marriage. See Deut. 22:14ff. Thus, to violate the woman meant a probable financial loss to the father, to say nothing of the feelings of the girl.

The laws in Ex. 22:16-17 and Deut. 22:23-27 partly explain the consternation of Joseph, husband of Mary, in Matt. 1:9. Would Mary be sentenced to die? Would she be compelled to marry the father of her child?

The law in Ex. 22:16-17 is not full and complete, as is the law on the same subject in Deut. 22:22-29. This points up again that the covenant ordinances in Ex. 21-23 are not designed to be an exhaustive law code but a "sampler" of the laws later to be given in full.

12. *What was to be done with a sorceress (witch)?* (22:18)

She was not to be allowed to live. (I Samuel 28:3, 9)

This verse does NOT give authority to Christians now to execute witches, whether real or unreal. We are not under the covenant of the law of Moses which commanded this. Furthermore, to force confessions out of witches (or anyone else) by torture was never part of the Jewish law, much less of Christian doctrine.

Other passages condemning witchcraft, sorcery, consulting with a "familiar spirit," etc. include Lev. 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deut. 18:10-11; I Kings 21:6; I Chron. 10:13; Isa. 8:19-20; Micah 5:12. The New Testament condemns sorcery and witchcraft in Gal. 5:20; Rev. 21:8; 22:15. It is an "abomination unto Jehovah."

Witchcraft has always been a forbidden practice for the people of God. It is an attempt to bypass the rule of God in nature and human life. It was a capital offense under the

law. We must not be involved with it, even to learn about it. Many who have been involved with it testify that it is dangerous. But we should not avoid it just for that reason. Our reason for avoiding it is that God says it is sin.

Although specifically forbidden by Israelite law, sorcery continued through much of Israel's history. It was also commonly practiced by other nations. See Ex. 7:11; Isa. 47:9, 12; Dan. 2:2; Num. 24:1.

The Hebrew word for *witch* in 22:18 is feminine, probably because many of those who practiced sorcery as a profession were woman. However, the law applied against men sorcerers as well.<sup>2</sup> See Lev. 20:2.

As an illustration of the character of witchcraft, we cite from an article in the *Joplin (Mo.) Globe*, Aug. 7, 1975, concerning a man and wife in Salem, Mo., who practice witchcraft. They declare that they are not satanists, and believe that Jesus Christ lived and was a great healer. But they object to Christian doctrine and the idea that humans have the ability to really know what God is. (This is a denial that God has ever revealed Himself through His prophets or in His word.) They tell of dancing nude under the full moon inside concentric circles of sulfur to gather power to heal or influence an event. Facing retirement, the couple said, "We feel a little sorrow in retiring, but it's not as bad as it used to be in the old days. In those days you didn't just retire. You were sacrificed in a ritual."

13. *What was the penalty for immorality with a beast?* (22:19)

Whoever lay with (that is, performed a sex act) a beast was surely to be put to death.

The verse begins in Hebrew with "All" (or "Everyone who"). So also do the parallel passages which condemn this

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<sup>2</sup>The Greek translation of the Hebrew word for sorcerer is *pharmakeus*, one who deals in drugs and poison, a sorcerer, a poisoner. The Hebrew word for one having a familiar spirit is 'ob, meaning a hollow place, particularly a hollow space in the belly which was supposedly inhabited by the spirit, and from which came the muttering and peeping sounds. The Greek translation of 'ob is *eggastrimuthos*, meaning "one making utterance in the belly."



sin. (Lev. 18:23; 20:16; Deut. 27:1). *All* must die who do this. But *WE* must now leave this judgment to God, although such acts should result in suspension from a church.

This unnatural act was partly legal among the Hittites. Those who did evil with a pig were to die. But those doing this with a horse or mule were free of penalty.<sup>3</sup>

In Canaanite (Ugaritic) literature, there is a story of Baal (the god) coupling with a cow in order to be saved magically from death. Also in the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh there are references to the relations of the goddess Ishtar with various animals.<sup>4</sup> The Hebrews were NOT to be like their pagan neighbor nations.

14. *What was the punishment for sacrificing to other gods?* (22:20)

Such people were to be utterly destroyed. Those who served other gods were to be stoned to death. Deut. 17:2, 3, 5; 13:1-16.

The verb translated "utterly destroyed" comes from the verb *haram*, "to utterly destroy." (The related noun is *herem*, an accursed thing, something devoted to destruction, something set apart for God's use or for destruction at God's orders.) The word *haram* has religious overtones absent in other words meaning kill or slaughter. Those who sacrificed to other gods were accursed, put under the ban, and devoted to destruction.<sup>5</sup>

15. *What was not to be done to sojourners?* (22:21)

They were not to be wronged (cheated) or oppressed. The Israelites had once been sojourners in Egypt and knew the feeling of strangers in a foreign land. Shielding an alien from wrong is a basic act of Godliness. Compare 23:9.

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<sup>3</sup>Hittite Laws No. 199-200, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, James B. Pritchard, ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1955), p. 197.

<sup>4</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

<sup>5</sup>The *herem* may refer to something "devoted" to God in a good sense, as for sacrifice, as well as something devoted to destruction. See Lev. 27:21, 28; Ezek. 44:29. But with both meanings the idea is present that the *herem* ("devoted thing") is set apart for God's disposal.

The "sojourners" referred to were resident aliens living amongst the Israelites. See Ex. 20:10; 23:12.

Deut. 10:18-19: "Jehovah loveth the sojourner, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the sojourner; . . . ." Compare Lev. 19:34; Matt. 25:35.

Note the singular *thou* and the plural *ye* in this verse. Right treatment of strangers is both an individual and a collective responsibility.

Love for aliens was not the practice in most ancient nations. The Egyptians hated "strangers," and the Greeks called them barbarians.

16. *What was the penalty for afflicting widows and orphans?* (22:22-24)

God would hear the prayer and cry of these lonely people and His wrath would grow hot, and He would cause their afflictors to be slain with the sword. Killing with the sword refers to wars in which men and their families would perish.

All through the scriptures God reveals that He has a special protective love for the widows and fatherless. See Deut. 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:19-21; 26:12-13; Ps. 94:6; Isa. 1:23; 10:2; Jer. 7:5-7; Zech. 7:10; Mal. 3:5. In the New Testament we have James 1:27; Mark 12:40. If there is an especially hot corner in hell, it is reserved for those who cheat and oppress any widow or orphan.

God's *wrath* is often referred to in scripture. See Ps. 69:24; Rev. 14:10. We should fear the wrath of God.

The "surely" in 22:23 is emphatic.

Ex. 22:22 begins (in Hebrew) "*Every* widow and orphan. . . ." Placing the word *every* (or *all*) first stresses the fact that this command applies with reference to ALL. (Compare 22:19, which also starts with the word *all*.)

The punishment of "making your wives widows and your children fatherless" is a severe but strikingly appropriate punishment to those who afflict any widow or orphan.

17. *What were those who loaned money NOT to do?* (22:25).

They were not to speak and act roughly to their debtors. Neither were they to lay interest charges upon these people.

Note that the poor are called “my people” (GOD’S people).

The Israelites were not to act like the demanding creditors in II Kings 4:1 and Matt. 18:28, and seize a debtor or his family or land.

The law about not charging interest applied only to Israelite debtors. They could charge interest to foreigners. Deut. 23:19-21.

Note the switching between *thou* (singular) and *ye* (plural) in 22:25. The duty of not charging interest was both individual and collective.

Nehemiah (5:3-10) condemned wealthy Jews for charging usury (interest) to their less fortunate brothers. Compare Psalm 15:5.

Christ told us to give not even expecting the principal back, much less any interest. (Luke 6:34-35). Christians must be even more gracious and generous to their needy brethren than Ex. 22:25 requires.

In modern times money is usually loaned for commercial purposes, to increase a man’s capital, increase his business, or enhance his comfort. It is proper that a reasonable interest or payment be collected for this help. Thus Ex. 22:25 does not mean we should demand that our banks stop charging interest. Jesus himself approved the taking of interest from a bank (Matt. 25:27; Luke 19:23). But this is quite a different thing from making gain out of a neighbor’s need or being callous to the needs of a brother in the Lord.

18. *What restriction was made about taking security for loans? (22:26-27)*

Items that were necessary for a man’s life were not to be taken as security (or pledge) for a loan. A creditor could not take a poor man’s garment. It might be the only clothing he had. In the daytime it was his clothing. In the nighttime it was his bed covering, if he even had a bed.

Another item that could not be kept as security for a loan was a handmill or mill stone (Deut. 24:6). Without these

items a poor man (or woman) could not grind grain for his daily bread.

If the poor man's garment was taken as loan security, it had to be returned to him before the sun went down the same day. Taking a pledge was legal, but barely so.

God said in 22:27, "When he crieth unto me, I will hear!" This verse seems to be set as a parallel passage to part of 22:23.

The backdrop of many of God's laws about loving one's neighbor is the marvelous truth about God: "I AM GRACIOUS" (or compassionate).

19. *How were the Israelites NOT to speak about their rulers?* (22:28)

They were not to revile them nor curse them. This applied to rulers who were unreasonable, unjust, and harsh, as well as to the noble and respected ones.

The apostle Paul quoted this verse in Acts 23:5. Compare Rom. 13:1-7; Heb. 13:17; I Peter 2:13-17.

The King James version has "Thou shalt not revile the *gods*." The marginal reading gives "judges." The Greek O.T. also reads, "Thou shalt not revile the *gods*." This is an abominable translation. The O.T. nowhere recognizes the existence of other gods. Much less does it command us to speak respectfully of them.

The word translated *gods* in King James version is *elohim*, the word which is usually translated *God*. The word is plural in form (though singular in meaning when referring to God), and is therefore used to refer to the gods of all nations. Furthermore, the word *elohim* basically means *mighty ones*. See Gen. 23:6. (Its singular form *el* means "a mighty one, a powerful one."). Because of this meaning "mighty ones," *elohim* sometimes refers to judges or other mighty rulers among men. See Ex. 21:6; 22:8. Also it refers to angels (Ps. 8:5), which are mighty.

We think that here in Ex. 22:28 *elohim* refers to judges or other dignitaries among men. The fact that it is made parallel with "ruler of thy people" supports this view.

Whether the reviling and cursing is directed at God or earthly judges, it should not be done.

*Reville* is from the same Hebrew word translated "curse" in 21:17 ("curseth father or mother"). See notes on that verse for the meanings implied by *curse*.

Lev. 24:15-16 tells of one who blasphemed God's name and was stoned to death for doing so. God's name is holy.

"Reviling the king" is a bad act for God's children. Eccl. 10:20: "Revile not the king, no not in thy thoughts, . . . ." Compare I Kings 21:10. Jude 8 speaks of evil men who "set at nought dominion, and rail at dignities." (Jude even goes so far as to indicate that we would do well not to rail at the devil.)

If the apostles Paul and Peter could direct the early church to honor the emperor (Nero!), we need to shut our mouths when tempted to speak harsh things against our rulers. We may reprove wicked acts, but we should not condemn people.

Keil and Delitzsch<sup>6</sup> suggest that in 22:28 the "reviling" of God refers to disregarding His threats with reference to the poor (vss. 22-23), and withholding offerings of the firstborn, etc. This interpretation ties the verse closely to its setting, but it seems to us to restrict the applications of "revile" too much.

20. *What were people to do with the fruits they produced and their firstborn?*

These were to be brought to the Lord (at least certain parts of their harvest were to be brought to the Lord). Compare 23:19.

Ex. 22:29 speaks (literally) of "thy fulness and thy tear." *Tear* seems to refer to juice or liquid that could form drops, as from a wine press. Num. 18:27 speaks of the "fulness of thy winepress."

Ex. 22:29 may refer to several (or all) types of offerings

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<sup>6</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 143.

of grain and produce, and not just to the firstfruits, although it certainly includes the firstfruits, and may refer to them primarily. The Greek version renders it, "Thou shalt not keep back the first-fruits of thy threshing floor and [wine] press."

The Israelites were not to delay offering their firstfruits or any other offerings. This would sometimes be a temptation.

The law about giving firstfruits and firstborn (men and beasts) is given more fully in Lev. 19:23-25; Num. 15:17-21; 18:12-17; Deut. 26:1-11; 15:19-20. The first produce of everything was the Lord's.

The firstborn sons were "given" by giving to the LORD five shekels of silver as a redemption price for them. See Ex. 13:2, 11-15. Firstborn animals were all either brought to the LORD (to His priests), or slain. Compare Num. 3:46-48; Deut. 15:19. Part of the meat of firstborn animals went to the priests as part of their livelihood. (Num. 18:15, 19).

The firstborn animal was left seven days with its dam (mother), and then on the eighth day was brought to the LORD as a sacrifice and offering. Apparently, in its first seven days the animal was not sufficiently developed to be regarded as a suitable sacrifice. Compare Lev. 22:27.

21. *What sort of men were the Israelites to be unto God?* (22:31)

They were to be *holy* men.

Among other ways, this holiness was to be shown by what they ate and did not eat. They were to eat no flesh of animals that had been killed and torn (chewed up) by beasts. Such flesh was to be cast to the dogs. They must not eat carrion.

All Israel was a holy nation. Ex. 19:6; Lev. 19:2. On the meaning of *holy*, see notes on Ex. 19:5-6.

Lev. 17:15 decreed that those eating an animal that died of itself or was torn by beasts were ceremonially unclean till the evening. Compare Ezekiel 4:14.

Presumably the rule forbidding the eating of animals torn in the field rested on the fact that such animals were not properly bled in slaughtering. The people who ate of them would eat blood. See Lev. 17:11-15.

What lesson or truth is there for Christians in the ancient rule about not eating torn beasts? Firstly, Christians should practice the same restriction, since we also are not to eat blood. Acts 15:20. Secondly, Israel's atonement was provided by the blood offered on the altar. Blood was not to be thought of as applicable to other purposes. This points out to us the incomparable value and unique power of the blood of the Lord Jesus. His blood was a covering for our sins.

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#### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**23** Thou shalt not take up a false report: put not thy hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. (2) Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to turn aside after a multitude to wrest *justice*: (3) neither shalt thou favor a poor man in his cause.

(4) If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. (5) If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, thou shalt forbear to leave him, thou shalt surely release *it* with him.

(6) Thou shalt not wrest the justice *due* to thy poor in his cause. (7) Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. (8) And thou shalt take no bribe: for a bribe blindeth them that have sight, and perverteth the words of the righteous. (9) And a sojourner shalt thou not oppress: for ye know the heart of a sojourner, seeing ye were sojourners in the land of E-gypt.

(10) And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather

in the increase thereof: (11) but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beast of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, *and* with thy oliveyard. (12) Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest; that thine ox and thine ass may have rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the sojourner, may be refreshed. (13) And in all things that I have said unto you take ye heed: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.

(14) Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year.

(15) The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep: seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, at the time appointed in the month A-bib (for in it thou camest out from E-gypt); and none shall appear before me empty: (16) and the feast of harvest, the first-fruits of thy labors, which thou sowest in the field: and the feast of ingathering, at the end of the year, when thou gatherest in thy labors out of the field. (17) Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord Je-ho-vah.

(18) Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my feast remain all night until the morning. (19) The first of the first-fruits of thy ground thou shalt bring into the house of Je-ho-vah thy God. Thou shalt not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

(20) Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee by the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.

(21) Take ye heed before him, and hearken unto his voice; provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgression: for my name is in him. (22) But if thou shalt indeed hearken unto his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. (23) For mine angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Am-or-ite, and the Hit-tite, and the Per-iz-zite, and the Canaan-ite, the Hi-vite, and the Jeb-u-site: and I will cut them off. (24) Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works; but thou shalt utterly overthrow them,



and break in pieces their pillars. (25) And ye shall serve Je-ho-vah your God, and he will bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee. (26) There shall none cast her young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil. (27) I will send my terror before thee, and will discomfit all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. (28) And I will send the hornet before thee, which shall drive out the Hi-vite, the Ca-naan-ite, and the Hit-tite, from before thee. (29) I will not drive them out from before thee in one year, lest the land become desolate, and the beasts of the field multiply against thee. (30) By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land. (31) And I will set thy border from the Red Sea even unto the sea of the Phi-lis-tines, and from the wilderness unto the River: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee. (32) Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. (33) They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me; for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading propose a topic for the chapter.
2. What was the law about spreading false reports? (23:1)
3. How might this be done? Where? (23:1)
4. What was the law about following a mob? (23:2-3)
5. What law was given about witnessing in court? (23:2-3)
6. Why was it necessary to forbid the people to "favor a poor man in his cause"? (23:3; Lev. 19:15)
7. How were the people to treat their enemy's overloaded fallen donkey? (23:5) Was the general attitude that is

commanded in the law about the fallen donkey limited to that one situation?

8. What was the law about justice to the needy? (23:6)
9. What was the law about bribes? (23:8)
10. How were the Israelites to treat strangers? Why? (23:9; 22:21)
11. What was the law about farming in the seventh years? (23:10-11)
12. What was the purpose of the sabbath day according to 23:12?
13. What was the law concerning talking about other gods? (23:12-13)
14. Name the Israelites' three annual compulsory feasts. (23:14-15; Compare Ex. 34:22-24; Deut. 16:16)
15. What did God mean by saying "Ye shall not appear before me empty"? (23:15)
16. What was not to be offered with their sacrifices? (23:18)
17. What law was given about preparing a kid to be eaten? (23:19)
18. What was to be sent before Israel? (23:20)
19. What divine characteristics did the guiding angel have? (23:21)
20. What was to be done with Canaanites' religious objects? (23:24, 32)
21. What promise was given about sickness? (23:25)
22. How would God help the Israelites to conquer the Canaanites? (23:27-28)
23. Were the Canaanites to be driven out suddenly? Why or why not? (23:29-30)
24. What were to be the boundaries of the promised land? (23:31; Compare Gen. 15:18)
25. What "River" is referred to in 23:31?
26. Were the Canaanites to live among the Israelites? (23:33) Why or why not?

EXODUS TWENTY-THREE: GOD'S COVENANT ORDINANCES  
(CONCLUDED)

1. Justice and goodness to all men; 23:1-9.
  2. The sacred seasons and feasts; 23:10-19.
  3. Conquering the Canaanites; 23:20-33.
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EXODUS TWENTY-THREE: GOD'S GOOD ORDINANCES

1. Ordinances about JUSTICE; 23:1-9.
  2. Ordinances about WORSHIP; 23:10-19.
  3. Ordinances about VICTORY in the Lord; 23:20-33.
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SLANDER! (Ex.23:1)

1. Don't start it.
  2. Don't listen to it.
  3. Don't repeat it.
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ADMINISTERING JUSTICE (Ex. 23:1-3, 6-9)

1. Avoid perjury; 23:1a.
2. Avoid collusion; 23:1b.
3. Avoid mob pressure; 23:2.
4. Avoid false sentiment; 23:3.
5. Avoid oppression; 23:6-7, 9.
6. Avoid bribes; 23:8.
7. Remember that judges shall themselves be judged; 23:7.

DUTIES TO ENEMIES (23:4-5)

1. Protect their interests; 23:4.
  2. Restrain our impulses to leave them; 23:5.
  3. Help their difficulties; 23:5.
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SABBATIC YEARS AND SABBATH DAYS (23:10-12)

- I. Sabbatic years; 23:10-11.
    1. Required faith in God; Lev. 25:20-22.
    2. Benefited the land; Lev. 25:5; Ex. 23:11.
    3. Benefited the land owner; Lev. 25:6.
    4. Benefited the poor and the beasts; Ex. 23:11.
  - II. Sabbath days; 23:12.
    1. Rest for animals.
    2. Rest for men.
- 

RELIGIOUS FEASTS (23:14-17)

1. Kept unto God; 23:14.
2. Kept as memorials; 23:15.
3. Kept by bringing offerings; 23:15.
4. Kept frequently; 23:16.

(The Lord requires dedication of our time, as He required it in Israel's time. The Lord blesses those who worship Him.)

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## FEASTS REQUIRED BY GOD (23:14-17)

1. A feast to commemorate past deliverance; 23:15.
  2. A feast to dedicate the first-fruits of our labor; 23:16.
  3. A feast to celebrate the year's final ingathering; 23:16; Lev. 23:39-47.
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## JESUS, THE ANGEL OF THE COVENANT (23:20-23)

- I. His nature.
    1. Equal with God. "My name is in Him." 23:21.
    2. Able to forgive sins; 23:21.
  - II. His work.
    1. Keeping God's people; 23:20.
    2. Overcoming enemies; 23:22.
    3. Bringing God's people to their destination; 23:23.
  - III. Our attitude toward Him.
    1. Take heed; 23:21.
    2. Provoke Him not;
    3. Hearken; obey; 23:21-22.
- 

## FALSE GODS! (23:24, 32-33)

1. Treatment of them.
  - a. Don't bow down to them; 23:24.
  - b. Destroy them; 23:24.
  - c. Drive them out; 23:31.
  - d. Make no covenant with them; 23:32.
2. Dangers from them.

## GOD'S COVENANT ORDINANCES 23:1-33

- a. Cause sin; 23:33.
  - b. Be a snare; 23:33.
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### BLESSINGS FOR THE OBEDIENT! (23:25-30)

1. Bless their food; 23:25.
  2. Bless their rainfall; 23:25.
  3. Bless their health; 23:25.
  4. Bless their productivity; 23:26.
  5. Bless them with long life; 23:26.
  6. Give victory over enemies; 23:27-30.
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### AN EXCLUSIVE FAITH! (23:24-33)

1. Destroy false religious objects (23:24; Acts 19:19.)
  2. Drive out sinful associates; (23:27-31, 33; I Cor. 15:33.)  
(See I Cor. 5:9-13)
  3. Make no covenant with evildoers; (23:32; II Cor. 6:14-18; II John 10-11)
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## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

### 1. *What is in Exodus twenty-three?*

This chapter contains the closing group of God's covenant ordinances, which are given in chapters 21-23. By the acceptance of this "book of the covenant" (24:7), Israel entered into its covenant with God and became God's special people, a holy nation.

The chapter deals with three main themes: (1) justice and goodness for all men (23:1-9); (2) the sacred seasons and feasts (23:10-19); (3) conquering the Canaanites (23:20-33). This last section forms an epilogue to chapters 21-23, and looks forward to future triumphant conquests in Canaan.

2. *What were the people to do with a false report they heard?* (23:1-2)

They were not to pick it up and tell it to others, nor to utter it in court as testimony.

Ex. 23:1-2 could be translated rather literally, "You shall not take up something you have heard (that is) false (or vain); put not your hand with a wicked (man, to conspire together) to be a witness of violence."

There are five brief negative commands in 23:1-3, each introduced by a negative particle (in Hebrew). These would be guidelines in maintaining justice. Ex. 23:1-3 is an expansion of the ninth commandment, which forbade bearing false witness.

We could "take up" a false report by repeating it as gossip, or by telling it in a court hearing. Ps. 101:5: "Who-so privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I destroy." Lev. 19:16: "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people."

The word translated "report" means something heard, a rumor, report, reputation, fame. "False" might also be translated "vain," since it is the same word as that used in Ex. 20:7 with reference to taking God's name in vain.

An "unrighteous witness" is a witness of violence, that is, one who inflicts violence upon others. Violence need not always be physically violent to be terribly hurtful!

A witness who made false charges against someone was to be punished with the same penalty which he had tried to bring upon someone else. (Deut. 19:16-21).

The Israelites were not to follow a mob (multitude) in its efforts to do evil. Mobs sway people into doing or tolerating acts that they would not do if they considered the matter without pressure. Christ was crucified through mob

action instigated by a few leaders (Matt. 27:20). Mobs, multitudes, and majorities are often in the wrong. Only Noah was righteous in his time. (Gen. 7:1. Compare Matt. 7:13-14.)

If some cause (lawsuit) was being heard, no Israelite was to give false testimony just because a certain feeling was popular (and probably loud!) just then. Many innocent people have died because a multitude was stirred up against them and many were screaming for their blood. Note the cases of Stephen (Acts 6:11) and Naboth (I Kings 21:10).

3. *Why should they not favor a poor man in his cause?* (23:3)

The Israelites were to promote JUSTICE. Justice favors neither the poor nor the rich; nor does it disfavor either the poor or the rich.

Lev. 19:15: "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment. Thou shalt not respect (show partiality to) the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor."

God is NOT indifferent to the plight of the poor. See Ex. 23:6; 22:25-27; Deut. 15:7-11. The poor are often oppressed by the rich and powerful (Amos 5:12). They have their special temptations (Prov. 30:9, 14).

Nonetheless, the poor man may be fully as selfish, cruel, dishonest, lazy, and covetous as anyone else. Men can be "minded to be rich" even when they are not rich (I Tim. 5:9). When a poor man has broken the law, he is to be punished just as anyone else. Note Ex. 22:3.

Neither pressure from a crowd, sympathy for the poor, or even revenge, was to influence the Israelites' conduct.

Our times have seen the rise of the foolish notion that we should pass every possible law to take wealth from the rich and give it to the poor. There is not enough material wealth in the world for all (or even most of us) to live like kings. When there are no longer any wealthy people to help the poor, all become poor.

4. *What was to be done if one saw his enemy's donkey going astray?* (23:4-5)

In such a case, one was *surely* to bring it back to him



again. (The *surely* is emphatic.)

Deut. 22:4: "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fallen down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again."

How beautiful! Animosity is not to destroy one's willingness to be of assistance in the times of need. Your enemy is also your brother! It is only a short step from the kind actions suggested by these verses to the "Love your enemy" of Matt. 5:44. Compare Romans 12:20.

Lev. 19:18: "Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am Jehovah."

Ex. 23:5 describes a situation in which a man sees his enemy with his donkey. The enemy obviously has been cruel to his beast and has overloaded it till it has fallen down under the load and cannot get up. The enemy has brought the problem upon himself. What shall the man of God do? He shall forbear doing his natural inclination of walking off and leaving his enemy to solve his own problem. Rather, he shall most certainly give assistance, and working WITH his enemy, release the ass!

If the law taught men to be good to their enemies (as it surely did!), what did Jesus mean by saying, "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy"? (Matt. 5:43.) Some Jewish authorities are incensed at these words, which they regard as a baseless charge against the Torah and the rabbis.<sup>1</sup>

We happily acknowledge that the law taught men to do good to their enemies. However, there are a few verses in the Old Testament which indicate that even some Godly men did *hate* their enemies. See Psalm 139:21, 22; 26:5). Also certain passages in the apocryphal books (like Ecclesiasticus 12:4, 7) and in the Dead Sea Scrolls show that Jesus was telling the truth when he indicated that some pre-Christian Jews really

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<sup>1</sup>J. H. Hertz, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

advocated hating enemies. *The Manual of Discipline* (one of the Dead Sea Scrolls) declared about their chosen members, "He is to bear unremitting hatred towards all men of ill repute, and to be minded to keep in seclusion from them."<sup>2</sup> We hasten to add (in shame and pain) that some who claim to be Christians have also taught their followers to hate their enemies. Consider the bloodshed in northern Ireland. But this has never been God's approved attitude for men.

The R.S.V. on Ex. 23:5 reads "You shall refrain from leaving him with it, you shall help him to lift it up." The footnote on this verse says that this is the Greek reading and the Hebrew is obscure.

The Hebrew of 23:5 could be literally translated "If you see the ass of him who hates you [lying] under his (or its) burden, you shall beware that you leave him not, but you shall surely release [it] with him."<sup>3</sup>

As you can see, this is hardly an "obscure" verse. It is only slightly difficult because no object follows the verb "release." Probably it is best to supply an indefinite object, such as the *it* inserted in italics in the American Standard version. The Hebrew does not make completely clear whether the man is releasing the ass or its load (although both involve the same actions). The Greek reading makes it clear that it is the *ass* that the verb *release* refers to,<sup>4</sup> and the Hebrew very probably means that also.

5. *What command is given about the justice due to the poor?* (23:6-7)

Men were not to wrest the justice due to the poor man in his lawsuit. ("Wrest" means "stretch out," "distort," "turn aside," or "pervert.")

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<sup>2</sup>Theodore Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English Translation* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1964), pp. 46, 68.

<sup>3</sup>This translation is adapted from that in Alexander Harkavy's *Hebrew and Chaldean Dictionary*.

<sup>4</sup>The genders of the Greek pronouns and articles indicate clearly that the object being released was the ass rather than its burden.

The word translated *justice* in 23:6 is *mishpat*, or judgment. It is the same word occurring in 21:1, translated "judgments" (or ordinances).

Note that the poor are "*thy* poor." Probably this hints that the poor are our brothers and our responsibility. We cannot say, "They are no concern of mine."

Ex. 23:7 commands men to keep far away from a false "matter." In its setting this "matter" appears to refer to false utterance in a lawsuit. Ex. 23:7 is primarily directed at judges in court.

We must take heed to our court decisions, because God also holds court; and all our witnesses and judges are on trial before HIM. Our decisions must be in harmony with His! God will not justify (that is, acquit, declare not guilty) the wicked person. (The word "wicked" is singular, emphasizing every individual's responsibility in this matter.)

#### 6. *What is the effect of a bribe?* (23:8)

A bribe blinds those whose eyes are usually open and watchful, and perverts (tangles, twists) the words of those usually righteous.

"They that have sight" (KJV, "the wise") are the judges and officials. Ex. 23:8 (like 23:7) is directed at the judges.

Ex. 23:8 is very much like Deut. 16:19. We simply must not let ourselves be deceived about the power of a bribe upon us.

Bribery was a very common practice in Biblical times (and still is!). See Amos 5:12; I Sam. 8:3; Ps. 26:10; II Chron. 19:7; Isa. 1:23; Ezek. 22:12. Prov. 15:27: "He that hateth bribes shall live."

No specific penalty is set in the law for accepting bribes. But in the rule of God over men, it did NOT go unpunished!

"The words of the righteous" seem to be the words of usually-righteous judges who have been influenced by bribes. It may also refer to the *causes* (or lawsuits) of the poor, who are referred to as the righteous (or innocent) in 23:7. (The word translated "words" also may have the meaning of "causes.")

7. *Why were the Israelites not to oppress sojourners?* (23:9)

They had been sojourners in Egypt and therefore knew the "heart" of a sojourner. Compare 22:21.

"Heart" is from the Hebrew *nephesh*, meaning soul, life, feelings, self, and numerous related meanings. The use of *nephesh* here makes a transition to the next paragraph (23:10-12), where a related word (the verb *naphash*) is translated "be refreshed" in 23:12.

8. *For how many years were Israelites to sow the land and gather crops?* (23:10-11)

Israel was to sow seed and gather crops for six consecutive years, but in the seventh years the land lay fallow, uncultivated. The oliveyards (literally "olive trees") and vineyards were to be treated the same way. This seventh year is commonly called the *sabbatical year*. The laws about this year are given more fully in Lev. 25:1-7 and Deut. 15:1-3. Grain which grew by itself in the seventh year was not harvested, but was left for the *poor* of the people to eat, and for the *beast* of the field. God plainly promised that the land would produce enough in the sixth years to carry them over until the harvest of the eighth year. See Lev. 25:20-22 and Neh. 10:31.

The spiritual basis for this law is stated by God in Lev. 25:23: "For the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me."

The word *rest* in 23:11 is not from the verb *shabath* (meaning "to keep sabbath"), but from another verb (*shamat*), meaning to let rest, or to release (as of a debt). (That has interesting spiritual implications.) See Deut. 15:1-2.

Note that God cares for the *beasts*. Ps. 36:6: "O Jehovah, thou preservest man and beast." Compare Ps. 104:21. God cares for sparrows and feeds the raven (Luke 12:24).

In the following centuries Israel neglected keeping its sabbatical years. The seventy years of Babylonian captivity was partly intended to make up for unkept sabbatical years. II Chron. 36:21.

To a child of God, his relationship with God controls all his life, even the way he farms and eats.

9. *What was the purpose of the seventh-day rest? (20:12)*

It was a time of *rest* for all, even for the work (draft) animals, the servants, and the sojourners. It was to bring refreshment and rest. The reference here to the sabbath emphasizes its humanitarian character rather than its memorial character, which is stressed in Ex. 20:8-11 and Deut. 5:12-15.

"Be refreshed" is from a verb (*naphash*) related to the noun (*nephesh*) meaning *soul*. It can be translated "to breathe, to take rest, to draw breath, to be refreshed." On the Sabbath days people were to "catch their breath." By keeping the Sabbath, every Israelite was reminded that he had a soul and there was a higher life than mere drudgery.

10. *What mention of pagan gods were the Israelites to utter? (23:13)*

NO mention was to be made of the name of other gods. While the Israelites were not to oppress sojourners, they were not to utter the names of the sojourners' gods. This prohibition about uttering the names of gods should have prevented marriages and other contacts with idolatrous peoples.

This verse probably accounts for the dropping of the name *Baal* in the names of several men whose names included Baal's name. Instead of *Baal* the word *bosheth* (meaning *shame*) was inserted. Thus Jerubbaal (Judges 6:32) became Jerubbesheth (II Sam. 11:21); Eshbaal (I Chron. 8:33) became Ishbosheth (II Sam. 2:8); Meribaaal (I Chron. 8:34) became Mephibosheth (II Sam. 4:4). Note that the book of Samuel, which is prophetic in character, avoided the name *Baal*.

The apostle Paul tells Christians to avoid mentioning several sins, in a manner similar to the way the Israelites were to avoid mentioning the names of gods. (Eph. 5:3)

Ex. 23:13 opens with a general exhortation to obey: "In all things that I have spoken unto you, take ye heed."

11. *How many annual feasts was each Israelite required to keep? (23:14, 17)*

Three. Compare Ex. 34:23; Lev. ch. 23; Deut. 16:1-17.

All male Israelites were required to come before the Lord for these three feasts. Though not required, women and boys often went with the men to the feasts (I Sam. 1:3, 4, 22; Luke 2:41-43). Israel's religious observances were the one factor in their society that could hold the nation together.

The three feasts are not mentioned here for the first time nor in full detail. Probably they are mentioned as part of the privileges of the people bestowed on them by Jehovah. This view relates the observance of the feasts to the nearby paragraphs. Ex. 23:13 told of a false way to worship God. 23:14-17 gave the true way.

"Three *times*" is literally "three *feet*," suggesting pilgrim festivals to which they marched on foot.

Critics (Martin Noth, for example) say that the three feasts were taken over by Israel only after the settlement in Canaan, long after Moses' time. (This view eliminates Moses as author of Exodus.) The proof (?) of such a view is mainly the presupposition that such feasts could not have originated from direct divine revelation and commandments, but gradually developed through cultural contacts with other peoples who observed similar feasts.<sup>5</sup>

12. *What were the three annual compulsory feasts?* (23:15-16)

(1) *The feast of unleavened bread.* This seven-day observance was immediately preceded (the day before) by the Passover, which, surprisingly, is not mentioned here. Perhaps the reason for this was that the Passover in early days was more of a family meal than a central religious activity.<sup>6</sup> Another possible reason for not mentioning the Passover may be that the extremely close linkage of the Passover to the feast of Unleavened bread probably caused most Israelites to think of both when they heard either one mentioned.

Noth in his usual manner contends that the Passover is not mentioned here with the rules about Unleavened Bread because the Passover came into Israel's practice much later

<sup>5</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-191.

<sup>6</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

than the feast of Unleavened bread.<sup>7</sup> There is no real evidence for this view.

An allusion is made by God in 23:15 to the previous commandment about keeping the feast of unleavened bread, "As I commanded thee." See 12:14-20; 13:6-10. Regarding the month *Abib*, see 13:4.

The Passover was observed sporadically by Israel during the days of the kingdom. (II Kings 23:22).

"None shall come before me empty" means that no man was to come to the central place of worship during the three compulsory feasts without an offering, that is, empty-handed. They were to bring animals and other things for offerings. See Deut. 16:16-17; Lev. 7:32-34; Ex. 34:20. We feel that the same rule about not coming before the Lord empty should be a guideline to Christians: Do not come to the Lord's services without an offering.

(2) *The feast of harvest*. This is the same feast that is called the "feast of weeks" (Lev. 23:9-21; Deut. 16:9-12) and the "day of firstfruits" (Num. 28:26). It is called *Pentecost* in the New Testament (Acts 2:1; 20:16). It came fifty days after the first grain was harvested. It was a harvest feast of dedication and thanks to God.

(3) *The feast of ingathering*. This is the same feast that is called the feast of booths or tabernacles. Its observance is described fully in Lev. 23:34, 39-43; Deut. 16:13-15. Note John 7:2. This feast occurs in late September, "at the end of the year," that is, of the civil year, which begins in the autumn, as distinguished from the religious year, which began in the spring. Its name "Ingathering" is taken from the gathering in of the grapes and olives, which had been completed by that time each year. During this feast the Israelites lived outdoors in temporary brush arbors called booths or tabernacles. This was to remind them year by year of their wilderness wandering experiences. An extensive

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<sup>7</sup>Noth, *ibid*.

series of sacrifices was offered each day of this feast.

On 23:17, see 23:14.

13. *What was NOT to be offered with blood sacrifices?*(23:18)

They were not to offer leavened bread with the blood of sacrifices. Also they were NOT to let the *fat* or sacrificed animals remained unburned overnight.

Lev. 3:17: "It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings, that ye shall eat neither fat nor blood."

The fat or sacrifices was all burned, even in the peace offerings, which were partly eaten by the offerer. (See. Lev. 1:8; 3:3-5; 4:8, 19.) Thus no fat should have ever been left unburned overnight. Compare Lev. 19:6.

Israel's burnt-offerings (animal sacrifices) were to be accompanied by a grain (or meal) offering, which was sometimes presented in the form of baked bread (Lev. 2:4-5; Num. 15:1-9). These meal-offerings were NOT to be made with leaven (Lev. 2:11; 6:17). This would be doubly enforced during the week of the feast of unleavened bread, when no leaven at all was to be seen in their property (Deut. 16:4; Ex. 13:6-11; 12:15-20). Leaven is a symbol of evil influence and sin (I Cor. 5:7-8).

During the feast of unleavened bread no flesh sacrificed at evening was to remain all night until the morning: eat it or burn it. See Deut. 16:4. At the original passover, nothing was left till the morning. See Ex. 12:10. This custom of not leaving sacrifices unconsumed overnight seems to have applied to all Israel's sacrifices. The practice impressed Israel with the seriousness and the unique function of sacrifices. They were not to be treated as leftover garbage.

Regarding the offering of first fruits (23:19a), see 22:29-30 and Deut. 26:2-11.

14. *How were kids NOT to be cooked for eating?* (23:19)

They were not to be boiled in the milk of their mother.

This law is now generally understood to make allusion to a Canaanite religious practice, in which a kid was boiled in its mother's milk. This practice was included in the



rituals at Ugarit, when such a dish was prepared at festal ceremonies pertaining to the fertility of the soil. In the Ugaritic tablet on "The gods pleasant and beautiful," it is written, "Boil a kid in milk, a lamb in butter."<sup>8</sup> The practice of boiling small cattle in milk has been continued among Bedouin to this time. God did not want His people's practice even to resemble those of the heathen.

Partly on the basis of 23:19b Jews do not prepare or serve meat dishes and milk dishes at the same meal. Orthodox Jews even keep separate kitchens for preparation of milk and meat dishes. The connection between this custom and Ex. 23:19 seems rather remote, although the *Kosher* diet laws of the Jews would certainly eliminate any possibility of cooking a kid in its mother's milk. J. H. Hertz,<sup>9</sup> a Jewish commentator, says that the practice of not eating milk and meat together was doubtless observed long before the age of the rabbis (about 400 B.C.-A.D. 500), and in connecting the practice with this text, they merely sought a support in the Torah for the very ancient Jewish practice. That is a fair and accurate statement. The Jewish diet laws are not directly derived from this verse, although it is an indirect support for their practice.

Christians are not obligated by the diet laws of the O.T., although they may find some helpful guidance in them. See Mark 7:19; I Cor. 8:8; I Tim. 4:3; Rom. 14:13-17.

15. *Who was sent with Israel to keep them in their journey?* (23:20-21)

An angel was sent. Ex. 20:23 reads literally, "behold, I (the *I* is emphatic) am sending an angel before thy face to guard you in the way and to bring you unto the place which I have prepared." Compare Ex. 14:19; 3:2; Acts 7:38.

This angel was a personality. Israel was to hearken unto his voice. He could pardon transgressions and God's name was in him, literally, "in the midst of him," in the inward part of his being and body.

<sup>8</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

<sup>9</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 318.

"My name is in him" means "My (God's) presence is in him." In Biblical usage, *name* often refers to one's entire being, nature, and authority. See Ps. 8:1; 20:1; Acts 8:12.

We believe that this angel was none other than that divine person called the Word (John 1:1), who later came to earth as Jesus Christ. The word *angel* means a *messenger*. Jesus has certainly always been God's communicator (John 1:18). Malachi 3:1 prophesied the coming of the "messenger (or *angel*) of the covenant whom ye desire." Certainly no one since Malachi's time has claimed to be eternal with God and to have power to forgive sins and to know all truth, other than Jesus. He backed up these claims with miracles done in the presence of many witnesses.

Isa. 63:9: "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the *angel* of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity, he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old."

Numerous O.T. prophecies foretold the coming of God's Messiah, who would bear God's *name*. "Unto us a son is given; . . . and his *name* shall be called. . . Mighty God, . . ." (Isa. 9:6). Jer. 23:6 spoke of the coming "branch" from David, that "his name . . . shall be called *Jehovah* our righteousness." We believe that these prophecies refer to Jesus. They help us to understand what God meant when he said of the "angel," "My *name* is in him."

Israel was to take care that they did not provoke the angel of God. "Provoke" means "to make bitter." (The verb is related to *Marah*, bitter.) Sadly, we learn from Ps. 78:40, "How often did they provoke him in the wilderness."

Not surprisingly, "liberal" and Jewish commentators strongly deny that the "angel" could be the Word (Jesus). But they disagree among themselves as to who or what the angel is. Some seek to identify the "angel" with the ark of the covenant that went before the tribes.<sup>10</sup> (This is

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<sup>10</sup>Broadman Bible Commentary, I, (1968), p. 428.

impossible. The angel was personal and the ark very impersonal.) Hertz maintains that the angel is Moses himself! (How could Moses himself go "before thee," when God was talking to Moses? Furthermore, Moses did not bring Israel into the land, as the angel was to do. See 23:23.) Cassuto<sup>11</sup> argues that the "angel" is not distinct from God himself and simply is a term for God's own actions. (It surely seems unlikely that God would say "My name is *in him*, if He only meant "My name is in myself.") Some feel that the pillar of cloud was the angel. See Ex. 14:19. (How could the pillar of cloud "pardon your transgressions"? The "angel" manifested his presence in the cloud, but was distinct from the cloud. These views show how far men will go in their determined refusal to confess the Lord Jesus.

16. *What would the angel do for Israel if they were obedient? (23:22-23)*

He would bring them unto the Canaanite nations, and there God would "cut them off" (destroy them). This act of cutting them off would be done gradually. See 23:29.

Observe in 23:22-23 how very closely linked are God and the "angel." "If thou shalt indeed hearken unto *his* voice, and do all that *I* speak; . . . ." This is exactly the relationship of Jesus and the Father. John 10:30: "I and the Father are one." John 8:28-29: "I (Jesus) do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me, I speak these things . . . for I do always the things that are pleasing to him."

Concerning the Canaanite tribes, see notes on Ex. 3:8, 17.

To "cut them off" (R.S.V., "blot them out") meant to hide or conceal, cut off, efface, destroy. The Canaanites were finally indeed utterly effaced from the earth, although it took Israel a long time.

For God to be "an enemy unto your enemies" is a fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in Gen. 12:3. Ps. 139:21-22 indicates that God's enemies become enemies

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<sup>11</sup>*Op. cit.*, pp. 305-306.

of God's people. Even the New Testament speaks about those that are "*enemies of the cross of Christ*" (Phil. 1:18).

Some interpreters feel that the idea of God's being an "enemy" to Israel's enemies is theological propaganda justifying Israel's conquest of the land, and differs from the view expressed elsewhere in the O.T. that God is the God of all nations. This idea fails to consider the depravity of the Canaanites. It also injects the implications that the Bible teaches contradictory points of view. We feel that further study will always show that the Bible is completely harmonious.

17. *What was Israel to do with Canaanite religious objects?* (23:24)

They were not to bow down to them or serve them, but were to destroy them utterly. Compare Ex. 20:5; 34:13; Deut. 7:5; Num. 33:52; Ex. 23:32-33. The Hebrew text emphasizes the *utter* destruction of these things. "Thou shalt *utterly* destroy them, and you shall *utterly* break in pieces their pillars."

They were particularly to break in pieces their *pillars*. These were upright standing stones, sometimes as much as ten feet tall. Such pillars have been found in excavations at Gezer and Tanaach. See Deut. 12:3.

The "works" of the Canaanites included burning their sons and daughters in fire to their gods. See Deut. 12:30-31. Israelites were not even to "inquire" about their gods. Compare Deut. 6:14.

18. *What would God bless if Israel served Him?* (23:25-26)

He would bless their bread, their water, and their health.

Their "bread" would be their grain harvest, from which bread was made. See Deut. 28:5. The "water" would be the needed rainfall. See Deut. 28:12.

Malachi 3:11: "I will rebuke the devourer (such as locusts) for your sakes . . . , neither shall your vine cast its fruit before the time in the field." Compare Amos 4:9.

The promise to protect the Israelites from *sickness* is repeated several times in the scripture. See Ex. 15:26.

Deut. 7:15: "Jehovah will take away from thee all sickness." It is painful to compare this promise with Israel's later afflictions sent upon them because of their unfaithfulness. See Amos 4:10; Isa. 1:5-6. (In this passage the sickness spoken of seems to be a collective national sickness of soul.)

God further promised that there would not be a woman miscarrying in the land, or a barren woman. Deut. 7:14 enlarges this promise to declare that "there shall not be a male or female barren among you or among your cattle." Compare Deut. 28:4.

Another promise yet more! "The number of thy days I will fulfill." Their people would not die young, before they had fulfilled their potential in life. Compare Ex. 20:12: "That thy days may be long in the land." It would be true of Israelites generally as it was of Abraham: "Abraham gave up the ghost and died . . . an old man, and *full* . . ." (Gen. 25:8). So also David: "David was old and *full* of days" (I Chron. 23:1).

As Christians we do not claim all of these material physical promises in the law. But we do live under a covenant with "better promises" (Heb. 8:6).

19. *How would God prepare things so as to help Israel conquer Canaan? (23:27-28)*

God would send his *terror* before Israel and would discomfit (that is, bring into confusion, or disturb) all the people in Canaan to whom Israel would come; and God would cause Israel's enemies to turn their back (literally "neck") unto Israel, that is, to turn and flee.

God spread this terror ahead of Israel by causing reports and rumors about Israel's invincible power to be circulated widely. See Josh. 2:9, 11; Deut. 2:25; Ex. 15:14-16; Num. 22:2-3; I Sam. 4:6-8.

God further promised to "send the hornet" before Israel, which would drive out the Canaanite nations. Compare Deut. 7:20. The closeness of verses 27 and 28 suggests that "hornet" and "terror" refer to the same thing, the psychological and social weakening of the people's courage and

ability to resist. The word *hornet* as here used seems to have a figurative and indefinite meaning, and could refer to anything which helped Israel to be victorious in its conquest - psychological terror, storms (Josh. 10:11), or such. The word *hornet* is singular (not like KJV and RSV "hornets"), but it is probably used in a collective sense for all the means used by God to "soften up" the Canaanites for Israel's conquest. Josh. 24:12 indicates that God surely did send the hornet before Israel, as He had promised.

The archaeologist John Garstang,<sup>12</sup> who excavated at Jericho in the 1930's, suggested that since the "hornet" (or wasp) was the sacred symbol of some of the Pharaohs of Egypt, that the "hornet" may have referred to the Egyptian armies that fought victoriously in Canaan against the Hyksos and other peoples about eighty years before Israel conquered the land. These Egyptian conquerors supposedly weakened Canaan's ability to resist Israel. We consider this theory very improbable. God did not say "I *have sent* the hornet before you," but "I *will send*" (future).

Furthermore, God never indicated that the Canaanites would be weak (or weakened) adversaries. They are described as being "greater and mightier than yourselves." (Deut. 11:23; 4:38).

20. *Would God drive out the Canaanites quickly?* (23:29-30)

No. Israel would need considerable time to occupy the land. And if the land were left without people, it would soon become desolate and run-down. Israel would occupy the houses, cities, fields, and vineyards of the former inhabitants (Deut. 6:10-11). These things would soon be in disrepair if left unoccupied.

The danger that wild beasts (lions, bears, wild dogs, etc.) would multiply and become a peril in the land if people were not occupying it was a very real menace. (II Kings 17:24-26; Lev. 26:22).

<sup>12</sup>Joshua-Judges: *The Foundations of Bible History* (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931), p. 259.

Israel's conquests of Canaan required six or seven years. See Josh. 14:7, 10; Num. 14:33. Jehovah cast out those nations before Israel little by little. Deut. 7:22.

Further reasons for the slowness in conquering the land were (1) that Israel transgressed God's covenant, and He wanted to test Israel whether they would walk in His ways or not (Judges 2:20-23; 3:4); and (2) to teach them war, that is, how to fight (Judges 3:2).

Even after Israel had conquered much of the land, various tribes were slow in occupying it. See Josh. 18:1-3. They lacked the aggressive faith to take over the land.

Skeptical critics think that the promise to drive the Canaanites out little by little indirectly suggests that the number of incoming Israelites was actually considerably smaller than the two and a half million people "often presupposed" on the basis of 600,000 fighting men.<sup>13</sup> This view is not a presupposition, but merely an acceptance of the statistics given in the scripture (Ex. 12:37). The people who operate on presuppositions are those who feel that the record just could not be true as it stands and therefore it isn't.

21. *What were to be the borders of Israel's land? (23:31)*

From the Red Sea (probably from the tip of the Gulf of Akabah at Elath) to the sea of the Philistines (the Mediterranean); and from the wilderness (probably the Sinai wilderness of Shur) unto the river (the Euphrates).

The boundaries of Israel's promised land are given several places in the scriptures. See Deut. 11:24 ("from the river [Euphrates] even unto the hinder sea" [the Dead Sea]); Gen. 15:18 ("from the river of Egypt [probably the Wady el Arish in the northern Sinai peninsula] unto the . . . river Euphrates"); I Kings 4:21 ("from the River [Euphrates] unto the land of the Philistines"). This passage in I Kings tells of the extent of the land in the days of king Solomon. It reached nearly to that extent in the time of Jeroboam II

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<sup>13</sup>Broadman Bible Commentary, I, (1969), p. 429.

of Israel (II Kings 14:25) and Uzziah of Judah (II Chron. 26:1-2, 6).

The reference to the "Red Sea" in 23:31 is literally to the "Sea of Reeds." This is the same body of water known as the Red Sea. See notes on Ex. 13:18.

Observe that while God would deliver the inhabitants of the land into Israel's hand, that Israel had to "drive them out." Human effort must work with the divine assistance.

22. *What sort of covenant was Israel to make with the Canaanites?*

NO covenant was to be made with them or with their gods! The Hebrew says that no covenant was to be made "TO" them, rather than "with" them. Israel was to enter the land as a conqueror, who might condescend to make a covenant of amnesty to the conquered people. But they were not even to do this. Much less were they to deal with the people as equals, *with* whom a covenant might be made. Compare Ex. 34:12-16; Deut. 7:2-3.

Israel was permitted to make peace covenants with cities far off from their land. See Deut. 7:1-2; 20:10-15.

The Canaanites and their gods would cause Israel to sin against God and would surely be a *snare* (trap) unto Israel. The word *snare* (like *stumbling-block* in the New Testament) expresses the idea of being trapped into *destruction*, rather than simply into sin (as bad as that is!). The warning is very severe and stern.

Israel did fall into this snare! Psalm 106:36-37: "And (they) served their (the Canaanites') idols, which became a *snare* unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto demons, and shed innocent blood."

Ex. 23:33 marks the end of the "book of the covenant." This section has included chs. 21-23, and perhaps part of chapter twenty. It told the terms upon which God would enter into covenant with Israel. The next chapter moves on to the actual ratification of this covenant. In view of the exclusive nature of the relationship between God and Israel, it is appropriate that the covenant book should end with



commands forbidding Israel to make any covenant with any other gods or men.<sup>14</sup>

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THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**24** And he said unto Mo-ses, Come up unto Je-ho-vah, thou, and Aar-on, Na-dab, and A-bi-hu, and seventy of the elders of Is-ra-el; and worship ye afar off: (2) and Mo-ses alone shall come near unto Je-ho-vah; but they shall not come near; neither shall the people go with him. (3) And Mo-ses came and told the people all the words of Je-ho-vah, and all the ordinances: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which Je-ho-vah hath spoken will we do. (4) And Mo-ses wrote all the words of Je-ho-vah, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the mount, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Is-ra-el. (5) And he sent young men of the children of Is-ra-el, who offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto Je-ho-vah. (6) And Mo-ses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. (7) And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that Je-ho-vah hath spoken will we do, and be obedient. (8) And Mo-ses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which Je-ho-vah hath made with you concerning all these words.

(9) Then went up Mo-ses, and Aar-on, Na-dab, and A-bi-hu, and seventy of the elders of Is-ra-el: (10) and they saw the God of Is-ra-el; and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the very heaven for clearness. (11) And upon the nobles of the children of Is-ra-el he laid not

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<sup>14</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

his hand: and they beheld God, and did eat and drink.

(12) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee the tables of stone, and the law and the commandment, which I have written, that thou mayest teach them. (13) And Mo-ses rose up, and Josh-u-a his minister: and Mo-ses went up into the mount of God. (14) And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aar-on and Hur are with you; whosoever hath a cause, let him come near unto them. (15) And Mo-ses went up into the mount, and the cloud covered the mount. (16) And the glory of Je-ho-vah abode upon mount Si-nai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Mo-ses out of the midst of the cloud. (17) And the appearance of the glory of Je-ho-vah was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Is-ra-el. (18) And Mo-ses entered into the midst of the cloud, and went up into the mount: and Mo-ses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. Who was to come up with Moses into the mount? (24:1,9)
2. Who alone was to come near the Lord? (24:2)
3. What words did Moses tell the people? (24:3)
4. What did the people promise to do? (24:3)
5. What did Moses write down? (24:4)
6. What did Moses build? (24:4)
7. Who offered sacrifices unto the Lord? Of what types? (24:5)
8. How did Moses divide the blood? (24:6)
9. What did Moses sprinkle the blood upon? (24:6, 8; Heb. 9:19)
10. What did Moses read publicly? (24:7)
11. By what title did Moses refer to the blood? (24:8; Compare

Luke 22:20)

12. What did Moses and the others see in the mount? (24:10, 11)
13. What was under God's feet? (24:10; Ezek. 1:22, 26; Rev. 4:6)
14. What is meant by "upon the nobles . . . he laid not his hand"? (24:11)
15. What did the nobles eat and drink? (24:11, 5). Where did they eat and drink?
16. What did God promise to give to Moses (24:12)
17. Who went with Moses up into the mount? (24:13)
18. What was Moses to do with the tables of stone? (24:12)
19. What was Joshua's position, or office? (24:13)
20. Where did the elders wait? (24:14)
21. Who were appointed to settle legal disputes? (24:14)
22. What was the appearance of the mount as Moses entered it? (24:15)
23. How long did Moses wait before God called him? (24:16)
24. From where did God call Moses? (24:16)
25. What did the glory of the Lord look like? (24:17)
26. How long was Moses upon the mount? (24:18)
27. What did Moses eat during this stay on the mount? (Deut. 9:9)

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#### EXODUS TWENTY-FOUR: RATIFICATION OF THE COVENANT

1. The call to ascend the mount; 24:1-2.
  2. The blood ratification; 24:3-8.
  3. The fellowship with God; 24:9-11.
  4. The ascent of Moses into the mount; 24:12-18.
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WORSHIP AFAR OFF! (24:1)

1. Afar off because of past unbelief.
  2. Afar off because of past disobedience.
  3. Afar off because sacrifices had not yet been offered.  
(This separation was removed when sacrifices were made!  
24:5-6, 8-10.)
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EXODUS TWENTY-FOUR:  
THE OLD TESTAMENT MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION!

1. An ascent into the mount; Ex. 24:1,9; Matt. 17:1.
  2. An emphasis on sacrifice; Ex. 24:5; Luke 9:31.
  3. A vision of God and glory; Ex. 24:10; Luke 9:29.
  4. A covering cloud; Ex. 24:15-16; Luke 9:34.
  5. Moses only - Jesus only; Ex. 24:18; Luke 9:34.
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THE COVENANT! (Ex. 24:3-8)

1. The covenant was divinely revealed; 24:3.
  2. The covenant was willingly accepted; 24:3.
  3. The covenant was permanently written; 24:4.
  4. The covenant was impressively presented; 24:4-5.
  5. The covenant was ratified with blood; 24:5-6, 8.
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HOW MEN MAKE COVENANT WITH GOD (24:3-8)

1. By hearing God's words; 24:3.

2. By commitment to obey; 24:3.
  3. By writing God's words; 24:4.
  4. By sacrifices unto God; 24:4-5.
  5. By sprinkling the blood God-ward; 24:6.
  6. By promises to obey; 24:7.
  7. By sprinkling the blood man-ward; 24:8.
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### FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD! (Ex. 24:3-11)

- I. How fellowship with God was obtained (24:3-8)
    1. By accepting God's words; 24:3, 7.
    2. By offering sacrifices; 24:5.
    3. By sprinkling the blood; 24:5-6, 8.
      - a. Toward God; 24:5-6.
      - b. Toward the people; 24:8.
  - II. Blessings of fellowship with God (24:9-11)
    1. Access to God; 24:9.
    2. A view of God; 24:10.
    3. Security with God; 24:11.
    4. Nourishment in God's presence; 24:11
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### MOSES AND CHRIST: COVENANT-MAKERS! (Ex. 24:3-11)

1. Both declared God's words.  
Moses (Ex. 24:3); Christ (John 7:16; 8:26)
2. Both offered sacrifices.  
Moses (Ex. 24:4-5); Christ (Eph. 5:2; Heb. 9:13)
3. Both sprinkled the blood.  
Moses (Ex. 24:6, 8); Christ (Heb. 12:24; I Pet. 1:2)
4. Both brought men unto God.

Moses (Ex. 24:9); Christ (Eph. 2:18; II Cor. 3:18)

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GOD'S MEDIATOR (Ex. 24:12-18)

1. Called up alone unto God; 24:12-14.
  2. Entered divine surroundings; 24:15-16, 17.
  3. Heard God's call; 24:16.
  4. Continued long with God; 24:18.
- (Both Moses and Jesus shared these experiences.)
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EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

1. *What is in Exodus twenty-four?*

Exodus twenty-four is one of the most sublime and glorious chapters in the Old Testament. We agree with Arthur Pink that there is no subsequent passage in the Old Testament approaching a parallel to the glories revealed in this chapter. Not until we come to the New Testament account of God tabernacling among men through the presence of His son do we have anything equal to Exodus twenty-four (John 1:14). This chapter has been designated the Old Testament Mount of Transfiguration! It is the climactic point of the history in Exodus.

In Exodus twenty-four we have the *call* to Israel's representatives to come up to Jehovah (24:1-2). This indicates the achievement of direct fellowship with God.

The chapter continues by telling of Moses' reading the book of the covenant to the people, and the people's acceptance of it, and the ratifying of it by the sprinkling of blood (24:3-8). Thus Exodus twenty-four tells the fulfillment of the promise God made in 19:5-6 to take Israel as His special

people, a holy nation.

The chapter records the actual meeting with God by Israel's leaders. They saw God and ate and drank with Him in security. (24:9-11)

The chapter concludes with the call to Moses to come up into the mount again to receive the written law and the commandments. Moses ascended and was there forty days. (24:12-18)

This chapter has been a particular target of unbelieving critics, who have tried to dissect it and attribute various parts of it to different authors living centuries apart. It seems that those chapters in which believers perceive the deepest spiritual significance and meaning are often the very ones the critics concentrate their attacks upon. (Such chapters include II Samuel 7, Isaiah 53, Zechariah 6, Genesis 1-2.) We should not be surprised at this, because the Bible says that the god of this world (the devil) has blinded the minds of the unbelieving. (II Cor. 4:3-4)

2. *Who was called to come up into the mount?* (24:1-2)

Moses, Aaron, Aaron's two sons (Nadab and Abihu), and seventy men from the elders of Israel were summoned to come up and worship "afar off." Only Moses was to come near to Jehovah. The people were not to go up with him.

It appears that Moses had come down from the mountain after hearing the words in chapters twenty-one to twenty-three. Note 20:21. Either Moses was already down at the start of chapter twenty-four, or he was in the process of descent when God spoke the words of 24:1.

Twice in this chapter Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, are named (24:1,9). They shared the rare honor of seeing God (24:9-10). They are referred to elsewhere in Num. 3:4; Lev. 10:1-2; Ex. 6:23. They are remembered chiefly because they died by fire from the Lord, sent upon them when they "offered strange fire." The repeated mention of them in Exodus twenty-four speaks of lost opportunities, of high privileges thrown away. Neither the dignity and righteousness of parents, nor our own special privileges from God

will save us, if we do not respond to God with a lowly, believing, obedient spirit.

The seventy elders seem to have been the accepted representatives of the entire nation. (Ex. 24:14; Compare Num. 11:16; Ex. 18:12; 3:16; 12:21; 17:5.) Though some disregard the number *seventy* as a "loose traditional number," we accept it as precisely correct.

The fact that Israel's representatives had to worship "afar off" shows that men cannot approach God on the basis of their own works and personal righteousness.<sup>1</sup> Even at our best we need a mediator.

The fact that Moses alone could come near to Jehovah indicates again his unique position as mediator and as a type of Christ, our mediator, who draws near unto the presence of God for us (Heb. 9:24).

The shifting of wording from second person ("thou") in 24:1 to third person ("him") in 24:2 surprises us a bit. We feel that Cassuto<sup>2</sup> is correct in suggesting that verse two was worded in third person because those who accompanied Moses were also enjoined to let Moses go up by himself. An abrupt change from second to third person occurs sometimes in Hebrew literature. See Ex. 23:25 and 20:5, 6, 7 for other examples.

Many critics of the Bible attribute 24:1-2, 9-11 to one author (Driver says J; Noth says E), and 24:3-8, 12-14 to some other source. Martin Noth says, "In 24:1-11 two different literary strata may easily be distinguished."<sup>3</sup> These critics do not agree among themselves as to the exact break-off point after verse fourteen. (Driver sets it after 14; Oesterly and Robinson after 15; Noth after 15a.) Noth feels

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J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, p. 322, quotes the Jewish authority Nachmanides: "They [the seventy elders] remained uninjured, because they were *worthy* to see the vision." This opinion surely conflicts with the scriptural view that "There is none that doeth good, no not one" (Psalms 14:3). Men are accepted by God solely because of God's graciousness and not because of their worthiness.

<sup>1</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 310.

<sup>2</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 194.



that even 24:1-2 shows it has been worked over. The lack of agreement among those holding such views reveals the lack of real evidence to confirm them. The fact that these theories conflict so sharply with the scriptures' own statements of authorship reveals the presupposition of the critics that the Bible is not trustworthy.

3. *What did Moses tell to the people? (24:3)<sup>4</sup>*

He told them all the "words of Jehovah and all the ordinances." The people responded to Moses' words by unanimously declaring that they would do all the words which Jehovah had spoken.

We suppose that the "words" and "ordinances" which Moses told the people were all the words that he had heard from God after he left the people. See 20:21. This would include everything in 20:22—23:23. It seems unlikely to us that Moses repeated the words of the ten commandments, since all the Israelites had heard these for themselves from God's own voice. See Deut. 4:33, 36.

After hearing Moses, ALL the people answered with ONE voice, saying, "ALL which Jehovah has spoken we will do." (Compare Israel's earlier promises to obey in Ex. 19:8; 20:19; Deut. 5:27.) Their prompt and unanimous response makes us forget for a moment how short was the time they remained faithful. In less than forty days they made the golden calf (Ex. 32).

4. *What last-minute preparations did Moses make for the ratification of the covenant? (24:4-5)*

(1) He wrote the words of Jehovah.

(2) He built one altar and set up twelve stone pillars.

(3) He sent young men to offer burnt-offerings and peace-offerings.

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<sup>4</sup>Martin Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 198, considers 24:3-8 an independent fragment attached to the "originally independent" book of the covenant (chapters 21-23), to connect that book with the covenant made at Sinai. He feels that chapter 34 is the J version of the making of the Sinai covenant, and that the story of the covenant making in chapter 24 was not originally by the same author as the one who wrote chapter 34. We feel that the story as given in Exodus is too harmonious with itself to permit us to accept such extreme ideas about its production.

The words which Moses had told the people orally (24:3), he then wrote upon papyrus or parchment. Surely both Moses' act of oral recitation and his written record of God's words required inspiration from God. Probably no one could have recalled all those details unless God aided him in recalling all that God had said. Compare John 14:26.

Numerous passages affirm that Moses *wrote* a great amount of material. See Deut. 31:9, 19, 24; Num. 33:2; Ex. 17:14. Certainly we believe these statements.

Regarding "under the mount" (or, "at the foot of the mountain"), see Ex. 19:17.

Moses' altar was made of earth or of uncut stones. See 20:25. The altar appears to have symbolized the Lord's presence among the Israelites. See Ex. 20:24.

The twelve pillars (presumably made of stone) symbolized the tribes of Israel. The act of setting up stones as memorials or symbols when a covenant was made is mentioned in other places in scripture. See Gen. 31:45; Joshua 24:25-26.

We appreciate the thought of R. Alan Cole,<sup>5</sup> that while the pillars represented Israel, the fact that this was only symbolism and not superstition is shown by the fact that in the blood ceremony, the blood was dashed over the people themselves (24:8), and not over the pillars that represented them.

We think that the "young men" who were sent to offer sacrifices were the firstborn sons. Ex. 13:2: "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn." This is the view expressed in the Jewish Talmud and the Targum of Onkelos. Keil and Delitzsch<sup>6</sup> deny that these young men were the firstborn sons, or some pre-Levitical priests. Positive proof of their identity is indeed not given, but we still think they were the firstborn.

Burnt-offerings and peace-offerings were Israel's most

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<sup>5</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 184.

<sup>6</sup>*Op. cit.*, II, p. 157.

ancient types of offerings. See 20:24. God later revealed His will on more involved types of offerings, like sin-, trespass-, and meal-offerings (Lev. 1-7). Burnt-offerings indicated man's guilt and God's condemnation of this guilt. Peace-offerings indicated the state of harmony brought about by the offering of burnt-offerings. Only the peace-offerings were partly eaten by the offerer (Lev. 7:15-16). It seems probable that the food eaten in 24:11 was from the peace-offerings.

There is a special emphasis on the fact that the sacrifices of 24:5 were unto the LORD. See 22:20.

5. *What did Moses do with the blood of the offerings?* (24:6, 8)

He put half the blood in basins, and he sprinkled this part of the blood on the altar he had built (24:4). The sprinkling of the blood on the altar indicated the blood was sprinkled God-ward (toward God) to satisfy the requirements of divine justice. Similarly, Christ's blood was presented in heaven on our behalf (Heb. 9:11-12, 24-25).

After sprinkling blood on the altar (an act of reaching out for God's acceptance), Moses read to the people the entire book of the covenant which he had written. After reading, Moses sprinkled the blood upon the people (or in the direction of the people). He also sprinkled<sup>7</sup> the book itself. Seemingly, Moses used the remaining half of the blood for these acts. The blood was sprinkled man-ward, as well as God-ward. The blood was to change the lives of the people.

Hebrews 8:18-20: "Wherefore, even the first covenant hath not been dedicated without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses unto all the people according to the law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the BOOK itself and all the PEOPLE, saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God

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<sup>7</sup>The verb *zaraq*, translated *sprinkle* in 24:8, means to scatter, to sprinkle, to swing, to shake, to pour out a vessel.

commanded to you-ward."

Christ used similar words at the last supper: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:20)

God's covenants are solemn, sealed with blood! Blood speaks of sin, and of death, and of life.

6. *Why was blood used in ratifying the covenant?* (24:8)

No theological explanation is given in Exodus, but several reasons are suggested in other passages.

(1) The blood was a *means of enactment*. Heb. 9:15-17 tells us that for a will (or testament, or covenant) to be in force, a death must have occurred. The offering of blood is possible only when a death has occurred. Thus, the blood functioned as a means of ENACTMENT of the covenant. "Wherefore, not even the first covenant (that given by Moses) was dedicated without blood." (Heb. 9:18)

(2) Furthermore, blood has always been connected with the *forgiveness of sins*. See Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:15, 22. The passage in Hebrews quite definitely links remission (release) of sins with the offering of blood, and specifically mentions Moses' sprinkling the blood at the making of the covenant as one of the applications of blood offered for remission of sins. Without the shedding of blood, Israel could not have been accepted as a people.

(3) Also blood served as a visual *warning* to the people that they must keep the terms of the covenant or face death. Blood-covenants showed the deadly seriousness of the commitments being made. See Gen. 15:9-10, 17; Jer. 34:18-20.

(4) The blood functioned also as a means of bringing *unity* between God and Israel. There was blood sprinkled upon both the altar (symbolizing God) and the people. Thus the two contracting parties were by this means united by a solemn bond. The blood was for the people a transposition into the kingdom of God, a fulfillment of Ex. 19:5-6.

7. *What promise did the people make when they heard the law read?* (24:7)

They promised to obey all that Jehovah had spoken. God's covenants must be accepted voluntarily by His people. Regrettably, Israel did not keep to its promise.

Note that Moses twice declared the law to Israel, once extemporaneously and once by reading from the written word. Public reading of a book of covenant was a frequent practice in Bible times. It was done by Joshua and King Josiah, among others. (Joshua 24:1ff; II Kings 23:2, 21.)

If it be objected that Moses could not possibly have spoken so as have been heard by 600,000 men plus women and children, we can only reply that perhaps this was done by speaking to certain individuals who were representatives of all the people or tribes. Probably the same thing occurred in the sprinkling of the blood upon the people. Furthermore, we can not dismiss the possibility that God miraculously amplified Moses' voice so that all could hear it.

Israel's promise to obey in 24:7 was their third open promise to obey. See Ex. 19:8; 24:3. Compare 23:22.

We must remind ourselves at this point that the law of Moses was never given as a means for justifying men from sin. See Gal. 3:21. It only pointed out sins, with the goal of curbing the practice of sin. (Gal. 3:19; I Tim. 1:9-10; Rom. 3:20.) The law was (and is) an essential guide to those who would live Godly. But the attainment of righteousness in God's sight has always been possible only because God graciously accepts those who believe and seek Him through the sacrificial system He has provided, namely through the death of Jesus Christ. (Gal. 3:8-9, 22.)

8. *What marvelous demonstration of fellowship followed the making of the covenant? (24:9-11)*

Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders went up upon the mount and actually saw the God of Israel!<sup>8</sup> They met in harmony, and beheld God, and ate and

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<sup>8</sup>The Greek LXX reads "They saw the *place* where the God of Israel stood." This appears to be a deliberate alteration of the text to avoid the possibility of describing God as having human or tangible form.

drank! However, even at this time it appears that Moses came much closer to God than the others. See 24:2.

Only a few days before it would have been DEATH for any Israelite to have broken through the fence-barrier and gazed at God (19:21, 24). Now after the blood has been sprinkled and the covenant accepted, they eat and drink with God in peace. Though the people had been rebels against God's holy nature and laws, He as the God of all grace meets with their representatives in gracious fellowship.

Moses had previously been commanded to ascend into the mount with the people's representatives (24:1). But they did not ascend till the blood was sprinkled and the covenant was ratified. This point cannot be stressed too strongly! Ponder the power of the blood to bring men into God's presence (Rev. 7:14-15). When we consider the rebelliousness and disobedience of Israel up to this point, and consider that God foresaw their soon-forthcoming disobedience, we are awed at the graciousness of God. We should also be awed that through the blood of Christ we have an access to the Father (Eph. 2:18).

Meditate on the marvel of seeing God!<sup>9</sup> How unusual this is! Exodus 33:20: "Thou canst not see my face; for man shall not see me and live." John 1:18: "No man hath seen God at any time." Compare I John 4:12. God dwells in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen, nor can see (I Tim. 6:16). When Isaiah saw the Lord, he felt that he was "undone" (or destroyed), "for mine eyes have seen the king. . . ." (Isa. 6:3) It was generally recognized among the Israelites that man could not see God and live. See Judges 6:22; 13:22. Ex. 24:11 itself hints that there was something very out of the ordinary in the fact that God did not lay His hand upon (or harm) the nobles.

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<sup>9</sup>Moses and the others with him on the mount saw *elohim*, or God. The name *Yahweh* is not used here. Neither is it used in other accounts that tell of men seeing God. Compare Isa. 6:1; Judges 13:22.

Never again for 1500 years did a body of men see God again, not until they saw the Lord Jesus with "glory as of the only-begotten of the father." We think that the one whom Moses and the elders saw was God the Word, he who later came in the flesh as Jesus; and that they did not actually behold God the Father. If this be true, then both the statements that they saw God and that no man has beheld God at any time can be true. Compare Isa. 6:1 and John 12:41. But we claim no knowledge of the divine vision presented unto Moses other than the words of the scripture text itself.

Critical scholars who seek to connect 24:1-2 directly to 24:9-11, and attribute 24:3-8 to another author, saying it has been inserted into the story, miss a principal point of Exodus 24: the point that the ratification of the covenant in vss. 3-8 was followed by a glorious experience of fellowship with God upon the mount.

The "then" at the start of 24:9 could be (literally) translated simply as "and," although the "and" there does indicate the consecutive sequence of events which we express by "then."

9. *What was the appearance of God like? (24:10)*

The description of God's appearance is so brief that no image could possibly be made from the information given here. See Deut. 4:15. What is described is only that which lay "under his feet," which was like a work (or production of labor) made of brilliant, clear sapphire. The translation "pavement" seems to be a bit too specific, but probably represents the general idea correctly.

The area under God's feet is said to have been like the very essence (KJV, "body") of heaven for (or in) purity. The term translated "body" in KJV does indeed mean bone, body, or frame; but it also has the meanings of "essence, self, self-same, very." This seems to be its meaning in 24:10. This indicates that what Moses and the elders saw had in every way the appearance of heaven itself. They did not see some watered-down representation.

The word "saw" in 24:10 (Heb., *ra'ah*) is a common word for seeing with physical eyes. The word "saw" (or "beheld") in 24:11 (*chazah*) is the customary word for seeing a vision. The use of both of these words leads us to think that God had not actually transported His heavenly throne apparatus to Mt. Sinai but that the nobles saw it by a vision, but with a vision of such clarity that it was like the very essence of heaven, like being there on the spot.

Cassuto<sup>10</sup> says that the word translated "purity" is commonly used (in Ugaritic poetry) to signify the brightness of the sapphire.

The "paved work" under God's feet appears to be the same as that which is referred to in the description of God's throne in Ezekiel 1:26: "Above the firmament . . . was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a *sapphire* stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it." Ezekiel alone refers to the appearance of God as the appearance of a *man*. The sapphire is a sky-blue semi-precious stone. See Ex. 28:18. Rev. 4:6 says that before the throne of God was, as it were, "a sea of glass, like unto crystal." We suppose that this "crystal" refers to the same "pavement" as that described as sapphire in Exodus.

The liberal critic Noth tries to link the sapphire paved work of Ex. 24:10 with painted or glazed pavements of sapphire color, such as are known to have existed in ancient Mesopotamia.<sup>11</sup> This, of course, renders the Exodus account a fictitious description, written by some author who devised a description of heaven resembling a Mesopotamian temple, and then alleged that the summit of Mt. Sinai was in heaven and that the God of Israel was present there. We are frequently astounded to see how far unbelievers will go to avoid accepting scripture statements as simple truth.

#### 10. *What was the significance of eating and drinking before*

<sup>10</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 314.

<sup>11</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 195.



*God?* (24:11)

The exact significance of this act is not stated. We suppose that it was mainly an act of fellowship with God, celebrating the ratification of the covenant. It is noteworthy that Jesus also instituted the new covenant with a meal, the last supper. See Luke 22:19.

We suppose also that what they ate were portions of the peace-offerings brought with them upon the mount.<sup>12</sup> See 24:5. The burnt-offerings would have been completely burned, but not the peace-offerings (Lev. 1:9; 7:11, 14). The peace-offerings were the only sacrifice of which the worshippers ate part. See notes on 20:24. The peaceful eating and drinking in God's presence indicates the harmony existing at that moment between God and Israel. It may be even a type of the blessedness of our presence with God in eternity, and of the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9; 21:3).

Was the *eating* in God's presence part of the process of ratifying God's covenant with Israel? We feel that it was. Jacob and Laban sealed the covenant between them by a meal together (Gen. 31:46, 54). BUT - and this is important - it was NOT the complete process of ratifying the covenant. Nor was it even the major part. That had taken place a day (or more) before when Moses sprinkled the people and the altar and the book with blood (24:6-8). The eating seems to us to have been more a celebration of the previous ratification of the covenant than a substantial part in the act of ratifying it.

We stress this, because the liberal critical view is that Exodus twenty-four contains *two* accounts of ratifying the covenant woven together. Supposedly the account in 24:1-2, 9-11 tells of ratifying the covenant by eating the meal with God up on Mt. Sinai. Then 24:3-8 gives another author's version of the covenant ratification by sprinkling blood at

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<sup>12</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 315, feels that they ate and drank *after* they descended and returned to camp. We certainly do not get that impression from the Biblical text.

the foot of the mountain.<sup>13</sup> It is much better to understand the sprinkling of the blood and the eating as being two acts in the one story.

11. *For what purpose was Moses called up into the mount?* (24:12)

He was called up to receive tablets of stone, and the law (*torah*) and commandment, which God had written.

We assume that the call of verse twelve came AFTER Moses had returned to the foot of the mountain with Aaron and his other companions. This surely seems to be implied by verse fourteen.

The giving of the tablets written by God would be a further and final confirmation of the covenant with God.

When Moses was told to come up into the mount and "Be there," he probably never imagined that he would be there forty days. See 24:18.

The section 24:12-18 looks ahead to 32:1, where Moses was sent down off the mount after the people built the golden calf.

The text surely declares that God himself wrote on the tablets of stone which He gave to Moses. See 31:18. We accept this as true.

It seems to us that the "tablets of stone" and the "law" spoken of are one and the same thing, namely the ten commandments on stone. The text could be translated (and probably should be), "I will give thee the tables of stone, *even* the law. . . ." (The "and" merely introduces another word by way of explanation, and stands between words in apposition.)

Jewish interpreters believe that the "law" spoken of in verse twelve was an oral law (or tradition) given to Moses in addition to the written law. This oral law is supposedly now preserved in written form in the Jewish *Talmud*. The *Talmud* has volumes of material telling how the laws of

<sup>13</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

Moses are to be interpreted and how they are to be carried out in all of life's activities. To many Jews every interpretation of the law given by a universally recognized authority (or rabbi) is regarded as having been given on Mt. Sinai.

Jesus rejected these traditions which were added to the law as being without authority from God. See Mark 7:5, 8-9. Moses himself declared that men were NOT to add to nor take away anything from the word which had been commanded to them (Deut. 4:2), referring to their written statutes and ordinances (Deut. 4:1).

12. *Who went with Moses up into the mount? (24:13-14).*

Joshua, Moses' servant, went up with him. Regarding Joshua, see 17:9 and 32:17. Not even Aaron went up.

Aaron and Hur are mentioned together in 24:14, as they were in 17:10, 12. See notes on those verses.

Moses had served as the judge in disputes too difficult for the other judges of Israel (18:26). In Moses' absence, the people were to bring such cases to Aaron and Hur.

The last clause of verse thirteen seems out of order with what follows it in verses fourteen and fifteen. That does not prove that the text is a jumble of contradictory statements copied clumsily from several sources. It merely reflects the Hebrew style of writing, which is not as concerned with strict chronological order as modern writers generally are. We saw another example of this back in 10:28—11:4.

13. *What covered the mount when Moses ascended into it? (24:15-17)*

The cloud covered it. The text suggests that the cloud returned, a cloud similar to which appeared previously, when the ten commandments were proclaimed (19:16).

The "glory of Jehovah" was seen there with the cloud. This glory is described as "like a devouring fire on the top of the mount," and it was visible even down below to the eyes of the children of Israel (24:17). Compare Ex. 16:10.

The glory of Jehovah "abode" upon Mt. Sinai. The word *abode* is a translation of the verb *shakan*, from which later developed a non-Biblical term *shekinah* (meaning dwelling,

or presence, of God), that referred to the glory cloud within the tabernacle and above it.

Moses was in the cloud on the mount six days, and on the seventh day God called him from the midst of the cloud. We suppose that these six days were days of spiritual preparation. In the Bible we have several instances where the events of six days reached a culmination on the seventh day. Examples could include creation, the weekly sabbath, the manna, etc. Perhaps the six-days' delay caused Moses to associate this experience with other great doings of God.

God's men need patience! Moses waited six days before God's voice came to him.

Many critics separate the story in Exodus into "sources" at 24:15 or near there. (See notes on 24:1-2). They allege that beginning at 24:15 we have a resumption of the Priestly narrative (P), which was interrupted after 19:20. This Priestly section is said to include 24:15—31:18, and to have been written centuries later, probably during Babylonian captivity (about 550 B.C.), and set into the older story by editors of the literary material. There is certainly no ancient manuscript evidence that the story has such sources. We have observed repeatedly how the text tells a continuous, harmonious story. We should not be intimidated by the critics's confident but unverified declarations. Their views deny the unity, truthfulness, and spiritual significance of the Exodus story.

#### 14. *How long was Moses in the mount?* (24:18)

He was there forty days and forty nights. Moses did not come down until the making of the golden calf (Ex. 32:15). In those forty days he received all the information in chapters 25-31 about the tabernacle, the priesthood, etc. Moses was gone so long that the people thought he had perished or otherwise left the scene (32:1).

We do not know whether Joshua was with Moses at any time in these forty days or not. Perhaps they tented together some of the time, or stayed together in some cave.

During these forty days Moses neither ate nor drank. See

Deut. 9:9. Moses also fasted during his second stay on the mount (Deut. 9:18; Ex. 34:28). Elijah fasted forty days at this same place (I Kings 19:8). And Christ fasted forty days in the desert (Matt. 4:2). Assuredly Moses could not have survived forty days without water if he had not been miraculously sustained.

The spectacle of Moses amidst the cloud and the fire of God's glory is awesome. But it is typical of the events connected with the giving of the law. "Thou heardest his words out of the midst of the *fire*" (Deut. 4:36). The Israelites came to a mount that "burned with *fire*, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest" (Heb. 12:18).

As Christians, we have come to a very different spiritual starting place. We have come, not to Sinai, but to Mt. Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. We have come to "Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant" (Heb. 12:18, 24).

Israel's representatives briefly came into the presence of God after the covenant was ratified. As Christians we have a constant and eternal access to the father through the new covenant ratified by Christ through His death upon the cross.

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### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**25** And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (2) Speak unto the children of Is-ra-el, that they take for me an offering: of every man whose heart maketh him willing ye shall take my offering. (3) And this is the offering which ye shall take of them: gold, and silver, and brass, (4) and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, (5) and rams' skins dyed red, and sealskins, and acacia wood, (6) oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense, (7) onyx

stones, and stones to be set, for the eph-od, and for the breast-plate. (8) And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. (9) According to all that I show thee, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the furniture thereof, even so shall ye make it.

(10) And they shall make an ark of acacia wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. (11) And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about. (12) And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four feet thereof; and two rings shall be on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it. (13) And thou shalt make staves of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. (14) And thou shalt put the staves into the rings on the sides of the ark, wherewith to bear the ark. (15) The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it. (16) And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee. (17) And thou shalt make a mercy-seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. (18) And thou shalt make two cher-u-bim of gold; of beaten work shalt thou make them, at the two ends of the mercy-seat. (19) And make one cher-ub at the one end, and one cher-ub at the other end: of one piece with the mercy-seat shall ye make the cher-u-bim on the two ends thereof. (20) And the cher-u-bim shall spread out their wings on high, covering the mercy-seat with their wings, with their faces one to another; toward the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cher-u-bim be. (21) And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. (22) And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cher-u-bim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Is-ra-el.

(23) And thou shalt make a table of acacia wood: two cubits *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and

a cubit and a half the height thereof. (24) And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold round about. (25) And thou shalt make unto it a border of a hand-breadth round about; and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about. (26) And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof. (27) Close by the border shall the rings be, for places for the staves to bear the table. (28) And thou shalt make the staves of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them. (29) And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and the spoons thereof, and the flagons thereof, and the bowls thereof, wherewith to pour out: of pure gold shalt thou make them. (30) And thou shalt set upon the table showbread before me alway.

(31) And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made, even its base, and its shaft; its cups, its knops, and its flowers, shall be of one piece with it: (32) and there shall be six branches going out of the sides thereof; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side thereof, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side thereof: (33) three cups made like almond-blossoms in one branch, a knop and a flower; and three cups made like almond-blossoms in the other branch, a knop and a flower: so for the six branches going out of the candlestick: (34) and in the candlestick four cups made like almond-blossoms, the knops thereof, and the flowers thereof; (35) and a knop under two branches of one piece with it, and a knop under two branches of one piece with it, and a knop under two branches of one piece with it, for the six branches going out of the candlestick. (36) Their knops and their branches shall be of one piece with it; the whole of it one beaten work of pure gold. (37) And thou shalt make the lamps thereof, seven: and they shall light the lamps thereof, to give light over against it. (38) And the snuffers thereof, and the snuffdishes thereof, shall be of pure gold. (39) Of a talent of pure gold shall it be made, with all these vessels. (40) And see that thou make them after their pattern, which hath been showed thee in the mount.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. What were the Israelites to bring to Jehovah? (25:2)
2. With what feeling were the offerings to be brought? (25:2)
3. What metals were to be offered? (25:3)
4. What colors of cloth were to be brought? (25:4)
5. What types of animal skins were to be brought? (25:4-5)
6. What type of wood was to be brought? (25:5)
7. What were the Israelites to build for God? (25:8)
8. Where would God dwell? (25:8; 29:45; II Cor. 6:16)
9. According to what was God's tabernacle to be made? (25:9, 40)
10. What were the dimensions of the ark? (25:10)
11. With what was the ark to be overlaid? (25:11)
12. By what means was the ark to be carried? (25:12-13)
13. Where were the staves of the ark kept? (25:15)
14. What is the testimony? (25:16; 32:15; 34:29)
15. What is the mercy-seat? (25:17)
16. What was at the top of the mercy-seat? (25:18; Compare Ezekiel 10:14, 20; Rev. 4:6-8)
17. How were the cherubim positioned? (25:19-20)
18. From where did God meet and commune with Israel? (25:22)
19. Of what was the tabernacle a type? (Heb. 9:9, 11-12)
20. Of what was the ark of the covenant a type? (Psalm 99:1; 80:1; 97:2; 89:14)
21. Of what was the tabernacle a copy? (Heb. 9:23; 8:5; Compare Rev. 11:19)
22. What happened when men looked into the ark without the mercy-seat covering its contents? (I Samuel 6:19)
23. Suggest ways in which Christ compares to the mercy-seat. (Compare I John 2:2; Romans 3:25; Hebrews 12:24)
24. Describe the table of showbread. (25:23)
25. Of what materials was the table to be constructed? (25:23-24)
26. How was the table decorated? (25:25)



27. What equipment was made to be used with the table? (25:29)
  28. When was showbread kept upon the table? (25:30; Compare Lev. 24:5-9)
  - 29-40. From Leviticus 24:5-9 answer these questions about the showbread:
    29. What was the showbread made of?
    30. How many loaves of showbread were to be set on the table?
    31. How much flour went into each loaf? Would this make the loaves large or small?
    32. What was to be poured on each row (or pile) of loaves?
    33. True or false? The showbread is called a type of (sacrificial) offering. (Lev. 24:7, 9)
    34. How often was the showbread to be set in order?
    35. From whom was the showbread to be taken?
    36. By whom was the showbread eaten?
    37. What would the number of loaves of showbread possibly indicate that they symbolized?
    38. What does the name showbread (or "bread of the presence") indicate about the significance of the showbread?
    39. What would the use of frankincense on the bread suggest about it? (Compare Psalm 141:2; Rev. 5:8)
    40. Is the showbread a type or symbol of the Lord's supper?
  41. Describe the candlestick (lampstand). (25:31-36)
  42. How much gold was in the lampstand? (25:39; 37:24)
  43. Who was to bring olive oil for the lamp? (Ex. 27:20)
  44. When was the lamp kept burning? (Lev. 24:3; I Sam. 3:3)
  45. Who tended to the lamp to keep it burning? (Ex. 27:21)
  46. Of what may the lampstand be a type or symbol? (Eph. 5:8; I John 1:5; Philippians 2:15; Psalm 119:105; John 8:12; II Cor. 4:3-6).
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EXODUS TWENTY-FIVE: SANCTUARY INSTRUCTIONS

1. Take an offering; 25:1-8.
  2. Make it according to the pattern; 25:9, 40.
  3. Make an ark and mercy seat; 25:10-22.
  4. Make a table; 25:23-30.
  5. Make a lampstand; 25:31-39.
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AN OFFERING FOR GOD! (25:1-7)

1. Comes from willing people; 25:1-2.
  2. Consists of valuable possessions; 25:3-7.
- 

A SANCTUARY FOR GOD! (25:8)

1. Made by MEN.
  2. Dwelt in by GOD.
- 

MAKE IT LIKE THE PATTERN! (25:9, 40)

1. A divinely revealed pattern.
  2. A pattern of the heavenly tabernacle; (Hebrews 8:5; 9:23)
  3. A pattern of the Christian religion; (Hebrews 9:8-9)
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## MESSAGES FROM GOLDEN FURNITURE (25:10-39)

1. The ark (25:10-16): God dwells among men!
2. The mercy-seat (25:17-22): God communes (talks) with men!
3. The table (25:23-30): God desires his people in his presence!  
God sets an offering in his presence!
4. The Lampstand (25:31-39): God gives light to men!

THE ARK — THE FOOTSTOOL  
OF GOD'S THRONE!  
(Ex. 25:10-16)

1. Contained the ten commandments. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne." (Ps. 89:14a)
2. Had the pot of manna (Ex. 16:33). "Lovingkindness and truth go before thy face." (Ps. 89:14b)
3. Had Aaron's staff that budded. "No man taketh the honor (priesthood) unto himself, unless he is called by God" (Heb. 5:4).

THE MERCY-SEAT  
(Ex. 25:17-22)

1. A precious golden covering.
2. A worship-centered covering (cherubim).
3. A blood-sprinkled covering; Lev. 16:14.

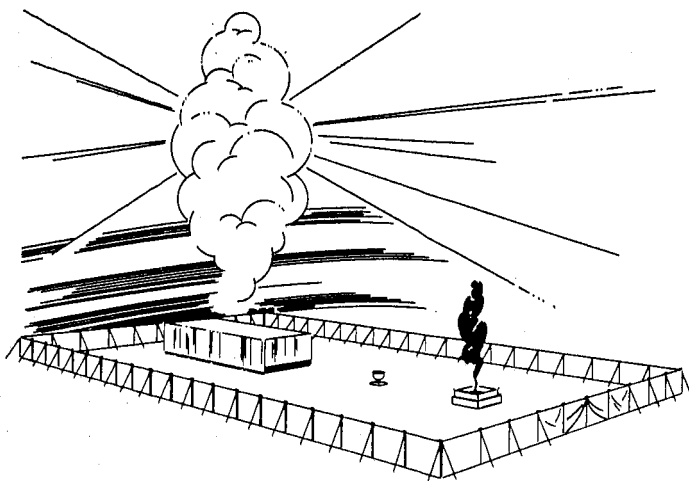
THE LAMPSTAND (Menorah)!

1. A precious light (golden).
2. A united light (all of one piece).
3. A perfect light (seven-fold).
4. A spiritual light (fueled by oil, symbolic of the Spirit).

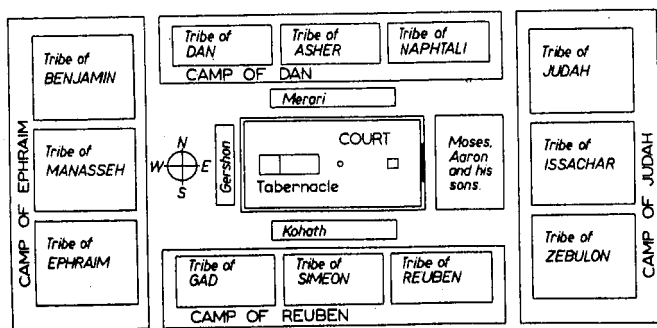
SHOWBREAD  
(Presence-bread)!  
(Ex. 25:23-30)

1. Twelve loaves (symbolizing the twelve tribes) always in God's presence! (Lev. 24:5-8).
2. An offering made by fire always in God's presence! (Lev. 24:9)

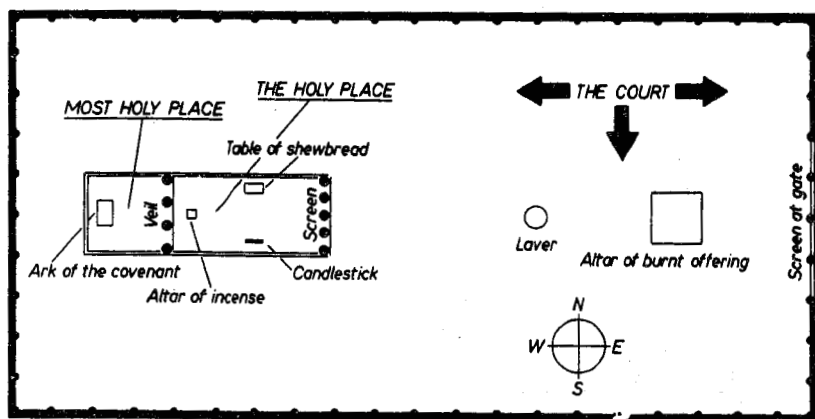
# TABERNACLE VIEWS



General view of the Tabernacle and court



The encampments of Israel around the Tabernacle



Ground plan of the Tabernacle and court



Acacia tree beside a wadi running into the Dead Sea. Acacia (or shittim) wood was used in the tabernacle. (Photo by author.)

## SPECIAL STUDY: THE TABERNACLE

1. *What was the tabernacle?*

- (1) The tabernacle was that beautiful place of worship made by the children of Israel in the days of Moses. It was a sanctuary, a holy place set apart for God. God showed His presence at the tabernacle, and there received the worship of the people. Exodus 29:43-46.
- (2) It was a portable house of worship. When we go on camping trips, we carry with us a "house" that we can move about, a tent. Out in the desert the Israelites were constantly moving about. Therefore they had to have a house of worship that could easily be moved with them. The very word "tabernacle" means a "tent," and the word "tent" certainly suggests a portable dwelling. God gave instructions about how to transport the tabernacle in Numbers 4:5-15.
  - a. Some pieces of furniture in the tabernacle had staves on each side, so men could carry them on their shoulders.
  - b. The heavier parts of the tabernacle were carried by six wagons pulled by oxen. Numbers 7:1-7.
- (3) It was the meeting place of God and Israel.

God dwelt among his people, Israel. Exodus 25:8. God particularly revealed His presence around the tabernacle, and especially in that part of it called the Most Holy Place. Exodus 25:22.

The fact that God dwelt in the midst of Israel was the central fact of their life. To Israel God's presence meant plan, protection, and provision. If God had not manifested His presence in the tabernacle, the tribes of Israel would have been scattered about helter-skelter, with no one to protect or provide for them.

This was an appeal to the senses of a people whose spiritual discernment was underdeveloped. God's presence among them was plainly indicated by the daily manna, the pillar of cloud, and the miracles that occurred during

their journeyings. But to a people brought up amidst the idolatry of Egypt, a centralized shrine was more readily comprehended than an omnipresent spiritual God.

Today God dwells in the midst of his *church*, just as He dwelt among the Israelites. II Corinthians 6:16. The presence and worship of God give order, protection, and purpose to our lives. The worship of God should be as central to us as the tabernacle was central in the camp of Israel.

2. *Where is the information given about the tabernacle?*

- (1) The instructions about how it was to be built are given in Ex. 25-31.
- (2) The account of its construction and erection are in Ex. 35-40. Most of the information in this section is a repetition of that in Ex. 25-31.
- (3) The book of Hebrews, chs. 9-10, discusses the significance of the tabernacle at length.
- (4) Many other references throughout the Bible refer to it. The legislation in Leviticus and Numbers and Deuteronomy was primarily to be carried out in the tabernacle rituals.

3. *What was the importance of the tabernacle?*

The importance of this tabernacle can be seen in several ways:

- (1) The details of its construction are described *twice* in Exodus, and much information is found about it throughout the rest of the Bible.

Arthur Pink reminds us that God only used two chapters to tell of the creation and furnishing of heaven and earth. But he used at least thirteen chapters (and really many more) to discuss the tabernacle!

- (2) The tabernacle is presented as a *type* of the Christian religion now operative (Heb. 9:8-9). (See Question No. 14 in this special study of the Tabernacle.)
- (3) The tabernacle was an earthly illustration and counterpart of God's heavenly dwelling and tabernacle. The tabernacle was a copy of things in the heavens (Heb. 8:5;

9:23-29). Rev. 11:19: "There was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant." Both the earthly and heavenly tabernacles therefore had covenant *arks*. Both had an altar for incense (Rev. 8:3). Both had seven lamps (Rev. 4:5). Christ entered the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (Heb. 9:11). Christ with his blood entered the true holy place (holy of holies) in heaven (Heb. 9:24). These facts made the earthly tabernacle very important.

- (4) God's insistence that it be made according to the precise pattern he had showed in the mount stresses the importance of each detail of it.

4. *Who were camped around the tabernacle?*

- (1) The Israelites camped all around the tabernacle. Each tribe camped by itself in its designated place. Although each tribe camped separately, the three on each of the four sides of the tabernacle were grouped together into larger encampments, called the Camp of Dan, the Camp of Judah, the Camp of Reuben, and the Camp of Ephraim. See Numbers 2:1—3:39. See page 550A.
- (2) Moses and the priestly families of Gershon, Merari, and Kohath were camped around the tabernacle up close to it.

5. *What were the names which were given to the tabernacle?*

God not only ordains things to exist, but He gives them their names as well. Let us use "Bible names for Bible things." Here are the names for the tabernacle:

- (1) "Tabernacle." Exodus 26:1. This word is the translation of several Hebrew words (2 main ones). One (*ohel*) means "tent." The other (*mishkan*) means "dwelling place."
- (2) "Tent." Exodus 26:36.
- (3) "Sanctuary." Exodus 25:8. This word means "a place set apart," or "a holy place."
- (4) "Tabernacle of the congregation." Exodus 29:42, 44; 30:36; etc. This name is rendered "tent of meeting" in the Revised Version. The name "tabernacle of the congregation" is applied to that room in the tabernacle called



"the holy place." Exodus 27:21.

(5) "House of the Lord." Deuteronomy 23:18. (The church is now the house of the Lord, and God dwells in it through the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1:22.)

(6) "Temple of the Lord." I Samuel 1:9. This name suggests the magnificence of the tabernacle, as if it were a palace or temple. The church is now the temple of God.

6. *How were materials obtained for the tabernacle?*

Free-will offerings provided the materials. See Exodus 25:1-9; 35:4-29; 36:5-7.

7. *Who actually constructed the tabernacle?*

It was constructed by men specially called and filled and guided by the Spirit of God to have wisdom and skill. God called them by name. Among these builders were Bezaleel and Oholiab. (Ex. 36:1; Ex. 35:30—36:1.)

These builders of the tabernacle correspond to the apostles of Christ in the church. Christ specifically called His apostles, and filled them with the Holy Spirit so that they could establish the church without error. Acts 1:8; John 16:13.

8. *How many tabernacles did all the parts of the tabernacle combine to form?*

Just one. It was ONE tabernacle. Exodus 26:6. All its parts formed one harmonious whole.

Accordingly we find a unity prevading the whole church of Christ. There are many different members of it, but all produce one body. I Corinthians 12:2.

9. *How was the tabernacle maintained?*

It was maintained by an offering of "atonement money." Every person over twenty had to give a half-shekel. Exodus 30:11-16. This was an annual offering. Matthew 17:24. The fact that God provided through the tabernacle a means of atonement (or covering) for sins made the people indebted to God and to His tabernacle.

10. *By what act was the tabernacle "sanctified" or set apart for holy use?*

It was set apart by anointing with holy oil. The tabernacle, all its pieces of furniture, and its priests were

anointed with a holy oil, so that it was sanctified and became "most holy." Exodus 30:22-33; 40:9-16.

Anointing oil, as used in the Old Testament, was symbolic of the Holy Spirit. See Luke 4:18; Psalm 133:2; Hebrews 1:9; Acts 10:38.

As every part of the tabernacle was anointed with the holy oil, so every feature of the Christian faith is anointed with the Holy Spirit. See Ephesians 1:22; I Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:17. Our religion is therefore divine, holy, precious, anointed of God.

11. *What covered over, or lodged above, the tabernacle?*

The cloud of God's glory covered over or lodged above the tabernacle. Exodus 40:34-39; Numbers 9:15-23. This glory cloud is called the SHECHINAH. (This word, however, is not actually found in the Bible.)

God's presence has frequently been associated with a cloud, or a shining light, or smoke, or fire. Exodus 16:10; 24:16-17; Numbers 20:6; Isaiah 6:4; Luke 2:9. This creates a great sense of God's presence and majesty.

This cloud also guided and led the Israelites. When the cloud lifted up, this was a sign for the Israelites to pack up for moving on. When the cloud moved, they followed. When the cloud stopped, they camped.

The Scripture indicates that God intends to glorify His people today with a glory like that which crowned the tabernacle. Isaiah 60:2; 4:5.

12. *What was the value of the material in the tabernacle?*

The value was tremendous. See Exodus 38:24-29. The exact value is impossible to determine, but a million and a half dollars has been suggested as a conservative figure. The worship of God is not a cheap, trifling, and inconsequential thing.

13. *Layout and furniture of the Tabernacle.*

A. The Layout of the tabernacle.

- (1) The *Court of the Tabernacle*, in which the Tabernacle itself stood, was an oblong space, 100 cubits by 50 (i.e., 150 feet by 75), having its longer axis east

and west, with its front to the *east*. It was surrounded by linen cloth hangings 5 cubits in height, and supported by pillars of brass 5 cubits apart, to which the curtains were attached by hooks and fillets of silver (thin rods or rails between the pillars). This enclosure was only broken on the eastern side by the entrance, which was 20 cubits wide, and closed by curtains of fine twined linen, wrought with needle-work, and of the most gorgeous colors. (Ex. 27:9-19; 38:9-20.)

- In the outer or eastern half of the court was placed the altar of burnt-offering, and between it and the Tabernacle itself, the laver at which the priests washed their hands and feet on entering the Temple.
- (2) The *Tabernacle itself* was placed toward the western end of this enclosure. It was an oblong rectangular structure, 30 cubits in length by 10 in width (45 feet by 15), and 10 in height; the interior being divided into two chambers, the first or outer of 20 cubits in length, the inner of 10 cubits, and consequently an exact cube. The former was the *Holy Place*, or *First Tabernacle* (Heb. 9:2), containing the golden candlestick on one side, the table of show-bread opposite, and between them in the center the altar of incense. The latter was the *Most Holy Place*, or the *Holy of Holies*, containing the ark, surmounted by the cherubim, with the two stone tablets inside.

The two sides, and the further, or western, end, were enclosed by boards of shittim-wood overlaid with gold. (Ex. 26:15-26; 36:20-70).

Four successive coverings of curtains looped together were placed over the open top, and fell down over the sides. The first, or inmost, was a splendid fabric of linen, embroidered with figures of cherubim, in blue, purple, and scarlet, and joined together by golden fastenings. The next was a woollen covering of goats' hair; the third, of rams' skins dyed red; and the outermost, of porpoise skins (Ex.

26:1-14; 36:8-19).

The front of the Sanctuary was closed by a hanging of fine linen, embroidered in blue, purple, and scarlet, and supported by golden hooks, on *five* pillars of shittim-wood overlaid with gold, and standing in brass sockets. The covering of goats' hair was so made as to hang down over this if desired. A more sumptuous curtain of the same kind, embroidered with cherubim and hung on *four* pillars with silver sockets, divided the Holy from the Most Holy Place. It was called the *VEIL*, as it hid from the eyes of all but the high-priest the inmost sanctuary, where Jehovah dwelt on his mercy-seat, between the cherubim above the ark.

B. Furniture of the tabernacle.

(1) In the Outer Court.

a. *The Altar of Burnt-offering*. See notes on Ex. 27:1-8; 38:1-7.

b. *The Brazen Laver*. See notes on Ex. 29:4; 30:17-21; 38:8; 40:7, 11. See also Lev. 8:10-11.

(2) In the Holy Place.

The furniture of the court was connected with *sacrifice*, that of the sanctuary itself with the deeper mysteries of mediation and access to God. The *Holy Place* contained three objects: the *altar of incense* in the center, so as to be directly in front of the ark of the covenant, the *table of show-bread* on its right or north side, and the *golden candlestick* on the left or south side.

a. *The Altar of Incense*. (Ex. 30:1-10, 34-38; 37:25-29; Lev. 10:1-2.)

b. *The Table of Showbread*. (Ex. 25:23-30; 37:10-16; Lev. 24:5-9.)

c. *The Golden Lampstand*. (Ex. 25:31-40; 27:20-21; 37:17-24; Lev. 24:1-4; Num. 8:1-4)

(3) In the Holy of Holies.

In the *Holy of Holies*, within the veil and shrouded

in darkness, there was but one object, the most sacred of the whole. The *Ark of the Covenant*, or the *Testimony*, was a sacred chest, containing the two tables of stone, inscribed with the Ten Commandments.

The cover of the ark (called the *mercy-seat*) was a place of pure gold, overshadowed by two cherubim, with their faces bent down and their wings meeting. This was the very *throne* of Jehovah, who was therefore said to "dwell between the cherubim."

#### 14. *Typology of the Tabernacle.*

A *type* is some person, thing, or event in the Old Testament age which foreshadowed some person, thing, or event in the New Testament age. The *antitype* is that person, thing, or event in the New Testament age which was foreshadowed by the Old Testament type. We are expressly told in Heb. 9:8-9 that the first tabernacle is a figure, or type, for the time present. The typology is given for many parts of the tabernacle.

In the list of the tabernacle types that follows we have placed question marks alongside our statements if the antitypes are not specifically stated in the scripture. In most such cases reasonable inferences may be drawn from scripture that should enable us to determine the antitypes with some certainty.

- a. The entire tabernacle—A type of the Christian religion that has now come into reality (Heb. 9:8)
- b. The Holy of Holies—A type of heaven (Heb. 9:24).
  - (1) The ark of the covenant—A type of the footstool of God's throne (I Chron. 28:2; Psalm 132:7-8). (?)
  - (2) The mercy-seat—A type of God's throne, which is a place of mercy because Christ our priest is there. See Romans 3:25; I John 2:2; 4:10. The term *propitiation* in these verses is the same word used in the Greek Bible for *mercy-seat*.
  - (3) The veil between the Holy and Most Holy places—A type of Christ's flesh, which was broken on the cross

(Heb. 10:19-20; Luke 23:44-45).

- c. The Holy Place—A type of the church (?). (As the Holy of Holies was entered only from the Holy Place, so heaven is entered only from the church. As the Holy Place was for priests only, so the church is for priests (Christians) only.)

(1) Altar of incense—A type of prayer (Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4; Ps. 141:2).

(2) Table of showbread—A type of the fellowship of saints in the presence of God (?). (The twelve loaves seem to have represented Israel. Show-bread means *presence-bread*. Thus the showbread symbolized Israel's being in God's presence, and foreshadowed our fellowship in God's presence [I John 1:3]).

Also as an "offering made by fire" (Lev. 24:9) it was a type of Christ our offering (Eph. 5:2), who is always in God's presence for us.

(3) Lampstand—A type of the light of the Gospel (?). We walk in the light (Eph. 5:7-8). God is light (I Jn. 1:5). Christ is the light (John 8:12). The scriptures are a light (Ps. 119:105; II Pet. 1:19). Churches are lights (Rev. 1:12, 20). Christians are lights (Phil. 2:15).

- d. The court—A type of the world, or God's outreach into the world (?). (As God placed in the court, within the reach of all Israelites, the means for forgiveness, so God has placed in the world the means for forgiveness to all who will draw near seeking God.)

(1) Altar of burnt offering—A type of Christ's death (Heb. 13:10; John 1:29).

(2) Laver—A type of baptism (Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5). (?) The word "washing" in Greek means "laver."

Also the laver appears to have been a type of the daily cleansing available to all priests (Christians!) (I John 1:9). This seems to be a necessary conclusion because the priests washed at the laver each time they entered and went out of the tabernacle (Ex. 30:19-21).

## e. The priesthood.

(1) Aaron, the high priest—A type of Christ our high priest (Heb. 4:14).

(2) Aaron's sons (lesser priests)—A type of Christians; all Christians are priests (Rev. 1:6; I Peter 2:9).

15. *What are the views of many critics about the tabernacle?*

Generally the critical view is that the information about the tabernacle in Exodus was written by priestly writers who lived nearly a thousand years after the time of Moses. These priestly writers lived during or after the Babylonian captivity (about 550 B.C.), and wrote their description of the tabernacle from their memories of the Solomonic temple in Jerusalem, or possibly even from their acquaintance with the temple of Zerubbabel built AFTER the Babylonian captivity. They projected back into the distant past an idealized description, based on later temple features. Their writings are usually referred to as the P (for Priestly) document. The P document was supposedly inserted into the older narratives comprising the remainder of Exodus. (Examples of these views may be seen in Noth's *Exodus*, p. 201, and *Broadman Bible Commentary* Vol. I (1969), p. 431.)

The critics hold that the ark was the imaginary creation of one who knew no more about it than that it once stood in the innermost part of Solomon's temple before the Babylonian exile. (Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 203).

The lampstand is said to have been an innovation (!) presumably introduced into the temple of Zerubbabel (516 B.C.). (Noth *op. cit.*, p. 203.) Since it had features resembling those of a tree, some have thought that it reflects an ancient reverence for trees.

The general conclusion drawn from such theories is that nothing in the Biblical stories is true or edifying. Such theories are often asserted as certain truth when there is not a shred of solid evidence to back them up. Archaeological discoveries have frequently shown that the critics have been in error. For example, we now know that

moveable shrines (such as the tabernacle) existed in several nations - Egypt, Canaan (at Ugarit), Syria (at Palmyra). Many of these go back as far as the time of Moses, and some in Egypt back as far as 2600 B.C. (John Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*, 241, 243). Why then should critics assume that the Israelites in Moses' times simply could not have produced a moveable place of worship like the tabernacle?

In this commentary we have occasionally discussed the critics' views on certain passages. In most cases we have found ourselves in strong disagreement with their opinions.

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#### EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

1. *What is in Exodus twenty-five?*

The chapter contains (1) God's instructions to Moses about taking an offering from the people to obtain materials to build the tabernacle (25:1-9); (2) instructions about how to make the ark (25:10-15) and the mercy-seat (25:16-22); (3) instructions about the table of presence-bread (25:23-30); (4) instructions about the lampstand (25:31-39).

2. *Who was to make an offering for tabernacle materials (25:1-2)*

*Everyone* whose heart made him willing was to give. Giving to God should be voluntary, not forced. See II Cor. 8:4-5; 9:6-7. Those who are willing do give freely. The Israelites gave more materials than were needed for the tabernacle. See Ex. 35:21-29; 36:5-7. In a similar way many years later they gave very much for the temple (I Chron. 29:1-5).

The word translated *offering* (Heb. *terumah*) means a heave-offering, one that is lifted up or separated unto God. The same word is used in Ex. 29:27, Lev. 7:14, Num. 15:19 to refer to various types of sacrifices. This use of this word



indicates that a sacredness comes upon all things presented to the LORD.

3. *What materials were given for the tabernacle?* (25:3-7)

(1) *Blue*. This was wool cloth dyed with deep violet color made from glands of the murex shell-fish found in the sea by Phoenicia and Palestine.

(2) *Purple*. Wool dyed dark red or reddish-purple by the shell-fish dye.

(3) *Scarlet*. Literally this says "worm of scarlet." The cloth was colored a brilliant red by color from the cochineal (or coccus) worm (or insect). In the Arabic language the word translated *scarlet* is *kirmiz*, from which we get our word *crimson*.

(4) *Gold*. All of the items in the Holy Place room or the Holy of Holies were of pure gold or gold-plated. The gold was probably obtained in Egypt (12:35), or possibly by spoil from the Amalekites or by inheritance from their forefathers. Gold was also used to overlay the boards of the tabernacle (38:24).

(5) *Silver*. This was obtained in part by a levy of half a shekel from each adult man (38:26-28). It was used for casting bases (pedestals or sockets) for the boards and pillars (36:24-26).

(6) *Brass*. This is more correctly translated "copper" or "bronze" (the alloy of copper and tin). Certainly it was not brass (copper and zinc). See 38:28-31. Copper was mined even before Moses' time in the rocky hills north of the Red Sea Gulf of Akabah, and still is.

(7) *Fine linen*. Egypt was famous for this material. See Ezek. 27:7. The Hebrew word for linen (*shesh*) is a borrowed Egyptian term. Joseph in Egypt was arrayed in linen (41:42). It was used for the innermost tabernacle covering (26:1), for the veil (26:31), the screen (26:36), and the priests' garments (28:6, 8, 42).

(8) *Goats' hair*. Literally, just *goats*! The goats usually had black hair (Song of Sol. 4:1). The women spun the goats' hair, twisting it into yarn (35:26), which was woven into

cloth. It was used for the second covering of the tabernacle (26:7).

(9) *Rams' skins dyed red.* These red rams' skins were used for the third covering over the tabernacle (26:14). R.S.V. reads "tanned rams' skins." This does not appear to be the best translation because the verb means "to be made red."

(10) *Sealskins.* (R.S.V. "goatskins," a conjectural translation; K.J.V., "badger skins," a faulty translation.) The *New English Bible* gives "porpoise skins," which seems to be a good rendering. The Hebrew word *tahash* refers possibly to the sea cow (dugong, or manatee), which is found in the Red Sea. It is ten to twelve feet long, with a rounded head. It has a hide admirably suited for making sandals (See Ezek. 16:10). Its upper skin is thicker and coarse, but the lower belly skin is thin yet tough.<sup>1</sup> An Arabic word related to the Hebrew *tahash* refers to several kinds of sea animals - seals, dolphins, sharks, dogfish. Perhaps the Hebrew word is equally applicable to several marine creatures.<sup>2</sup>

The "sealskins" were used for the outermost covering of the tabernacle (26:14), and for a covering over the ark and other furniture of the tabernacle (Num. 4:6, 8, 10, 11).

(11) *Acacia wood.* (King James, "shittim"). The acacia trees are the only trees in Sinai or Arabia from which planks might be cut. They are very tough, thorny, rather flat-topped trees, not usually over twenty feet high at present. The author has seen many of them in the Negev, the Arabah, and around the Dead Sea. The wood is indestructible by insects. The thorns (very numerous!) are up to two inches long. Most of the acacia trees now surviving are too small to have been cut into planks one and a half cubits broad (26:15-16). The Arab charcoal business has depleted the larger trees. However, S. C. Bartlett in the nineteenth century reported finding a great many large acacia trees in Wady

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<sup>1</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 252-253.

Sa'al (which leads into Wady Sheikh).<sup>3</sup> Many of these were very large, twenty inches to two feet in diameter. Bartlett tells that Mr. Holland, another Sinai traveller, found one nine feet in circumference. It is incorrect to assert that there have been no trees in Sinai from which boards the size of the tabernacle boards might have been cut. (In Ex. 26:15 R.S.V. renders "boards" as "frames.") (The boards might have been made by splicing wood from several trees together.)

(12) *Oil for the light.*<sup>4</sup> This was a pure (or clear) olive oil beaten from the olives (Lev. 24:2). See Ex. 25:6; 27:20-21.

(13) *Spices* for anointing oil (30:23-33) and for sweet incense (30:34-38; 35:28).

(14) *Onyx stones and other gemstones* (25:7). See 28:9, 17-20. The onyx was probably a banded agate with straight bands. Others consider it to be a beryl. (*Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, article "Minerals.") These stones were used in the high priest's garments. The onyx stones and other gems were presented by the rulers of the congregation (35:27). Ex. 25:7 mentions the ephod and breastplate. See Ex. 28:6-14; 39:2-7 on the ephod, and 28:15-30; 39:8-21 on the breastplate.

The absence of mention of *iron* in the list of materials to be donated is possibly an indication of the very early date of the book of Exodus.

#### 4. *What was God's purpose for the sanctuary?* (25:8)

God's purpose was that He might dwell among the Israelites. God desired to live among his people. See Ex. 29:45; I Kings 6:13; Lev. 26:11-12; II Cor. 6:16; Heb. 3:6; Rev. 21:3. It is certainly true that God inhabits eternity (Isa. 57:15), and fills heaven and earth (Jer. 23:24). Heaven is His throne and earth is His footstool (Isa. 66:1). Spiritually-minded

<sup>3</sup>Bartlett, *op. cit.*, pp. 300-301.

<sup>4</sup>The Greek LXX omits 25:6, possibly because of a skip by the eye of the translator between words with similar endings, *shittim* in vs. 5, and *sammim* in vs. 6. But the verse is needed to provide a full list of the materials for the tabernacle. See Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

Israelites realized this. See I Kings 8:27.

Nonetheless, God condescends to meet his children in limited places where they can reach Him.

The word *sanctuary* (25:8) means a holy place, one set apart for God. See Jer. 17:12.

God did not ask for a tabernacle; he asked for a sanctuary. God needs no tabernacle in which to dwell. The word "tabernacle" in 25:8 simply means a "dwelling." Do not read into 25:8 the meaning "Make me a sanctuary to provide a place where I may dwell among them." The text does not say that God dwelt in *it* (the tabernacle), but rather that he dwelt in *them* (the people)!

5. *What was the guide used in constructing the tabernacle?* (25:9)

The guide was the pattern which God showed Moses in the mount. See 25:40; 26:30; 27:8. Making the tabernacle exactly like this pattern was absolutely required. See Heb. 8:5.

God seems to have shown Moses a model or form of the tabernacle made in the way He wanted Moses to make it. This model was actually a model of the very tabernacle of God in heaven, and the earthly tabernacle was thus to be itself a model (pattern) of the heavenly tabernacle. To have digressed from the pattern shown to him would have caused Moses to misrepresent the design of God's tabernacle in heaven. Further, it would have produced a faulty type (or advance representation) of the religion which Jesus Christ has brought to us.

Some Jewish commentators have held that Moses saw a prophetic vision of the actual divine dwelling place in heaven, and that it therefore became necessary for Moses to erect in the middle of the camp of Israel a tabernacle designed like that seen in his vision, corresponding to the heavenly sanctuary.<sup>5</sup> Hertz (also Jewish) disagrees, saying

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<sup>5</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

that the tabernacle was only an educational tool to wean Israel from idolatrous worship, and that it did not correspond to any tabernacle on a universe-wide scale.<sup>6</sup>

Keil<sup>7</sup> argues (correctly we feel) that God showed Moses not the heavenly original, but only a model of the heavenly original. The word translated *pattern* (Heb. *tabenith*) seems to have this meaning in Deut. 4:17 ("the *likeness* of any beast"), II Kings 16:10 ("the *fashion* of the altar"), and II Kings 16:10 (David's pattern of the temple, which he gave to Solomon).

Observe that the pattern of the tabernacle shown to Moses extended to the pattern of ALL the vessels (furniture, instruments) of it. There is an opinion that God has given men no definite pattern for His worship. God does indeed allow much freedom of expression in worship, but the command to conform exactly to the tabernacle pattern suggests that the pattern is a very real thing for us to recognize and accept.

6. *What was the first item of tabernacle furniture to be described? (25:10-11)*

The ark of the testimony (or covenant). For further information about the ark, see 37:1-9; Deut. 10:2-5; Heb. 9:3-5.

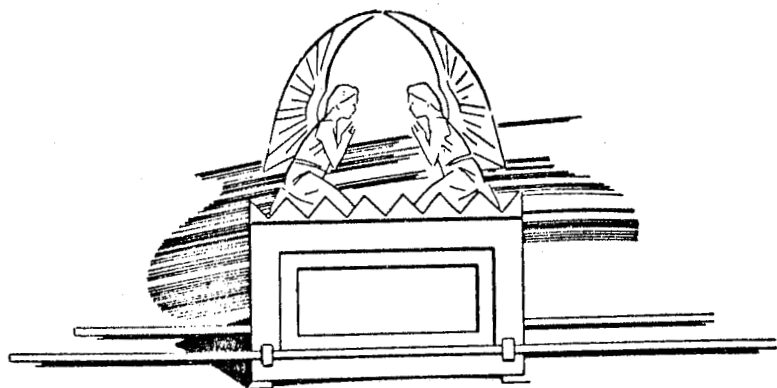
The ark was a wooden chest overlaid "within and without"<sup>8</sup> with gold. It was 1½ x 1½ x 2½ cubits<sup>9</sup> (about 27 x 27 x 45 inches). The ark (Heb. *'aron*) of the covenant should certainly not be confused with the ark (Heb. *tebah*) of Noah or the ark-basket (*tebah*) of the baby Moses (Ex. 2:3).

<sup>6</sup>J. H. Hertz, *Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London, Soncino Press, 1969), p. 325.

<sup>7</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.* II, pp. 165-167.

<sup>8</sup>The Hebrew expression in 25:11 meaning "inside and outside" could quite literally be rendered "in (the) house and in (the) street." This same idiom is used to describe how Noah's ark was pitched with pitch "within and without" (Gen. 6:14). Probably the ark was overlaid with gold by the Egyptian method of attaching thin hammered plates of gold to the wood by means of small nails. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

<sup>9</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 246, discusses the length of a cubit, and settles upon a length of eighteen inches. We adopt his conclusion.



The ark of the covenant and the mercy-seat with cherubim

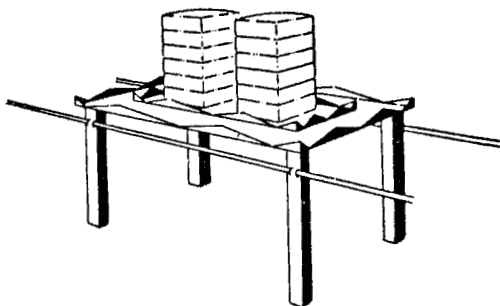
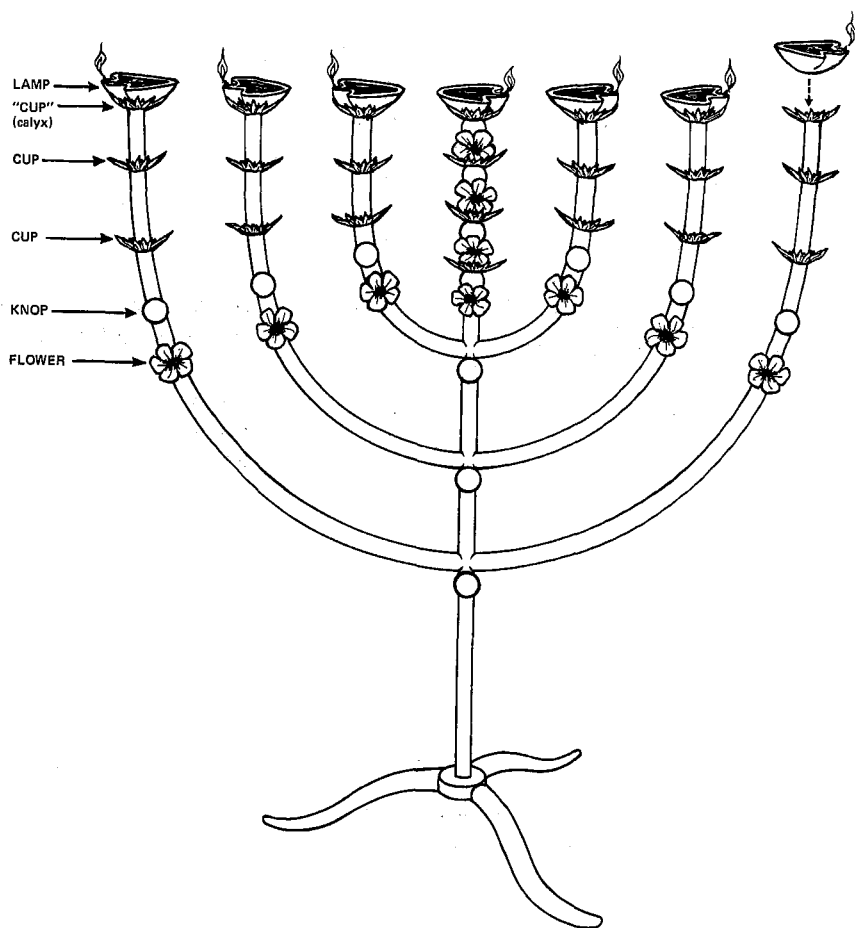


Table of showbread with its double crown and loaves.



The golden MENORAH (lampstand, or candlestick). The drawing shows that the lamps could be lifted off the lampstand for cleaning or refueling. Decorations on the lampstand include "cups" (resembling the calyx, or false petals, of flowers), knops (spherical ornaments), and flowers. The three-legged stand is adapted from a crude ancient sketch of the lampstand found in the Sinai peninsula. (Drawing by James Sherrod)

The ark is called by several names: (1) "ark of God" (I Sam. 3:3); (2) "ark of the covenant" (Num. 10:33; Deut. 10:8); (3) "holy ark" (II Chron. 35:3); (4) "ark of the LORD" (Josh. 6:7, 13; I Kings 2:26); (5) "ark of the testimony" (Ex. 25:22; 39:35); (6) "ark of thy strength" (Ps. 132:8). In Exodus it is uniformly called the ark of the testimony.

The ark and all the articles of furniture within the tabernacle building were of gold or overlaid with gold. Anything closely associated with God's presence was made of gold. God's heaven is golden. Rev. 21:10.

The ark and its covering (the mercy-seat) were the only items in the innermost tabernacle room, the holy of holies. Thus the ark was the central focus of the sanctuary, and the instructions concerning it were given first. It seems to have been a representation of God's throne and His footstool, and therefore it was befitting that first attention should have been given to it.

Likewise we need to set our minds on things above (Col. 3:1-2). Our heavenly home should be our primary focus of interest and our life goal. Set your home perfectly (completely) on the grace (the favor) that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (I Peter 1:13).

Although the ark was the first thing described, it appears that it was not constructed until after the tabernacle building was made (37:1-9).

We observe the pronouns in 25:10ff. First, "*they* shall make an ark." But then many times after that, Moses himself is told, "*Thou* shalt. . . ." This points out Moses' leadership in making it. The workman Bezalel actually constructed it. See Ex. 37:1.

It appears from Deut. 10:2-5 that Moses himself had made a previous ark right after coming down from the mount the second time with the tablets of the ten commandments. He put the commandments in this ark, and declared many years later "There they are." It appears therefore that Moses considered the ark of the covenant to be in some way



a continuation of the simpler ark he himself had built for the stone tablets. Perhaps Bezalel only gold-plated and decorated the chest Moses prepared.

The top edge of the ark had a "crown" (moulding, rim, border, edge) round about it. This crown served to keep mercy-seat (covering) upon the top of the ark. Also it was decorative. A similar crown was upon the table of show-bread and the golden altar of incense (30:3; 37:26).

7. *How was the ark carried about?* (25:12-15)

Staves of acacia wood overlaid with gold were inserted into rings of solid gold attached to the four "feet" of the ark. These staves were used to carry the ark on the shoulders of the Levites (Numbers 4:15). The "feet" of the ark seem to have been short legs or low blocks attached to the corners under the ark to keep it from sitting directly upon the ground. If the rings were in feet on the bottom, the ark would have stuck well up above the heads of the Levites as it was being carried by the staves. The rendering "feet" in 25:12 is preferable to "corners" (King James version).

The staves were not to be taken from the ark at any time. See I Kings 8:8. For information about how the ark was covered over before being carried about, see Numbers 4:5-6, 15.<sup>10</sup>

8. *What was placed in the ark?* (25:16, 21)

The ark was to contain the "testimony." This "testimony" was the two tablets of the ten commandments. See Ex. 31:18; 40:20.

The word *testimony* means a precept or law. The Hebrew word translated "testimony" comes from a verb meaning "to turn, return, repeat, say repeatedly, testify, affirm."

We might therefore say that the "testimony" was a constantly

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<sup>10</sup>Numbers 4:6 says, "shall put in the staves thereof." This does not contradict the statement of Ex. 25:15 that the staves were not removed from the ark. The Hebrew verb (*sim*) of Num. 4:6 means to "set, put, place," but does not mean to put something *into* something unless it is used with the preposition *in*. Since this is not in Num. 4:6, the verse probably simply means that the staves were to be properly adjusted for use in carrying.

repeated communication to the people. That is worth pondering.

Although the original stone tablets were concealed in the ark, copies of their text were certainly available for the people to see and read.

The ark also had with it two other items: Aaron's wood staff which budded (Numbers 17:10); and a pot of manna (Ex. 16:3. See Hebrews 9:4-5.)<sup>11</sup>

Only the stone tablets were actually put into the ark. The rod of Aaron was "before the testimony" (Num. 17:10) and so was the pot of manna (Ex. 16:34). The ark contained only the stone tablets in Solomon's day (I Kings 8:9).

Cassuto<sup>12</sup> refers to the fact that ancient kings would sometimes deposit deeds (writings) of a covenant into boxes at the footstools of their idols. The Egyptian king Rameses II placed the documents pledging peace between himself and the Hittites under the feet of his god Re. Similarly the Hittite king placed the documents under the feet of his idol called Teshub. It therefore appears that God used human covenant customs to impress the Israelites with the meaning and seriousness of His covenant with Israel.

#### 9. *What did the ark represent? What was it a type of?*

The Bible does not give a direct statement saying that the ark represented one specific thing. Nonetheless, there

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<sup>11</sup>According to Heb. 9:3-4, the Holy of Holies contained a golden altar (K.J.V., censer) of incense. No such article is mentioned by Moses in Exodus. A censer for incense was indeed taken into the Holy of Holies by the high priest on the Day of Atonement, and this may be what Hebrews 9:3 refers to. Another view is that the passage refers simply to the altar of incense in the Holy place, but speaks of it as being associated with the Holy of Holies because it was so close to the veil and the Holy of Holies. I Kings 6:22 says that in the construction of Solomon's temple "the whole altar that belonged to the oracle (the Holy of Holies) he overlaid with gold." It does not appear from the text that Solomon's temple actually had an altar inside the oracle, and that the altar referred to was probably only the altar of incense in the House (Holy Place). All of these facts seem to support the conclusion that the altar of incense was in some ways not fully explained to us associated both with the Holy Place and to the Holy of Holies.

<sup>12</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 331.

are some statements that help us to understand what it symbolized.

It appears to us that the ark was a sort of footstool of God's throne and the mercy-seat upon it was a representation of the throne itself.

Psalm 99:1: "Jehovah reigneth; . . . He sitteth (or, is enthroned) above the cherubim." Similar statements are made in Ps. 80:1; I Sam. 4:4; II Sam. 6:2; Isa. 37:16; 25:22. (The cherubim referred to are the gold angel figures on the mercy-seat, the covering of the ark. See below, section 11.)

King David said in I Chron. 28:2, "It was in my heart to build a house of rest for the *ark* of the covenant of Jehovah, and for the *footstool* of our God." The "and" of this verse could be translated "*even* for the footstool. . . ."

Psalm 132:7-8: "We will go into his tabernacle. We will worship at his FOOTSTOOL. Arise, O Jehovah, into thy resting place; Thou, and the *ark* of thy strength."

These passages seem to confirm the idea that the mercy-seat with its cherubim was a symbol of God's throne, and the ark a symbol of the footstool of God's throne.

Consider the rich significance of the ark and the mercy-seat as a symbol of God's throne! The ark contained the ten commandments. This would indicate that God's throne rests upon divine LAW and truth. The ark had with it the pot of manna, symbolizing that God's throne is a place of loving-care for His people. The ark had Aaron's staff with it, symbolizing God's sovereignty in choosing who shall minister unto Him, and how men shall approach Him.

Perhaps the greatest teaching of the ark as a visual symbol was that it was covered by a seat (or throne) of mercy! "Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, . . ." (Heb. 4:16)

"Mercy and truth are met together" (Psalm 85:10). "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy

throne: Lovingkindness and truth go before thy face" (Ps. 89:14). All of these things - righteousness, justice, lovingkindness, truth - are presented to us by the ARK, God's throne!!!

10. *What covered the ark?* (25:17)

A mercy-seat of pure gold covered the ark. The mercy-seat had no wood in its composition. It had the same dimensions as the top of the ark and was held in position by the crown around the top of the ark (25:12).

The mercy-seat was so significant that in I Chron. 28:11 the whole room called the Holy of Holies is called "the house of the mercy-seat." The mercy-seat was the major spot of significance in the ritual on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:2, 14-15).

The term *mercy-seat* was first used by Wm. Tyndale. It is an apt translation of the Hebrew *kapporeth*. Martin Luther rendered it *Gnadenstuhl*, meaning throne of mercy. *Kapporeth* has both the ideas of *covering* and of *atonement* for sins. The Latin *propitiatorium* is a good rendering, meaning "a place of propitiation."<sup>13</sup>

The Greek rendering of *kapporeth* is *hilasterion*, meaning a place to please (or propitiate) and be reconciled to God, a *propitiatory*. The Greek word *hilasterion* is found in Romans 3:25 referring to Christ ("whom God set forth as a *propitiation*") and in Heb. 9:5 to refer to the mercy-seat itself. A related word, *hilasmos*, is used in I John 2:2 and 4:10 to refer to Christ as our propitiation. These usages of words show that Christ has for us the same functions as the mercy-seat had for Israel. Christ is our mercy-seat!

The word *kapporeth* (mercy-seat) is not used in the O.T. with the limited meaning of lid or cover, as over a box. It is derived from the verb *kaphar* (found 113 times in the O.T.), which by far most frequently (70 times) means "to make atonement." (In some places it simply means

<sup>13</sup>Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

“to cover.”)

What is it that is *covered* by the functions of the mercy-seat? Your *souls* are covered (Ex. 30:16). *You* are covered (Lev. 23:28). Your sin is covered (Ex. 32:30; Compare Ps. 32:1). Thus the atonement provided by the mercy-seat was a very comprehensive covering. (Atonement is a manufactured word in English, from *at-one-ment*, suggesting harmony.)

Consider the importance of the mercy-seat! When the Israelites in the days of the judges looked into the ark of the covenant (I Samuel 6:19), thousands of them died. They dared to look upon the tablets of ten commandments, God's law which they had broken.

It seems that men cannot confront God's law that they have broken and not perish, unless there is a mercy-seat sprinkled with blood between them and God's law.

On the day of judgment, when the books are opened (Rev. 20:12), and we all stand face to face with God, confronting His law, which we have broken, we shall yet be safe, IF we have accepted Christ as our savior. He is our mercy-seat, our propitiation!

But if we have not received Christ as our propitiation (mercy-seat), we shall be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death (Rev. 20:15).

11. *What was made to project from the ends of the mercy-seat?* (25:18-20)

Two cherubim, made of gold, all of one piece with the mercy-seat, and made of beaten (hammered-out) work, projected upwards from the mercy-seat. (The word *cherubim* is the Hebrew plural form of cherub.) The cherubim were not added upon the mercy-seat, but rose from its top at the ends.

Cherubim are one type of angelic creature. They are frequently mentioned in connection with God's throne. See Ezekiel 1:22, 26, 28; 10:20-21. We are reasonably certain that the “living creatures” (or “beasts”) of Rev. 4:6ff are cherubim. The golden cherubim of the mercy-seat

were earthly representatives of the real heavenly beings. They seem to be outstanding for their rapid activity and their reverent worship.

Ezekiel describes the cherubim that he saw as creatures with bodies like men (1:6), but having four faces (of an ox, man, lion, and eagle) and four wings (Ezek. 1:5-11). Because their faces looked toward one another and also downward toward the mercy-seat, we assume that the cherubim on the mercy-seat had only one face each.

Considerable stress is given to the fact that the cherubim were of ONE piece with the mercy-seat, literally "out of the mercy-seat." Perhaps this is to emphasize that adoring angels are always present at God's throne. Compare Rev. 4:6-8; 5:11; Isaiah 6:1-2.

The wings of the cherubim spread out upwards above the mercy-seat so as to cover it. But certainly their wings did not cover it so completely that it became impossible for the priest to sprinkle blood upon it (Lev. 16:14).

The faces of the cherubim were directed (1) towards (facing) one another. and (2) towards the mercy-seat. In other words, they were bowing. The downward look of the cherubim suggests the reverence due to God, who promised to commune (or speak) with Moses from a position above the mercy-seat (Ex. 25:22). The cherubim did not gaze upon God's presence above their wings. Compare Isaiah 6:2.

Some Bible references picture God as "riding" upon the cherubim. II Sam. 22:11: "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly; Yea, he was seen upon the wings of the wind." (Compare Ps. 18:10. It surely seems reasonable to us that this is merely a figurative description of the rapidity of God's actions. Nonetheless, the expression is Biblical, and we certainly approve of it! I Chronicles 28:18 actually refers to the mercy-seat as "the chariot." This brings back to our minds the fact that our God is a God of life and activity, unlike the dead idols that must be moved about by men.

Ancient peoples, such as the Assyrians, Egyptians, and

Phoenicians drew and sculptured composite creatures that many people associate with the Biblical cherubim.<sup>14</sup> These had bodies of lions or oxen, and head of humans or birds. The Egyptian sphinx is such a figure. They were usually winged. The Assyrians even called their winged, human-headed bull statues *karibu*, a word related to the Hebrew *cherubim*.<sup>15</sup>

We surely think that these pagan cherubim(?) were nothing more than feeble, distorted attempts to reproduce the appearance of real cherubim. People had known of cherubim ever since man was expelled from Eden (Gen. 3:24). Their superhuman speed and power probably stimulated attempts to make idolatrous representations of them. Certainly Israel did not need to borrow the idea and designs of cherubim from pagans to form their concept of cherubim as given in the scriptures.

We suppose that the cherubs of the mercy-seat had the basic body forms of men, rather than of oxen or lions. Such four-legged forms would have required too much space on the mercy-seat. This view is strengthened by the fact that cherubim with human forms were placed in Solomon's temple (I Kings 6:23-28). The Jewish Talmud says that the tabernacle cherubim resembled youths.<sup>16</sup> We have mentally pictured the cherubim on the mercy-seat as kneeling, although the cherubim in Solomon's temple were standing upon their feet. (II Chron. 3:13)

Cherubim were embroidered upon the veil in the tabernacle (Ex. 26:31) and upon its inner linen curtains (26:1). They were not regarded as "graven images," probably because no worship was directed toward them. See Ex. 20:1.

#### 12. *Where would God commune with Israel?* (25:22)

God promised to meet Moses (and Moses alone is referred to) and to speak (or commune) with him from the area

<sup>14</sup>M. F. Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964), pp. 39, 42.

<sup>15</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 191. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, pp. 333-334.

<sup>16</sup>B. Hagiga, 13b. Referred to in Cassuto, *op. cit.*, pp. 333-334.

above the mercy-seat, between the two cherubim. God would speak to Moses all the words which he wished to command unto the children of Israel.

Ex. 25:22 points out vividly the position of Moses as a mediator between God and Israel.

Observe that God was not in the box, the ark! The presence of God was indicated by the glory-cloud (Shekinah) above the mercy-seat. See Lev. 16:2.

13. *What was the second article of furniture to be described? (25:23)*

The table of showbread (presence-bread). We find it surprising to us that the table should be given this priority in listing. But our surprise probably only shows our lack of ability to see things from God's point of view.

14. *Describe the table of showbread. (25:23-25; 37:10-16)*

It was one cubit (18 in.) broad, one and a half cubits high, and two cubits (three feet) long. It was really a very small table. It was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Like the ark and the altar of incense it had a crown (rim) of gold around its top edge. This prevented items on the table from falling off.

The table had a "border" round about it, and the border was a handbreadth (about three inches) wide. The term translated "border" is also rendered as margin, moulding, ledge. The text does not clearly state where the border was placed. Some feel that the border was on the flat table top, so that the table had both an outer and inner crown on its top, causing the top to have a picture-frame appearance. This arrangement would have severely decreased the already limited space available on top of the table for the bread and the vessels. Also, the carved representation of the temple table shown on the Arch of Titus in Rome seems to show a "border" placed around the legs of the table, about halfway down the legs. The Arch of Titus relief shows two segments of such a frame around the legs of the table near the middle of the legs. Such a "border" attached to the legs would strengthen the table, like rungs on a chair.



15. *How was the table carried about?* (25:26-28)

It was carried by gold-plated wood staves thrust into rings of gold, which were placed in the four corners of the table that were on the four "feet" (or legs) of the table. The rings were placed "close by" the border. ("Close by" here means "against" or joined to it.) Therefore, if the border were on the table top, the rings must have been located near the upper ends of the legs. If the border were positioned about halfway down the legs, the rings would have been there. We favor this view. It would have been much easier to cover and carry the table with the rings down lower on the legs than with the rings and staves near the top of the table. See Num. 4:7-8. The staves in the table were removed except when the table was being carried about.

16. *What vessels were used with the table?* (25:29)

The text mentions (1) dishes, (2) spoons, (3) flagons, and (4) bowls. The "dishes" (R.S.V. "plates") may have been flat receptacles to carry the bread on, or upon which were stacked the loaves on the table. The "spoons" were probably small cups or dishes used for holding and pouring incense. The same word is used in Numbers 7:14, 20 to refer to small containers for incense. The "flagons" (K.J.V., "covers") seem to have been small beakers (drinking cups) used for pouring out drink-offerings (Num. 28:7-8). The "bowls," like the flagons, were vessels for pouring out. See Ex. 37:16, where the bowls and flagons are mentioned again, but in reverse order from that in 25:29. Ex. 37:16 says that these vessels were made to pour from. Possibly the bowls were goblets or chalices, having cup-like tops with slim stems beneath for convenience of handling. Such vessels are known to have been used in Moses' time.<sup>17</sup>

17. *What was the weekly ritual involving the showbread?* (25:30; Lev. 24:5-9)

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<sup>17</sup>Ruth Amiran, *Ancient Pottery of the Holy Land* (Rutgers University Press, 1970), pp. 129-131. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

Twelve loaves were made of fine flour, each having "two tenth parts" of flour in it. If the "tenth parts" were tenths of an ephah (about three-fifths of a bushel), then each loaf would have had about a gallon of flour in it! The loaves would have been of enormous size. Lev. 24:7 says the loaves were placed on the table in two rows (or piles). The Hebrew word simply means "arrangement" and could refer to either loaves or piles. We do not think there was room enough on the table for two rows of such loaves, with six loaves in each row. Josephus (*Ant.* III, vi, 6) says that the twelve loaves were placed six upon each heap, one above another.

Lev. 24:5-6 speaks as if ONE man (the high priest presumably) set up the table each weekly Sabbath day. Then all the priests ("Aaron and his sons") ate the old bread in a holy place. The new loaves were set in place and pure frankincense placed on each row.

18. *What was the significance of the showbread?*

The exact theological significance of the bread is not systematically set forth in the scripture. The more we study about the showbread, the more we realize it was a symbol with many facets of meaning, and cannot be fully comprehended under one brief tidy heading.

Firstly, it seems to have been a symbol of *God's people in God's presence*. The very name *showbread* literally means "bread of the face(s)," or *presence-bread*. Ex. 25:30 says rather literally, "Thou (singular) shalt set (or give) upon the table bread of (the) *presence* before my *presence* continually." The showbread therefore did not symbolize God's presence, but the presence of someone (or something) else in God's presence.

The fact that there were TWELVE loaves set out seems to suggest that the bread symbolized the twelve tribes, the people. The showbread surely reminded the Israelites that they were always in God's presence. Note that the bread is called the "continual bread" in Numbers 4:7, and "holy bread" in I Sam. 21:4. What a marvelous symbol

the bread was, representing as it did a holy people continually in God's presence!

Secondly, the showbread was an "offering made by FIRE unto Jehovah" (Lev. 24:7). As such it was a type of Christ Jesus, who is man's ONLY effective offering unto God (Eph. 5:2). The term "fire-offering" in Lev. 24:7 is applied to several types of offerings - the burnt-offering in Ex. 29:18, 41-42, and Lev. 1:9; the meal-offering in Lev. 2:3; to the peace-offering in Lev. 3:11; to the sin-offering in Lev. 5:12. From this fact we may be reminded that in Christ's ONE offering are summed up all the numerous types of offerings prescribed in the O.T. law. It would appear that the showbread was basically one form of the meal-offering (Lev. 2:1-16).

The idea that in the very sanctuary of God there is constantly displayed before God's presence an "offering made by fire" is very comforting to those who know the horrible realities about sin!

Thirdly, the showbread was to be a "memorial" (Lev. 24:7). The term *memorial* is a sacrificial term referring to that which brings the worshipper into favorable remembrance before God. See its use in Acts 10:4; Lev. 2:2; 5:12; 6:15. The showbread is said to have become a "memorial" when the frankincense was applied to it (Lev. 24:7). Frankincense appears to be a symbol of prayer. See Psalm 141:2; Rev. 5:8. All of these facts cause us to understand that when we pray, trusting in the Lord Jesus, who is always in God's presence as was the showbread, we are brought into good remembrance before God.

Fourthly, setting forth the showbread was a *covenant requirement* for the children of Israel (Lev. 24:8). Such acts of obedience are frequently required by God as conditions of continued covenant relationship with Him.

In pagan religions food was sometimes placed on a sacred table as food for the god. For an example see the apocryphal book *Bel and the Dragon*, vs. 13. The showbread presented a different picture of God - of a God who did

not eat men's food; of a God who wanted his people to be in his presence more than he wanted gifts from them; of a God who ministered unto His people, rather than the people ministering unto Him.

The showbread has been regarded by some as a type or symbol of the Lord's supper. There are a few resemblances, such as the *weekly* eating of bread by the priests, the offering of frankincense (symbolic of prayers) on the bread, and the fact that both are expressions of a *covenant* (Lev. 24:8; Luke 22:20). On the other hand, the fact that the twelve loaves were a symbol of the PEOPLE before God is quite different from the symbolism of the Lord's supper, in which the bread is the LORD'S body. Also the fact that the showbread was a sacrificial offering made by fire is quite in contrast to the Lord's supper, which is certainly not a repeated sacrifice of Christ. (Roman Catholic theology does view the communion [mass] as a sacrifice.) We doubt that the showbread was a specific type of the Lord's supper.

19. *What was made to give light in the holy place?* (25:31-35. Compare 37:17-24; 27:20-21; 30:7-8; Lev. 24:2-4; Numbers 8:1-4.)

A *lampstand* (K.J.V., candlestick) of pure gold was made, and oil-burning lamps were placed on the branches of the lampstand. The Hebrew word for lampstand is MENORAH (a beautiful word, derived from the verb *nor* ["to shine"] and the noun *or*, meaning "light"). The seven-branched lampstand has become the great symbol of the Jewish religion. A relief carving on the Arch of Titus in Rome shows the menorah taken from Herod's temple in Jerusalem (A.D. 70). The lampstand in that carving is not the same one that was in the tabernacle, but it probably resembled it in many ways. It must have been very heavy, judging by the number of men pictured as carrying it. The lampstand in Herod's temple is described in Josephus, *Ant.* III, vi, 7.

The lampstand was made of "beaten" (or hammered)

work, like the cherubim of the mercy-seat. It had a base, the form of which is not described, but the base was almost certainly NOT like the decorated two-stage pedestal shown in the arch of Titus. The Hebrew word translated "base" means literally "hip" or "thigh," but this does not reveal much about its form. Cassuto<sup>18</sup> suggests that the base resembled those on lampstands found at Megiddo and Bethshan, which had three feet projecting from the central shaft. A rough sketch of a menorah with a three-legged base is shown in Beno Rothenberg's *God's Wilderness*.<sup>19</sup> This was scratched onto a rock in the Sinai desert.

The lampstand had a central shaft projecting upwards from the base. We do not know its height. We suppose it was about the same height as the table (1½ cubits, or 27 inches) or the altar of incense (2 cubits, or 36 inches). The word translated "shaft" is *kane*, meaning reed, stem, or cane.

Three branches went out of the central shaft on one side and three went from the opposite side, making seven supports for lamps. Because of the use of the number seven to indicate the *complete* number of seals, trumpets, etc. in Revelation, *seven* is usually thought to indicate *completeness*. The lampstand with its lamps was perfectly adequate, and it furnished all the light that was provided. (25:32)

Decorations on the central shaft and branches consisted of (1) cups (K.J.V., bowls), (2) knops (R.S.V., capitals), and (3) flowers. The "cups" probably were like the cup (or calyx) of a flower, consisting of the green false petals directly under the true flower. The "knops" (Heb., *caphtor*) were probably spherical (or egg-shaped) designs, perhaps resembling the ovaries (seed-chambers) of flowers. The "flowers" were like the blossoms of flowers, perhaps like almond-tree blossoms. (25:33)

<sup>18</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 341.

<sup>19</sup>Published in London by Thames and Hudson, 1969, p. 179.

The whole menorah had the general shape of a natural plant, with a stalk (or stem) and paired branches, turned upwards. The ornamentation was also of floral design.<sup>20</sup>

Three cups were in each branch, each almond-shaped (that is, the cups were like the calyxes of almond blossoms). Also on each branch was a knop and a flower blossom design. It appears that the top cup (calyx) was the support for the lamp on each branch. In the center shaft (which is by itself called the "lampstand" in 25:33b, 34) were four cups (calyxes) shaped like almonds (or almond-flowers), and a knop and a flower with each. (25:34)

In the central shaft just below the levels where the pairs of branches issued forth from both sides were knops. The text says that the knops were both *under* each pair of two branches and also "out of the same." We understand this to say that the knops actually touched each pair of branches, but were actually just below them.

20. *How was the entire lampstand made of one piece?* (25:36)

All of the connecting points where the branches came forth from the central shaft were to be constructed of one piece with the rest. The branches were not to be made separately and then attached by couplings to the central shaft.

Admittedly Ex. 25:36 is a difficult verse. Noth (*Op. cit.*, p. 208) says it is "not fully comprehensible." (Such an attitude is typical for Noth.) The plural possessive endings in "*their* knops and *their* branches" appear to refer to the six branches mentioned in vs. 35. But we cannot imagine that the six branches themselves had branches.

Cassuto (*op. cit.*, p. 343) feels that the "branches" of 25:36 (Hebrew, *qenoth*, having a feminine ending) and the "branches" of 25:35 (Hebrew *qanim*, having a masculine ending) refer to different things. The feminine word is used in Job 31:22, where it refers to the joint, or socket

<sup>20</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, pp. 342-343.

("Let my arm be broken from the joint"). If "joint" be the meaning in 25:36, then the verse would mean "The knops of the six branches and their connecting points (joints) out of the central shaft shall all be of one piece of hammered work of pure (unalloyed) gold."

Considerable stress is given to the fact that the lampstand was all made of ONE piece of gold (25:31, 35, 36). Whatever the lamp symbolized should therefore be regarded as a unity, even if it has several parts.

21. *What was to be placed on top of the lampstand? (25:37)*

Seven lamps, one on each branch. These were made separately from the lampstand. The material used in making the lamps is not stated. It may have been gold, as in Solomon's temple (I Kings 7:49). We definitely prefer this view. Or they may have been made of ordinary clay (terracotta), as were most of the lamps of those times. The clay lamps of the period were like saucers having one place on the rim pinched into a spout or hole for holding the wick up out of the olive oil in the lamp.

The lamps were to be so positioned that they would give light "over against it," that is, in front of it, toward the area across the room from the lamp. The spouts of the lamps were pointed toward the north, the opposite side of the room, so that no lamp shadows would block the light. The lampstand itself stood on the south side of the room. See Ex. 36:35.

22. *What implements were prepared for use with the lampstand? (25:38)*

(1) *Snuffers*. These were a type of tweezers to remove old wicks and install new ones. (2) *Snuffdishes*. These were trays or bowls to hold charred remains of old wicks and soot, which would then be thrown out.

23. *How much gold was used in the lampstand? (25:39)*

A talent, about seventy-five pounds. At a price of \$150 an ounce, the lampstand would be worth about \$180,000. The vessels and implements with the lampstand were included in this total weight of gold.

24. *What final direction was given about the making of the lampstand and its implements? (25:39)*

Make all of them according to their pattern which you were shown on the mount! Compare Ex. 25:9. The verb "was shown" does not imply that Moses had already left the mount and had returned to camp. Rather it indicates that God had already shown Moses the vision of the pattern (or model) of the tabernacle, and then gave the description required to construct it.

25. *What was the ritual connected with the lampstand? (Lev. 24:2-4; Ex. 27:20, 21)*

Pure (or clear) olive oil was obtained by beating olives to extract their oil. (These the Israelites must have obtained from nomadic caravans.) In the mornings the high priest came in to the holy place to light the lamp (literally "to cause it to go up"). He was to keep (or arrange) it "from evening to morning" before the face of the LORD continually.

26. *What was the significance of the menorah? Of what was it a type?*

As with the table of showbread, the scripture does not give a systematic exposition of the significance of the lampstand. Nevertheless, certain conclusions seem rather evident.

(1) The lampstand signified that the covenant of the Lord was essentially a covenant of LIGHT. There were no dark spooky chambers where priests might carry on secret esoteric rites. See Isa. 60:1-3.

In the same way the gospel of Christ is a religion of light. (a) God is light (I John 1:5). (b) Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12). (c) Christians are children of light (Eph. 5:8). They are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14) and "lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). (d) The Bible is a light (II Pet. 1:19; Psalm 119:105). (e) The gospel (good news) of Christ Jesus is a light (II Cor. 4:4). Christians are to cast off the works of darkness (Romans 13:12).

(2) God's light is complete and perfect. This is indicated by the seven-fold nature of the lampstand. See notes on



section No. 19 above. Similarly in the gospel of Christ we have been granted all things that pertain unto life and godliness (II Pet. 1:3).

(3) The lamp was fueled by olive oil, which is often a symbol of the Holy Spirit. See Acts 10:38; Heb. 1:9; Lev. 8:12; Zech. 4:2-6. Thus the light was the light of the Spirit. Compare Rev. 4:5 (which tells of a vision of God's throne): "There were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God."

The fact that the scriptures were written by men moved by the SPIRIT (II Pet. 1:21) confirms a correspondence between the tabernacle lampstand and the scriptures. The lampstand was fueled by oil; the scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit, which the oil symbolized.

To say that the lampstand was a type of just one thing (as, for example, the Bible alone) is to give an incomplete interpretation of it. Perhaps we could sum it up in a broad way by saying that it symbolized the light of the gospel of Christ (II Cor. 4:4).

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### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**26** Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains; of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, with cher-u-bim the work of the skilful workman shalt thou make them. (2) The length of each curtain shall be eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits: all the curtains shall have one measure. (3) Five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and *the other* five curtains shall be coupled one to another. (4) And thou shalt make loops

of blue upon the edge of the one curtain from the selvedge in the coupling; and likewise shalt thou make in the edge of the curtain that is outmost in the second coupling. (5) Fifty loops shalt thou make in the one curtain, and fifty loops shalt thou make in the edge of the curtain that is in the second coupling; the loops shall be opposite one to another. (6) And thou shalt make fifty clasps of gold, and couple the curtains one to another with the clasps: and the tabernacle shall be one WHOLE.

(7) And thou shalt make curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the tabernacle: eleven curtains shalt thou make them. (8) The length of each curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits: the eleven curtains shall have one measure. (9) And thou shalt couple five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and shalt double over the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tent. (10) And thou shalt make fifty loops on the edge of the one curtain that is outmost in the coupling, and fifty loops upon the edge of the curtain which is *outmost in* the second coupling. (11) And thou shalt make fifty clasps of brass, and put the clasps into the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may be one. (12) And the overhanging part that remaineth of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remaineth, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle. (13) And the cubit on the one side, and the cubit on the other side, of that which remaineth in the length of the curtains of the tent, shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle on this side and on that side, to cover it. (14) And thou shalt make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of sealskins above.

(15) And thou shalt make the boards for the tabernacle of acacia wood, standing up. (16) Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and a cubit and a half the breadth of each board. (17) Two tenons shall there be in each board, joined one to another: thus shalt thou make for all the boards of the tabernacle. (18) And thou shalt make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards for the south side southward. (19) And thou shalt make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for its two tenons, and two sockets

under another board for its two tenons: (20) and for the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side, twenty boards, (21) and their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. (22) And for the hinder part of the tabernacle westward thou shalt make six boards. (23) And two boards shalt thou make for the corners of the tabernacle in the hinder part. (24) And they shall be double beneath, and in like manner they shall be entire unto the top thereof unto one ring: thus shall it be for them both; they shall be for the two corners. (25) And there shall be eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. (26) And thou shalt make bars of acacia wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle. (27) and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the hinder part westward. (28) And the middle bar in the midst of the boards shall pass through from end to end. (29) And thou shalt overlay the boards with gold, and make their rings of gold for places for the bars: and thou shalt overlay the bars with gold. (30) And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which hath been showed thee in the mount.

(31) And thou shalt make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined line: with cher-u-bim the work of the skilful workman shall it be made: (32) and thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold; their hooks *shall be* of gold, upon four sockets of silver. (33) And thou shalt hang up the veil under the clasps, and shalt bring in thither within the veil the ark of the testimony: and the veil shall separate unto you between the holy place and the most holy. (34) And thou shalt put the mercy-seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place. (35) And thou shalt set the table without the veil, and the candlestick over against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south: and thou shalt put the table on the north side.

(36) And thou shalt make a screen for the door of the Tent,

of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined line, the work of the embroiderer. (37) And thou shalt make for the screen five pillars of acacia, and overlay them with gold; their hooks shall be of gold: and thou shalt cast five sockets of brass for them.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. How many curtains were made for the first covering of the tabernacle? Of what material? With what colors and decorations were they to be made? (26:1)
2. What were the dimensions of these curtains? (26:2)
3. How were the ten curtains joined together? (26:3-6)
4. What other items in the tabernacle did these curtains resemble in material, decoration, and in color? (26:31, 37; 27:16)
5. What was the number of goats' hair curtains? (26:7)
6. What were the dimensions of the goats' hair curtains? (26:8)
7. How were the goats' hair curtains joined together? (26:9-11)
8. How was the additional goats' hair curtain (one more than the linen curtains) arranged and positioned? (26:12)
9. What were the other two tabernacle coverings made from? (26:16)
10. What materials were the tabernacle boards (frames?) made of? (26:15)
11. What were the dimensions of each board? (26:16)
12. What material was used for sockets (bases or pedestals) under the boards? (26:19)
13. How many sockets were under each board? (26:19)
14. How many boards were on the south (and north) side of the tabernacle? (26:18)
15. What were made to hold the boards into their sockets?

(26:17, 19)

16. How were the rear (west) corners of the tabernacle walls strengthened? (26:23)
17. How many bars on each side held the tabernacle boards together? (26:26-27)
18. How did the middle bar differ from the upper and lower ones? (26:27-28)
19. Of what material were the rings on the boards for the bars to be made? (26:29)
20. According to what plan was the tabernacle to be erected? (26:30)
21. What were the materials and colors of the veil? (26:31)
22. Upon how many pillars was the veil hung? (26:32)
23. Of what material were the sockets under these pillars to be made? (26:32)
24. Why was the ark called the "ark of the testimony"? (26:33; 32:15; 40:20)
25. What covered the ark? (26:35)
26. Draw a rough sketch of the tabernacle floor layout, showing the position of all items of furniture. Indicate directions. (26:35; 40:2-8)
27. What was hung at the doorway of the tabernacle building? (26:37)
28. How many pillars were at the tabernacle door? (26:37)
29. Of what material were the sockets under the pillars at the tabernacle door made? (26:37)

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### EXODUS 26: ENCLOSINGS!

(The architectural items described in Exodus 26 enclosed the tabernacle building completely.)

1. *Curtains*; 26:1-14.

- Furnished beauty, worshipful atmosphere (26:1), unity (26:6, 11), and protection (26:12-14).

2. *Boards and Bars*; 26:15-30.

- Furnished strength (not seen by men) (26:15-16), portability (so it could always be with men), and beauty (26:29).

3. *Veil and Screen*; 26:31-37.

- Showed a separation between earth and heaven (26:33).
- Showed a separation between the world and the church. (Only the priests served in the holy place [Num. 4:18-20; 3:38]).

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CURTAINS! (26:1-14)

1. Glory hidden from those on the outside.
2. Glory revealed to those on inside.
3. Unity produced from many parts (26:6, 11)
4. Protection for the sanctuary (26:12-14).

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BOARDS! (26:15-25)

1. The boards provided great **STRENGTH**. (This strength could not be seen from the outside because the boards were concealed behind curtains.)
2. The boards provided great **BEAUTY**. (They were gold-covered, but this gold could only be seen from the inside.)
3. The boards provided great **ACCESSIBILITY**. (The tabernacle was always accessible to the people because its board framework was easily disassembled, carried about, and reassembled wherever the people moved.)

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FURNITURE OF THE HOLY PLACE - For Priests Only!  
(Numbers 3:10, 38)

1. The showbread - God's people in God's presence!
2. The lampstand - A perfect light, fueled by the oil of God's

Spirit.

3. The incense altar - The prayers of saints (Rev. 5:8).  
(All Christians are priests unto God [I Peter 2:5, 9]. They have free access to those things symbolized by the holy place and its furniture!)
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### THE HOLY OF HOLIES - God's Throne Room!

(The Holy of Holies was a type of heaven. Heb. 9:11-12, 23-24)

1. God was enthroned in both. (Psalm 99:1; Rev. 4:1-2)
  2. Both have divine light and glory. (Lev. 16:2; Rev. 21:23)
  3. Both have worshipping cherubim. (Ex. 25:18; Rev. 4:6-8)
  4. Both are golden. (Ex. 25:11, 17; 26:29; Rev. 21:18)
  5. Both are "foursquare." (Ex. 26:16; Rev. 21:16)
  6. Both have God's law in them. (Ex. 40:20; Ps. 119:89; 89:14)
  7. Both are places where blood atonement is made. (Lev. 16:15-16; Heb. 9:11-12, 24-25)
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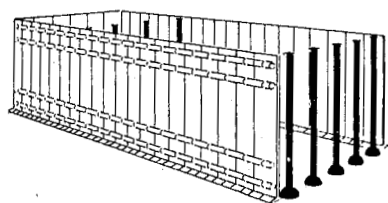
### THE VEIL - A Type of Christ's Flesh! (Heb. 10:19-20)

1. The unbroken veil showed that the way into the Holiest place (heaven) was not yet clear. (Heb. 9:8)
  2. The rent veil shows the way into God's presence is now open. (Matt. 27:51; II Cor. 5:6, 8)
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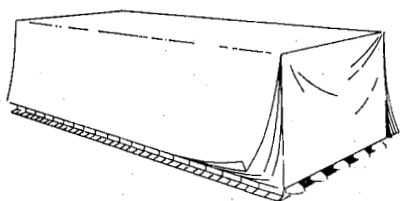
### EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

#### 1. *What is in Exodus twenty-six?*

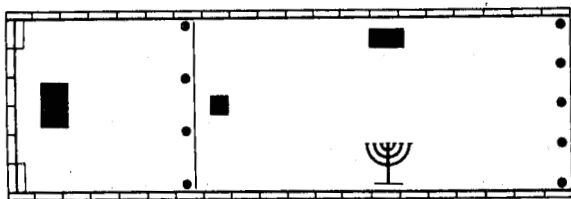
The chapter contains God's instructions to Moses about how to make the ENCLOSINGS of the tabernacle - the curtains and coverings over it (26:1-14), the boards of its walls (26:26-30), the veil that separated the two rooms



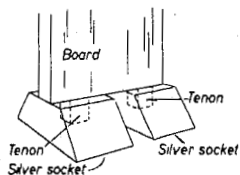
Tabernacle building - showing boards, bars, sockets, pillars, and the two rooms



Tabernacle building showing its four coverings and the "hanging" across the front

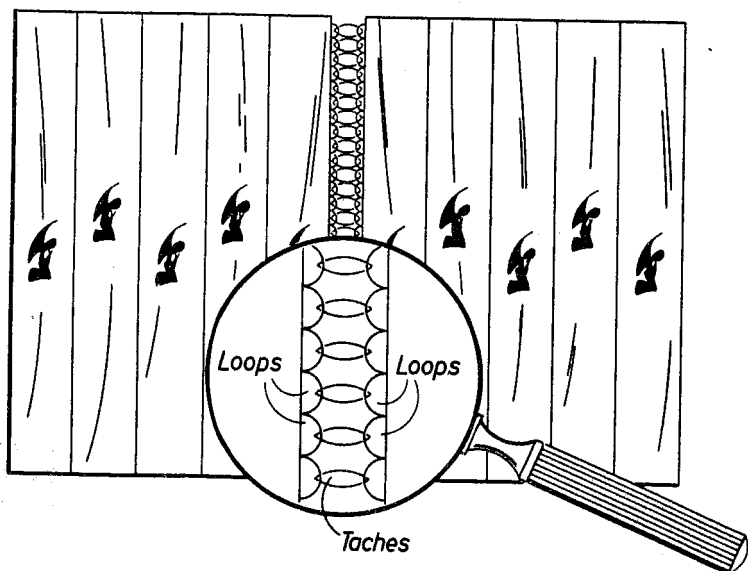


Floor plan—showing its boards



A tabernacle board with its tenons and sockets.





The innermost (linen) curtains of the Tabernacle. Note that it was formed of two groups of five curtains decorated with cherubim, and joined by loops and taches (or clasps).

(26:31-35), and the screen that closed the entrance (26:36-37).

2. *What was the material of the innermost curtains?* (26:1; 36:8-13)

They were made of fine linen. The threads were prepared by twisting many strands of linen fibre together. These were woven together with blue, purple, and scarlet thread (Ex. 35:25). Cherubim figures were woven into the fabric by a skilled weaver. The expression "work of the skillful workman" literally says "work of a thinker." (It does refer to a weaver.) Regarding the *cherubim*, see notes on 25:19. The material of these curtains was the same as that of the veil (26:31), the screen (26:36), and the screen at the entrance of the court (27:16).

Note that the linen curtains formed a covering called the "tabernacle" (Heb. *mishkan*, meaning dwelling). The same limited technical use of the term *tabernacle* is found in 26:6 and Num. 3:25. However, the term also refers to the entire structure of the tabernacle building in such passages as Ex. 25:9; 26:12, 30. In Ex. 27:19 it even refers to the tabernacle and the court around it.

The word *tabernacle* is derived from the verb *shakan*, meaning to dwell temporarily, suggesting the brevity of Israel's sojourn. The earthly sojourn of all of God's people is brief.

3. *How many linen curtains were joined together, and in what way?* (26:2-6)

Ten curtains, each four by twenty-eight cubits (six by forty-two feet), were joined together. Five were joined together into one set by sewing them together along their long sides.<sup>1</sup> These formed two very large sets of curtains twenty by twenty-eight cubits. Then along one edge of each set fifty loops of blue thread were attached. These rows of loops were placed side by side, and then gold clasps

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<sup>1</sup>To describe how the curtains were placed side by side, the Hebrew uses the idiom "a woman to her sister."

(K.J.V., "taches") were used to couple the two large sets of curtains into a single covering. The loops would have been spaced slightly over one-half cubit apart. ("Selvedge" in 26:4 means "end," "border," or "extremity.")

4. *What is the significance of the linen curtains?*

The scripture does not state that they had a specific significance. Some interpreters seek to find symbolism in all their colors and numbers. But those who do this produce widely different interpretations, and show how futile speculative interpretation is. It may be edifying to meditate about such matters, but our conclusions must always remain private opinions.

Probably we are not speculating too much to say that the beauty of the curtains suggests the beauty of God's divinely revealed religion. The cherubim figures suggest the presence of God, because they are always associated with God's presence in scripture. (Note that the inside walls of Solomon's temple were decorated with cherubim. I Kings 6:29).

5. *What material comprised the second tabernacle covering? (26:7; 36:14-18)*

Goats' hair (literally, just "goats"). This was the usual material of nomads' tents, and still is. It is black (or nearly so), strong, and gives good protection from the weather. The goats' hair was spun (twisted) into yarn by wise (skilled) women, and then woven into cloth (35:26).

The goats' hair coverings are called the "Tent" (Heb. *ohel*). See 26:11, 13; 36:14; 40:19 for other examples of this specialized use of the term *tent*. However, Ex. 26:36 uses *tent* to refer to the entire tabernacle building. Also Num. 24:5; Isa. 54:2, and Jer. 30:18 use the terms *tent* and *tabernacle* as synonyms referring to dwelling places generally.

6. *How many goats' hair curtains were joined, and in what way? (26:8-11)*

Eleven curtains, each four by thirty cubits, were made and then coupled together along their long sides in sets of five and six curtains. Fifty loops were set in one edge of

each set and the sets were joined by placing bronze clasps in the loops that lay side by side. Note that the clasps were bronze, not gold as with the linen curtains. (The material of the loops is not indicated. Probably it was goats' hair cord) The clasps joined the two sets into one huge covering, thirty by forty-four cubits.

The coupling together of the sets of curtains produced ONE tent (26:11). The unity of the tabernacle was a significant feature of it, just as the unity of the church should be a significant quality about it.

7. *How were the first two coverings over the tabernacle positioned? (26:12-13)*

Apparently they were draped flat over the tabernacle, the linen curtains first and the goats' hair curtains over them.

Some interpreters have proposed that this flat-roofed design does not form a "tent." They feel the coverings must have been suspended on a slope from a ridge pole running lengthwise over the tabernacle. The lower ends of the curtains would then have been tautly staked down. The presence of five pillars at the west end of the tabernacle is thought to strengthen this view, because the middle pillar of the five was possibly higher than the rest and served as one support for the ridgepole.

We feel that the flat roof arrangement is more probably the actual one used. Among the desert dwellers "tent" did not usually suggest a sloping roof. Their tents were (and are) generally flat-roofed, except for the spots where the interior stakes hold small areas of the black curtains up in points.

There is no indication that the middle pillar at the front was taller than those about it. The scripture does not mention any ridgepole. And it mentions no pole at the back end of the tabernacle to support that end of a ridgepole.

It is hard to see how the goats' hair coverings could have hung down "over the backside" of the tabernacle if they had been suspended high enough over a ridgepole to have

formed a sloping roof. They would have formed many uneven folds as they hung down from the angle of the sloping roof.

The clasps of the linen curtains were placed directly over the veil separating the holy place from the Holy of Holies. See 26:33. This position would cause the linen curtains to extend exactly to the front edge of the tabernacle boards on the east (the entrance), and to extend westward clear back to the end of the Holy of Holies, and then drape down to the very bottoms of the tabernacle boards on the west end.

With their length of twenty-eight cubits the linen curtains would span the open top of the tabernacle (ten cubits) and hang down over both sides to within one cubit of the bottoms of the tabernacle boards on the north and south.<sup>2</sup>

The goats' hair curtains were draped flat over the top of the tabernacle boards and over the linen curtains. Being two cubits longer, they completely covered them on the sides, and indeed hung down to the very bottoms of the tabernacle boards on the north and south, extending one cubit lower than the linen curtains.

The set (or coupling) of the six goats' hair curtains was placed over the east (front) part of the tabernacle. It was so positioned that the sixth curtain (which would appear to be the first as one approach the tabernacle) was "doubled over" at the forefront.<sup>3</sup> This doubling over (or doubling

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<sup>2</sup>Keil and Delitzsch (*Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 176) suggest that the linen curtains hung down *inside* the boards of the holy place, so that the cherubim figures would be visible on the side walls inside, as well as on the ceiling above. They feel that the elaborate cherubim embroidered on the curtains would be largely needless if they were never seen on the outside of the boards. We do not deny that this might have been the position of the linen curtains. The presence of cherubim figures on the walls of Solomon's temple is a possible parallel. Nonetheless, the text in Exodus does not clearly state that the linen curtains hung inside the walls. And no reference is made to any supports at the tops of the boards from which the curtains may have hung down on the inside.

<sup>3</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 352, suggests that the folded-back goats' hair curtain was folded *beneath* the front edge of the linen curtain in order to cover its edge well and give it thorough protection. We find neither proof nor disproof of this idea.

back) would reduce its width to two cubits. Thus the second curtain from the tabernacle forefront started just two cubits from the forefront edge. In this position it would cause the clasps joining the two large sets (couplings) to lie two cubits behind the clasps joining the sets of linen curtains. Having the joints (the clasps) "staggered" in this way would be helpful in keeping out wind and rain from the tabernacle. (Rain was not much of a problem in the Sinai peninsula, but infrequent cloudbursts do occur in winter.)

Since the clasps joining the sets of goats' hair curtains came two cubits behind the clasps of the linen curtains, there would have been eight cubits from the point of the clasps of the goats' hair to the back edge of the tabernacle. But there were twenty cubits of goat's hair extending back from the clasps. This would cause the goats' hair to cover the tabernacle top completely and then dangle down to the ground (ten more cubits), and still have "half a curtain" (two cubits) to remain over at the back, lying on the ground (26:12). Cassuto quotes a passage from the Talmud which said that the two cubits of goats' hair trailed on the ground "like a woman walking in the street with her train trailing behind her."<sup>4</sup>

The dark goats' hair curtains gave no hint of the brilliant colors beneath and within it. The tabernacle materials were so chosen that there was a consistent movement from less valuable materials to more valuable as one moved closer to the most holy place from the outer areas. In a similar way, the nearer that one draws to God and Christ, the greater are the riches that he finds.

8. *What were the two outer tabernacle coverings?* (26:14; 36:19; 39:34)

Coverings of *rams' skins* dyed red and of *sealskins* were placed over the goats' hair curtains. Regarding these materials, see notes on 25:5.

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<sup>4</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 353.

Sacred tent-shrines, some with red coloring, are known to have been used by Moslems; and also even farther back, into the third-first centuries B.C. at Palmyra; and in the seventh century B.C. in Phoenicia.<sup>5</sup> Certainly this does not necessarily indicate that either the pagans or the Israelites borrowed the idea of a red-covered sacred tent from one another.

The ancient rabbis held that the covering of red rams' skins was ten by thirty cubits, only large enough to have covered the top area of the tabernacle. Cassuto (also Jewish) feels that it may have hung down a little over the walls.<sup>6</sup> These opinions are hardly solid evidence.

The R.S.V. translation of 26:14 suggests that the two coverings of rams' skins and sealskins were actually just ONE covering made of the two materials. However, the Hebrew text uses the words for "a covering of skins" before *both* the terms translated "rams' skins" and "sealskins." Also the sealskins are said to be "above" the other covering. These facts argue strongly for two separate coverings.

There is, however, a bit of uncertainty about whether the rams' skins and sealskins were one or two coverings. In the account of the erection of the tabernacle in 40:19, the word for "covering" is in the singular, possibly indicating that only the covering of rams' skins was placed over the tabernacle when it was set up. Certainly the two outer coverings would have been very heavy and unwieldy. Some authors suggest that possibly the sealskins were used only as a tent bag or wrapping to protect the outer coverings when they were being moved.<sup>7</sup> Compare Num. 4:6, 8, 11, 12.

We still think the tabernacle was covered with separate

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<sup>5</sup>Frank M. Cross, Jr., "The Priestly Tabernacle," reprinted in *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, edited by G. Ernest Wright and David Noel Freedman (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1961), pp. 217-219.

<sup>6</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 353.

<sup>7</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 194. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

coverings of rams' skins and sealskins.

From the standpoint of outward beauty the tabernacle could not be considered attractive. In a similar way, even Christ Jesus had no outward beauty that we should desire him (Isa. 53:2). The preciousness is seen by those who believe (I Peter 2:7).

9. *What formed the walls of the tabernacle?* (26:15-18)

Boards of acacia wood overlaid with gold (26:29), stood on end like pillars, and held together by rods through gold rings, formed the walls. The boards were ten cubits (fifteen feet) long and a cubit and a half wide (twenty-seven inches). Twenty such boards were on the south side,<sup>8</sup> and twenty were on the north, but only six with these dimensions were on the west (back) side. Two extra corner boards were also on the west.

The thickness of the boards is not stated. Josephus (*Ant.* III, vi, 3) says that they were four fingers thick, about three inches. This seems very reasonable, but is hardly conclusive evidence. Some Jewish commentators have said that the walls were one cubit thick! This would make the boards into impossibly heavy beams. (This thick dimension was proposed because of a desire to make the tabernacle's inside measurements exactly ten cubits. By assuming that all of the eight boards [26:22-25] on the west side were one and a half cubits wide, they calculated that this side was twelve cubits wide. To reduce this to ten cubits, it was proposed that the side boards were each one cubit thick, and their *outside* faces were even with the ends of the west wall.)

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<sup>8</sup>"For the south side" in 26:18 is literally "to the side of the Negev, southward." Similarly "westward" in 26:22 is literally "to the sea." Some critics have argued that the use of these geographical orientations as indicators of directions reveals that the writer of Exodus lived in Canaan, probably long after Moses' time. but inasmuch as the Hebrew language was used even before Israel sojourned in Egypt (Gen. 42:22-23), these geographical expressions indicating directions had probably become established idiomatic usages before the sojourn, and continued to be used by the Hebrews even when they were in areas that did not have the Negev at the south and the Great Sea to the west.



Cassuto comments that most probably the thickness of the boards was small, and hence the question as to whether the tabernacle dimensions (the ten cubits width) were external or internal is of little consequence, since there was no appreciable difference.

Each board of the walls had two tenons (Heb. "hands") in the lower end of it. These were "joined one to another" (literally "the woman to her sister"). It seems that the tenons, though side by side in the ends of the boards, were also joined to one another, perhaps by another short board (or piece of metal) into which they were mortised. This combination of the two tenons and their coupling-pieces could then be attached to the bottom of each board. This design would make the tenons more rigid and less likely to break out of the boards when under strain.

It is widely held that the "boards" of the tabernacle were not boards but hollow "frames" made of two upright pieces and two or more cross pieces at the ends, and perhaps in between, making them somewhat like ladders. The R. S. V. translates the Hebrew word *qeresh* ("board") as "frame." However, it renders the same word as "deck" (of a ship) in Ezek. 27:6, demonstrating that the Hebrew word does not always have the meaning of "frame."

Several arguments have been advanced for the use of *frames* rather than solid boards. (1) Acacia trees were not large enough to yield such large boards. (See our notes on 25:5 on the size of acacia trees. Even if one tree were not large enough for a whole board, wood from several of them could be spliced together.) (2) The solid boards would be so heavy they could hardly have been handled. (This argument depends upon how thick the boards were.) (3) The fact that the cherubim decorations on the linen curtains on the side walls could not be seen if draped on the outside of walls of solid wood argues that the walls were of frames, through which the wall decorations could be seen. This is based on the assumption that everything beautiful in the tabernacle had to be visible. This is hardly

the case. The curtains in the Holy of Holies were seen only once a year. The gold overlay inside the ark of the covenant was never to be seen. The gold overlay on the outside of the tabernacle walls was covered by the goats' hair curtains. The beauty was seen by God, even if it was invisible to men. Men would be aware of its beauty even though it did not always hang in plain sight. Certainly the decorations on the curtains were visible above, on the tabernacle ceiling.

(4) The Hebrew word translated "board" is from a root word meaning "cut off" in other Semitic languages, and in the Ugaritic language the noun is used of a pavillion of the Canaanite god El, which might suggest framework here.<sup>9</sup> Also Canaanite and Assyrian buildings were made of wooden framework. To this we reply that the example of Assyrian buildings is irrelevant since they date from centuries after the Israelite tabernacle. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the Israelites patterned God's tabernacle after Canaanite architecture. Also the fact that the word for board is derived from a word meaning "to cut off" hardly proves the boards were frames. The boards themselves were also "cut off."

We agree with Cassuto, who says it is hard to suppose that the boards were not actually boards.<sup>10</sup>

10. *What supported the boards?* (26:19-21)

Two sockets, or pedestals, or bases, of silver supported each board. Each socket was of one talent (about seventy-five pounds) of silver (38:27). The presence of two sockets under each board with each mortised to receive the tenons under a board, would keep the boards from rotating, as they might have done if each board had had only one tenon at top and bottom. We do not know the shape of the sockets, but they probably were wider at the bottom than at the top.

Altogether one hundred sockets supported the tabernacle

<sup>9</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>10</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 351.

boards and the pillars holding up the veil (Ex. 38:27). Wagons were used to transport these heavy silver sockets. See Num. 4:31; 7:3, 6-8.

11. *How were the back corners of the tabernacle designed?* (26:22-25)

The boards for the two back corners are mentioned separately, as if they had different dimensions or designs from the other boards. Their width is not stated. We find ourselves in agreement with various authors who feel that they were only half a cubit wide. Two of them with this width would add only one cubit to the nine-cubit width of the other six boards at the west end of the tabernacle, making ten cubits.

Ex. 26:24 is a difficult verse. We have not found any two commentators in agreement about its meaning. The verse says that the corner boards were in some way "doubled" (paired, or twinned) together "beneath," that is, at the bottom. Possibly this means that the boards were made of two thicknesses of board for a few cubits at the bottom. Perhaps each of the two thicknesses was stuck into one of the sockets. Then the boards extended on up "entire" (or whole, unbroken, perhaps meaning unspliced) to *its* [singular] top (or head), unto "the one ring." This suggests to us that at the top of the boards some type of a ring clamped each corner board to the adjoining end boards of the south and north sides. (The meaning of the Hebrew technical term translated "doubled" is not fully known.)

12. *What bound the tabernacle boards together?* (26:26-30; 36:31-34)

Five bars of acacia wood overlaid with gold were thrust through rings of gold attached to the tabernacle boards. Five such bars were placed on the north side and on the south side, and the west end of the tabernacle. The middle bar on each side was "in the midst of the boards" and "passed through from the end to the end."

This design made the tabernacle easy to assemble and disassemble as the Israelites moved from place to place.

How cleverly designed it was!<sup>11</sup>

The statement about the middle bar reaching from end to end causes most interpreters to feel that the other four bars did not reach from end to end along the sides of the tabernacle, but probably only half way. These four bars were probably arranged into just two rows, one above and one below the long middle bar. Thus there were only three rows of bars, even though there were five bars, because the top and bottom rows consisted of two bars, each only extending half the length of the walls. We feel this is a probability, but by no means a certainty.

Some have felt that the long middle bar was inserted not through rings, but through holes bored in a straight line through the midst of the boards from edge to edge. However, the text surely sounds as though all the bars were thrust through rings.

Cassuto felt that the rings and bars were on the *inside* of the tabernacle walls. Noth felt that the bars were "presumably on the outside." We think they were on the outside.

The obscurity in the instructions about the boards and bars in our Bibles was cleared up for Moses, because God had showed him exactly how he was to set up the tabernacle (26:30). Observe that even the manner of setting up the tabernacle was not left to human judgment. God has given careful directions to his children on all matters wherein exact obedience is required.

13. *What separated between the two tabernacle rooms? (26:31-33; 36:35-38)*

A beautiful veil separated the rooms called the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies). The word *veil* (Heb. *paroketh*) means "that which separates." Its

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<sup>11</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 211, fails to sense the reasonableness and efficiency of this design. Instead he imagines that a priestly writer (P) living a thousand years after the time of Moses, fused together two disparate story elements, first of a tent sanctuary such as nomads use; and then the pattern of the Jerusalem temple, which the priestly writer transformed into a wooden structure capable of being dismantled. Such daring, dogmatic assertions of unproven and destructive theories never cease to amaze us.

dimensions seem to have been ten cubits square. It is called the "veil of the screen" in 40:21; 35:12; 39:34, although the term *screen* is usually associated with the hanging at the entrance to the Holy Place.

The description of the material and decorations of the veil is almost identical to that of the linen curtains over the tabernacle. (See 26:1.)

The veil was hung on four pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold. These pillars were supported on four sockets (pedestals) of silver. See 26:19. The pillars had hooks of gold at their tops, and the veil was hung upon these hooks, hanging directly below the clasps (*taches*) that joined the two large sets of linen curtains. (See section 7 of the notes on this chapter.)

The "ark of the testimony" (see 25:10-16) was to be brought into the innermost room (the Holy of Holies). Ex. 40:20-21 indicates that when the tabernacle was erected, the ark was put into its position in the tabernacle first and then after that the pillars and veil were set up. Thus 26:33 does not set forth a sequence of acts to be followed in erecting the tabernacle.

#### 14. *What was the significance of the veil?*

The New Testament clearly identifies the veil as a symbol, or type, of Christ's FLESH, which was broken on the cross of Calvary (Heb. 10:19-22).

The Holy of Holies was *God's throne room*, a type of heaven. See Heb. 9:11, 24. The Holy of Holies was closed off by the veil, and no one went past it except the high priest, and he only one day of each year (Heb. 9:7; Lev. 16:2, 34). The Holy Spirit signified to men by this visual means that the way into the true holiest place (heaven!) was not yet made open and plain as long as the tabernacle of Moses was still standing with its veil intact. The same condition continued on into the times of Solomon's temple (which replaced the tabernacle) and later temples. The way into heaven was at that time simply NOT made manifest (open, plain)!

Thus in the O.T. times there was some uncertainty about the future life and immortality. Job cried, "If a man die, will he live again?" (Job 14:14). In later times God revealed the promise of the resurrection of men's dead bodies (Dan. 12:2), but it was still a matter of future hope and not present assurance.

At the hour our Lord Jesus died, the veil in the temple in Jerusalem was ripped in two from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51). This veil corresponded to the one in the tabernacle. It separated the two innermost rooms of the temple, which corresponded to the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

When Christ's fleshly body died, the true veil (his flesh!) was torn apart. The barrier between God and man, between earth and heaven, between death and immortality, was swept aside for ever!

Now men may approach boldly to God's heavenly throne. "Let us draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16). We can now KNOW that we have eternal life (I John 5:13). We are of good courage, knowing that even when we are absent from the body (dead!) we are "AT HOME WITH THE LORD" (II Cor. 5:8). We depart from this world and are "WITH CHRIST" (Phil. 1:23). More than that, our mortal bodies will themselves be resurrected at the end to become immortal (I Cor. 15:50-53).

Thanks be to God for sending the Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel! (II Tim. 1:10)

Thanks be to God for a mighty savior, who rent the veil in two through the death of himself, and then rose again from the dead!

15. *How was the tabernacle furniture arranged? (26:34-35)*

In the Holy of Holies there was only the ark and its mercy-seat covering. See 25:16-21. "Outside the veil," in the Holy Place, was the *lampstand* on the south side, the *table* of showbread on the north and the *altar of incense* up near the veil at the west part of the Holy Place (30:6; 40:23-26).

The Holy Place was probably a type of the *church*. As the Holy of Holies was entered only from the Holy Place, so heaven is entered only from the church. As the Holy Place was for priests only, so the church is for priests (Christians) only.

The tabernacle building was a surprisingly small building, only ten by ten by thirty cubits (fifteen by forty-five feet floor size). But it did not need to be extremely large, since no one entered it but the priests. The congregation worshipped at the door of each man's tent. See 33:8. Probably only a small portion of the people ever even entered the courtyard, since even it was small (fifty by a hundred cubits, seventy-five by one hundred fifty feet). On feast days they could view the sacrifices from just outside the court, or from further distance.

16. *What closed the entrance to the door of the tent?* (26:36-37; 36:37-38; 38:18-19)

A "screen" (hanging, curtain) of cloth hung at the door of the Holy Place. Its colors and fabric were like those of the veil and the linen curtains (26:1, 31), except that it had no cherubim figures woven into it. Cherubim were present only in those places immediately associated with God's presence. The colors of the screen were embroidered into it.

The screen was supported by five pillars, one more than held up the veil. Five pillars were probably used here because additional support was needed at the entrance, on account of the frequency with which the screen would be drawn aside for priests to enter.

The five pillars were overlaid with gold, and had gold hooks at the top. See 26:32. Its sockets (pedestals) were of bronze, unlike the silver sockets of the rest of the tabernacle.

Exodus 36:37-38 speaks of the pillars at the entrance having capitals and fillets of gold. We read of no capitals nor fillets on the pillars holding up the veil. The word *capital* here is simply the word meaning top or head. It

does not suggest the presence of a fancy top piece on the pillar.

"Fillet" in 36:38 is a word meaning a junction rod, or something which is attached or fastened together. It possibly refers to rods connecting the pillars. Whether the screen was hung from these fillets, as from a curtain rod, or just hung on the hooks like the veil, is not clearly indicated.

Keil and Delitzsch felt that the fillets formed a sort of architrave, a solid wooden (but gold-overlaid) section above the pillars.<sup>12</sup> Cassuto says that the fillets formed a pole lying on the hooks, and that this prevented the side boards from inclining inwards because of the weight of the curtains suspended over them.<sup>13</sup>

We cannot tell whether the pillars were inside or outside the screen. We are of the opinion that they were inside, because they were covered with gold. Gold was reserved for the things inside the tabernacle, except for the outside of the side boards, and even they were covered by the curtains. However, the fact that the pillars had bronze sockets shows that they were regarded as near or part of the items in the court, which were of bronze.

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### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**27** And thou shalt make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits. (2) And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof; the horns thereof shall be on one piece with it: and

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<sup>12</sup>*Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 182.

<sup>13</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 361.



thou shalt overlay it with brass. (3) And thou shalt make its pots to take away its ashes, and its shovels, and its basins, and its flesh-hooks, and its firepans: all the vessels thereof thou shalt make of brass. (4) And thou shalt make for it a grating of network of brass; and upon the net shalt thou make four brazen rings in the four corners thereof. (5) And thou shalt put it under the ledge round the altar beneath, that the net may reach halfway up the altar. (6) And thou shalt make staves for the altar, staves of acacia wood, and overlay them with brass. (7) And the staves thereof shall be put into the rings, and the staves shall be upon the two sides of the altar, in bearing it. (8) Hollow with planks shalt thou make it: as it hath been showed thee in the mount, so shall they make it.

(9) And thou shalt make the court of the tabernacle: for the south side southward there shall be hangings for the court of fine twined linen a hundred cubits long for one side: (10) and the pillars thereof shall be twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets *shall be* of silver. (11) And likewise for the north side in length there shall be hangings a hundred cubits long, and the pillars thereof twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, of silver. (12) And for the breadth of the court on the west side shall be hangings of fifty cubits; their pillars ten, and their sockets ten. (13) And the breadth of the court on the east side eastward shall be fifty cubits. (14) The hangings for the one side *of the gate* shall be fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three. (15) And for the other side shall be hangings of fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three. (16) And for the gate of the court shall be a screen of twenty cubits, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of the embroiderer; their pillars four, and their sockets four. (17) All the pillars of the court round about shall be filleted with silver; their hooks of silver, and their sockets of brass. (18) The length of the court shall be a hundred cubits, and the breadth fifty every where, and the height five cubits, of fine twined linen, and their sockets of brass. (19) All the instruments of the tabernacle in all the

service thereof, and all the pins thereof, and all the pins of the court, shall be of brass.

(20) And thou shalt command the children of Is-ra-el, that they bring unto thee pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause a lamp to burn continually. (21) In the tent of meeting, without the veil which is before the testimony, Aar-on and his sons shall keep it in order from evening to morning before Je-ho-vah: it shall be a statute for ever throughout their generations on the behalf of the children of Is-ra-el.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After reading the chapter carefully, propose a brief chapter topic for it.
2. Of what materials was the altar made? (27:1, 2, 8)
3. What was the general shape of the altar? (27:1)
4. What were the dimensions of the altar? (27:1)
5. What stuck out of the upper corners of the altar? (27:2)
6. What accessory utensils were made for the altar? (27:3)
7. What was the grating (net-work) made from? (27:4)
8. Where were the bronze rings of the altar set? (27:4)
9. Where was the grating of the altar placed? (27:5)
10. Where were the poles placed? (27:7)
11. What were the poles (or staves) used for? (27:7)
12. When were sacrifices made on the altar? (Lev. 6:9, 12, 13)
13. Of what would the altar be a type? (Hebrews 13:10-12; John 1:29; Matthew 23:19)
14. Suggest some ways in which the altar resembled that of which it was a type.
15. What were the dimensions (including height) of the court? (27:9, 13, 18)
16. What formed (or enclosed) the court? (27:9, 10)

17. Describe the way the court was constructed. (27:9-13)
  18. How many pillars were used in the court? (27:10-15)
  19. On which side of the court was its entrance? (27:13, 14)
  20. How wide was the entrance of the court? (27:14, 15)
  21. What was hung across the court entrance? Describe it. (27:15)
  22. Who might enter the court? (Lev. 17:8-9; 22:18; 6:9-10; 3:1-2)
  23. What items of furniture were in the court? (Ex. 40:6-8)
  24. Of what may the court have been a type? (Compare Rev. 11:1-2)
  25. Of what material were the utensils of the tabernacle made? (27:19)
  26. Who was to bring pure olive oil? For what use? (27:20)
  27. Of what may olive oil be a type? (Compare Heb. 1:9; Acts 10:38; Zech. 4:2-6)
  28. When did the lamp burn? (27:20)
  29. In what room (or area) did the lamp burn? (27:21)
  30. What is the "testimony"? (27:21; Ex. 32:15; 34:29)
  31. Who tended the lamp? (27:21)
  32. How long was the law about the burning of the lamp to continue? (27:21)
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### EXODUS TWENTY-SEVEN: ALTAR, COURT, OIL!

1. The altar; 27:1-8
  - a. Made of wood and bronze; 27:1, 8.
  - b. Made with horns; 27:2-3.
  - c. Made with a grating; 27:4-5.
  - d. Made portable; 27:6-7.
  - e. Made according to the pattern; 27:8.
2. The court; 27:9-19.
  - a. Made of curtains upon pillars; 27:9-10, 17.

- b. Made according to dimensions given by God; 27:11-13, 18.
- c. Made with an entrance; 27:14-16.
- d. Made of sturdy bronze; 27:19, 3.
- 3. The oil; 27:20-21.
  - a. Brought by the people; 27:20.
  - b. Burned before Jehovah; 27:21.
  - c. Brought for ever; 27:21.

### THE ALTAR, A TYPE OF CHRIST'S DEATH (27:1-8)

- 1. A place of power! (It had horns!) Ex. 27:2; Eph. 1:19.
- 2. A place of death! Lev. 17:11; Rom. 6:23, 3-5.
- 3. A place of atonement (or covering!) Lev. 1:4; 4:20; Heb. 9:24-26.  
(The atonement was continual! Ex. 29:42)
- 4. A place of meeting God! Ex. 29:42; Eph. 2:16-18.
- 5. A place of sweet smell unto the Lord! Lev. 1:9, 13, 17; Eph. 5:2.
- 6. A place of thanksgiving! Lev. 7:15-17; Col. 1:12-13.

"The altar shall be most holy!" (Ex. 40:10)

### THE COURT, GOD'S OUTREACH TO MEN! (27:9-19)

- 1. The court was separated from the outside world.
  - a. The court was enclosed by high hangings. (27:12-15)
  - b. We must "draw near" to God. (Isa. 55:6; James 4:8)
- 2. The court was open to all. (Ex. 27:16)
  - a. To priests (Lev. 4:3-4)
  - b. To Israel (Lev. 4:27-29)
  - c. To Gentiles (Num. 15:14)
- 3. The court contained the altar and the laver. (Ex. 40:29, 30, 33)
  - a. The altar, a place of blood atonement. (Lev. 17:11)
  - b. The laver, a place of washing. (Ex. 30:18-21; Titus 3:5)

"Enter into his courts with praise!" (Psalm 100:4)

## OIL FOR THE LAMP! (Ex. 27:20-21)

“Let your lamp be burning” (Luke 12:35). “Let your light shine before men; that they may . . . glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). See Matthew 25:2-9.

1. Brought by the people. (27:20)
  2. Beaten from the olives - to be the best oil!
  3. Burned continually! (27:20)
  4. Brought daily! (27:21)
  5. Brought for ever.
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## OIL — A TYPE OF GOD’S SPIRIT! (27:20-21)

1. Priests anointed with oil (Ex. 29:7); Jesus anointed with the Spirit (Acts 10:38; Heb. 1:9)
  2. The lamp light fueled by oil (Ex. 27:20; Zech. 4:2-3, 6); The light of God’s word fueled (inspired) by the Holy Spirit (II Pet. 1:20-21; II Tim. 3:16)
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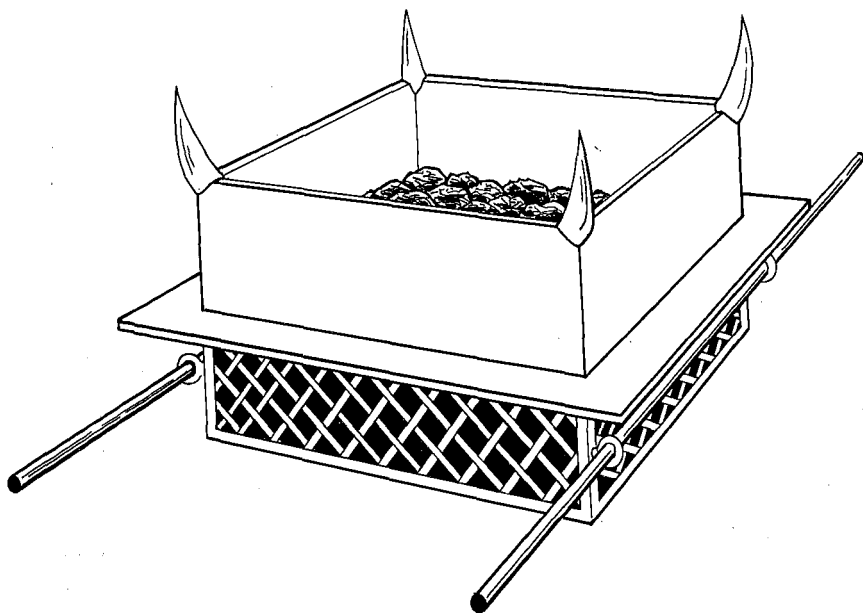
## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

1. *What is in Exodus twenty-seven?*

The chapter gives the instructions for making the altar of burnt-offering, and for making the pillars and hangings around the courtyard of the tabernacle. It closes with instructions about oil for the lamp. Probably it is simplest to remember the chapter as relating to “Altar and Court.”

2. *What was the material used in making the altar?* (27:1-2)

Its basic framework was made of acacia wood (25:5). The frame itself was hollow (27:8). Apparently there was no internal bracing. The altar was overlaid with bronze (or copper). At a later time (about a year later) the bronze



Probable design of the altar of burnt-offering, or brazen altar. The altar was hollow, wooden, and copper-plated. It had a network of copper reaching halfway up the altar, under the ledge round about the altar. The altar was almost shoulder-high to a man (three cubits, or four and a half feet). The ledge therefore probably served as place for priests to stand or to lay objects. Uncut field stones may have been placed in the altar to hold up the firewood and sacrifices (Ex. 20:24-26). (Drawing by James Sherrod)



The high priest in his holy garments. The garments include (1) the breastplate with twelve gemstones, (2) the ephod, an apron-like garment with straps over the shoulders, (3) the blue robe of the ephod with pomegranates and bells at its bottom, (4) the inner "coat" of fine linen, (5) the girdle (sash) of the ephod, and (6) the mitre (or turban) with its inscribed golden plate. (Art by Ellen Cline)

censers (incense burners) of certain rebels who sought to become priests were beaten into plates and attached to the altar as additional covering for it (Num. 16:37-39). We suspect that this was done because the wooden framework needed more protection from the fire than had been originally provided (although the stated reason was that these censers were holy).

The use of bronze for the altar is an obvious contrast to the use of gold for the furniture in the tabernacle building. We observe that the value and beauty of the materials used decreased as they were located further out from the Holy of Holies. (We also notice that the order in which the various objects of furniture are described is generally progressively outward from the Holy of Holies, through the Holy place, and now into the court.)

It has been proposed frequently that the hollow altar was filled with natural uncut stones or earth when it was in use. See 20:24-25. The fire that burned the sacrifices would in that case have actually burned on the stones in the center of the altar. This would have left the altar less exposed to heat damage, as well as conforming to the instructions about making altars of earth or stones. There is, however, no definite statement that the altar was actually filled with stones or earth.

3. *What are the names of the altar?*

It is called the "altar of burnt-offering" (Lev. 4:7; 10:18); or the "brazen altar" (Ex. 38:30), to distinguish it from the "golden altar" of incense (Ex. 39:38). When the altar is referred to, it is always THE altar, because it was the only such article in the Israelite religious rituals. King Solomon's temple had ten lavers, ten tables of showbread, etc. But even it had only one altar. Perhaps this points toward the fact that we have in Christ our *only* altar for covering sins.

4. *What were the dimensions of the altar? (27:1; 38:1)*

It was five cubits long, five wide, and three high (7½ feet by 7½ feet by 4½). King Solomon's temple had a much larger altar, twenty by twenty by ten cubits (II Chron. 4:1).



Some have thought that the tabernacle altar was wider at the bottom than at the top, because the sides of the altar below the "ledge" (vs. 5) extended downward from the outside edge of the ledge. The text does not actually describe it this way; however, it really does not preclude this as possibly being the real design. (We doubt that it was.)

5. *Why was the tabernacle equipped with an altar?*

This was necessary because a blood atonement has always been required before men can obtain fellowship with God. "All things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 10:22). Sin requires payment of life. A life is required as a substitute for a life forfeited by sin. See Lev. 17:11.

As repulsive as altars may seem to us, they are part of the necessary education of people to understand the cross. We cannot understand the death of Christ without thinking in terms of altars and sacrifices. Altars speak of *death*. It was not a pleasant object lesson - burning, smelling, smoky, blood-smeared.

We Christians have an altar (Heb. 13:10). The death of Jesus provides for us both an altar and a sacrifice. Christ's death was just as painful and grisly as any burnt-offering on the altar. And, most grievous of all, He had to die because we have sinned. But he loved us and gave himself for us because we could not save ourselves. Because of this supreme gift of Himself, we should concentrate our preaching on "Christ and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2).

Because of the presence of the altar, an infinitely holy God became approachable by His unworthy people. Israel (like ourselves) approached the LORD by the way of the court, the altar, the laver, the lamp, the bread, and incense, the veil, and into the presence of the Lord.

God's covenant with Israel was ratified at the first by the sprinkling of blood (24:8). The presence of "continual burnt-offerings" on the altar (29:42) was a perpetual reminder of the covenant, and a constant means of keeping within the covenant. The sacrifices done at the altar are described

in detail in Leviticus 1-7.

6. *What was upon the corners of the altar?* (27:2; 38:2)

Horns! They were not detachable, but were made "of one piece" with the altar (literally, "from it").

As the horns of an animal give it power, so *horns* came to be a symbol of power and strength. Note Psalm 75:10; Micah 4:13.

The horns indicate the power in the blood atonement - power to remove condemnation and power to cleanse the life of a transgressor. Because of divine power, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us (Romans 8:37).

In the sin-offerings blood was smeared upon the horns of the altar. See Lev. 4:7; 8:15; 9:9; 16:18; Ex. 29:12.

Sacrificial animals were sometimes tethered to the horns of the altar (Ps. 118:27). Men pleading for their lives sometimes clutched onto the horns of the altar (I Kings 1:50; 2:28; Ex. 21:14).

7. *What accessory equipment was made for use at the altar?* (27:3; 38:3)

(1) Pots (KJV: "pans") to hold ashes being taken away; (2) shovels; (3) basins for sprinkling blood (Lev. 1:5); (4) flesh-hooks (or forks) for moving pieces of flesh about (I Sam. 2:13; (5) fire-pans. This is a translation of the Hebrew word rendered "snuffdishes" in 25:38 and 37:23, and "censers" in Lev. 10:1 and 16:12. All of these items were of brass (27:19).

Similar equipment was prepared for the altar in Solomon's temple. (I Kings 7:45)

8. *Where was the network of brass placed?* (27:4-5; 38:4-5).

The exact positions of the "network" and the "ledge" (KJV: "compass") are difficult to determine. Cole<sup>1</sup> suggests that the brass network (or grating) lay horizontally *inside* the altar framework, and was supported upon a ledge protruding from the inside walls of the altar frame and located

<sup>1</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-197.

halfway up the sides. If this was the real design, then the sacrificial animals were burned upon the grating and the ashes dripped below. This design would account for the fact that the wooden altar frame was not damaged much by fire, and explain how the ashes in the altar were spilled out when the altar of Jeroboam I was split apart (I Kings 13:15). (We do not think that the sacrificial animals were burned upon the grating. The text does not definitely state that the network was supported by the ledge. In fact, the network was *under* the ledge. See 27:5)

Most commentators think that the network stood upright (vertically) on edge as part of the outside structure of the altar, extending from the ground upward to halfway up the sides. This design would provide an air draft for the fire on the altar. To us this seems the better view, because the rings employed to hold the staves to carry the ark were of necessity on the *outside* of the altar, and these rings are said to have been mounted on the corners of the network.

Also the net-work is clearly said to have been installed "unto half (way up) the altar." To us this seems meaningless if the net-work were not vertical and on the outside.

As for the "ledge" itself, Cassuto<sup>2</sup> suggests that it was a kind of horizontal projection that encompassed the altar on all sides, and that its purpose was purely ornamental. He does not think that it was supported under its outer edge by the network or anything else.

This view would interpret the altar as having the same external dimensions at the bottom as it had at the top. We favor this view, because no suggestion is made in the text that the altar was wider at the bottom than at the top.

Keil and Delitzsch<sup>3</sup>, Barnes<sup>4</sup>, and others have felt that the ledge was a bench or shelf protruding at right angles from the sides of the altar halfway up its sides, and that the

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<sup>2</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 364.

<sup>3</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 186.

<sup>4</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 73.

network of brass stood vertically under the outer edge of the ledge so as to support the outer edge of it. This design would result in the altar's being wider at the bottom than at the top. Keil and Delitzsch suggest that the priests stood upon this ledge when offering the sacrifices, and that this would explain how Aaron could "come down" from offering sacrifices. (Lev. 9:22).

The use of the ledge as a place upon which the priests might stand seems reasonable (though unproven). The altar was four and a half feet tall (three cubits, or fifty-four inches). Thus a bench or ledge halfway up its sides (twenty-seven inches up) would make the work of lifting firewood, pieces of flesh, pots, tools, etc. upon the altar much easier. Possibly a ramp of earth (certainly no steps!) was sloped up beside the altar to the level of the ledge. See Ex. 20:26.

After all has been said, we have to admit that we do not know the precise purpose of the ledge around the altar. Probably it was used for whatever purposes it might conveniently serve. We also do not know the width of the ledge.

9. *How was the altar of burnt-offering transported about?* (27:6-7; 38:5-7)

It was carried by staves thrust into rings mounted on the corners of the altar, upon the net of brass. The staves were overlaid with brass, unlike the staves with the furniture inside the tabernacle, which were overlaid with gold.

When being transported the altar was covered with a purple cloth and a covering of sealskins. (See 25:5.) Only this altar had a purple covering. The other furniture had blue coverings.

10. *What material was used for the frame of the altar?* (27:8)

"Planks" (KJV & RSV: "boards") were used. The Hebrew word for "plank" (*luach*) in 27:8 is not the same word used of the boards of the tabernacle building. *Luach* is the word also used to refer to the stone tablets of the ten commandments (Ex. 24:12; 31:18). It may mean table, tablet, plate of stone or metal, wooden plate, board, or plank. (Harkavy's *Lexicon*)

11. *What was the name of the enclosure around the tabernacle?*  
(27:9; 38:9)

It was called the *court* of the tabernacle. "Court" simply means yard or enclosure. There the people could come and and assemble at God's house for worship. The court marked the outer limit of the area dedicated exclusively to the service of God. Later temples in Jerusalem would have stone walls marking off their courts (I Kings 7:12). We do not read of vast crowds thronging the tabernacle courts as they did in the temple courts later (Isa. 1:12).

Even Gentiles could enter the court. Lev. 17:8; 22:18; Num. 15:14-16. This shows that the LORD has always been rich unto all who call upon Him (Rom. 10:12, 13).

There was joy in coming into the court. "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, That he may dwell in thy *courts*" (Ps. 65:4). "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his *courts* with praise" (Psalm 100:4).

The court shows the two principles of exclusion and inclusion.<sup>5</sup> The nation of Israel was unholy in its deeds, and thus could NOT go into the immediate presence of Yahweh in the Holy of Holies. The veil before the Holy of Holies and the screen before the Holy Place excluded all but certain peoples. There are barriers between a holy God and unholy men. But the great message in God's good news is that God has reached out to men and provided a meeting place where men may come to Him. The walls of the court are up, but the door is open. God has set forth to reach out and reconcile the world unto Himself (II Cor. 5:16-21). While God's holiness excludes us as unworthy sinners, yet his love and mercy include us in a divine outreach.

This is the reason we have spoken of the court as a type of God's outreach into the world.

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<sup>5</sup>Ramm, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-164.

In some manner God's heavenly kingdom also has a "court." See Rev. 11:1-2. We see in this fact another illustration of the truth that the tabernacle on earth was a copy of the things in the heavens (Heb. 9:23).

12. *What were the dimensions of the court?* (27:9, 12, 18)

It was fifty cubits wide (75 feet) on the east and west, and a hundred cubits (150 feet) on the north and south. Its entrance was on the east side (27:13-14). The entrance was twenty cubits wide (27:16), and located in the center of the east side.

If in Egypt the Israelites had ever worshipped the rising sun, this practice would have been unlikely to be continued at the tabernacle, because their backs would have been toward the rising sun as they approached the tabernacle facing west, toward its entrance on the east.

13. *What was the court made of?* (27:9-10; 38:9-10)

It consisted of pillars five cubits tall (7½ feet), which held up a hanging of fine twisted linen cloth (38:16, 18). The court was too tall to gaze over, even on tiptoe. People had to come inside to see what was going on inside.

The material of the pillars is not specifically stated, but probably it was acacia wood. The columns were not made of brass, a fact indicated by the non-mention of the columns in 38:29-31, where the uses of the brass are itemized.

The columns had sockets (bases, or pedestals) of brass, but hooks and fillets of silver at their tops. The capitals (or decorated tops) of the pillars were overlaid with silver (38:17). Josephus (*Ant.* III, vi, 2) says that the brass bases had sharp ends like spears, which were stuck into the ground. The scripture does not mention such a fact.

The hooks were used to hold up the cloth hangings. Cassuto suggests that the hooks were Y-shaped, like the Hebrew letter *waw*.

The nature of the "fillets" remains quite uncertain. See 38:10. The Hebrew word for fillet (*chashuq*) comes from a verb (*chisheq*) meaning "to fasten together" (Harkavy). Therefore, some have suggested that the fillets were

silver connecting rods, like curtain rods, connecting the tops of the pillars to one another; and that the "hanging" hung from these rods. Other commentators suggest that the fillets were bands or rings of silver encircling the pillars at various points, perhaps at the tops, bottoms, and middles, and that the hangings may have been anchored to the pillars at their fillets. The function of the fillets is not clearly indicated. We somewhat favor the view that they were bands of silver upon the pillars, and did not extend from one pillar to the next one.

The expression "south side southward" in 27:9 is literally "to the side of the Negev, to the south." See notes on 26:18.

14. *How many pillars were used in the court?* (27:10-15; 38:10-15)

Sixty pillars. Twenty were on the north and on the south side. Ten were on the east and on the west ends.

The most probable layout is that the pillars were exactly five cubits apart. The pillar at each corner was probably counted as belonging to only one side, even though each corner pillar supported an end of the hanging on two adjacent sides. Keil and Delitzsch affirm that anyone may easily convince himself of the correctness of the number of sixty pillars by drawing a figure of their layout. We agree.

15. *How large was the entrance of the court?* (27:16; 38:18-19)

It was twenty cubits (30 feet) wide. It was made of the same colored linen material as that used at the doorway of the tent. See 26:36. (Regarding *linen*, see 25:4.) The hanging at the entrance to the court was embroidered with needlework. It was held up on four pillars, which rested on four sockets (pedestals). See 27:10. On either side of the entrance fifteen cubits of linen curtains were hung up.

The expression in 38:18 "the height in the breadth" is a rather singular one, and "breadth" there is to be understood of the doorway of the court. It emphasizes that the screen at the court entrance was the same height as the rest of the court.

Regarding the "fillets" of 27:17, see notes on 27:9-10.

16. *What material were the tabernacle instruments made of?* (27:19; 38:20)

Of brass. See 25:3. The instruments referred to are probably the vessels and tools used at the altar (27:3), and possibly others also.

The "pins" of the tabernacle are probably the tent pins which provided anchors to the guy ropes holding upright the pillars of the court. Ex. 27:19 also indicates that the main tabernacle building used "pins." Possibly they held the side boards of the tabernacle rigid, although their position and function are not stated.

17. *What was used as fuel for the light?* (27:20)

Pure olive oil obtained by beating olives was to be brought by the children of Israel to the priests. The Jewish *Mishna*<sup>6</sup> indicates that the very best oil was produced by beating the olives lightly with rods. This oil was clear and colorless and burned with little smoke. The lower grades of oil were obtained by crushing the olives completely in a press or mortar.

The small amount of oil required by the lamp could have been obtained from caravans passing through the wilderness. There is no need to question the Biblical text because oil was (supposedly) not available in the desert.

The Hebrew words for "light" (*ma'or*) in 27:20 and for "lamp" (*ner*) are different from the word (*menorah*) translated "candlestick" in 25:31. Some have therefore thought that they refer to a different light, perhaps some much simpler light. To us it appears that Ex. 35:14 and 39:37 clearly indicate that all these Hebrew words refer to the same "light."

The wording of Lev. 24:2-4 is almost identical to Ex. 27:20-21.

The lamp is said to "burn continually."

It seems somewhat surprising to find at this point (27:20)

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<sup>6</sup>See Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 198.



the instructions about bringing olive oil for the lamp. We would have imagined that such information would have been given back in 25:31ff where the lamp was described. But it is the usual pattern in Exodus to keep the descriptions of the construction of the items of furniture separate from the information about the rituals associated with them.

Also, 27:20-21 may be considered the start of a new section of subject matter, giving directions for the priesthood. Note that chapter twenty-eight continues the discussion of the priesthood. Cassuto<sup>7</sup> notes that 27:20, 28:1, and 28:3 all begin (in Hebrew) with the word "and thou." He considers this an indication of connection between 27:20-21 and the following chapter. We do not feel that this is a certainty, but it is a possibility.

18. *When was the lamp to burn?* (27:20-21)

It was to burn "continually" (Heb., *tamid*). This word itself may mean either continuously, without interruption; or regularly, that is, every night. It is used with the second meaning in Psalm 34:1: "His praise shall *continually* be in my mouth." This can hardly mean an unbroken flow of praise.

The lamp was to burn "from evening to morning" (27:21; Lev. 24:3; Ex. 30:7-8; I Sam 3:3) I Sam. 3:3 says, "The lamp had not yet gone out."

Nonetheless, we are of the opinion that the seven lamps were never all extinguished at one time. They were the only source of light in the Holy Place. Light would frequently be needed in the Holy Place in the daylight hours, as well as at night. See Lev. 4:7; 24:7-8. Later Jewish practice was to keep the lamp burning unceasingly.

19. *Where was the lamp to burn?* (27:21)

It burned in the "tent of meeting" (KJV: "tabernacle of the congregation"). This was the Holy Place, the room just "without (outside of) the veil," which was before the

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<sup>7</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 369.

testimony (the tablets of the ten commandments in the ark).

The expression "tent of meeting" is used here for the first time as a title for the Holy Place. After this time it is often employed. The word "meeting" (Heb. *mo'ed*) refers to the place, the time, and the event of a "meeting" between God and man.

20. *Who was responsible for caring for the light? (27:21)*

Aaron (the high priest) and his sons (the other priests).

The light was kept "before Jehovah." Keeping the light burning was important to God. It said something about Him and about His people also.

Burning the lamp was to be a statute (or law) "for ever," literally, a "statute of eternity." The Hebrew word *'olam* (translated "for ever") sometimes means existence without end, as in the expression in Gen. 21:33, "the *everlasting* God." However, sometimes it refers to long periods of time which may have an end. Thus we read that slaves might become servants "for ever," that is, for life (Deut. 15:17). Also the grave is called the "everlasting home" in Eccl. 12:5, even though there will be a resurrection. God put His name in Solomon's temple "for ever"; nevertheless, Solomon's temple was destroyed. Thus also circumcision was an "everlasting covenant" (Gen. 17:13), even though at present neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters at all (Galatians 5:6).

These uses of "for ever" (and related expressions) make clear how the lamp could be a "statute for ever," and yet exist no more at present.

The burning of the lamp was "on behalf of" the children of Israel. This expression is translated "by" in the R.S.V., and "for" (margin: Lit. *from*) in the New American Standard version. The Hebrew has a compound preposition literally reading "from with." Primarily it means "from," but the idea that it was also "with" Israel seems true here. God's light was "from" them in the sense that they furnished the oil, but it was "with" them in that it was *God's* light in their tabernacle.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**28** And bring thou near unto thee Aar-on thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Is-ra-el, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aar-on, Na-dab and A-bi-hu, E-le-a-zar and Ith-a-mar, Aar-on's sons. (2) And thou shalt make holy garments for Aar-on thy brother, for glory and for beauty. (3) And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aar-on's garments to sanctify him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. (4) And these are the garments which they shall make: a breast-plate, and an eph-od, and a robe, and a coat of checker work, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aar-on thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. (5) And they shall take the gold, and the blue, and the purple, and the scarlet, and the fine linen.

(6) And they shall make the eph-od of gold, of blue, and purple, scarlet, and fine twisted linen, the work of the skilful workman. (7) It shall have two shoulder-pieces joined to the two ends thereof, that it may be joined together. (8) And the skilfully woven band, which is upon it, wherewith to gird it on, shall be like the work thereof *and* of the same piece; of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen. (9) And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Is-ra-el: (10) six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the six that remain on the other stone, according to their birth. (11) With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, shalt thou engrave the two stones, according to the names of the children of Is-ra-el: thou shalt make them to be inclosed in settings of gold. (12) And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulder-pieces of the eph-od, to be stones of memorial for the children of Is-ra-el: and Aar-on shall bear their names before Je-ho-vah upon his two shoulders for a memorial. (13) And thou shalt make settings of gold, (14) and two chains of pure gold; like

cords shalt thou make them, of wreathen work: and thou shalt put the wreathen chains on the settings.

(15) And thou shalt make a breastplate of judgment, the work of the skilful workman; like the work of the eph-od thou shalt make it; of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, shalt thou make it. (16) Foursquare it shall be *and* double; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span the breadth thereof. (17) And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, four rows of stones: a row of sardius, topaz, and carbuncle shall be the first row; (18) and the second row an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond; (19) and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; (20) and the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be inclosed in gold in their settings. (21) And the stones shall be according to the names of the children of Is-ra-el, twelve, according to their names; like the engravings of a signet, every one according to his name, they shall be for the twelve tribes. (22) And thou shalt make upon the breastplate chains like cords, of wreathen work of pure gold. (23) And thou shalt make upon the breastplate two rings of gold, and shalt put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate. (24) And thou shalt put the two wreathen chains of gold in the two rings at the ends of the breastplate. (25) And the *other* two ends of the two wreathen chains thou shalt put on the two settings, and put them on the shoulder-pieces of the eph-od in the forefront thereof. (26) And thou shalt make two rings of gold, and thou shalt put them upon the two ends of the breastplate, upon the edge thereof, which is toward the side of the eph-od inward. (27) And thou shalt make two rings of gold, and shalt put them on the two shoulder-pieces of the eph-od underneath, in the forefront thereof, close by the coupling thereof, above the skilfully woven hand of the eph-od. (28) And they shall bind the breastplate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the eph-od with a lace of blue, that it may be upon the skilfully woven band of the eph-od, and that the breastplate be not loosed from the eph-od. (29) And Aar-on shall bear the names of the children of Is-ra-el in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto

the holy place, for a memorial before Je-ho-vah continually. (30) And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the U-rim and the Thum-mim; and they shall be upon Aar-on's heart, when he goeth in before Je-ho-vah: and Aar-on shall bear the judgment of the children of Is-ra-el upon his heart before Je-ho-vah continually.

(31) And thou shalt make the robe of the eph-od all of blue. (32) And it shall have a hole for the head in the midst thereof: it shall have a binding of woven work round about the hole of it, as it were the hole of a coat of mail, that it be not rent. (33) And upon the skirts of it thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the skirts thereof; and bells of gold between them round about: (34) a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the skirts of the robe round about. (35) And it shall be upon Aar-on to minister: and the sound thereof shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before Je-ho-vah, and when he cometh out, that he die not.

(36) And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLY TO JE-HO-VAH. (37) And thou shalt put it on a lace of blue, and it shall be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. (38) And it shall be upon Aar-on's forehead, and Aar-on shall bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Is-ra-el shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before Je-ho-vah. (39) And thou shalt weave the coat in checker work of fine linen, and thou shalt make a mitre of fine linen, and thou shalt make a girdle, the work of the embroiderer.

(40) And for Aar-on's sons thou shalt make coats, and thou shalt make for them girdles, and head-tires shalt make for them, for glory and for beauty. (41) And thou shalt put them upon Aar-on thy brother, and upon his sons with him, and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office. (42) And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover the flesh of their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall

**reach: (43) and they shall be upon Aar-on, and upon his sons, when they go in unto the tent of meeting, or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place; that they bear not iniquity, and die: it shall be a statute for ever unto him and unto his seed after him.**

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After reading the chapter carefully, propose a very brief topic-title for it.
2. Who was to bring Aaron near and clothe him? (28:1, 2, 41)
3. What office were Aaron and his sons to have? (28:1)
4. Did Aaron take this office unto himself by volunteering? (Heb. 5:4)
5. Who is the Christian's high priest? (Heb. 4:14)
6. What other people are priests NOW? (I Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10)
7. Name Aaron's four sons. (Ex. 28:1)
8. What were two purposes of the priests' garments? (28:2, 40)
9. Who were to make Aaron's garments? (28:3; 31:2, 3, 10)
10. What were Aaron's garments to do for him? (28:3)
11. Name the six garments of Aaron. (28:4)
12. What materials went into the garments? (28:5)
13. Who contributed these materials? (35:4-9)
14. What materials went into the ephod? (28:6; 39:2, 3)
15. What part of the ephod went over the priest's shoulders? (28:7)
16. What was used to gird (or tie) the ephod on? (28:8)
17. What was placed on the shoulders, as part of the ephod? (28:12)
18. What was carved on the onyx stones on the shoulders? (28:9-11)

19. What class of men wore ephods? (I Sam. 22:18; I Sam. 2:18, 28; 14:3; 30:7; II Sam. 6:14)
  20. What was the breastplate said to be for? (28:15)
  21. What material was used to make the breastplate? (28:15)
  22. What was set upon the breastplate? (28:17-20)
  23. What was engraved on the stones of the breastplate? (28:21)
  24. To what was the breastplate tied? (28:26-28)
  25. What did Aaron bear on his heart? (28:29) What may this symbolize if we apply it to Christ?
  26. What was placed in the breastplate? (28:30)
  27. What was the purpose of these items? (28:30; Num. 27:21; I Sam. 28:6; Ezra 2:62, 63)
  28. What was Aaron to bear upon his heart as he wore the breastplate? (28:30)
  29. What was the color of the robe of the ephod? (28:31)
  30. What was upon the skirts of the robe of the ephod? (28:33, 34)
  31. How important were these items? (28:35)
  32. What was engraved upon a golden plate? (28:36)
  33. Where was the golden plate worn? (28:37, 38)
  34. Besides Aaron, what other priest is *holy*? (Heb. 7:26)
  35. What did Aaron bear? (28:38)
  36. What was the coat of Aaron made of? (28:39; 39:27)
  37. What was the mitre? (28:39; 39:28)
  38. What garments were made for Aaron's sons? (28:40)
  39. What four things was Moses to do to the priests? (28:42)
  40. What covered the naked flesh of the priests? (28:42)
  41. When were the priests to wear the linen breeches? (28:43). What might happen if they did not wear them? (Compare Ex. 20:26.)
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EXODUS TWENTY-EIGHT: HOLY GARMENTS! (28:2)

I. PEOPLE ASSOCIATED WITH THE HOLY GARMENTS; 28:1-5.

1. Aaron and his sons - To be priests. (28:1)
2. Moses - To make the garments and put them on the priests. (28:1, 2)
3. Wise-hearted men - To make the garments. (28:3-5)

II. PURPOSES OF THE HOLY GARMENTS

1. "For glory and beauty" (28:2, 40)
2. "To sanctify Aaron and his sons" (28:3)
3. "That he may minister unto me in the PRIEST'S office" (28:3, 4)

III. PLANS OF THE HOLY GARMENTS; 28:6-43.

1. The ephod; 28:6-14.
2. The breastplate; 28:15-30.  
(Urim and Thummim; 28:30)
3. The robe of the ephod; 28:31-35.
4. The plate of gold; 28:36-38.
5. The coat, mitre, and girdle; 28:39.
6. Garments for Aaron's sons; 28:40, 41.
7. Linen breeches; 28:42, 43.

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PRIESTS APPOINTED BY GOD! (Ex. 28:3, 4)

1. Aaron - A type of Christ, our high priest; (Heb. 8:1-6)
  2. Aaron's sons - A type of Christians, who are priests unto God; (I Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6).
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THE EPHOD! (28:6-14)

1. A garment distinctively for priests; (28:6; I Sam. 22:18; 2:28).



2. A garment of beauty and glory; (28:6, 8, 13).  
(Christ, our priest, is glorious; Rev. 1:13-16; Phil. 3:21.)
  3. A garment for bearing the names of God's people; (28:9-12)
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### THE PRIESTLY BREASTPLATE! (28:15-30)

- I. Its purposes
    1. For judgment; 28:15.
    2. To contain the Urim and Thummim; 28:30.
    3. To bear the names of the children of Israel; 28:29.
  - II. Its pattern
    1. Made as a folded cloth pouch; 28:15, 16.
    2. Made of gold; 28:15, 20, 24.
    3. Adorned with gems; 28:17-20.
    4. Supported on golden chains; 28:22-28.
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### ROBE OF THE EPHOD! (28:31-35)

1. Its blue color suggests the close connection of the priest to other blue things of the tabernacle. (25:4; 26:31; 27:16; Num. 4:6)
  2. Its seamless form suggests the robe of Christ. (John 19:23)
  3. Its bells suggest the public nature of Christ's work. (No secret priestly rituals)
  4. Its pomegranates suggest the beauty and fruitfulness which there is in Christ.
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### THE GOLDEN PLATE - THE BADGE OF HOLINESS! (28:36-38)

1. By means of the plate of sinful priests became HOLINESS.
2. By means of the plate the priest bore the iniquity of the holy gifts presented by the people. (28:38)

3. By means of the plate the people and their gifts were accepted before the Lord!
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#### CLOTHES FOR AARON'S SONS! (28:40-43)

1. Resembled those of the high priest; (28:40)  
(We also are dressed in the righteousness of Christ, our high priest. Phil. 3:9; Rom. 9:30)
  2. Provided the priests with glory and beauty.  
(We also are changed from glory to glory. II Cor. 3:18)
  3. Covered their nakedness. (Ex. 28:42; Rev. 3:18)
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#### EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

1. *What is in Exodus twenty-eight?*

The chapter deals with the garments of the high priest and the other priests. We entitle the chapter "Holy Garments" (28:2). It forms an obvious unit of subject matter. The next chapter continues the instructions about the priesthood, but takes up the topic of their consecration ritual. The material in chapter twenty-eight is very similar to 39:1-31, where we read of the actual making of the garments.

2. *Who was to go get Aaron and make holy garments for him? (28:1, 2)*

Moses was to do this. The "thou" ("you") in 28:1 is stressed. Moses is made very prominent here as the mediator of God's covenant. God does His work through chosen, clearly-designated men.

Moses was to bring near unto himself from the midst of the children of Israel Aaron and his sons, so they might serve as priests unto God. The names of Aaron's four sons - Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar - appear

here together.

Nadab and Abihu had been mentioned in 24:1 as among those going up into the mount. They later died by fire during their consecration ritual (Lev. 10:1, 2). Aaron's sons Eleazar succeeded him as high priest (Num. 3:4; 20:25, 26). Still later the descendants of Ithamar became the high priests, from Eli through Abiathar (I Sam. 2:27, 28; I Kings 2:26, 27). After that time the descendants of Eleazar resumed the priesthood, from Zadok onward (I Chron. 6:8-15).

3. *What service were Aaron and his sons to perform?* (28:1)

They were to be *priests*. Note that they were *called*; they did not volunteer (Heb. 5:4). The priesthood was serious business, as we can see by the case of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1, 2).

The creation of a special hereditary priesthood was a new development in Israel. Up until this time priestly functions had been conducted by the head of each family or tribe, generally in accordance with the principle of the dedication of the firstborn son (Ex. 13:2; Num. 3:12, 13). We read of priests serving at various times and places - men like Melchizedek and Jethro. Job offered sacrifices for his family (Job 1:5). But if there was any continuity in the office of priest - as from father to son - we are not informed about it. Now the priesthood is to become an "established" order in Israel.

The duties of the priests included burning incense daily (30:7, 8; 27:21); keeping fire on the altar (Lev. 6:9-13); offering daily sacrifices (Ex. 29:38-44); blessing the people (Lev. 9:22; Num. 6:23-26); blowing the silver trumpets (Num. 10:8-10); testing for adultery (Num. 5); and teaching the people (Deut. 17:8; 19:17; 21:5).

Many scholars of a skeptical ("liberal") persuasion have set forth the idea that the whole priestly system did not originate until the Babylonian captivity or afterwards. This is part of the Wellhausen theory about a P (Priestly) source of some of the O.T. books. But even Martin Noth

(himself a rather extreme liberal) admits that P would not have written his account of Aaron and his garments purely from fantasy.<sup>1</sup> But while admitting that the priesthood is older than the time of the Babylonian captivity, they still think that the priesthood originated through the people's common reverence of holy men separated from usual worldly activities. Not so! The priesthood was established by divine choice.

Please remember that the whole religious system connected with the tabernacle, including the priesthood, was only a shadow and type of the heavenly realities (Heb. 10:1). Thus Aaron and his sons were only representations of the true eternal priesthood. God never planned that the priesthood from the tribe of Levi (Aaron's family) would be priests forever. God foretold that there would come a priest after the order and likeness of Melchizedek, who would be a priest forever (Psalm 110:4). This, of course, refers to our Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 7:11-17). In the age of the "new covenant" under which we live, the preparatory symbolic religious system existing in the time of Moses has been replaced by the genuine heavenly realities themselves! Thus we are no longer under the priesthood of Aaron and his sons, but of Christ Jesus, of whom Aaron was only a foreshadowing.

Similarly Aaron's sons no longer function as lesser priests working with their father. All Christians are now God's priests. See I Peter 2:5; Rev. 1:6; 5:9, 10. We may all pray for ourselves and for others!

We must beware of religions like Roman Catholicism and its descendants, that set up a special class of individuals within the church as "priests." To adopt a system of having a special class of men as priests is to lapse back into the covenant of Moses! We live under a new and better covenant, with a better priesthood (Heb. 7:18-22). To

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<sup>1</sup>Exodus, p. 220.

revert to the system of the law of Moses is to revert to condemnation (Gal. 3:10; II Cor. 3:9).

4. *What were the purposes of the priests' garments?* (28:2-4)

They were for "glory and for beauty." God intended that His priests be prominent and glorious before the people. Also the garments were prepared "that he may minister unto me in the priest's office." It surely seems that in Aaron's case the clothes made the man! He was *invested* with his office, not created in it. Note that 28:2 refers to the garments as "holy garments" (or "garments of holiness").

5. *Who was to make the priestly garments?* (28:3)

"Wise-hearted" men. These wise-hearted men were the craftsmen Bezalel and Oholiab (Ex. 31:1-6). "Wise-hearted" in the Hebrew idiom meant able to enjoy skill and practical wisdom, as in artistic skill. (The R.S.V. rendering "endowed with an able mind" seems a rather weak rendering.)

6. *What were the garments of the priest?* (28:4)

Six items are listed: breastplate, ephod, robe, coat, mitre (or turban), and girdle (belt, or sash). Aaron's sons had only coats, girdles, and head covering. In addition, linen breeches (under-pants) were provided (28:42).

7. *What materials were used in the priests' clothing?* (28:5; 39:1)

The gold, blue (cloth), purple, scarlet, and fine linen were used. The use of the article *the* points to specific gold and specific cloth, namely that presented by the people (35:20-23).

8. *What was the ephod?* (28:6-8; 39:2-5)

The ephod was a cloth garment worn by the priest, and sometimes by others temporarily engaged in religious ceremonies.

The ephod worn by the high priest was very much more magnificent than those worn by others. See I Sam. 2:28; 14:2; 21:9; 23:6-9; 30:7. But we do read of common priests wearing ephods (I Sam. 22:18). The boy Samuel wore one

(although he was of the tribe of Levi [I Chron. 6:16, 28]). King David wore one when he brought up the ark to Jerusalem (II Sam. 6:14). References to the "ephod" of Gideon (Judges 8:27) and that of Micah (Judges 17:5) seem to be euphemisms for idols,<sup>2</sup> although that is not definite.

The ephod was made of gold wires (like threads), and of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twisted linen. The gold was beaten into thin plates and then cut into fine wires and worked into the fabric (39:3). The ephod had the same material in it as the veil and the screen, except for the added gold threads and the absence of embroidered cherubim. The ephod was a spectacular garment.

The exact form of the ephod is rather uncertain. One view is that it was somewhat of a double apron, with one section over the front of the body and another section on the back. These were coupled at the shoulders by strips of cloth attached to the front section (28:25). These shoulder-pieces had upon them two engraved onyx stones resting upon the shoulders. A girdle at the waist held the two sections to the body.<sup>3</sup> Compare 28:7 and 39:4. The ancient rabbis seemed to think the ephod had this general form and hung down to about the hips.

Another view of the form of the ephod is that it was sort of a loin-cloth, of one piece, held up by shoulder straps like suspenders, and having its two ends attached together in some way at the back of the body. The band (or girdle) of the ephod was a thicker, belt-like section of the ephod made of one piece with the rest of the garment (28:8). The ephod did not extend higher on the body than the waist. The band (girdle) of the ephod was of the same material as the rest of the ephod. The rings on the lower part of the breastplate (28:28) were attached to the band of the ephod.

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<sup>2</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

<sup>3</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-194, favor this view.

With some hesitancy we adopt this latter view.<sup>4</sup> *Ancient Near East in Pictures* (Princeton, 1969), p. 66, shows male dancers in Egypt during the Old Kingdom (prior to Moses' time) wearing garments somewhat similar to ephods of this description.

The exact meaning of "two ends" in 28:7 is uncertain.

Josephus (*Ant.* III, vii, 5) said that the ephod was made with sleeves also, and did not appear to be made differently from a short coat. To us this idea does not seem to fit the scriptural information.

9. *What was on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod?* (28:9-14; 39:6, 7)

Two onyx stones were on the shoulders, each engraved with names of the sons of Jacob. Six names were on one stone and six on the other, listed in the order of their births. The names were engraved with the type of engraving used on signets. (A "signet" was a seal, or stamp. These were made of stone or other hard material. They were often shaped like small cylinders about the size of a little finger, with carvings around them. Others were like pebbles with one flat side, and had a carving of a name or figure on the flat face, which was used to stamp an impression on a soft clay tablet.)

The onyx stones were enclosed in setting (K.J.V., "ouches") (or frames) of gold. These settings were of "wreathen" work, which was gold wire twisted to form sort of a chain (28:13, 14). The breastplate was fastened from its top side to these settings (28:25).

The exact function of two chains attached to the settings of the onyx stones (28:14) is not stated. Keil and Delitzsch<sup>5</sup> think they were the same chains as those extending up from the top of the breastplate to the settings. (See notes on 28:24 below). Others feel that they held the two sections of the ephod together at the shoulders.

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<sup>4</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 373, holds this view.

<sup>5</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 197.

We do not know for certain what type of gemstone is referred to as "onyx" here (Heb. *shocham*). According to the Greek LXX they were emeralds. Josephus (*Ant.* III, vii, 5) called them sardonyx, which is the best variety of onyx. Harkavy's *Lexicon* suggests that they may have been a beryl.

10. *What was the purpose of the onyx stones and the ephod?* (28:12)

By means of the inscribed shoulder stones Aaron bore the names of the children of Israel before Jehovah for a "memorial." They were "stones of memorial" for the children of Israel.

The term *memorial* is a sacrificial term referring to that which brings the one remembered into favorable remembrance before God. See Ex. 30:16.

It is a delight to our souls to meditate upon the fact that Christ, though he does not wear an ephod made by hands, bears our names before the Father for a memorial. He causes us to be remembered with favor before the Father, and not as we deserve to be remembered. The Lord Jesus is our ADVOCATE with the father (I John 2:1).

The ephod was a garment associated with holy men, with priests. The ephod of Aaron was designed so that he carried about the names of God's people. Similarly Christ is plainly set forth before our minds as the holy priest of God, and one who bears our names before God.

11. *What was the form of the breastplate?* (28:15, 16; 39:8, 9)

Basically it was a folded cloth, forming sort of a pouch, decorated with 12 inscribed gemstones, and worn on Aaron's chest.

It was made of the same gold and fabric material as the ephod (28:6). It was square and doubled, that is, folded double. It was a span each way, about nine inches square. We suppose that it was two spans long and one wide, but when folded double it was a span square. Four rows of jewels were set upon it.

It appears that the fold was at its bottom, so as to form



a kind of pouch to hold the Urim and Thummim (28:30).

The translation "breastplate" is only an interpretation, because we do not know for certain what the Hebrew word *chosen* (translated "breastplate") meant.

12. *What was upon the breastplate?* (28:17-21; 39:10-14)

There was a "setting" (Hebrew, "filling") for stones. In the Hebrew the word for "setting" is singular, suggesting one large setting holding all the gems. However, verse twenty plainly refers to "settings" (plural), showing that the "setting" was a collective plural word.<sup>6</sup>

In the settings were twelve gems, arranged in four rows, and having the names of the twelve sons of Israel engraved upon them, much as the names were engraved upon the onyx stones worn upon the shoulders.

13. *What gemstones were set on the breastplate?* (28:17-19)

The Hebrew names of the gemstones are hard to link positively with modern names of gemstones. The topaz is probably a correct identification. It is a golden yellow gemstone. The blue sapphire is known. The "diamond" is named in several English versions, but there is no indication that the ancients were either acquainted with this stone or had acquired the skill to engrave upon it. The amethyst is probably a correct identification. It is purple.

The Greek LXX renderings of the Hebrew words probably carry no great authority in identifying the stones. But it is interesting that eight of the twelve stones named in the Greek LXX as being on the priest's breastplate are mentioned as adornments of the foundations of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:19, 20).

14. *What held the breastplate in place?* (28:22-28; 39:15-21)<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 222 refers to a rectangular golden breastplate set with precious stones and found at Byblos. It dates from the Middle Bronze (about 1700 B.C.). It hung from a golden chain. Thus it slightly resembled the ephod of Aaron. Nonetheless, we do not feel that it resembled the breastplate of Aaron closely enough to indicate any real relationship between the two, since Aaron's breastplate had the gems in individual settings.

<sup>7</sup>The Greek LXX uses the 29th verse from the Hebrew text as verse 23. To us this  
(Continued on next page.)

It was bound to the settings of the onyx stones on the shoulders by chains. Its bottom was tied to the girdle of the ephod.

"Chains" of "wreathen" (twisted) gold wire were attached to two gold rings at the upper corners of the breastplate. The ends of the chains were attached to the gold settings holding the onyx stones on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod.

Keil and Delitzsch<sup>8</sup> maintain that the chains mentioned in 28:14 are the same chains as those of 28:22. The chains are mentioned only *once* in the account of the execution of the work in 39:15. Also the chains in both verses are said to be attached to the gold settings on the shoulders. If the chains in the two verses are not really one and the same, then no function is ascribed to those of 28:14. To us this seems true.

The lower corners of the breastplate (as folded double) had gold rings on the inner side. Then two more rings were placed on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, evidently near their lower parts over the abdomen (28:6, 7). Then with a "lace" (probably a thread, cord, or line) of blue, the rings on the girdle of the ephod were tied to the lower rings on the breastplate. (Note that the shoulder-pieces [or straps] of the ephod extended downward to the bottom of the breastplate, probably near the waist.)

15. *What was the function of the breastplate?* (28:29)

By means of the breastplate Aaron bore the names of the children of Israel for a memorial before the LORD continually when he went into the Holy place. The priest represented ALL Israel, as indicated by the twelve stones on the breastplate. Regarding *memorial*, see notes on 28:12.

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seems to break the continuity of subject matter about the construction of the breastplate as given in 28:22-28.

Also the Greek LXX omits 28:26-29 of the Hebrew (Masoretic) text. This causes omission of the information as to how the breastplate was attached to the shoulder-pieces of the ephod. Also it modifies the numbering of the following verses. We doubt the accuracy of the LXX here.

<sup>8</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 197.

We know of no symbol that more vividly pictures how Christ our high priest bears us about upon His heart than the breastplate of Aaron! We are "graven upon the palms of thy hands" (Isa. 49:16).

Also the very use of gemstones is suggestive and comforting. God's people are His jewels (or possession, or treasure) (Mal. 3:17).

Also the fact that the breastplate was for *judgment* (28:15) is a pleasing idea. The word for *judgment* (*mishpat*) was used in 21:1 to refer to God's ordinances. Its use in connection with the breastplate therefore suggests that the priest is the communicator of divine truths (judgments, ordinances). Indeed Christ Jesus is the priest who revealed God's judgments to us, and will finally be the judge of all. See John 8:26! Luke 2:35; Acts 10:42.

16. *What was in the breastplate?* (28:30)

The Urim and Thummim were in it. These objects, whatever they were, were to be upon Aaron's heart when he went in to Jehovah's presence in the Holy place. By the presence of the breastplate and the Urim and Thummim, Aaron bore upon his heart continually the *judgment* of the children of Israel. This may include both bearing their guilt (compare Deut. 1:37), and interceding for Israel in prayer.

The Urim and Thummim functioned as means for discerning facts about the will of God not otherwise knowable. No one knows exactly what they consisted of.

"Urim and Thummim" are Hebrew words transliterated. Most Bibles do not attempt to translate the terms because of the uncertainty about their meaning. "Urim and Thummim" quite literally mean "lights and perfections." The Greek LXX rendered them as "revelation and truth." Symmachus' Greek translation gave a better rendering, "illumination and completion."

The function of the Urim and Thummim is illustrated by Numbers 27:21, where Joshua was instructed to inquire (seek God for unrevealed information) before the priest

Eleazar through the Urim and Thummim. (This does not indicate that the Urim and Thummim had magical power in themselves, but only that God used these items as a vehicle for his truth.)

From the way the Urim and Thummim are spoken of here in Exodus and in Lev. 8:8, it appears that they were some material things, previously existing, and familiarly known. They were separate from the breastplate itself,<sup>9</sup> as well as from the gems upon the breastplate. Moses was not told to *make* the Urim and Thummim, but just to put them in the breastplate. The Urim and Thummim were considered to be the crowning glory of the tribe of Levi (Deut. 33:8). Inasmuch as the Urim is called the "Urim of judgment" in Num. 27:21, it is appropriate that it was placed in the "breastplate of judgment."

King Saul could get no answer from the Lord by Urim and Thummim or by dreams and prophets (I Sam. 28:6). In the days after the return from Babylonian captivity, the Urim and Thummim were lacking, but men still sought to locate them (Ezra 2:62, 63).

Guesses as to the nature of the Urim and Thummim are legion. Since *Urim* starts (in Hebrew) with the first letter of the alphabet and *Thummim* with the last, they may contain a reference to the nature of God as the alpha and omega (the A and Z), whose will they revealed.<sup>10</sup>

The most common opinion is that the Urim and Thummim were two sacred lots (something like dice). Compare I Sam. 14:21. However, this is not positively asserted anywhere.

In those cases in the O.T. when men inquired of the Lord for needed revelations of information, it was the kings or leaders who sought the Lord. This makes it appear

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<sup>9</sup>Josephus identified the Urim and Thummim with the stones on the breastplate, which he reports as shining with great light and splendor when Israel marched to victory in battle. *Ant.* III, viii, 9.

<sup>10</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

that the use of Urim and Thummim was limited to questions from the leaders of the people. Note Num. 27:21; I Sam. 14:37, 38; I Sam. 23:2; 30:7, 8; Judges 1:1, 2; 20:18, 23, 27, 28.

Also it does seem to be true that questions asked of the Urim and Thummim were so framed that they could be answered by a Yes or a No, or by a choice between two things.

These facts have led numerous scholars to feel that the Urim and Thummim were two lots. Some have speculated that the Urim and Thummim had a *yes* side and a *no* side, and that rolling two *yes*'s meant *yes*, while two *no*'s meant *no*, and a divided answer meant that no answer was given.<sup>11</sup> Certainly lots were in that age directed by the Lord. See Proverbs 16:33. Nonetheless, we still find ourselves unconvinced that Urim and Thummim were lots.

We never read of the presence of Urim and Thummim after the time of King Saul. But the time of and reason for their disappearance still remain mysteries.

The Urim and Thummim are another illustration of the fact that God is a revealer of secrets to His people. See Daniel 2:19, 22. But this does not indicate that we have a right to demand and expect God to reveal the secrets of His government to us at all times. We must be content with what He has already revealed. "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29).

17. *What was the robe of the ephod like?* (28:31, 32; 39:22-24)

This robe seems to have been like a sleeveless dress. It seems to have been worn under the breastplate and ephod, although this is not actually stated. It was all of blue cloth. The hole for the priest's head to pass through was rimmed with a woven border to strengthen it, so that

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<sup>11</sup>Compare Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

it would not become ripped at that point. The translation "habergeon" or "coat of mail" is "not beyond doubt" (to quote Cassuto) To us it seems very doubtful, indeed, and much more applicable to a medieval knight's armor than to priestly garments in the time of Moses.

The pullover robe of one piece reminds us of Christ's seamless robe. John's reference to Christ's robe seems almost an indirect reference to Christ's high priestly office. (John 19:23).

18. *What was at the bottom of the robe of the ephod?* (28:33-35; 39:25, 26)

Placed at the bottom of the skirt of the robe were alternating pomegranates and golden bells. The pomegranates were of blue, purple, and scarlet. Pomegranates are fruit about the size of oranges, bright red in color, with juicy red seeds arranged in rows parallel to the core. They have on their outside, at the end of the core where the flower was, short, pointed, calyx-like projections of tissue (like the skin of the fruit). These give the pomegranate a distinctive form and appearance.

Some have suggested that the pomegranates on the robe of the ephod were only embroidered onto the cloth of the robe. Certainly pomegranates do not naturally come in blue and purple colors. Still the fact that the golden bells were solid (and ringing!) objects and that the bells hung "between" the pomegranates (Heb., "in the midst of them") makes us feel that the pomegranates were solid material dangling like bobbles from the robe. The book of Ecclesiasticus (45:9) refers to the glory of Aaron's pomegranates and bells.

The bells provided *sound* to be heard when Aaron ministered in the Holy place before Jehovah and when he came out. This making of sound was essential to Aaron "that we die not." The scripture does not state why the bell-ringing was considered so essential. Some think it was simply a means of announcing Aaron's coming before God. If that is so, the announcement was to alert the *people*

about Aaron's activity, not to alert God that Aaron was about to enter. The ringing made the worshippers conscious that the priest was ministering in their behalf in God's presence. The ringing-forth conveyed the impression that Aaron's work was something that everyone was to know about and feel himself involved in.

The same effect of making all men aware of God's work in their midst is still necessary. See Eph. 3:9. Whether we ring out the news by bells, publish it on paper, preach it from the housetops, men still need to know that God's priest is at work for them.

19. *What object was placed on the high priest's head covering?* (28:36-38; 39:30, 31)

A plate of PURE gold inscribed with the words HOLINESS TO YAHWEH was placed on the front of Aaron's turban.

This plate was placed upon a lace (or cord, thread, line) of blue. Then the plate and its backing of lace were placed upon the mitre (or turban.) (See 28:39). Thus it was kept upon Aaron's forehead.

It appears to us that the K.J.V. translation HOLINESS TO THE LORD is preferable to "Holy to the LORD." The Hebrew word *QODESH* is a noun. Admittedly it is frequently used as an adjective, as in "holy ground" (literally, "ground of holiness"; Ex. 3:5) or "holy city" ("city of holiness"; Isa. 48:2). But the use of the word here without a closely preceding noun that it modifies indicates that it should be taken as a noun, "holiness." The Greek LXX renders it as *hagiasma*, "Holiness of the Lord."

The gold plate testified that Aaron was wholly holy.

By wearing this plate Aaron was qualified by God to bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel presented to the LORD in all of their holy gifts. These "gifts" seem to refer to all their sacrifices, free-will offerings, and such. Even upon these gifts to God there was a stain from the iniquity of the donors, and possibly from the very curse of Adam (Haggai 2:12-14; Gen. 3:17).

Every thing that they offered was unclean. But the fact that a HOLY priest presented their gifts caused the people to be accepted.

These facts should cause us to thank the LORD that Jesus our priest is the HOLY ONE OF GOD! (John 6:69; Rev. 3:7; Heb. 7:26; Luke 1:35). Without a holy and undefiled priest like him, we could present nothing as acceptable to God, neither ourselves nor our gifts.

Aaron's holiness was, admittedly, more in label than in fact. But God in His grace accepted Aaron and accepted the people's gifts given through him.

The Hebrew word (*tsits*) translated "plate" may also be translated "blossom," "flower," or "crown." The N.E.B. renders it "rosette." We do not see clear indication that the golden plate worn by Aaron was flower-shaped.

20. Which priestly garments are very briefly mentioned? (28:39; 39:27-29)

(1) the coat of Aaron, his mitre (turban), and girdle (sash, or belt).

The "coat" was made of fine linen, woven in "checker work." This term does not necessarily imply that it was sewn in squares like a checker-board, but it does imply that it was in some way sewn and "quilted" together. It was the priest's inner garment. It seems that the robe of the ephod, the ephod, and the breastplate were all worn outside of it.

Josephus (*Ant.* III, 7, 2) says that the inner vestment (the coat) reached down to the feet, and was close to the body, and had sleeves tied fast to the arms. He says further that it was embroidered with flowers of scarlet, purple and blue, and hung loosely down to the ankles, and was tied about the waist. This is interesting information, but is not one hundred percent certain.

The mitre, or turban, was also made of fine linen. It appears to have been a long band of cloth, wrapped in swathes about the head. The Talmud suggests that the turban had sixteen cubits (24 feet!) of material in it.



Compare Josephus, *Ant.* III, 7, 3. The gold plate was attached to the front of it.

The "girdle" of 28:39 appears to have been that which held snug the coat referred to in the same verse. If so, it was concealed by the robe of the ephod. The word translated "girdle" in 28:39 is a different word from that translated "girdle" (or band) in 28:8. We feel they refer to entirely distinct items.

21. *What priestly garments were prepared for Aaron's sons?* (28:40; 39:27-29)

Three garments are named: coats, girdles, and head-tires.

These garments were "for glory and beauty," as were the garments of their father Aaron, the high priest. (28:2).

The priests' coats were made of fine linen, of woven work. Their mitres (turbans) were also of fine twisted linen. The mitres were "goodly." Their girdles were of fine twisted linen, blue, purple, and scarlet, the work of the embroiderer. See 39:28, 29.

While these garments of cloth adorned the flesh of the priests, they were to have a better clothing:

"Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; . . .

Her priests will I clothe with salvation." (Psalm 132:9, 16)

The word translated "head-tires" (K.J.V. "bonnets") is not the word translated "mitre" in 28:39. This word rendered "head-tires" occurs only four times in the O.T., and refers exclusively to the dress of the priests. It is derived from a verb meaning "to be high." This hints that these head-coverings were large and prominent.

No shoes for the priests' feet are mentioned. We suppose that they ministered barefooted. Compare Joshua 5:15 and Ex. 3:5.

22. *Who was to clothe the priests?* (28:41)

Moses was to clothe them, both Aaron and his sons. Compare 28:2; 29:5-7; Lev. 8:7. Moses was also to anoint them by pouring oil upon their heads, and to consecrate them. To "consecrate" means, quite literally, "to fill the

hands." This idiom is very suggestive of the fact that the priests' hands were to be filled with the Lord's service. However, as an idiom, it seems to mean only "to install." (Compare Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 386.) "To sanctify" means "to set apart to holy use."

23. *What innermost garments were provided for the priests?* (28:42, 43; 39:28)

Moses was to make for them linen breeches to cover the flesh of their nakedness. These covered from the loins (abdomen) to the thighs. These were to be worn beneath all other garments whenever they came near to the altar in the Holy place. Failure to wear these could cause them to "bear iniquity," (that is, to suffer the punishment of iniquity) and die! This was to be a law for the priests forever.

Modesty was required in God's priests. Compare Ex. 20:26. It is worthy of notice that Moses put upon the priests all of their garments except these linen inner breeches. See Lev. 8:13; Ex. 29:5.

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#### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**29** And this is the thing that thou shalt do unto them to hallow them, to minister unto me in the priest's office: take one young bullock and two rams without blemish, (2) and unleavened bread, and cakes unleavened mingled with oil, and wafers unleavened anointed with oil: of fine wheaten flour shalt thou make them. (3) And thou shalt put them into one basket, and bring them in the basket, with the bullock and the two rams. (4) And Aar-on and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tent of meeting, and shalt wash them with water. (5) And thou shalt take the garments, and put

upon Aar-on the coat, and the robe of the eph-od, and the eph-od, and the breastplate, and gird him with the skillfully woven band of the eph-od; (6) and thou shalt set the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre. (7) Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him. (8) And thou shalt bring his sons, and put coats upon them. (9) And thou shalt gird them with girdles, Aar-on and his sons, and bind head-tires on them: and they shall have the priesthood by a perpetual statute: and thou shalt consecrate Aar-on and his sons.

(10) And thou shalt bring the bullock before the tent of meeting; and Aar-on and his sons shall lay their hands upon the head of the bullock. (11) And thou shalt kill the bullock before Je-ho-vah, at the door of the tent of meeting. (12) And thou shalt take of the blood of the bullock, and put it upon the horns of the altar with thy finger; and thou shalt pour out all the blood at the base of the altar. (13) And thou shalt take all the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul upon the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, and burn them upon the altar. (14) But the flesh of the bullock, and its skin, and its dung, shalt thou burn with fire without the camp: it is a sin-offering.

(15) Thou shalt also take the one ram; and Aar-on and his sons shall lay their hands upon the head of the ram. (16) And thou shalt slay the ram, and thou shalt take its blood, and sprinkle it round about upon the altar. (17) And thou shalt cut the ram into its pieces, and wash its inwards, and its legs, and put them with its pieces, and with its head. (18) And thou shalt burn the whole ram upon the altar: it is a burnt-offering unto Je-ho-vah; it is a sweet savor, an offering made by fire unto Je-ho-vah.

(19) And thou shalt take the other ram; and Aar-on and his sons shall lay their hands upon the head of the ram. (20) Then shalt thou kill the ram, and take of its blood, and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aar-on, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the

blood upon the altar round about. (21) And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aar-on, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him. (22) Also thou shalt take of the ram the fat, and the fat tail, and the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul of the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, and the right thigh (for it is a ram of consecration), (23) and one loaf of bread, and one cake of oiled bread, and one wafer, out of the basket of unleavened bread that is before Je-ho-vah: (24) and thou shalt put the whole upon the hands of Aar-on, and upon the hands of his sons, and shalt wave them for a wave-offering before Je-ho-vah. (25) And thou shalt take them from their hands, and burn them on the altar upon the burnt-offering, for a sweet savor before Je-ho-vah: it is an offering made by fire unto Je-ho-vah.

(26) And thou shalt take the breast of Aar-on's ram of consecration, and wave it for a wave-offering before Je-ho-vah: and it shall be thy portion. (27) And thou shalt sanctify the breast of the wave-offering, and the thigh of the heave-offering, which is waved, and which is heaved up, of the ram of consecration, even of that which is for Aar-on, and of that which is for his sons: (28) and it shall be for Aar-on and his sons as *their* portion for ever from the children of Is-ra-el; for it is a heave-offering: and it shall be a heave-offering from the children of Is-ra-el of the sacrifices of their peace-offerings, even their heave-offering unto Je-ho-vah.

(29) And the holy garments of Aar-on shall be for his sons after him, to be anointed in them, and to be consecrated in them. (30) Seven days shall the son that is priest in his stead put them on, when he cometh into the tent of meeting to minister in the holy place.

(31) And thou shalt take the ram of consecration, and boil its flesh in a holy place. (32) And Aar-on and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that is in the basket,

at the door of the tent of meeting. (33) And they shall eat those things wherewith atonement was made, to consecrate *and* to sanctify them: but a stranger shall not eat thereof, because they are holy. (34) And if aught of the flesh of the consecration, or of the bread, remain unto the morning, then thou shalt burn the remainder with fire: it shall not be eaten, because it is holy.

(35) And thus shalt thou do unto Aar-on, and to his sons, according to all that I have commanded thee: seven days shalt thou consecrate them. (36) And every day shalt thou offer the bullock of sin-offering for atonement: and thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou makest atonement for it; and thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it. (37) Seven days thou shalt make atonement for the altar, and sanctify it: and the altar shall be most holy; whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy.

(38) Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar: two lambs a year old day by day continually. (39) The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even: (40) and with the one lamb a tenth part of an *e-phah* of fine flour mingled with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of a hin of wine for a drink-offering. (41) And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto according to the meal-offering of the morning, and according to the drink-offering thereof, for a sweet savor, an offering made by fire unto Je-ho-vah. (42) It shall be a continual burnt-offering throughout your generations at the door of the tent of meeting before Je-ho-vah, where I will meet with you, to speak there unto thee. (43) And there I will meet with the children of Is-ra-el; and *the Tent* shall be sanctified by my glory. (44) And I will sanctify the tent of meeting, and the altar: Aar-on also and his sons will I sanctify, to minister to me in the priest's office. (45) And I will dwell among the children of Is-ra-el, and will be their God. (46) And they shall know that I am Je-ho-vah their God, that brought them forth out of the land of E-gypt, that I might dwell among them: I am Je-ho-vah their God.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After reading the chapter carefully, propose a very brief topic-title for it.
2. To whom are the commands of 29:1, 3, 5 addressed?
3. What items were to be collected for the consecration ritual? (29:1-2)
4. Where was the consecration ritual to take place? (29:4)
5. What was the first act in the priest's consecration? (29:4)  
Of what may this act have been a symbol? (Matt. 3:13; John 17:19)
6. What did Moses put upon Aaron? (29:5-6) Of what may this act have been a symbol? (Isa. 11:5; 63:1-2; 59:17; Rev. 1:13; Psalm 45:8)
7. With what was Aaron anointed? How? (29:7; Psalm 133:2)  
Of what may Aaron's anointing have been a symbol? (Acts 10:38; Psalm 45:7; Heb. 1:9; Matt. 3:16; Luke 4:1, 14)
8. What garments were placed on Aaron's sons? (29:8-9)
9. How long was the priesthood to belong to Aaron's family? (29:9)
10. What does the word *consecrate* mean? (Do some research on this.) (29:9)
11. For what type of an offering was the bull brought? (29:10, 14; Compare Lev. 4:1-4)
12. Upon which offerings did the priests lay their hands? (29:10, 15, 19)
13. For whose sin was the bull offered? (29:10; Compare Heb. (5:1-3.))
14. Where was the blood of the bullock put and where was it poured out? (29:12) (Where was the blood of sin-offerings usually put and poured out? Lev. 4:5-7)
15. For what type of offering was the one ram offered? (29:15, 18)
16. How much of the ram was burned? (29:18; Lev. 1:9)
17. Where was the blood of the other ram placed? (29:20).

- What may the application of blood to Aaron's ear, thumb, and toe have symbolized? (Compare Ps. 40:6-9; Heb. 10:5-10; Zech. 3:6-8)
18. What designation (or descriptive name) is applied to the other ram? (29:26, 31)
  19. What two things were sprinkled on the priests' garments? Why? (29:21)
  20. What was placed into the priests' hands for a brief time? (29:22-24) What motions did the priests make while holding these items? (29:24)
  21. What part of the ram was to be saved for Aaron and his sons? (29:26-28; Compare Lev. 7:32-34)
  22. What type of an offering was the portion reserved for Aaron and his sons said to have been? (29:28; Compare Lev. 7:34)
  23. What was done with the high priest's garments when he died? (29:29)
  24. How long did a new priest wear his father's garments? (29:30)
  25. What type of sacrifice does the ram which the priests ate part of appear to have been? (29:31-32; Compare Lev. 7:29-33)
  26. What was done with the bread which Moses brought? (29:33, 2-3; Lev. 7:11-13)
  27. What was the law about "strangers" eating the priests' food? (29:33) What should this teach us about men taking the office and privileges of priesthood to themselves? (Heb. 5:4-6)
  28. Why did the priests eat the bread and flesh? (29:33)
  29. What was done with leftover bread and flesh? (29:34; Compare 12:10)
  30. For how long did the consecration ritual continue? (29:35-36)
  31. What object was cleansed by the sin-offerings? (29:36-37) Why should it need cleansing?
  32. Did touching the altar make whatever touched it holy? (29:37; Compare Haggai 2:12) Is 29:37b a simple statement

- of fact, or is it a command of God to be obeyed?
33. What was to be offered every day on the altar? (29:38, 42)
  34. When were they to be offered? (29:39, 41)
  35. What was offered along with the lambs? (29:40)
  36. What did these daily offerings symbolize to us now living? (29:42; Compare Heb. 9:24-26; 10:11-12; 1 John 1:7, 9; John 1:29)
  37. Where did God meet with Israel? (29:42-43; 25:21-22)
  38. What was the effect of God's glory and presence on the tabernacle? (29:43-44)
  39. What does *sanctify* mean? (29:43-44)
  40. What two great promises did God give to Israel in 29:45? Compare 25:8; Gen. 19:5-6; 17:1; Eph. 3:17; Rev. 21:3.
  41. What was Israel to know? (29:46; 6:7; 16:12) What would cause them to know this?
  42. How could Israel's knowing that Jehovah was their God be BOTH a result of and a means of God's dwelling among them? (29:46)
  43. Why state at the close "I am Jehovah their God"? (29:46)

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EXODUS 29: CONSECRATION OF PRIESTS;  
CONTINUAL BURNT-OFFERING

I. CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS; 29:1-37.

1. Items used in the consecration; 29:1-3.
2. Priests washed (29:4), clothed (29:5-6, 8-9), and anointed (29:7).
3. Bullock of sin-offering; 29:10-14.
4. Ram of burnt-offering; 29:15-18.
5. Ram of consecration; 29:19-28, 31-34. - Priest's garments inherited; 29:29-30.
6. Seven days of consecration; 29:35-37.

II. CONTINUAL BURNT-OFFERING; 29:38-42

1. Offered twice each day; 29:38-41.



2. Offered with meal- and drink-offerings; 29:41.
3. Offered at the place God met with Israel; 29:42.

### III. GOD'S PRESENCE WITH ISRAEL; 29:43-46.

1. Sanctified the Tent; 29:43.
2. Sanctified the priests; 29:44.
3. Caused Israel to know the LORD; 29:45-46.

### AARON, A TYPE OF CHRIST (our high priest)!

	Aaron	Christ
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#### I. SIMILARITIES

- |                      |            |                        |
|----------------------|------------|------------------------|
| 1. Called.           | Ex. 29:4   | Heb. 5:4-6; John 10:18 |
| 2. Washed.           | Ex. 29:4   | Matt. 3:13-15          |
| 3. Clothed.          | Ex. 29:5-6 | Isa. 63:1-2; Rev. 1:13 |
| 4. Anointed.         | Ex. 29:7   | Heb. 1:9; Acts 10:38   |
| 5. Perpetual priest. | Ex. 29:9   | Heb. 7:16-17           |

#### II. DIFFERENCES

1. Christ needs no sacrifices for His own sins; Ex. 29:10, 15-16; Heb. 7:26-28.
2. Christ never dies; Ex. 29:29; Heb. 7:23-24.
3. Christ need not repeat His sacrifice daily; Ex. 29:38-39; Heb. 10:11-12.

### AARON'S SONS, A TYPE OF CHRISTIANS (as Priests)!

	Aaron's Sons	Christians
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- |                       |            |                       |
|-----------------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Called.            | Ex. 29:4   | I Pet. 2:9            |
| 2. Washed.            | Ex. 29:4   | Heb. 10:22; Titus 3:5 |
| 3. Clothed.           | Ex. 29:8-9 | Rev. 3:18             |
| 4. Perpetual priests. | Ex. 29:9   | Rev. 1:6              |

- |                                        |                   |                  |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 5. Offered sacrifices.                 | Ex. 29:10, 15, 19 | Eph. 5:2         |
| 6. Consecrated in ear, thumb, and toe. | Ex. 29:20         | Rom. 12:1        |
| 7. Made HOLY.                          | Ex. 29:21         | I Pet. 1:16; 2:9 |
| 8. Sacrifices placed on hands.         | Ex. 29:24         | I Thess. 2:4     |
| 9. Partook of the sacrifices.          | Ex. 29:32         | Heb. 13:10-12    |
- 

### THE CONTINUAL BURNT-OFFERING

(A type of the death of Christ)!

(Exodus 29:38-42)

1. Offered every day; Ex. 29:38-39. (Christ's sacrifice in un-failingly available.)
  2. Offered with enrichment (meal- and drink-offerings); Ex. 29:40-41. (Christ's sacrifice is rich.)
  3. Offered to create fellowship with God; Ex. 29:42.  
(Christ's sacrifice brings fellowship with God. I John 1:3, 7)
- 

### GOD'S PRESENCE AMONG HIS PEOPLE (Ex. 29:43-46)

1. A *sacrifice-bought* presence; 29:42-43.
  2. A *sanctifying* presence; 29:43-44.  
(Sanctifies the tabernacle, altar, and priests)
  3. A *steadfast* presence; 29:45.
  4. A *knowledge-giving* presence; 29:46.
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## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

1. *What is in Exodus twenty-nine?*

The chapter deals with the consecration of Aaron as high priest and his sons as ordinary priests. The chapter closes with instructions about the every-day continual burnt-offerings (29:38-46). We entitle the chapter CONSECRATION OF PRIESTS.

The chapter is of great value to us because it illustrates how Christ Jesus received His high-priesthood and how He functions as priest. Also it illustrates how we Christians have become priests and how we function as priests. In other words, the things related in this chapter are TYPES for our enlightenment.

The eternal application of Exodus twenty-nine lies in the fact that true priests must be cleansed, clothed, anointed, installed by sacrifice, and consecrated in ear and hand and foot (29:20). Then and only then can they make sacrifices pleasing to God.

Exodus twenty-nine is very similar to Leviticus chapter eight.

Exodus twenty-nine is different in the character of its subject matter from the material in surrounding chapters. They deal with the materials and construction of the tabernacle, whereas this chapter deals with the *ritual* of consecration of priests and closes with the *ritual* of daily burnt-offerings. The insertion of this chapter gives *purpose* to the instructions about material things in the adjoining chapters.

Although chapter twenty-nine deals mainly with ceremonial instructions, the book of Exodus does not attempt to set forth a thorough description of the religious practices in Israel. Exodus sets forth just enough about the ceremonies to make the history it tells and the construction details it relates relevant and exciting. Exodus leaves to the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy the main body of data about Israel's religious rituals.

Thus, allusions in Exodus twenty-nine to the sin-offering (29:14, 36), the burnt-offering (29:18, 25, 42), wave-offering (29:41), drink-offering (29:40), etc., can only be understood after a study of Leviticus 1-7.

2. *What items were used in the priests' consecration?* (29:1-3)

(1) A young bull (literally, "one bull, a son of the cattle") for a sin-offering (29:10, 14; Lev. 8:2); (2) two rams, one for a burnt-offering (29:18) and the other for the "ram of consecration" (29:22); (3) unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil (resembling pancakes, or tortillas, or Arab *pita*), and unleavened wafers anointed (spread) with oil (29:32; Leviticus 2:1). These bread items were all made of fine white flour and were all brought in one basket. The bread formed a meal-offering (also called a grain-offering, or cereal-offering, or meat-offering in KJV). See Lev. 6:19-23.

The exact significance of meal-offerings is in no place in scripture set forth specifically. It was always offered with the burnt-offerings and with the peace-offerings (Num. 15:4-10). Some have felt that it was a symbol of Christ's human nature (Pink). Others (the author, for example) have felt it was a symbol of the *people* of God (who are often described as God's good harvest of grain) presenting themselves to God, along with Christ's presentation of Himself as our burnt-offering. In cases like this where the scriptures do not definitely inform us about things, we must avoid strong, dogmatic, divisive opinions.

3. *What was the first act in the priests' consecration?* (29:4; 40:12; Lev. 8:6)

They were *washed* with water. This was probably done at the laver (30:17-20). This outward washing certainly is to be viewed as a symbol of their inner cleansing of mind and conscience. But it was also an essential act of obedience in bringing about this inner cleansing.

It is noteworthy that Christ's "washing" (his baptism) was the *first* act as He began His ministry. (Matt. 3:13). However, unlike Aaron he did not need cleansing of soul;

He was washed only to set us an example.

Aaron's sons were washed as well as their father. The washing of the sons appears to be a type of the baptism of believers in Christ. Our baptism is both a symbol of the inward cleansing God gives, and an act of faith required by God to bring about the cleansing. See Titus 3:5; Eph. 5:26; Heb. 10:22. As priests unto God our garments are washed in the blood of the lamb (Rev. 7:14).

4. *What clothes were placed upon the priests?* (29:5-6, 8-9; Lev. 8:7-9, 13)

The same garments are mentioned here<sup>1</sup> that are described in chapter twenty-eight. The breeches of 28:42 are not mentioned in 29:5-6, 8-9, because the priests themselves put these on, and this passage lists only the garments which Moses placed on them.

Leviticus 8:8 mentions specifically that the Urim and Thummin were placed in the breastplate as they were clothed.

5. *What was poured on Aaron's head?* (29:7; Lev. 8:12)

The special anointing oil was poured upon him. The composition of this oil is described in Lev. 30:22-33. It was a unique compound prepared exclusively for the purpose of anointing. It was composed of olive oil and several spices. It appears that only the high priest had the holy anointing oil poured on his head. Compare Ps. 133:2. However, Ex. 30:30 does indicate that his sons were also anointed. Perhaps their anointing consisted of that sprinkling of oil and blood referred to in 29:21, where the oil is said to have been sprinkled upon them and upon their garments.

The anointing of Aaron was a type of the anointing of

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<sup>1</sup>The RSV omits "Aaron and his sons" from 29:9, although it is in the Hebrew text. This omission does not change the meaning, but it probably should be retained because its presence reemphasizes the distinctive position of Aaron and his sons.

The Hebrew term for "holy crown" in 29:6 is *nezer* (meaning sprout, shoot, branch), whereas in 28:36 the golden "plate" in Hebrew is called *tsits* (meaning blossom, flower). The use of the two different terms for the golden plate on Aaron's turban is hardly a proof for multiple or composite authorship of the two chapters. Two descriptive terms are frequently used to refer to the same object.

Christ Jesus. The very word *messiah* (or Christ) means "the anointed one." Immediately after Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him and He was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power. See Acts 10:38; Ps. 45:7; Heb. 1:9; Luke 3:22; 4:1, 14. These passages seem to indicate that the anointing oil was a symbol (or type) of the Holy Spirit.

Aaron's sons were anointed as was Aaron himself. Similarly Christians are anointed with the Holy Spirit. (I John 2:20, 27; 4:13). When we obey the gospel, and repent and are baptized, we receive God's Spirit as a gift (Acts 5:32; 2:38). We certainly are not anointed in the same degree that Christ was, but we all become partakers of the Holy Spirit.

The fact that Israel's priests, kings, and prophets were anointed as part of their installation into office suggests that to do God's work all human talents need the special touch of God's Spirit.

6. *How long was the priesthood to belong to Aaron's family?* (29:9, 33; Num. 18:7)

The priesthood was given to them by a "perpetual statute." (This may also be translated "a statute for the distant future." See Harkavy's *Lexicon*, under '*olam*.)<sup>2</sup> Thus their priesthood was to be permanent as long as the statute (the law) was in effect.

God later prophesied the appearance of another priest (referring to Christ Jesus who was to come), who would be of the order (or likeness) of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4). The coming of a priest from an entirely different family and people certainly indicated that the law giving the priesthood to Aaron's family "by a perpetual statute" was to be abolished (Heb. 7:11-18).

7. *What does "consecrate" mean?* (29:9)

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<sup>2</sup>*Olam* is variously translated "distant future," "everlasting," "eternity." It certainly does not always imply an endless eternity to come. For example, it is used in Deut. 15:17, where it clearly means only "for life."

In the Hebrew language the words literally mean "to fill the hand." This literal rendering is very suggestive and causes us to ponder the fact that God's service should fill our hands, and also our minds, lips, etc.

Nevertheless, it seems that the expression "fill the hands" had lost much of its purely literal meaning and had become just a synonym for "install" or "ordain." (Note the R.S.V. and New English Bible.)

8. *What was the purpose of the sacrifice of the bull?* (29:10-14; Lev. 8:14-17)

It was to be a sin-offering (29:14). The sin-offerings are described in Leviticus chapter four and 6:24-30. They were offered for sins done unintentionally and unawares. These sins might include violations of anything which Jehovah had commanded not to be done (Lev. 4:2).

When Aaron and his sons laid hands upon the bull before it was sacrificed, they were making an acknowledgement of their sins. As men "compassed with infirmity" they needed first to offer sacrifice for their own sins before they could offer for others. (Heb. 5:2; 7:27). Killing the bull was an admission, "We deserve to die, but God in His grace accepts the death of this creature instead of my death."

Note that Aaron and his sons laid hands on all three of the offerings made during their consecration (29:10, 15, 19). ALL the priests laid hands upon the bullock of the sin-offering.

The act of the priests in laying hands on the bull was like to our act of confessing, "He (Jesus) was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities" (Isa. 53:5).

Moses himself killed the sin-offering. Priests did not usually have to kill the sacrifices themselves. (Lev. 1:5)

The application of the blood to the horns of the altar of burnt-offering suggests the POWER of the sacrifices. Compare 27:2.

The "inwards" of 29:13 are the entrails. The "caul of

the liver" (29:13) refers to fleshly tissues coupled with and round about the liver. The word translated "caul" literally refers to something which is left over or redundant. (R.S.V. renders it "appendage of the liver.")

"Burn them upon the altar" (29:13) literally reads "make them smoke upon the altar." This expression is applied to burning a sacrifice or burning incense.

Parts of the bull of the sin-offering were burned upon the altar, and parts (the sin, flesh, dung) were burned outside the camp. The burning outside the camp hints that the animal had taken the sins of the offerer upon it in such a way that God viewed it as inappropriate for offering on the altar. Even sin that has been removed by sacrifice has an abhorrent quality about it. Compare Lev. 4:11; Heb. 13:2.

9. *What was the purpose of the sacrifice of the first ram?* (29:15-18; Lev. 8:18-21)

It was to be a *burnt-offering* unto Jehovah. Burnt-offerings are described in Leviticus chapter one and 6:8-12. The burnt-offering was a type of Christ's death on the cross.

The fact that the WHOLE ram was burned has been interpreted to signify that the priests gave themselves completely to the Lord. Much more probably it signifies the TOTAL destruction due to sin and to the sinner. Burnt-offerings illustrate the utter destruction coming to the sinner in hell, and the total ruin endured by Christ when He died.

The numerous sacrifices of the law speak of many things - of the holiness of God, of the sin of men, of the power in sacrifices, of the wickedness of sin, of Christ the lamb to come.<sup>3</sup>

Sprinkling the blood about the altar (29:16, 12) reminds us that God's offerings must be made where God designates. It is the altar that makes a gift holy (Matt. 23:19).

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<sup>3</sup>Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 168.



Unless brought to the altar, blood was just blood. Similarly, a change in our way of living, unless done with a recognition that Christ is our altar, does not make that change a "repentance unto life."

The mention of "a sweet savor (smell)" reminds us of Noah's sacrifice (Gen. 8:2). A "sweet savor" does not necessarily suggest that the sacrifice smells like perfume. But is one that is agreeable to the Lord. Christ gave himself for us "an offering and a sacrifice unto God for a sweet-smelling savor." (Eph. 5:2)

10. *Where was the blood of the second ram applied?* (29:19-21; Lev. 8:22-24, 30)

The blood of this ram was placed upon the priests - upon the tip of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the toe of the right foot. Also, the blood was sprinkled upon the altar round about (that is, all around it). Further, it was sprinkled upon the priests and their garments.

This second ram (compare 29:1, 15) is called the "ram of consecration." (Note 29:22, 26.) Literally this would read, "the ram of filling (the hands)!" Compare 29:9. Its use was special and unique as a part of the priests' consecration, even though it does seem to have been sort of a peace-offering. The peace-offering was the one offering partly eaten by the offerers. See Ex. 29:31-34; Lev. 7:15-17.

The application of blood to the priest's ear, toe, and thumb suggests that his ears were to be consecrated to hearing God's words, his feet to walking in God's courts, and his hands to God's works.

The blood on their ears also recalls to our minds that a slave's ear was bored if he wished to commit himself to perpetual service to his master (21:6). The priest was committing himself to perpetual service to God.

The application of blood to both *priest* and *altar* suggests the close linkage of priests and sacrifice. Offering sacrifices was one of their primary duties. But sacrifice was also their only hope for personal acceptance before God. Similarly, we must preach Christ and Him crucified (I Cor. 2:2);

but we must recognize as we preach that the cross of Christ is our personal hope and glory (Gal. 6:14) and not just something which we preach to others.

The sprinkling of a mixture of blood and anointing oil (29:21) upon the priests further links together the blood atonement and service to God. Heb. 9:22 tells us that all things are cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no remission.

The sprinkling of the blood hallowed (made holy) both the priests and their garments (29:21-33).

We need not be disturbed by the thought that sprinkling blood and oil upon the priests' costly garments would spatter and befoul them. Some things are much more important than spotless tidiness! Also, not a large amount of oil and blood was sprinkled, probably only a few drops.

11. *What was placed upon the priests' hands during their consecration?* (29:22-25; Lev. 8:25-29)

Several parts of the body of the ram of consecration and one piece of each of the various kinds of bread mentioned in 29:2 were placed upon the hands of Aaron and of his sons. These items were then "waved" before the face of the Lord. The verb "shalt wave" in 29:24 reads literally "thou shalt wave," suggesting that Moses waved the flesh and the bread. However, 29:25 indicates that Moses did not take back the flesh and bread from the priests' hands until after it had been waved. Obviously then the priests did the waving, and Moses himself only waved the flesh and bread in that he caused Aaron and his sons to wave it.

The act of placing parts of the offerings in the hands of the priests seems to symbolize and visualize the fact that they were being given the authority to handle sacred offerings and bring them before the Lord. In a similar way Christ has been fully qualified to bring our offering (Himself!) before God. (Heb. 5:8-9)

Possibly also the waving served to dramatize that the offering was to be seen and known by all men everywhere, and was offered to God, who is everywhere.

The movement indicated by “waving” was a horizontal motion. It may have been forward and back again, like the motion of sawing, as if extending the offering towards the altar. (Isa. 10:15 uses the verb *nuph*, translated “to wave,” to refer to the motion of sawing.) Also, the waving motion may have been a right-to-left motion, side to side, like the motions used in cutting with a sickle. (*Nuph* expresses this type of motion in Deut. 23:25 [23:26 in Hebrews].) “Wave” is not necessarily thought of as being in contrast to “heave” (in 29:27), as if waving were horizontal motions and heaving were up-and-down motions. See 29:27.

- The “rump” of 29:22 K.J.V. refers to the “fat tail” of the Oriental sheep. Their tails are thick, wide (often six inches or thereabouts), heavy, and full of fatty tissue.
12. *What was done with the breast of Aaron’s ram of consecration?* (29:26-28; Lev. 8:29)

The breast (meat from the lower abdomen) was waved by Moses before the Lord, and then it became Moses’ special portion for food. This breast of the wave-offering thereafter (after this one original priestly consecration) was to be the priest’s portion of sacrifices, along with the thigh (shoulder) of heave-offerings. See Lev. 10:15; Deut. 18:3. Also, peace-offerings were partly waved before the Lord, and, then the wave-breast of peace-offerings was reserved for the priests to eat. (Lev. 7:30)

The breast was given to Moses on this one occasion because he filled the office of priest for Aaron and his son during their consecration. But thereafter it was a part reserved for the priests’ food.

The term “heave-offering” (29:28) (Heb. *terumah*) simply means an oblation or something offered to God or to the priests. The root of the word (*rum*, to be raised, to be high) suggests a raised position, but does not definitely state that it was handled with up-and-down motions during its presentation.

As Moses and Aaron received part of the meat brought

to the altar for sacrifices as support for their priestly work, so also the Lord has commanded that those who now proclaim the gospel shall live by the support of those who hear the gospel. (I Cor. 9:14)

Leviticus 8:30 gives the instruction to sprinkle Aaron and his sons with blood and oil *after* the instructions about the wave-offering. Ex. 29:21ff mentions the sprinkling *before* the instructions about the wave-offering. We need not assume from this (as Noth does. See *op. cit.*, pp. 232-233) that Exodus contradicts Leviticus, or that there is indication of "secondary additions" to the Biblical text. We do not know exactly why there is the difference in order, but it is only a very slight difference. We doubt that this Biblical record of the priests' consecration was recorded with such detail that it could function as a step-by-step procedure manual for repeating the ceremony.

13. *What was done with the high priest's garments when he died? (29:29-30)*

They were passed on to his son after him, and the son was anointed in them and consecrated in them. God intended that there would ALWAYS be a qualified priest on the job to enable men to approach Him acceptably. Compare Heb. 7:23-25.

Numbers 20:25-26 tells of the transfer of Aaron's garments to his son Eleazar.

The new priest wore the robes of his father seven days at the start of his priestly career. These seven days correspond to the seven days that Aaron and his sons remained within the tent of meeting during their consecration. (Lev. 8:33, 35). "Tent of meeting" (KJV, "tabernacle of the congregation") usually refers to the room called the Holy Place (27:21).

"Liberal" critics generally assume (wrongly, we feel) that the instructions about the regalia of high priest were not formulated or put into practice until the post-exilic time after the Babylonian captivity, a thousand years after Moses' time. This is surely NOT the way the Biblical text

tells it.

14. *What was done with the flesh of the ram of consecration?* (29:31-34; Lev. 8:31-32)

Moses was to boil it in a holy place (not THE Holy Place), and Aaron and his sons were to eat it along with the bread (29:2, 23) at the door of the tent of meeting (the Holy Place).

How meaningful it was that Aaron and his sons should EAT those things by which atonement (at-one-ment) was made for them, and by which they had been consecrated and sanctified! (29:18, 25). Similarly, the sacrifice of Christ for us not only provides us forgiveness, but also sustains our spiritual life (John 6:51).

Any bread or flesh which the priests did not eat was to be burned the next morning (29:34). See notes on 12:20 for possible reasons for the destruction of leftover food.

"Atonement" in 29:33 (and elsewhere) refers to *covering*. The Hebrew verb translated "make atonement" (*kaphar*) is related to the word translated "mercy-seat" (*kapporeth*). This idea of atonement (covering) is very prominent in God's covenant with Israel.

No stranger dared to eat the holy food specially reserved for Aaron and the priests. "Stranger" in 29:37 refers to anyone not of the family of Aaron.

15. *How long did the consecration ritual last?* (29:35; Lev. 8:33-36)

It lasted seven days and then on the eighth day Aaron and his sons, as newly consecrated priests, offered the first sacrifices themselves.

In their first sacrifices they offered a calf for a sin-offering and a ram for a burnt-offering (Lev. 9:1-2). It is very noticeable that after all the offerings Moses had made for Aaron and his sons that they themselves had to offer for themselves sin- and burnt-offerings (Lev. 9:7-8). Only then did they present the people's offering (oblation Lev. 9:15). Truly the blood of bulls and goats could NOT take away sins (Heb. 10:4, 11).

The number *seven* frequently suggests completeness. Perhaps the seven-day stay in the tent of meeting points toward the completeness of the consecration of the priests.

16. *What sacrifices did Moses offer during the seven days of the priests' consecration? (29:36-37)*

Every day of the seven he offered the bull of the sin-offering. (See 29:10, 14.) These particular offerings were made primarily to make atonement for the altar itself. Ex. 29:36 can be translated rather literally to read, "And the bull of the sin-offering thou shalt offer daily for the atonement, and thou shalt purge (upon) the altar in thy making atonement for (or upon) it, and thou shalt anoint it to make it holy."

The result of these sacrifices was that the altar became MOST holy (literally, "holy of holy things"). Everyone touching the altar would be "holy." Inasmuch as no one was to touch the altar except the priests (not even the Levites; see Num. 4:15), the statement about the altar making whoever touched it holy really only serves to intensify the "holiness" of the priests. Certainly "lay" persons did not become "holy" by touching the altar either intentionally or accidentally. Compare 30:29; Haggai 2:12.

Christ is our altar (Heb. 13:10-12). The sanctification of the altar at the tabernacle by Moses suggests that great significance is attached to Christ's sanctifying himself unto God's service. See John 17:19.

17. *What was to be offered on the altar every day perpetually? (29:38-42; Num. 28:3-8)*

A continual burnt-offering was to be made daily throughout Israel's generations, consisting of two yearling lambs, one offered each morning and one offered in the evening. (Literally, "between the two evenings." See 12:6.)

Along with each burnt-offering a meal-offering was offered, consisting of a tenth part of an ephah of fine flour mingled with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil. Also, the fourth part of a hin of wine or a drink-offering was poured on the burnt-offering. See Num. 28:15; Ex.

27:20. One-fourth of a hin would be about a quart.

A tenth of an ephah of flour would be about three and a half pints. (The ephah itself is about three-fifths bushel.)

Offering these daily burnt-offerings constituted the major function of the brazen altar. Omission of these daily sacrifices was a matter of greatest consequence (Daniel 8:11).

The continual burnt-offerings seem to have symbolized the future death of Christ, that it would be a continuously effective sacrifice for us. As there was always a burnt-offering smouldering on the altar, so the death of Christ is a constantly available sacrifice for us.

Regarding the significance of the meal-offerings, see notes on 29:2-3. The significance of the drink-offering of wine is not explained in scripture. It certainly was an added enrichment of the sacrifice, and Paul compares his giving his own life to a drink-offering (Phil. 2:17).

18. *Where would God meet with Israel?* (29:42-44)

God would meet with Israel at the door of the tent of meeting (the Holy place). For examples of God doing this, see Num. 12:5; 14:10; 16:19, 42; 20:6.

Note that God met with *Israel* and not just with the priests alone. God's presence was for all.

God had promised to commune (talk) with Israel from above the mercy-seat on the ark (25:22). But because almost no one entered the room where the ark was, God revealed his presence at a nearby place where people could come, at the door of the Tent.

God's presence *sanctified* (made holy) the tent and the altar.

God describes his presence as "my glory." This refers to the cloud described in 40:34ff.

God's presence among His people is precious! Rev. 21:3 promises, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall *dwell* with them."

In 29:43 a subject must be supplied for the verb "shall be

sanctified." The King James and American Standard versions supply the word "Tent" (or tabernacle), and this appears to be correct. Ex. 29:44 appears to contain a statement parallel to 29:43, and 29:44 definitely mentions the Tent. R.S.V. renders the subject of the verb in 29:43 indefinitely: "It shall be sanctified by my glory." To us this seems unnecessarily vague, even though the Hebrew text does not actually state the subject. (Note that *Tent* is in italics, which indicates that it is not actually in the Hebrew text.)

19. *Who would dwell amongst Israel? (29:45)*

God himself would dwell among them and be their God. See 25:8; 19:5. Ex. 6:7: "I will be to you a God." Gen. 17:7: "And I will establish my covenant between thee and thee and thy seed after thee . . . *to be a God* unto thee and to thy seed after thee." God's promise to dwell with Israel (in 29:45) is a fulfillment of promises given as far back as the time of Abraham six hundred years earlier.

20. *What would Israel come to know because of God's presence among them? (29:46)*

Israel would know that He was Jehovah their God! Over and over again in Exodus God had stated that this was His great purpose - that they would know that He was JEHOVAH. See 6:7 notes.

Sadly we must state that in spite of all of God's deliverances for Israel and the wonders He did among them, many Israelites never really learned that God was the LORD. Therefore, when later tests came upon them, they failed to trust God.

Note that the continuation of God's dwelling among Israel was conditioned upon their realizing that He was the Lord.

God closed the instructions about the priests' consecration and the daily burnt offerings by asserting, "I am Jehovah their God." This same declaration is found in many other passages. See Lev. 18:2, 4, 6, 21, 20. The fact



that God is the LORD Jehovah is all the authorization that God needed for Him to command Israel or anyone else.

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THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**30** And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: of acacia wood shalt thou make it. (2) A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; four-square shall it be; and two cubits shall be the height thereof: the horns thereof shall be of one piece with it. (3) And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof; and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about. (4) And two golden rings shalt thou make for it under the crown thereof; upon the two ribs thereof, upon the two sides of it shalt thou make them; and they shall be for places for staves wherewith to bear it. (5) And thou shalt make the staves of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. (6) And thou shalt put it before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy-seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee. (7) And Aar-on shall burn thereon incense of sweet spices: every morning, when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn it. (8) And when Aar-on lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn it, a perpetual incense before Je-ho-vah throughout your generations. (9) Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt-offering, nor meal-offering; and ye shall pour no drink offering thereon. (10) And Aar-on shall make atonement upon the horns of it once in the year; with the blood of the sin-offering of atonement once in the year shall he make atonement for it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto Je-ho-vah.

(11) And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (12) When thou takest the sum of the children of Is-ra-el, according to

those that are numbered of them, then shall they give every man a ransom, for his soul unto Je-ho-vah, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. (13) This they shall give, every one that passeth over unto them that are numbered: half a shek-el after the shek-el of the sanctuary (the shek-el is twenty gerahs), half a shek-el for an offering to Je-ho-vah. (14) Every one that passeth over unto them that are numbered, from twenty years old and upward, shall give the offering of Je-ho-vah. (15) The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half shek-el, when they give the offering of Je-ho-vah, to make atonement for your souls. (16) And thou shalt take the atonement money from the children of Is-ra-el, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tent of meeting; that it may be a memorial for the children of Is-ra-el before Je-ho-vah, to make atonement for your souls.

(17) And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (18) Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and the base thereof of brass, whereat to wash. And thou shalt put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. (19) And Aar-on and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: (20) when they go into the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire unto Je-ho-vah. (21) So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations.

(22) Moreover Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (23) Take thou also unto thee the chief spices: of flowing myrrh five hundred *shek-els*, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty, (24) and of cassia five hundred, after the shek-el of the sanctuary, and of olive oil a hin; (25) and thou shalt make it a holy anointing oil, a perfume compounded after the art of the perfumer: it shall be a holy anointing oil. (26) And thou shalt anoint therewith the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, (27) and the table and all the vessels

thereof, and the candlestick and the vessels thereof, and the altar of incense, (28) and the altar of burnt-offering with all the vessels thereof, and the laver and the base thereof. (29) And thou shalt sanctify them, that they may be most holy: whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy. (30) And thou shalt anoint Aar-on and his sons, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office. (31) And thou shalt speak unto the children of Is-ra-el, saying, This shall be a holy anointing oil unto me throughout your generations. (32) Upon the flesh of man shall it not be poured, neither shall ye make any like it, according to the composition thereof: it is holy, *and* it shall be holy unto you. (33) Whosoever compoundeth any like it, or whosoever putteth any of it upon a stranger, he shall be cut off from his people.

(34) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stac-te, and on-y-cha, and gal-ba-num; sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a light weight; (35) and thou shalt make of it incense, a perfume after the art of the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure *and* holy: (36) and thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy. (37) And the incense which thou shalt make, according to the composition thereof ye shall not make for yourselves: it shall be unto thee holy for Je-ho-vah. (38) Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereof, he shall be cut off from his people.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTY  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading, propose a brief summary, topic, or theme(s) for the chapter.
2. What were the materials and the dimensions of the altar of incense? (30:1-2)
3. How were the horns of the altar connected to the rest of

the altar? (30:2)

4. What other items of furniture were made of the same materials as the altar and had several features in common? (25:10-12, 23-26)
5. How was the altar of incense carried about? (30:4-5; Num. 4:11)
6. Where was the altar of incense positioned in the tabernacle? (30:6; 40:5)
7. With what tabernacle room was the altar of incense sometimes associated? Why? (Heb. 9:2-4; I Kings 6:22)
8. When was incense burned on the altar? (30:8)
9. Of what was incense a symbol? (Ps. 141:2; Rev. 5:8; 8:4-5). What might the REGULAR burning of incense suggest about our devotional activities? (Compare Ps. 55:17)
10. What was NOT to be put on the altar of incense? (30:9)
11. What special act was done at the horns of the altar once a year? (30:10)
12. What was to be paid when a census was taken? (30:12-13)
13. What does this census rule suggest that God considers about his people? (Ezek. 18:4)
14. How much were the people to pay? (30:13)
15. Who was to pay it? (30:14-15)
16. As far as the people themselves were concerned, what was the purpose of this payment? (30:12, 15, 16)
17. What was the money used for? (30:16; 38:25-28)
18. What was the laver made of? (30:18, 38:25-28)
19. Where was the laver placed? (30:18)
20. What was the laver used for? (30:19)
21. When was the laver used? (30:20)
22. How seriously did God regard the washings at the laver? (30:21)
23. Of what may the laver have been a type? (Titus 3:5; Eph. 5:26; Rev. 7:14; Heb. 10:22; I John 1:9)
24. What were spices and oil combined to make? (30:22-25)
25. What was anointed? Who was anointed? (30:26-30)
26. What restrictions were placed on the use and making of anointing oil? (30:31-33)

27. Of what is anointing oil a symbol? (Heb. 1:9; Acts 10:38; Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18; Psalm 45:6-8)
  28. What were sweet spices and frankincense used to make? (30:34-35)
  29. Where was incense placed? (30:36, 7)
  30. Where would God meet with Israel? (30:36)
  31. What restriction was placed on making incense? (30:37-38) Why?
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EXODUS THIRTY: INCENSE  
(and other Tabernacle Features)

- A. *Altar of Incense*; 30:1-10.
    1. Its pattern; 30:1-5.
    2. Its position; 30:6.
    3. Its rituals; 30:7-10.
  - B. *Atonement money*; 30:11-16.
    1. Collected during a census; 30:11-13.
    2. Collected from all alike; 30:14-15.
    3. Collected for tabernacle service; 30:16.
  - C. *Laver*; 30:17-21.
    1. Material; 30:17-18.
    2. Position; 30:18.
    3. Function; 30:19-21.
  - D. *Anointing oil*; 30:19:33.
    1. Formula; 30:19-25.
    2. Function; 30:26-31.
    3. Restrictions of use; 30:32-33.
  - E. *Incense*; 30:34-38.
    1. Formula; 30:34-35.
    2. Function; 30:36.
    3. Restrictions on use; 30:37-38.
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INCENSE, A TYPE OF PRAYER! (Ex. 30:1-10, 34-38)

1. Purpose; 30:1. (A sacrifice!; Heb. 13:15)
  2. Pattern; 30:1-2. (Must be *God's* pattern!)
  3. Power; 30:2. (Had horns!)
  4. Position; 30:6. (Nearest to God!)
  5. Practice; 30:7-8, 36. (Regular!)
  6. Purity; 30:35.
  7. Preciousness; 30:3, 34-35.
  8. Pulverized! 30:37.
  9. Private property! 30:37-38.
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GOD'S COUNTED ONES! (30:11-16)  
 "All souls are mine!" (Ezek. 18:4)

1. Those counted need ransom! 30:11-12.
  2. Those counted must pay! 30:13.
  3. Those counted are all equal before God; 30:15.
  4. Those counted render "service"; 30:16.
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EQUALITY BEFORE GOD! (Ex. 30:12-15)

1. ALL CLAIMED by God; 30:12.
  2. All need atonement; 30:12, 15.
  3. All redeemable by God; 30:15.
  4. All useful for service; 30:16.
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THE WASHING OF PRIESTS (Ex. 30:17-21)

1. Commanded by God; 30:19.
  2. Essential for life; 30:20, 21.
  3. Necessary for service; 30:20.
  4. Perpetual in practice; 30:21.
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ANOINTING OIL - A TYPE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT!  
(Ex. 30:22-23)

1. Precious; 30:22-25.
  2. Pure; 30:25.
  3. Pervasive! 30:26-29.
  4. Sanctifying! 30:29.
  5. Qualifying; 30:30.
  6. Not for the world; 30:32-33; John 14:17.
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EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER THIRTY

1. *What is in Exodus thirty?*

The chapter has a MIXTURE of subjects in it. Subjects include (1) the incense altar, (2) atonement money, (3) laver, (4) anointing oil, (5) incense formula. Inasmuch as the INCENSE is mentioned both first and last in the chapter, it is probably our most helpful memory aid to recall the contents of the chapter under the heading of INCENSE, etc.

Although the material of the chapter is mixed, ALL of it is essential for an accurate comprehension of the tabernacle. Without this material, our understanding would be hopelessly deficient.

Note that most of the paragraphs are introduced by the formula, "And Jehovah said unto Moses, . . . ." (32:11, 17, 22, 34). This same introductory expression continues to appear in chapter 31 (31:1, 12). Indeed, it appears that chapter 31 is very closely joined to chapter 30, and probably should not even be divided from it by a separate chapter number.

We do not know why the segments of information in chapter thirty are grouped together just as they are. It would seem more orderly if the section about the altar of incense were placed back in chapter twenty-five with the

discussion of the lampstand and table. (Indeed, in chapter thirty-seven these three are grouped together.) The discussion of the laver would seem more natural back with that of the altar in chapter twenty-seven. (The two are associated in 38:1-8.) No one really knows why the material in chapter thirty is given just at this point as it is. In saying this we are NOT finding fault with the order that God's word presents its material. We are just stating a fact.

We have good reasons to reject the skeptical critics' notion that chapters thirty and thirty-one are very later supplements to the Priestly narrative,<sup>1</sup> and likely were written as late as the Babylonian exile.<sup>2</sup> If they really were "late additions," the editors would probably have stuck them into the narrative at points where they would appear to fit more naturally.

2. *What were the materials and dimensions of the altar of incense?* (30:1-5; 37:25-28; 40:5, 26; Lev. 4:7)

It was made of acacia wood. (See 25:5.) It was overlaid with pure gold, so that it is called the "golden altar" in 39:38 and Num. 4:11, to distinguish it from the brazen altar of burnt-offering. It stood two cubits (36") high, and had equal width and length of one cubit (18"). Horns projected from its four upper corners. The horns were made of one piece with the rest of the altar, rather than as separate pieces attached to it. It had a crown, or moulding, around the edge of its top, as did the table of showbread and the ark of the covenant (25:11, 24). Whether this was for ornamentation, or to keep material from sliding off its top is not stated.

The altar was transported by using staves that were thrust through golden rings anchored into the sides of the altar under its crown, very much like those on the ark of the covenant and the table of showbread. The staves were of acacia wood overlaid with gold. For the method of

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<sup>1</sup>Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

<sup>2</sup>*Broadman Bible Commentary*, I, (1969), p. 446.



covering and transporting the altar of incense, see Num. 4:11.

3. *Where was the altar of incense positioned in the tabernacle?* (30:6)

It was placed in the Holy Place, just in front of the veil. Just behind the veil was the Most Holy Place, containing the ark of the covenant, covered over by the mercy-seat. The smoke from the altar of incense wafted past the veil into the Holy of Holies, and thus, as it were, into the very presence of God.

The mention here of the mercy-seat along with the facts about the incense altar suggests that the altar of incense had a very intimate relationship to the ark and mercy-seat. Smoking incense was brought into the Holy of Holies on the day of atonement (Lev. 16:12-13). For these reasons, and perhaps others, the altar of incense in Solomon's temple is spoken of as belonging to the oracle (Holy of Holies) (I Kings 6:22). Also Heb. 9:4 speaks of the golden altar as being in the Holy of Holies.

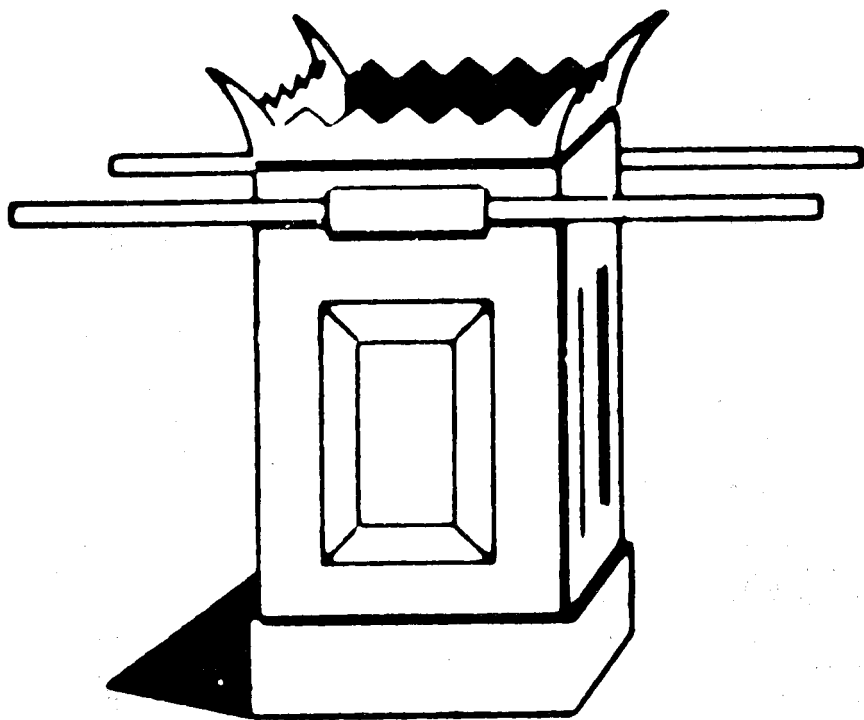
4. *When was incense burned on the altar?* (30:7-8)

Every morning and evening. When Aaron dressed (literally "made good") the lamps in the morning, he burned incense. Also when the lamps were lighted in the evenings (literally, "between the two evenings." See 12:6) he burned incense. "Morning by morning" Aaron caused the incense "to smoke." (These verses sound as if the lamp did not burn during the daytime, but compare 27:20-21; 25:37.)

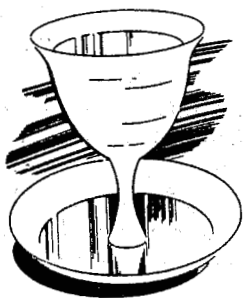
5. *What was NOT to be put on the altar of incense?* (30:9)

No strange incense, no burnt-offerings, no meal-offering, and no drink-offerings. Sin-offerings were made on its horns once a year. (30:10). "Strange" (or foreign) incense would be incense with any formula other than that described in 30:34-38. There was a distinctiveness about the use of this altar that was not to be compromised.

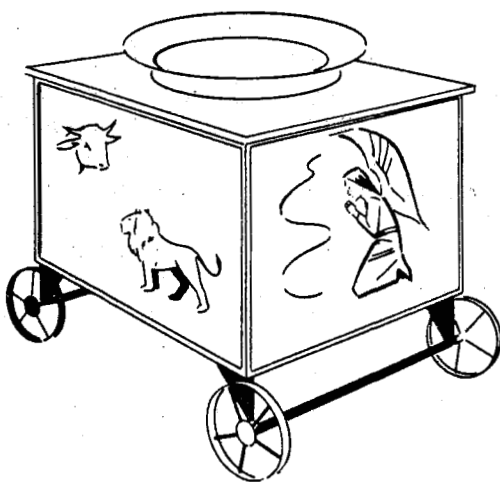
The "strange incense" of 30:9 is probably not the "strange fire" offered by Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1), although the "strange fire" incident shows how seriously



Altar of Incense



Conjectural form  
of the laver and its base



Wheeled laver of the type made for Solomon's temple. It is remotely possible that the laver in the tabernacle may have had resemblances to this design.

- God regarding His commands about the incense. See 30:37-38. We do not know with certainty what this "strange fire" was. On the annual day of atonement the priests was to obtain coals of fire from the altar of burnt-offering (Lev. 16:12). Upon these coals he placed incense as he went into the Holy of Holies. It appears that the fire used by Nadab and Abihu was taken from some place besides the altar. It is possible that when the priest burned incense on the altar each day, he did it by bringing in coals of fire from the brazen altar, although we do not know this for sure.
6. *What special act was done upon the horns of the altar once a year?* (30:10)

Once a year Aaron made atonement for the altar by placing the blood of the sin-offering upon the horns of the altar of incense. (Concerning sin-offerings, see 29:10-14.)

The preposition "upon" (Heb. *'al*) in 30:10 probably means "for" it. This preposition is used in 29:36 to refer to making atonement "for" the altar of burnt-offering. Similarly Ex. 30:15 has "atonement *for* (*'al*) your souls." Similarly Lev. 16:18. Certainly the word means "upon," but here it seems to have the added meaning of "for." The A.S.V. has "upon" in the text and "Or *for*" in the margin.

We agree with Keil and Delitzsch<sup>3</sup> that the reference in Lev. 16:18 to putting blood "upon the horns of the altar round about" refers to the *altar of burnt-offering* rather than to the altar of incense (even though most commentators hold the opposite view). The expression "go out" in Lev. 16:18 refers not to Aaron's going out of the Most Holy Place into the Holy Place, but to his going out of the tent of meeting into the court.

However, as Keil and Delitzsch also assert, the allusion to Aaron's making atonement "for the tent of meeting"

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<sup>3</sup>*Op. cit.*, II, p. 400.

(Holy Place) most probably refers to the yearly act of atonement on the altar of incense referred to in Ex. 30:10. After making this atonement for the tent of meeting by placing the blood of the sin-offering on the horns of the altar of incense, then Aaron went out to the altar of burnt offering to make atonement for it also.

Note that man's use made God's golden altar contaminated.

7. *How did God view the altar of incense?* (30:10)

It was *most holy* unto Jehovah, literally "holy (or holiness) of holies." The same expression is applied to the altar of burnt-offering (29:37; 40:10), to all the vessels of the sanctuary (30:28-29), and to the offerings of Israel that were partly eaten by the priests (Num. 18:9-10; Lev. 2:3).

8. *What was symbolized by the incense?* (Rev. 5:8; 8:4-5)

Prayer! "Let my *prayer* be set forth as incense before thee, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Psalm 141:2).

Incense functioned also as sort of a *sacrifice*. The very fact that it was offered on an *altar* (Heb. *zebach*, a place of sacrifice) suggests the sacrificial quality in prayer. "In every place incense shall be *offered* unto my name" (Mal. 1:11). This should cause us to regard prayer as very necessary and serious in our Christian activities.

The *closeness* of the altar of incense to the veil and to the ark of the covenant suggests that we are never closer to God than when we pray. Only a thin veil separates us from the very face of God, and in Christ even this veil is removed! (II Cor. 3:14-18)

The presence of horns on the altar of incense suggests the *power* of prayer. Compare 27:2.

The necessity of *regularity* in prayer is suggested by the regular daily offering of incense. "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice" (Psalm 55:17; Compare Dan. 6:10.)

The importance of *reading God's word* ("a lamp unto my feet"; Ps. 119:105) at the time of our prayers may be

suggested by the fact that the incense was offered at the same time that the lampstand was tended.

The concept of prayer as a *tribute* to God as king is at least hinted in the fact that the burning of incense was done as a tribute to great kings. See II Chron. 16:14; 21:19.

There is NO New Testament example or teaching which would lead Christians to incorporate the burning of incense into our worship assembly activities. To do this would be to borrow from the outgrown system of the law of Moses or from pagan religious rituals. To pagans incense is burned to drive out demons, or to add punch to prayers, or to convey some priestly blessings.

9. *What was to be paid when a census was taken?* (30:11-15)

Every one was to pay half a shekel. This money was a ransom for their souls, "to make atonement" for their souls. The amount paid was a very small sum. A shekel was about four-tenths of an ounce.<sup>4</sup> (At that time the shekel was not a coin, but a unit of weight, a piece of metal weighing that amount. Compare Gen. 24:22.) Anyone could have afforded this little payment. This very smallness of the offering should have made obvious the fact that the people were NOT purchasing their atonement by this pittance, but only acknowledging that they had a debt which God alone could pay for them. Compare I Pet. 1:18-19.

Implied in this law about censuses is the truth that *God owns all souls* (people). "All souls are mine" (Ezek. 18:4). The very fact of counting one's flock or one's wealth suggests ownership. We do not usually count our neighbor's sheep or his income; we count our own. If we do count them, the owner will want to know about it. The experience of King David taking a census showed that taking a census could be a dangerous business. Seventy thousand people

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<sup>4</sup>*Broadman Bible Commentary*, II, (1969) gives 0.40302. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 394, says the "shekel of the sanctuary" was double the weight of the regular shekel; but the difference is not positively known.

died in a plague (II Sam. 24:1, 15). Being counted in Israel meant that each Israelite owned up to his covenant membership and responsibilities with God. God still claims exclusive ownership of His people. (John 10:27-29).

The "offering" mentioned in 30:13 was a heave-offering (Heb. *terumah*), something "lifted up" to God. See notes on 29:27-28. Note the three-fold reference to the *offering* (30:13, 14, 15). Note also the three-fold reference to "soul" (30:12, 15, 16). ("Soul" is a very comprehensive term; it refers to everything about us that relates to life - our whole person, our physical animal life, our spirit, our emotions, etc.)

The payment of the half-shekel acknowledged not only God's ownership, but also the uncleanness and unworthiness of the people. By nature Israel was alienated from God, and could remain in covenant with the LORD only on the ground of His grace, which covered the sin. This idea of ransom and redemption extends on into the New Testament, where we read that in Christ we have "redemption" (ransom). (Eph. 1:7; I Pet. 1:18)

The fact that the rich and poor alike paid the same amount may have suggested to the people's minds that all people stand alike before God - one not preferred above another, all equally in need of atonement (30:15). Note that there were rich people in that generation of Israelites.

Censuses are referred to in Num. 1:2-3; 26:2. Ex. 38:25-26 mentions the silver half-shekel collection from 603,550 men, the exact same count as in Numbers 1:46. The census in Numbers one did not take place until *after* the building of the tabernacle, or some nine months after this atonement-money offering. The fact that the count was the same in both indicates the precision of both the atonement-money collection and the census. Probably the numbering in Numbers one according to "fathers' houses" (families and tribes) was greatly speeded up by the information gained in the previous numbering for atonement money.

On the shekel being 20 gerahs, see Lev. 23:25. The

word "gerah" means a "grain" (Harkavy's *Lexicon*) or possibly a "bean" (Barnes).

10. *What was the atonement money used for?* (30:16)

It was used for the *service* of the tabernacle. Compare 38:25-31. The shekels of silver furnished the material for the sockets (pedestals, or bases) used in the tabernacle, and also the hooks on the pillars.

The text does not state that the half-shekel atonement money was to be an annual levy, but rather that it was paid only when a census was taken. At a later time the half-shekel did become an annual temple tax (Matt. 17:24). In the time of Nehemiah the Jews themselves made ordinances to charge themselves yearly one-third of a shekel for the service of the house of God. But this is not the same law as that in Exodus.

The atonement money was to be a "memorial" for the children of Israel before Jehovah. *Memorial* is a sacrificial term referring to something which brings the offerer into favorable remembrance before God. The term is applied to various sacrifices (Lev. 2:2, 9; 5:12; Num. 5:26), and to the memorial stones worn by the priest (Ex. 28:12), and to prayer and alms (Acts 10:4).

11. *What was the laver made of?* (30:17-18; 38:8; I Kings 7:37-38)

The laver was a wash basin made of brass, or, more correctly, bronze (See 25:3). The bronze came from metal that had formerly been in the mirrors owned by the women that ministered at the door of the tent of meeting. (Regarding the women, see I Sam. 2:22 and Luke 2:37.) These mirrors were probably obtained in Egypt (Ex. 12:35-36), where such mirrors were common objects.<sup>5</sup> They were made of flat discs of polished bronze to which was attached a short handle to be held in one hand. The handles were

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<sup>5</sup>For photographs of Egyptian mirrors see *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 546; or *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. III, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), p. 403.



sometimes ornate, carved, made of ebony, and even covered with gold plate. The reflector and handle would together be about eleven inches long. These would be difficult to obtain out in the wilderness where the Israelites were. But the women seemed willing to sacrifice that which assisted them to acquire beauty of features to make the thing which would give the priests beauty of soul. We admire this sacrifice.

The dimensions and shape of the laver are not given. If only Aaron and his four sons used it, it need not have been large. We doubt that it was shorter than the lowest item of tabernacle furniture, the table, which was a cubit and a half in height (27"). By contrast the molten "sea" where the priests washed in Solomon's temple was huge! (I Kings 7:23; II Chron. 4:2-6.)

A *base* (K.J.V., "foot") is always mentioned with the laver. The fact that they are always referred to separately suggests that they were detached from one another (31:9; 35:16; 39:39; Lev. 8:11). The base was anointed separately from the rest of the laver (Ex. 40:11). The bases under the ten lavers in Solomon's temple were separate from the lavers. These bases in Solomon's temple were bronze four-wheeled carts with side panels engraved with cherubim, lions, and palm-trees (I Kings 7:27-37).

The form of the base supporting the laver in the tabernacle is not described. We do not know whether it was actually coupled to the laver, or whether the laver simply rested on the base. We rather favor the view that they were not coupled to one another.

The fact that a cart-like wheeled base for a laver has been found in Cyprus<sup>6</sup> dating back to 1400-1200 B.C. causes us to think that possibly the base of the laver in the tabernacle may itself have had a similar form, and that this pattern was later adopted for Solomon's temple.

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<sup>6</sup>Werner Keller, *The Bible as History in Pictures* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), p. 190.

Was there water in the base of the laver, as well as in the laver itself? Josephus says there was. (*Ant.* III, vi, 2) Except for the difficulty of washing the feet in a laver probably over two feet above ground, we know no reason to suspect that the base was designed to hold water.

12. *What was the function of the laver?* (30:19-21; 40:30-32)

The priests washed their hands and feet there when they went into the Holy Place and also when they came near to the altar to minister. They were to do this "that they die not." (Compare 28:35.) There is no mention of the priests' washing at the laver *after* they completed their ministrations.

Nothing is stated in Numbers four about the method of packing or transporting the laver or its base.

13. *Of what may the laver have been a type?*

Generally speaking, it was a type of the inner cleansing required of all who serve the Lord. "I will *wash* my hands in innocency: So will I compass thine altar, O Jehovah" (Psalm 26:6).

The laver was used both for the *initial* washing of the priests during the consecration ceremony, and *repeatedly* thereafter when they came to minister. We suppose therefore that the laver symbolized the Christian's initial cleansing upon receiving the Lord, and the repeated cleansing he can share thereafter.

The Greek word for *laver* (*loutron*) occurs in Titus 3:5 and Eph. 5:26. Hebrews 10:22 speaks of our "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience; and having our body *washed* with pure water." The "sprinkling" is certainly the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (I Peter 1:2). Mentioned with the sprinkling of the blood is the washing of the body in pure water. This would seem to refer to our baptism. Thus, in accord with this, we read in the accounts of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, that after Saul had heard and seen the Lord Jesus, and believed, and repented (even asking, "What shall I do, Lord?"), and prayed (Acts 9:11), the Lord sent the devout Ananias unto him. Ananias came and said to Saul, "Why tarriest thou? arise

and be baptized and *wash* away thy sins, calling on his name." (Acts 22:16). Note that the inner cleansing from sins occurred at the same time as the outer washing of baptism.

Even after becoming a priest unto God, after being washed in the "laver of regeneration," the Christian still sins oftentimes and is unclean for the service of God (I John 1:8, 10). In those circumstances he may confess his sins and be forgiven and cleansed from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9). (The promise in I John 1:9 is addressed to Christians and not to unsaved people.) The repeated washings at the laver would appear to have portrayed this frequent cleansing available to those in Christ.

The view is commonly expressed that it is the WORD (the scriptures) in which Christians are washed. Note Ephesians 5:26. It appears that Eph. 5:26 refers to the initial cleansing of believers, rather than to the cleansings we experience after receiving the Lord. This initial cleansing was accomplished "in word," that is, in the sphere of the word, wherever the word was preached. In that realm where the word has been proclaimed men may be cleansed by the "washing of water." The word itself does have cleansing power (Psalm 119:9), but only as a guide to direct us in seeking cleansing in God's approved way. We take heed to our way *according to* God's word. Salvation requires more than hearing alone. That word which we hear must be accompanied by faith (Heb. 4:2) and the "obedience of faith" (Romans 1:5; 16:26).

14. *What were spices and oil combined to make? (30:22-25)*

They were made into a holy anointing oil.

Blended with a hin (about a gallon) of olive oil were fifteen hundred shekels weight (about thirty-eight pounds) of spices! This might appear to form a thick mass, not pourable. But information from ancient Mesopotamian (Akkadian) documents indicates that the spices were subjected to a long and complicated process of soaking and boiling in water over a period of many days, so that

at the end of the distillation the fragrance of the spices remained as a liquid, even with the solid materials removed. This distilled fragrance was blended with the oil, and it is to this process that Exodus 30:25 refers.<sup>7</sup> A "perfumer" (or apothecary) made this product.

Spices mentioned include "flowing *myrrh*" (K.J.V., "pure myrrh"). "Flowing" refers to the liquid form, in contrast to the dry gum. This is a resin exuded from branches, stems, and incisions in a thorny shrub, or small tree found in south Arabia and Palestine. Secondly, there was "sweet *cinnamon*," from a tree up to thirty feet tall native to Ceylon. The commercial cinnamon is obtained from its fragrant inner bark. The third spice was the "sweet *calamus*," or "fragrant cane." The plant producing this is an aromatic reed (a perennial grass) that grows in India. Its sap forms the calamus, or ginger grass oil. The fourth spice was a *cassia*. See Psalm 45:8. This is the aromatic bark of a tree in India, Ceylon, and Malaya, similar to cinnamon, but of quality inferior to the true cinnamon. Ezekiel 27:19 mentions cassia and calamus as products of trade with Tyre. The copper "Treasure" scroll of the Dead Sea Cave III mentions a "vessel of incense in cassia wood."<sup>8</sup>

15. *What was anointed?* (30:26-30; 40:9; Num. 7:1)

*Everything* connected with the tabernacle was anointed, including the priests and their garments (29:21). This made everything "most holy" (or "holy of holies"). See notes on 29:37 concerning how those who touched the most holy things became "holy."

Since the anointing oil was a symbol of the Holy Spirit, the thorough anointing of the tabernacle suggests that every aspect of the Christian faith, which the tabernacle symbolized, is anointed with the Holy Spirit, and is therefore touched with the very holiness of God. Our faith is precious with God's own Spirit in every aspect.

Anointing the tent did not mean smearing its entire

<sup>7</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 397. Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, II, p. 215.

<sup>8</sup>*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. I (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), p. 541.

surface, but just sprinkling a few drops on it.

16. *What restrictions were placed on the anointing oil?* (30:31-33)

The people were not to make any with the same formula. They were not to put it upon the flesh of anyone, Israelite or "stranger." People oftentimes did apply sweet oils to themselves (Prov. 27:9; Ps. 104:15). But this oil was for the tabernacle and the priests only. Anyone appropriating it for himself would be "cut off" from his people. This probably meant he would be executed. (See notes on 31:14.) Some have thought that being "cut off" was a punishment imposed by heaven, in that the transgressor would die before his time, leaving no children. A similar restriction was placed on the making of the holy incense (30:38).

17. *What were sweet spices and frankincense used to make?*

They were used to make a special incense to be burned only on the altar of incense. On the spiritual significance of incense, see notes on 30:10.

The spices and frankincense were mingled together in quantities of equal weight. These ingredients were "seasoned with salt" (K.J.V., "tempered together"). While the Hebrew verb here certainly can be translated as "to be salted," it does also appear here to mean "tempered" or "mixed" together. A similar meaning is given in the Greek LXX (*memigmenon*, mingled).

*Frankincense* is a light-colored (yellow or milky) resin exuded from incisions in the bark of the frankincense tree, which is native to Arabia and northern India. It forms beads which are easily ground into powder, and emit a balsamlike odor when burned. *Stacte* is a highly perfumed gum resin that exudes from the incised bark of the storax tree. The tree has a whitish color and grows in Palestine on dry hillsides with the oaks and terebinths. Another identification of stacte is the opobalsamum. *Onycha* is thought to be the covering flaps from certain mussel shells found in India. (Others say from the Red Sea.<sup>9</sup>) When

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<sup>9</sup>J. H. Hertz, *Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1969), p. 354.

burned, this tissue gives a very pungent odor resembling musk. Its smell adds strength to the smell of other materials mixed with it. It was very costly. *Galbanum* seems to have been the gum resin excreted from the lower parts of stems of several species of *Ferula* herbs that grow in the Holy Land. When hardened tears of this resin are burned, the odor is pungent; but the effect when mixed with other spices is pleasant.

18. *Where was incense placed?* (30:36)

Incense was placed in the tent of meeting (the Holy Place), near the testimony (the ten commandments in the ark), where God met with Israel. It was burned on the altar of incense.

Note that the incense was beaten very small, probably in a mortar. This "smallness" might well remind us that when we come to God in prayer, we need to be "beaten small." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

19. *What restriction was placed on making the incense?* (30:37-38)

No one was to make any for themselves so they could smell of it.

If incense is a symbol of prayer, the stern rule about not making any of the special incense for men's own use and pleasure suggests that we dare not pray to anyone except the true God, who alone is worthy of prayer.

Regarding the penalty of "cutting off," see notes on 31:14 and 30:33.

Cole<sup>10</sup> tells that Knobel tried to reproduce the incense formula and found it to be "strong, refreshing, and very agreeable." To a Jew such an experiment would have meant death. His experiment is made even less worthwhile because the identification of some of the spices in the incense is rather uncertain.

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<sup>10</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 208. Cole refers to Driver as his source of information.

THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**31** And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (2) See, I have called by name Be-zal-el the son of U-ri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Ju-dah: (3) and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, (4) to devise skilful works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, (5) and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all manner of workmanship. (6) And I, behold, I have appointed with him O-ho-li-ab, the son of A-his-a-mach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee: (7) the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy-seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the Tent, (8) and the table and its vessels, and the pure candlestick with all its vessels, and the altar of incense, (9) and the altar of burnt-offering with all its vessels, and the laver and its base, (10) and the finely wrought garments, and the holy garments for Aar-on the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office. (11) and the anointing oil, and the incense of sweet spices for the holy place: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do.

(12) And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (13) Speak thou also unto the children of Is-ra-el, saying, Verily ye shall keep my sabbaths: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am Je-ho-vah who sanctifieth you. (14) Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that profaneth it shall surely be put to death; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. (15) Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, holy to Je-ho-vah; whosoever doeth any work on the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. (16) Wherefore the children of Is-ra-el shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.

**(17) It is a sign between me and the children of Is-ra-el for ever: for in six days Je-ho-vah made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.**

**(18) And he gave unto Mo-ses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Si-nai, the two tables of the testimony, tables of stone written with the finger of God.**

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading, propose a brief title (topic or theme) for the chapter.
2. How many times does the expression "Jehovah (the LORD) spake unto Moses" occur in chapters 30-31? Does this expression seem to mark the start of new paragraphs?
3. What man had God called to be a skillful workman? (31:2; Compare 17:10, 12; 24:14.) How specific was the call? Of what tribe was he?
4. How had God assisted the craftsman to do his work? (31:3)
5. What particular skills was this man given? (31:4-5)
6. Who also was appointed to work with the first craftsman? (31:6) Of what tribe was he?
7. Were these two the only ones to be given help by God in craft work? (31:6)
8. How is the candlestick (lampstand) described? (31:8)
9. What are the "finely wrought garments"? (31:10; 35:19; 39:1, 41)
10. What items were the craftsmen to make? (31:11, 6)
11. Of whom may these craftsmen possibly have been a type? (John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 1:8)
12. What was to be a sign between Israel and the Lord? (31:13, 17)
13. What was keeping the Sabbath to cause Israel to know? (31:13)
14. What does "sanctify" mean? (31:13)
15. What was the penalty for profaning (defiling) the Sabbath? (31:14, 15)



16. What day of the week was the Sabbath day? (31:15)
  17. How did God view the Sabbath? (31:15)
  18. How long was the Sabbath to be kept? (31:16. Compare Col. 2:16-17.)
  19. What did the Sabbath commemorate? (31:17)
  20. What effect on *God* did the seventh day rest have? (31:17)
  21. What did God give to Moses? When? (31:18)
  22. What is the "testimony"? (31:18; 34:28)
  23. How were the tables (tablets) written? (31:18. Compare 24:12, 32:15-16; 34:1, 4, 28.)
  24. How long had Moses been up in the mount? (24:18; Deut. 9:11)
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### EXODUS THIRTY-ONE: THE WORKMEN AND THE SABBATH

- I. WISE WORKMEN; 31:1-11.
    1. Called by name; 31:1-2, 6.
    2. Filled with the Spirit; 31:3.
    3. Given skills; 31:4-5.
    4. Appointed to make the tabernacle; 31:7-11.
    5. Limited to what God commanded; 31:11.
  - II. THE SIGN OF THE SABBATH; 31:12-17.
    1. The practice ("Verily ye shall keep it."); 31:12-13.
    2. The purpose ("That ye may know that I am Jehovah."); 31:13.
    3. The preciousness ("It is holy."); 31:14.
    4. The penalty ("He shall surely be put to death."); 31:14-15.
    5. The permanence ("for a perpetual covenant"); 31:16-17.
    6. The proclamation (or commemoration). "In six days Jehovah made heaven and earth."; 31:18.
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### GOD'S SPIRIT IN GOD'S MEN! (31:1-11)

1. Filled them; 31:1-3.

1. Furnished them skills; 31:4-5.
  2. Furthered their natural talents; 31:6.
  3. Fulfilled what God commanded; 31:11, 6.
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## THE SABBATH, A SIGN! (31:13, 17)

1. A sign God had spoken to Israel.
  2. A sign of concern for human weariness; (Ex. 23:12)
  3. A sign of faith that God is creator.
  4. A sign of faith that God will provide.
  5. A sign of commitment to obey God.
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## TABLETS OF TESTIMONY! (31:18)

1. Based on the spoken word; (20:1ff; Deut. 9:10)
  2. Promised by God to Moses; (24:12)
  3. Written by God; (32:16; Deut. 4:13)
  4. Presented by God to Moses; (32:18)
- 

## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

1. *What is in Exodus thirty-one?*

The chapter tells of God's calling the **SKILLED WORKMEN** to make the tabernacle, its furniture, etc. Then it commands the keeping of the **SABBATH** as a sign between God and Israel. The chapter closes with a statement about God's giving the stone tablets of the ten commandments to Moses.

Exodus 31:1 starts a new paragraph, as is indicated by the words "And Jehovah spake unto Moses saying. . . ." Compare 30:11, 17, 22, 34; 31:12. With the completion of directions for construction of the sanctuary, the names of its builders are now given.

2. *What man had God called as a skillful workman?* (31:1-2)

God had called *Bezalel*, son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. His grandfather appears to have been the Hur who, along with Aaron, held up Moses' hands during battle (17:10), and was with Aaron while Moses was in the mountain (24:14). (See notes on these passages.) Bezalel was the chief artificer in metal, stone, and wood; and he performed the apothecary's work in compounding the anointing oil and incense (37:1, 29).

We suppose that Bezalel's ancestry is that given in I Chron. 2:3, 5, 9, 18-19 - Judah, Perez, Hezron, Caleb<sup>1</sup> (or Chelubai), Hur Uri, Bezalel.

Bezalel's name seems to mean "In God's (El's) shadow." We do not feel that this meaning of his name has great significance. But it is significant that God called him BY NAME. God knows us individually and uses us individually. Note that the great Persian ruler Cyrus was called "by name." (Isaiah 45:4).

The workmen who were chosen were *God's* choice, not necessarily Moses's. The power imparted to the workmen was *God's* power and not men's.

Bezalel was more prominent than his co-craftsman Oholiab. Bezalel is sometimes mentioned alone (37:1), and when both are named, Bezalel is always named first (35:30, 34; 36:1, 2).

Martin Noth in his characteristic "liberal" fashion attributes chapter thirty-one to a post-Babylonian exile Priestly author, and then even says that parts (e.g., 31:7-11) of the chapter are "secondary additions" to P. He associates the names Bezalel and Hur with men of the same names in Ezra 30:24; Neh. 3:9; I Chron. 2:50; 4:1, 4. Since these writings are post-exilic, he says "This could suggest a post-exilic origin for the tradition."<sup>2</sup> Noth fails to mention that

<sup>1</sup>Certainly this is not the famous Caleb, son of Jephunneh, who was associated with Joshua.

<sup>2</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 240. Noth's argument is unproven, to say the least.

there was also a Hur in the time of King Solomon (I Kings 4:8). (This would not support his theory of late priestly authorship.) Cole<sup>3</sup> says that the names Bezalel and Oholiab are archaic, since neither contains a form of the divine name YAH. We agree that they are archaic!

3. *How did God assist the craftsman in his work?* (31:3; 35:30—36:1)

Jehovah filled Bezalel with the Spirit of God. This assisted him in wisdom, in understanding, knowledge, and all manner of workmanship. "Understanding" refers to insight, understanding, and intelligence; whereas "wisdom" seems to be the ability to use intelligence effectively.

Exodus 31:6 suggests that these craftsmen were already naturally "wise-hearted." To their naturally-given talents God added His Spirit. The passage certainly does not belittle natural abilities. They are as much a gift from God as are specially bestowed abilities. Even Moses was possessed of natural ability and training before God aided him yet more. Similarly the seven "deacons" of Acts 6:3 were men of wisdom even before they were appointed to their special work.

Please note that *wisdom* included skills of artistry, mechanics, and construction. Note also that God's *Spirit* bestowed the "wisdom" of this type. We usually think of the Spirit empowering prophecy (as in Num. 11:17ff) and moral and spiritual qualities. But the Spirit also empowers other works. On occasion He may impart military power (Judges 3:10). And here in Ex. 31:3 we read of the Spirit bestowing skill in art and construction. The Spirit thus seems to empower all of life's activities that are within the will of God.

4. *What particular skills was Bezalel given?* (31:4-5)

All types of manual skills are listed. He was to "devise skilful works." The Hebrew words thus translated may also be rendered "to devise devices" or "to think thoughts."

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<sup>3</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 209.

This suggests that he was to think out artistic designs, ideas, and inventions, all of course within the limits of what God had commanded to Moses. Thus these men were not automated puppets but were granted use of their own creative abilities within limits.

Cassuto<sup>4</sup> says that later Jewish traditions sought to magnify the tabernacle and said it was built miraculously of its own accord. But he correctly affirms that this is not the meaning inherent in the simple interpretations of the text.

5. *What other man was appointed with the first craftsman?* (31:6-8)

*Oholiab* of the tribe of Dan was appointed. No other Bible person bears this name. He was from the tribe of Dan, the same tribe as Hiram, the chief architect of Solomon's temple (II Chron. 2:13-14). He appears to have had primary charge of the textile work (38:23; 35:34-35). His name means something like "My tent (or shelter) (is) the father (or God)." His name has in it the Hebrew word *'ohel*, which means tent. This does seem very appropriate since he was the maker of the tent curtains.

The "I" at the start of 31:6 is emphatic. The word "behold" seems to be inserted to arrest our attention upon a significant fact.

Exodus 31:6 mentions that God had also granted wisdom to *others* who were wise, so they also could make the tabernacle parts that God had commanded Moses.

Exodus 31:7-11 lists the items to be made, all of which have been described in detail perviously, and all of which will be described again during the account of the construction, which is given in chapters 35-39.

The "furniture" of 31:7, 8, 9 literally refers to "vessels."

6. *What are the "finely wrought garments"?* (31:10)

This expression "finely wrought garments" (KJV,

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<sup>4</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 402.

"cloths of service") appears here for the first time. It is also in 35:19 and 39:1, 41. The Hebrew word *serad* ("finely wrought") occurs only these four times in the O.T. Its meaning is somewhat uncertain. It appears to be derived from a verb meaning to twist, weave together, knot. (This accounts for the ASV translation.) The Greek LXX rendered it "robes of ministry" (*leitourgikai*), from which the KJV rendered it "cloths of service."

We feel that Barnes<sup>5</sup> has correctly identified the "finely wrought garments" as the robes of the high priest described in 28:6-38; 39:1ff. The "holy garments" referred to in 31:10 are probably the linen garments worn by the high priest on solemn occasions like the day of atonement. Note the expression "holy garments" in both Ex. 31:10 and Lev. 16:4-5. Ex. 31:10 seems to list as a third class of priestly garments the garments of Aaron's sons which were made of linen and worn in their regular ministrations (28:40, 41).

Other identifications for the "finely wrought garments" include the rabbinical view that they were wrappers for vessels of the sanctuary while in transit, and Gesenius' view that they were inner curtains of the tabernacle or inner hangings of the dwelling place.<sup>6</sup> Cassuto<sup>7</sup> felt that they may have been inner garments worn by the priests under their tunics in winter time. To us these views seem improbable.

7. *Of whom may these craftsmen have been a type?* (John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 1:8)

The scripture does not say they were types of anyone, of Christ or of anyone else. Certainly Christ builds His own church, and Bezalel and Oholiab could have been types of Christ in this aspect (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:19-22).

Jesus also called his holy *apostles* to build his church.

<sup>5</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 86.

<sup>6</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

<sup>7</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 403.

He called them by name (John 6:70; Mark 3:14-19), as Bezalel was called by name. Jesus gave them power by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:1), so they would be led into all truth (John 16:13), and would speak the things of Christ (John 16:14). In these respects Bezalel and Oholiab resembled the apostles sufficiently to justify comparing the two.

8. *What was to be a sign between Israel and the Lord?* (31:12-13, 17)

The Sabbath day was to be the sign. The Sabbath day is referred to here for the first time as a *sign*. Compare Ezek. 20:12, 20.

Circumcision (Gen. 17:1), and unleavened bread (Ex. 13:19) are also said to be *signs* between God and Israel. The Sabbath, circumcision, and unleavened bread were all practiced outside of Israel, but only in Israel did they have a religious significance.

Note that God calls the Sabbath "MY Sabbath."

Most commentators say that the reference to the Sabbath here relates especially to the keeping of the Sabbath during the construction of the tabernacle. As important and exciting as the construction would be, it was not to be done on the Sabbath days. All of this is true, but it is not set forth in the text as the reason for asserting the Sabbath law just here. Rather, the text emphasizes here that the Sabbath was to be kept "throughout your generations." The application is more for all time than for that particular time.

The keeping of the Sabbath was to cause Israel to know<sup>a</sup> that God was the LORD who sanctified them (made them holy). Failure to observe times of worship makes men forget that God is the LORD who makes us holy.

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<sup>a</sup>"That ye may know" is literally just "to know." Some Jewish interpreters have supplied as the subject for "to know" "that all nations shall know." See J. H. Hertz, *Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, p. 356. This idea seems legitimate. When the Jews kept the Sabbath, all nations knew that Jehovah was their God. Nonetheless, the text does not definitely imply that "all nations" is the subject of "to know."

Regarding the Sabbath day, see notes on 20:8-11.

9. *What was the penalty for profaning the Sabbath day?* (31:14-15)

Execution! The "surely" in "surely be put to death" is emphatic.

To "profane" (KJV, "defile") the Sabbath is to break it or regard it as unholy.

Is there a difference between being "put to death" for profaning the Sabbath, and being "cut off" from among the people (by excommunication) for working on the Sabbath? We think not. These appear to be parallel statements and not two different assertions. Ex. 31:15 plainly says that doing any work on the Sabbath (such as the work referred to in 31:14) was to be punished by execution. Compare 35:2.

Numbers 15:32-36 tells of one man who was executed (stoned) for gathering sticks on the Sabbath. We have no record of any others who were slain for breaking the Sabbath. Nehemiah later enforced the Sabbath with considerable severity (Neh. 13:15-22). Neh. 13:17-18 declares that the Jews went into captivity because they failed to keep the Sabbaths. Christ was threatened with death for breaking the Sabbath (John 5:16-18). Nonetheless, it appears plain that very few people were ever executed for breaking the Sabbath.

How can we explain this neglect to enforce a plainly-stated penalty for Sabbath-breaking? First of all, if it had been universally enforced, there would have been a near-total depletion of the population! Secondly, God has often laid down clear penalties for certain offenses and then only enforced it occasionally *in this age*, as if to make examples of the few. Thus Uzzah was slain, but not the men who loaded the ark on the cart (II Sam. 6:6-7; Num. 4:15). David and Bathsheba were spared from the penalty of adultery (Lev. 20:10). Ananias and Sapphira died quickly for lying about the use of their money (Acts 5:5, 10), but God in His longsuffering has generally delayed this



punishment, apparently to give opportunity for men to repent and be forgiven (II Pet. 3:8). The punishments for disobeying God will certainly come, but very often God in His grace defers the punishment to allow opportunity for repentance and forgiveness.

7. *How did God view the Sabbath?* (31:15)

He viewed it as "holy to Jehovah" (or "holiness to Jehovah"). (This is the same expression as that on the high priest's golden plate. Ex. 28:36.)

God wanted the Sabbath to be a "Sabbath of solemn rest" (Heb., *shabbat shabbaton*), meaning a complete cessation of work. (The use of *shabbaton* in Lev. 23:3 and 25:5 show it meant "rest" or "complete rest.") Not even fires were to be kindled on the Sabbath. (Num. 35:31.)

8. *What day of the week was the Sabbath day?* (31:15)

The seventh day of the week, our Saturday. For reasons why Christians are certainly not obligated to keep Saturday as a Sabbath rest, see notes on 20:8-11.

9. *How long was the Sabbath to be kept?* (31:16-17)

Israel was to keep it "throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant." "perpetual covenant" is literally "a covenant for distant future." The same expression was applied to the priesthood in 29:9. (See notes on that passage). It does not necessarily mean "for an endless future eternity."

10. *What did the Sabbath commemorate?* (31:17)

It commemorated God's creation of the world in six days and His resting on the seventh day. See Ex. 20:11; Deut. 20:15. Keeping the Sabbath was for an Israelite a constantly recurring proclamation that God was the creator and king of the universe, and thus to desecrate the Sabbath was an open denial of God. We ought to take our worship of God with equal seriousness.

11. *What effect on God did the seventh day of rest have?* (31:17)

He was refreshed! Literally, He "took breath" or "caught his breath." (The verb "refreshed" is a translation of a verb related to the word *nephesh*, meaning soul, life, breath.)

The application of this expression to the creator is surprising and remarkable. It is not used elsewhere in reference to Him. The same expression is used in 23:12 to refer to the rest and refreshing of servants by the Sabbath rest.

We do not feel we should try to be "wise" by commenting on how God might be "refreshed." We leave the statement as the scripture gives it. God does not need our analysis or defense.

12. *What did God give to Moses? When? (13:18)*

God gave to Moses the two stone tablets inscribed with the words of the ten commandments (the testimony). Compare 32:15; 34:1, 28; 25:16. God had promised to give these tablets to Moses (24:12). The other parts of the law were written in a "book," probably a scroll (24:7).

The stone tables were given at the close of God's communing (speaking) with Moses. Moses had been up on the mount forty days. See Ex. 24:18; Deut. 9:11.

The choice of stone as the material and engraving (cutting) as the method for writing both suggests the imperishable duration of the words of God.

The inscription upon the tablets was written with "the finger of God." Does this mean that God himself engraved the writing, or that He wrote it in that he caused Moses to write it? Commentators have mostly taken the latter view. Still the literal force of the statement sounds as if God wrote it. Ex. 32:16 definitely says the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God. Ex. 34:1 instructs Moses to hew out a second set of stone slabs to replace the first set (which he broke), but God indicated that He himself would do the writing. Ex. 34:27-28 contains a commandment for Moses himself to write "these words"; but the words there seem to refer to the covenant words in Ex. 34. The assertion in 34:28 "he wrote" could refer either to God's act or Moses's.

The expression "finger of God" is understood by all to point to a divine source or causation. Its use in Ex. 8:19 to

refer to the plague of lice suggests it refers to a direct work of God, rather than one done by an intermediary. Similarly "finger of God" in Luke 11:20 (referring to Jesus' casting out demons) seems to describe direct divine action. Cassuto<sup>9</sup> thinks that the use of "finger of GOD" instead of "finger of the LORD" and the use of *finger* instead of hand (since writing requires more, than one finger for man) show that the expression does not refer to God's actual physical act of writing. This argument does not seem very strong to us. But whichever view we take, God was the author of the words on the tablets.

We can only guess as to the size of the ten commandments. Certainly they were smaller than the ark of the covenant, and light enough to be carried in the hand (32:15). Keil and Delitzsch<sup>10</sup> suggest that stone slabs about one cubit by one and a half cubits would be large enough for the 172 words of the ten commandments without the writing being excessively small.

Exodus 31:18 is a transitional verse between the instructions about the tabernacle and the priesthood and the story of the golden calf that follows in chapters 32-34. Notice Ex. 32:15, 19.

## THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**32** And when the people saw that Mo-ses delayed to come down from the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aar-on, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Mo-ses, the man that brought us up out of the land of E-gypt, we know not what is become of him. (2) And Aar-on said unto them, Break

<sup>9</sup>*Op. cit.*, pp. 405, 406.

<sup>10</sup>*Op. cit.*, pp. 219, 220.

off the golden rings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. (3) And all the people brake off the golden rings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aar-on. (4) And he received it at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, and made it a molten calf: and they said, These are thy gods, O Is-ra-el, which brought thee up out of the land of E-gypt. (5) And when Aar-on saw *this*, he built an altar before it; and Aar-on made proclamation, and said, To-morrow shall be a feast to Je-ho-vah. (6) And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

(7) And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, that thou broughtest up out of the land of E-gypt, have corrupted themselves: (8) they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed unto it, and said, These are thy gods, O Is-ra-el, which brought thee up out of the land of E-gypt. (9) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, I have seen *this* people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: (10) now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. (11) And Mo-ses besought Je-ho-vah his God, and said, Je-ho-vah, why doth thy wrath wax hot against they people, that thou hast brought forth out of the land of E-gypt with great power and with a mighty hand? (12) Wherefore should the E-gyp-tians speak, saying, For evil did he bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. (13) Remember Abraham, I-saac, and Is-ra-el, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. (14) And Je-ho-vah repented of the evil which he said he would do unto his people.

(15) And Mo-ses turned, and went down from the mount, with the two tables of the testimony in his hand; tables that were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. (16) And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. (17) And when Josh-u-a heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Mo-ses, There is a noise of war in the camp. (18) And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome; but the noise of them that sing do I hear. (19) And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing; and Mo-ses anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. (20) And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it with fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Is-ra-el drink of it.

(21) And Mo-ses said unto Aar-on, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought a great sin upon them? (22) And Aar-on said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are *set* on evil. (23) For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Mos-ses, the man that brought us up out of the land of E-gypt, we know not what is become of him. (24) And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off: so they gave it me; and I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

(25) And when Mo-ses saw that the people were broken loose (for Aar-on had let them loose for a derision among their enemies), (26) then Mo-ses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Whoso is on Je-ho-vah's side, *let him come* unto me. And all the sons of Le-vi gathered themselves together unto him. (27) And he said unto them, Thus saith Je-ho-vah, the God of Is-ra-el, Put ye every man his sword upon his thigh, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his neighbor. (28) And the sons of Le-vi did according to the word of Mo-ses:

and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. (29) And Mo-ses said, Consecrate yourselves to-day to Je-ho-vah, yea, every man against his son, and against his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.

(30) And it came to pass on the morrow, that Mo-ses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto Je-ho-vah; peradventure I shall make atonement for your sin. (31) And Mo-ses returned unto Je-ho-vah, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. (32) Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. (33) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. (34) And now go, lead the people unto *the place* of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine angel shall go before thee; nevertheless in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them. (35) And Je-ho-vah smote the people, because they made the calf, which Aar-on made.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading, propose a topic or title for the chapter. (This one is easy!)
2. How long had the people waited for Moses? (24:18)
3. To whom did the people come with a request? (32:1; 24:14)
4. What was their request? (32:1)
5. What was the condition of the people's hearts just then? (Ps. 106:21; Acts 7:39-40; Nehemiah 9:17-18)
6. Where did Aaron obtain material to make the calf? (32:2-3)
7. How could a "graving tool" be used to make a "molten" calf? (32:4)
8. What did the people say about the golden calf when they saw it? (32:4) What did they say that contradicted

- themselves? (32:1)
9. What did Aaron build after he made the calf? What proclamation did he make? (32:5)
  10. What sacrifices did the people make? (32:6; 20:24)
  11. What is involved in "they rose up to *play*"? (32:18-19; I Cor. 10:7)
  12. Did the Lord know about their idolatry? (32:7-8)
  13. Whose people did the Lord say they were? (32:7. Compare 32:11)
  14. What is meant by a "stiffnecked" people? (32:9; Deut. 9:6; Isa. 48:4; II Chron. 30:8; Acts 7:51)
  15. Did God suggest by saying to Moses, "Let me alone," that Moses very probably could affect and influence His intentions? (32:10)
  16. What did God at that moment intend to do with the people? (32:10; Ps. 106:23)
  17. What would God make of Moses? (32:10; Compare Num. 14:12; Gen. 12:2; Deut. 9:14)
  18. Would this offer have been a strong temptation to Moses?
  19. What three arguments did Moses use to influence God to spare the people? (32:11-13)
  20. Did God spare the people? (32:14)
  21. How can God "repent" when he "changes not"? (Mal. 3:6; Ex. 32:14) (For other examples of God "repenting," see Jonah 3:10; Jer. 26:19; Joel 2:13; II Sam. 24:16; Jer. 18:10; Gen. 6:6-7.)
  22. How were the stone tablets written? (32:15-16)
  23. Who was with Moses on the mount? (32:17; 24:13)
  24. What did the minister of Moses think about the noise from the people? (32:17)
  25. What sort of sound did Moses say they heard? (32:18)
  26. What did Moses do when he saw the calf and the dancing? (32:19)
  27. What did Moses do with the calf? (32:20; Deut. 9:21)
  28. What question did Moses ask of Aaron? (32:21)
  29. By what title did Aaron address Moses? (32:22; Num. 12:11) Why use such a title?

30. Was it really true that the people were "set on evil" (mischievous)? (32:22; See Deut. 10:6, 24)
  31. What "tall tale" did Aaron tell Moses? (32:24) What does this show about the character of Aaron or the condition of his heart?
  32. How did the Lord feel about Aaron at that time? (Deut. 9:20)
  33. In what way were the people "broken loose"? (32:25). (Compare the King James translation of 32:25.)
  34. How would Israel now be regarded among their enemies since they had "broken loose"? (32:25)
  35. What call did Moses issue to the people? (32:26)
  36. Who answered the call? (32:26)
  37. What were the Levites told to do? (32:27) Wasn't this rather extreme? Compare Num. 25:5, 7-11; Deut. 33:9; Luke 14:26; Ex. 22:20.
  38. How many were slain? (32:28. Compare Acts 2:41)
  39. What were the Levites called to do? (32:29)
  40. What did Moses tell the people that he would do for them? (32:30) Was he certain that his efforts would be successful?
  41. What did Moses ask God to do for the people? (32:31-32)
  42. Is the first part of 32:32 a complete or an incomplete sentence? What is the significance of this?
  43. What self-sacrificing request did Moses make? (32:32) Who made a somewhat similar statement? (Rom. 9:3)
  44. Did Jehovah forgive the people's sins? (32:33, 34; Compare Ex. 34:7; Ezek. 18:20)
  45. Did God agree to let the people go to the promised land? (32:34)
  46. Who (two persons) would lead them? (32:34; 23:20; Num. 20:16)
  47. How did God punish the people? (32:35)
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## EXODUS THIRTY-TWO: IDOLATRY!

## I. Causes of Idolatry

1. Forgetful people; (32:1).
2. Weak leadership; (32:2, 21-24, 25).
3. Lust of flesh; (32:6).

## II. Consequences of Idolatry

1. Anger of God; (32:7-10).
2. Anger of leaders; (32:19).
3. Punishments; (32:20, 35).
4. Derision of enemies; (32:25).

## III. Cure of Idolatry

1. Call for decision; (32:26).
  2. Discipline; (32:27-28).
  3. Prayer for forgiveness; (32:30-31).
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## INTERCESSOR!

1. Need for an intercessor; (32:7-10).
  2. Test of an intercessor; (32:10).
  3. Pleas of an intercessor; (32:11-13).
    - a. Must be earnest.
    - b. Must be based on truth.
  4. Power of an intercessor; (32:14).
  5. Truthfulness of an intercessor; (32:30-31).
  6. Self-sacrifice of an intercessor; (32:32).
  7. Limitations of an intercessor; (32:33).
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## THE REPENTANCE OF GOD! (Ex. 32:14)

## A. What it is not!

1. Not a change in God's standards; (Mal. 3:6).
2. Not partiality to God's favorites ("pets"); (I Pet. 1:17).

3. Not getting over a temper tantrum.
  4. Not withholding just punishment; (32:33, 35).
  - B. What it is!
    1. A consistent pattern for God; (Jonah 3:10; Jer. 26:19; Joel 2:13; II Sam. 24:16; Jer. 18:10; Gen. 6:6-7).
    2. An act of compassion. ("Repent" here means "have compassion.")
    3. A change in God's response based on a change in man's relation to Him.
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#### FAILURE OF LEADERS! (Ex. 32:21-24)

1. Failure brings sin on the people; (32:21).
  2. Failure brings God's anger on the leaders; (Deut. 9:20).
  3. Failure leads to blame-shifting; (32:22-24).
    - a. Blames the people; (32:22-23).
    - b. Blames chance happenings; (32:24).
- 

#### MOSES - A SPIRITUAL STATESMAN! (Ex. 32:19-20, 25-35)

1. Reacted strongly to sin; (32:19).
  2. Administered discipline; (32:20).
  3. Called for decision; (32:26).
  4. Placed spiritual relationships over fleshly ties; (32:27, 29).
  5. Denounced sin as sin; (32:30-31).
  6. Prayed for the people; (32:30).
  7. Willing to sacrifice himself; (32:32).
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#### EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

##### 1. *What is in Exodus thirty-two?*

The chapter contains the familiar story of the making of the golden calf, God's anger, Moses' breaking the ten

commandments, and Moses' prayer.

The chapter makes clear that the idolatry of the people brought upon them later punishments that could never be all averted: "I will visit their sin upon them!" (32:34). Israel's idolatry caused them to be rejected temporarily as God's special people, until Moses prayed for their restoration with great earnestness. Note Ex. 33:13: "Consider that this nation is *thy people!*" Ex. 33:9: "Pardon our iniquity and our sin, and *take us* for thine inheritance." The chapter portrays a RUPTURE of the covenant between God and Israel.

Ramm accurately entitles the section "Israel in Idolatry; or Israel is out of Egypt, but Egypt isn't out of Israel."<sup>1</sup>

The chapter reveals the power of idolatry. We need this dramatic reminder, because we tend to think idolatry is a temptation only to primitive peoples. We do not always recognize our own idolatries. John wrote, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols" (I John 5:21). Paul cautions us, "Neither be ye idolaters, as some of them were" (I Cor. 10:7).

Many critics view the chapter as a resumption of the Sinai story left off after 19:24. They consider the story in Ex. 32-34 to have been written shortly after the time of King Solomon to condemn Jeroboam I for making the golden calves (I Kings 12:28-33). According to this theory the author of 32-34 was the writer commonly called "J" (for Jehovist, or Yahwist). J's story was interrupted after Ex. 24 by the insertion of a long section of Priestly instructions (Ex. 25-31), written about the time of the Babylonian captivity. With chapter 32 the "J" (or JE) section is resumed. In addition, some critics hold that within chapters 32-34 themselves there are evidences of later interpolations.<sup>2</sup>

We cannot accept these critical views. There is utterly

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<sup>1</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 179.

<sup>2</sup>Martin Noth, *op. cit.*, pp. 243-245.

no evidence in any ancient manuscripts of the existence of the separate source documents that the critics write of. The supposed lack of unity in the material seems evident to those who want to believe it and not evident to those who do not want to believe it. To us, the book of Exodus has a remarkable unity and progressiveness. And even the critics cannot agree among themselves as to exact points of division between the various "sources."

King Jeroboam I deliberately created religious ceremonies that would conflict with the Mosaic law, so as to get the people in this new nation completely cut off from loyalty to the Jerusalem temple. Thus it appears that the laws and stories in Exodus were things he was familiar with, things that had been written centuries before his time. It is quite hard to believe that someone ("J") wrote Exodus 32-34 AFTER Jeroboam had already made his golden calves.

2. *What request did the people make to Aaron? (32:1)*

They requested that Aaron make them "gods" who would go before them on their journey.

They referred to Moses as "this Moses ('this guy!') that brought us up out of the land of Egypt." They did not mention that JEHOVAH had brought them up! The lofty truth of an eternal, imageless God had not yet penetrated their minds, much less their religious habits. They wanted visible gods who would go before them - gods they could SEE!

Moses endured "as seeing him who is invisible." (Heb. 11:27). But the people wanted a visible god.

We marvel at how quickly the Israelites had forgotten the LORD! Scarcely five months before they were singing, "Jehovah is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: This is my God . . ." (Ex. 15:2).

The story of the making of the golden calf is a plain demonstration that seeing miracles and experiencing God's great wonders will not save and uphold those who have a weak faith. Those who cannot endure "as seeing the

invisible" (God) will probably not be saved by an abundance of visible miracles.

Moses had been gone forty days (24:18), and the people thought he would never return. Moses had delegated authority to Aaron and Hur (24:14). After 24:14 we hear no more of Hur. Jewish tradition (unverified) says he resisted the people's demands and was put to death by them. Josephus (*Antiquities* III, v, 7-8) mentions the people's anxiety over Moses' delay; but he says not even one word about the golden calf! Josephus tends to glorify Israel and to super-glorify Moses.

There has been MUCH discussion about the identity of the "gods" which the Israelites requested Aaron to make. Were these "gods" (plural) or "a god"? The story mentions only one golden calf (32:8). But the Hebrew verbs translated "go up" and "brought" (in 32:4) are forms used with plural subjects. The Hebrew word for "God" (*'elohim*) is naturally plural in form, although when referred to the LORD it normally takes a singular verb (as in Gen. 1:1: "God [plural form] created [singular verb] . . ."). The word *'elohim* frequently has a definitely plural meaning, "gods." In such cases the verb is plural also, as it is in Ex. 32:1.<sup>3</sup> We agree with John Davis<sup>4</sup> that the people were thinking of "gods" (plural) when they made their request to Aaron. Compare Ex. 32:31. (Isn't it remarkable that the people asked for "gods" to lead them instead of another man like Moses?)

Exodus 34:4 quotes the people as saying when they saw the ONE golden calf, "*These are thy gods, O Israel.*" It has been proposed that the words "gods" and "these" in this verse are "plurals of majesty," which only refer to one god. This is a possible and commonly-accepted explanation as to why *'elohim* often takes a singular verb. But examples

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<sup>3</sup>Interestingly, Nehemiah 9:18, in telling of this very event, quotes the people as saying, "This (singular) is thy God (*'elohim*) that brought thee up out of Egypt."

<sup>4</sup>*Moses and the Gods of Egypt* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971), p. 283.

of the pronoun *these* with a singular meaning are RARE indeed. II Chron. 3:3; Ezek. 46:24; and Ezra 1:9 have been proposed as examples of this; but these are extremely uncertain passages, as a little study will reveal.

Our opinion is that the Israelites were not trying to be grammatically consistent at that moment. They were too excited to be bothered about grammatical points, such as whether the word "god" took a singular or plural verb. We should not be surprised if they were inconsistent. Theologically they were very inconsistent. Why not also grammatically?

Another much-discussed question is this: Were the people desiring to make another god instead of Jehovah? Or was their idol a representation of Jehovah? Was it an adaptation of some Egyptian idol? Or perhaps of some Canaanite idol?

The prevailing opinion among scholars is that the golden calf was in some way a representation of Jehovah, or a mount for Jehovah to sit or stand upon. Scholars feel it was probably NOT a representation of an Egyptian god, because the feast held in connection with the worship of the calf was announced as a "feast of Jehovah" (32:5).<sup>5</sup> (At least Aaron proclaimed a feast unto Jehovah.) Cassuto<sup>6</sup> thinks that the Israelites were not actually asking for a substitute for the God of Israel, but were only asking for a replacement for Moses; and that Aaron did not consider that he was making another God instead of Jehovah. Scholars who hold views such as these assume that Aaron and the Israelites were thinking about god-images like those of Canaan and Syria, rather than like those of Egypt. The Canaanites at ancient Ugarit called their father-god "El, Father Bull." These Canaanite and related gods are very often pictured as sitting or standing on wild beasts - bulls, lions, cattle, etc. *The Ancient Near East in Pictures*

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<sup>5</sup>Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, p. 141.

<sup>6</sup>Op. cit., pp. 411-413.

(Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 163, 164, 167, 179, shows pictures of numerous such gods riding upon animals. Thus according to this view, when Aaron made the calf, he was seeking to fashion a mount for the LORD, a bull calf upon which the invisible God could ride, like Canaanite deities. As the mercy-seat was indeed sort of a throne for Yahweh, so the bull calf was to be sort of a vacant throne for Yahweh. Thus, according to this view, Aaron did not really intend to commit the sin of idolatry when he made the calf.

Though the theories just presented are frequently expressed, there are problems in adopting them. The Biblical text does NOT state that the golden calf was designed like the idols of any particular people. Then there is the problem as to why the Israelites should have tried to make a calf like some Canaanite or Syrian image when they had lived in Egypt for centuries, and had become thoroughly Egyptianized. When the Israelites were in the wilderness and experienced difficulties, they always wanted to go back to EGYPT, and not to Canaan. (See Neh. 9:17; Ex. 14:11; 16:13; Num. 14:4.) Joshua 24:14 and Ezek. 20:7, 8 both speak of the Israelites serving the gods of EGYPT. Ezekiel even mentions that they did not "forsake the idols of Egypt." Acts 7:39 quotes Stephen as saying that they "turned back in their hearts unto EGYPT" (not to Canaan or Syria); and then they "made a calf in those days and brought a sacrifice unto the idol." Observe that the calf is plainly called an idol. Psalm 106:21 says that when they made the likeness of the ox "They *forgot* God their savior who had done great things in Egypt." Surely if they had *forgotten* God, they were not trying to make an image of him or for him to ride upon.

This scriptural evidence causes us to think that the golden calf actually was an idol in the worst sense of that word; and that it was probably adapted from some Egyptian model, rather than being patterned after a Canaanite bull-statue upon which some god-figure was standing.

It is well-known that the Egyptians made statues of animals that were worshipped as gods. These included the Hathor cow images, and the image of the Apis bull. The Apis bull was most often worshipped as a living bull, another one being picked to replace each former one at death. But statues of the Apis bull have indeed been found, dating as far back as the seventh century B.C., and possibly older.<sup>7</sup>

3. *Where was material obtained for the golden calf?* (32:2-3)

It was obtained from the golden rings in the ears of the families of the Israelites. The text does not clearly state this, but possibly Aaron thought that the request for costly earrings might restrain the Israelites. Not only was the value of the earrings great, but the Israelite men had to take them away from their family members, who might be uncooperative. If that was in Aaron's mind, his hopes were in vain. ALL the people BROKE OFF the earrings, and brought them to him. Aaron underestimated their fanaticism, and in so doing put himself in position where he needed to reject his own offer; and he was not equal to it. Thus he was swept along by the mob pressure to make an idol, an act that he certainly did not personally approve.

The Israelites did wear earrings in ancient times (Gen. 35:4). But in later years they did not (Judges 8:24). The taboo on earrings seems to have started at Mt. Sinai after the golden calf incident (Ex. 33:4-6). Gideon made an "ephod" from earrings, but they were the earrings of the Midianites (Judges 8:24-27).

4. *What was the technique used in making the calf?* (32:4, 8)

It was first "molten" and then "fashioned" (cut, form, make) with an engraving tool. "Molten" indicates that the

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<sup>7</sup>*Ancient Near East in Pictures* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), p. 190, has a photograph of an Apis statue wearing a sun-disk between its horns and a sacred cobra (uraeus) from its forehead. It is dated in the Saite period, 663-525 B.C. See also *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 141.



gold was first melted. We are not informed how it was made after the gold was melted. We suppose that a wooden model or a wooden frame of the idol was then made, and the gold was then overlaid upon this wood.<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 30:22 and 40:19 suggest that idols were made in this manner. The fine details (such as eyes) would then be engraved into the golden shell. This would explain how the image could be "burned" (32:20). We get the impression that the calf was made in one day. If so, it could hardly have been anything but CRUDE.

We cannot excuse Aaron's action of making this idol. His heart was surely not in his work, but he did it. This did not disqualify him from the priesthood, any more than the sins of Abraham, Jacob, and David disqualified them from being great leaders in God's program for the ages. God's gifts are bestowed on the basis of grace rather than merit.

5. *How did the people respond when they saw the golden calf?* (32:4)

They became almost delirious with ecstasy! They said, "These are thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt!" Whereas they had said shortly before (32:1) that MOSES brought them up from Egypt, now they say the calf-idol had brought them up. What insanity! The calf had not even been in existence when they left Egypt!

The use of the plural forms "these" and "gods" gives problems, because only one idol was made. See notes on 32:1. Cassuto<sup>9</sup> writes that the Jews never had the foolish

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<sup>8</sup>An alternate translation of "fashioned it with a graving tool" is "he bound it up in a bag." To arrive at this rendering one must read *charit* (bag, purse, pocket) for the word *cherit* (graving tool) that is actually in the text. Then we must translate the verb *tsarar* as "wrap" or "bind up." This translation is found in II Kings 5:23, where Naaman put two talents in a bag. But this rendering seems incongruous and superfluous. Why should Aaron tie up the earrings in a bag? Why should such a triviality be mentioned? See Keil and Delitzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

<sup>9</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 413.

idea that the calf led them from Egypt, but only that they considered the calf an emblem of God, itself worthy of divine honor along with the Lord, and thus spoke of "these," referring to the LORD *and* to the calf. This idea, as appealing as it might be, just isn't what the text says. The people upon seeing the calf said, "These are thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up."

The words of the people are the very words later used by King Jeroboam I (931-909 B.C.) to refer to his golden calves set up at Dan and Bethel (I Kings 12:28). Jeroboam's allusion to Aaron's golden calf could hardly be missed. The people were probably just as ready to worship a golden calf in Jeroboam's time as they were in Aaron's time.

The term "calf" (Heb., *'egel*) is masculine, and refers to a young bull in full strength. A three-year old animal is referred to as an *egelah* (same word with a feminine ending). The same word refers to an ox (or to the female heifer counterpart) mature enough to work at plowing or threshing (Judges 14:18; Jer. 50:11; Hosea 10:11). Psalm 106:19-20 makes the "calf" synonymous with an "ox."

6. *What did Aaron do when he saw the people's reaction to the calf?* (32:5)

Aaron built an altar before the calf, and he cried out, "A feast to Yahweh tomorrow!"

What was Aaron thinking when he built the altar and proclaimed a feast to Yahweh (if indeed he really was thinking in any coherent way at all)? It is proper for us to give Aaron whatever credit there may be possible. "Love believeth [the best possible about] all things" (I Cor. 13:7).

Aaron's making the altar was surely a legitimate act (Ex. 20:24), and the altar was not mentioned later as a cause for criticism. Making the altar was Aaron's own idea; the people had said nothing (as far as we know) about an altar.

Proclaiming a feast to Yahweh was also Aaron's own idea. We cannot assert on the evidence of the text that Aaron was trying to link the molten calf to Jehovah worship

(as some have alleged). If that was his idea, it did not work. Jehovah himself told Moses that the people had sacrificed **TO THE CALF**, and not to Him (32:8). It seems to us that Aaron was probably trying to divert the people's minds from the calf to the altar, and thus from calf-worship to Jehovah worship. It hardly compliments Aaron to represent him as thinking that he could transform the calf into a Jehovah-worship accessory by making an altar before it and proclaiming a Jehovah feast. (That would be somewhat like trying to make a cocktail party or a dance holy by having an "invocation" at the start.) Aaron did not later attempt to excuse himself by saying something such as, "Well, I thought we could use the calf to symbolize Jehovah, or use it for Jehovah to ride upon." Compare 32:21-24.

Whatever Aaron had on his mind, it did not cancel his sin. God became so angry with him that He was ready to kill him (Deut. 9:20). The decisiveness of Moses in situations of idolatry makes Aaron look very shaky. See Ex. 32:19-20; Num. 25:4-5.

7. *How did the people worship around the calf?* (32:6)

The people responded enthusiastically, rising up *early* the next morning. (Perhaps it was late in the evening when the calf was completed.) They "broke loose." (See notes on Ex. 32:25 concerning this expression.) They offered burnt-offerings (20:24) and peace offerings. Then they "sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play."

Eating and drinking are innocent enough, but the "play" was another matter. Paul classifies this "play" as idolatry (I Cor. 10:7). The "play" including singing and dancing (32:18-19). The "play" included laughter, probably loud and uproarious. The Hebrew word translated "play" (*tsachaq*) means to laugh (Gen. 17:17), jest, mock (Gen. 19:14; 21:9), make sport of (as in Judges 16:25, where the Philistines "made sport of" Samson), and play. The word is used in Gen. 26:8 to refer to Isaac "sporting" with his wife, Rebekah. On the basis of this one use of the word many interpreters have read into the "play"

around the golden calf the idea of a wild sex orgy,<sup>10</sup> such as the Canaanites might have indulged in at a Baal festival.

We seriously question that the "play" around the idol involved any sex orgy. *Tsachaq* does not basically refer to sex acts. What Isaac was doing with Rebekah was out-of-doors in plain sight, and probably involved nothing more than teasing, or joking, or laughing with Rebekah. The passage about Isaac does not indicate that the word meant "fondling" or even "caressing." Paul does not mention in I Cor. 10:7-8 that "fornication" was associated with the "play" around the golden calf, as it was with later idolatry (Num. 25:1).

It is not necessary, or even possible, to assume that all the people (600,000 men!) were involved in the idolatry. But many were, and therefore the whole nation was collectively involved in the transgression.

8. *How did God react to the golden calf?* (32:7-8; Deut. 9:12)

Jehovah was angry enough to destroy them (Deut. 9:19). His displeasure was HOT. Observe the statement that "They have made. . . ." They all made it by contributing materials, by requesting that it be made. See Ex. 32:20, 35.

Note that God referred to Israel as "THY (Moses') people" (32:7). For that moment He disowned them. But Moses reversed this, and (in 32:11) referred to them as "thy (God's) people."

God accused the Israelites of three things:

(1) They had *corrupted* themselves. "Corrupt" means "destroy, lay waste, corrupt morally (Gen. 6:11), overthrow." All acts of forsaking God corrupt those who disobey.

(2) They had turned aside quickly. Quickly indeed! It was scarcely six weeks since they had heard the ten commandments, which forbade the making of any type of image.

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<sup>10</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 216. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 414.

(3) They had made a molten calf and worshipped it and sacrificed unto it (NOT unto God). Concerning the plurals "these" and "gods," see notes on 32:1.

9. *What did God threaten to do to the Israelites?* (32:9-10; Deut. 9:13-14).

To consume them, that is, burn them up (literally "to devour" them).

God declared that they were a stiff-necked people. This was a common expression (Deut. 9:6; II Chron. 30:8; Isa. 48:4; Acts 7:51), which described people as being like oxen or horses that would not respond when the guiding rein was tugged.

God declared that He would make of MOSES a great nation, once He had consumed the Israelites. The same promise was made to Moses later at Kadesh (Num. 14:12). The promise was like that given to Abraham (Gen. 12:2). Moses later mentioned this promise to Him in his speech to the people (Deut. 9:14).

Whether this promise was actually an alluring temptation to Moses or not, he rejected it instantly. If he had accepted it, his own descendants would not necessarily have been better people than the other Israelites. His grandson became an idolatrous priest (Judges 18:30).

God said to Moses, "Now therefore, let me alone." But Moses refused to let God alone. Like Jacob, he would not let go until he obtained the blessing (Gen. 32:24-29). In "Let me alone" there is an acknowledgement that Moses' intercession could alter (or at least delay) God's threatened punishment. God placed the fate of the whole nation into the hands of Moses. Would Moses, as the mediator of the covenant, show himself worthy of his calling, and sacrifice his own exaltation for the sake of a guilt-laden people?

"He (God) said that he would destroy them, Had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, To turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them" (Psalm 106:23).

10. *What three appeals did Moses make to God to spare Israel? (32:11-13)*

(1) Remember your special relationship with Israel. They are "thy people," which thou hast brought out of the land of Egypt.

(2) The Egyptians would hear of it and think God had brought Israel forth to slay them, and they would gloat. (Joshua later used a similar argument, Josh. 7:9.)

(3) Remember your covenant promises with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to multiply their seed and give them the promised land. The promises mentioned in Ex. 32:13 can be read in Gen. 22:17; 13:15.

Moses mentioned "mountains" in 32:12. The Sinai area was very well supplied with mountains.

Regarding "repent" in 32:12, see notes on 32:14.

Note in 32:13 that God had sworn "by his own self." God can swear by none greater. (Heb. 6:13)

11. *How can God REPENT? (32:14)*

It should not be surprising to us that God "repents" of His threats to do evil (bodily punishment). "Repenting of evil" is one of the most prominent and basic aspects of God's nature. See Joel 2:13; Jonah 3:2. The Old Testament very frequently mentions God's repentance. See Jer. 26:19; 18:10; Jonah 3:10; II Sam. 24:16; Gen. 6:6-7. Aren't you glad that God will "repent" (change his mind about) the evil which He would be absolutely just to inflict?

The word here translated "repent" (*nacham*) most often means "to have compassion, to pity, to be comforted, to console." It is used in Psalm 23:4: "Thy rod and thy staff, they *comfort* me." Ex. 34:14 could be translated, "And Jehovah had compassion concerning the evil which He said he would do to his people." (Note the reassuring reference to "his" [God's] people.) Of thirty-five occurrences of this verb in the Old Testament, thirty refer to God as the subject and only five to men's acts of repenting.

God does not "repent" in the sense that he acknowledges He was in error or made a bad judgment. See Mal. 3:6.

God does not have temper tantrums, of which He needs to repent. God NEVER really desires or gets pleasure from the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11).

God was totally just in being angry over Israel's idolatry. God would be unworthy of our worship if He did not abhor evil. But at the very moment God was angry, He left the door open to Moses' intercession for the people, with the clear hint that if Moses prayed, the consequences would be different. In all of these things, God showed no shiftiness, no uncertainty, no variation. (James 1:17)

We are not told whether Moses was informed at that moment that God had repented. But the fact that God did not object to Moses' prayer for the people was itself a reassurance to Moses. Later when Moses wrote the book of Exodus, he knew that God had forgiven at that moment, and thus Moses wrote of what had actually happened just then.

Many commentators have tried to explain God's "repentance" as a figure of speech that seeks to express God's feelings in human terms that we can understand, because His feelings are beyond human comprehension. They speak of God's repentance as an anthropopathism (attributing human feeling to God) or an anthropomorphism (attributing human forms to God). This explanation seems to us rather unnecessary. Mankind learned of "repentance" from God, not God from man. We do not assume we know all about God. But one revelation from God about Himself is worth a thousand of our speculations about Him.

12. *What did Moses carry as he came down from the mount?* (32:15-16)

He carried the two tables (tablets) of stone inscribed with the ten commandments. See notes on 31:18. It was unusual for ancient inscribed stones to be written on both sides.

13. *What did Joshua think about the noise in the camp?* (32:17-18)

He thought it was a sound of war in the camp. Being a

military man, he was probably conditioned to interpret all loud sounds from people as war. See Ex. 17:9.

Joshua had been left on the lower slopes of the mount when Moses went up (24:13). As Moses descended, he met Joshua, but he did not tell him what God had said in 32:8. Even when Joshua commented about the uproar, Moses did not tell Joshua what God had said, but merely corrected his false impression of the sound.

Exodus 32:18 very definitely has a poetic rhythm in Hebrew. However, this does not necessarily indicate that the whole book was originally written in verse, of which a fragment is here preserved.<sup>11</sup> Poetic lines sometimes drop from the lips of gifted people without the lines being in a poetic setting.

The words "shout," "cry," and "sing" are all actually translated from one Hebrew word (*'anah*). This word refers to antiphonal singing in Ex. 15:21, and may do so here, as if one group of idolaters were singing and another group were echoing their words.

14. *How did Moses react when he saw the idolatry?* (32:19)

He was surprised, shocked, stunned, and indignant! Though he had been told about it, the impact of seeing it was much stronger than of hearing about it.

The word "dancing" is plural, as if referring to dances, or different types of dances. Cole<sup>12</sup> suggests that the plural is a "plural of indignation," as if to say "such goings-on!"

Moses slammed down the tables of ten commandments, and broke them "beneath the mount" (that is, at the foot of the mount). In the very place where the covenant had been made (24:4), the tables of the covenant were broken. How sad, but how appropriate.

We are not informed as to whether we should interpret the breaking of the ten commandments as merely an act of Moses in anger, or as a symbol of the breaking of the

<sup>11</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

<sup>12</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 218.



covenant between God and Israel. The scripture does not definitely state the latter idea, but the symbolism comes immediately into our minds. Certainly there was a rupture in the covenant relationship. Observe Moses' fervent pleas to God to accept Israel back as His people (33:13; 34:9).

Perhaps God blamed Moses slightly for breaking the ten commandments. See notes on 34:1.

Moses' breaking ALL the laws seems to illustrate James 2:10: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Israel in breaking one law had broken all the law.

S. C. Barlett tells of climbing up and descending Mt. Sinai:

We started to descend . . . by the gorge on the north-east side [called "Jethro's path"], by which possibly Moses may have descended when he heard the sounds of the camp, before he could see what was taking place there. We were completely shut in by the sides of the gorge till just as we emerged from it near the bottom. There was no sound below for us to hear, but we could readily accept Mr. Palmer's statement that while descending here, he had distinctly heard the sounds of his own camp at the foot of the mountain, while entirely hidden from view. . . . The passage by which we [and presumably Moses] descended was of the steepest, the rocks often loose, and the descent hard. Between the almost perpendicular cliffs, sometimes singularly honey-combed . . . we made our way . . . in an hour and a quarter from the top of Ras Safsafah.<sup>13</sup>

15. *What did Moses do with the golden calf?* (32:20; Deut. 9:21)

He utterly destroyed it, even making the Israelites drink the water containing its ashes. Deut. 9:21 mentions that

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<sup>13</sup>*From Egypt to Palestine* (New York: Harper, 1879), pp. 269, 270.

the water was that in "the brook that descended out of the mount."

Moses **GROUND** the calf, probably between stones. See notes on 32:4 regarding how the golden calf might be *burned*.

Moses' treatment of the idol surely showed the worthlessness of it. It also humiliated the idolaters. In later years King Josiah treated the altar at Bethel in a way similar to the way Moses treated the golden calf. (II Kings 23:15)

Numerous Jewish and modern commentators have associated the "water of bitterness" used as a test of a wife suspected of adultery (Num. 5:17-22), with Moses' act of making the people drink the water bearing the ashes of the golden calf. To us this does not appear to be a legitimate association.

Firstly, the scripture does not associate the two passages. Secondly, the law given in Numbers five was apparently revealed by God to Moses some time **AFTER** the golden calf was destroyed. Thirdly, Exodus 32 does not mention any examination of the people to see who passed and who flunked the water-drinking test.

In spite of these barriers to associating the two passages (Ex. 32 and Num. 5), writers still speak as if Moses used the gold-dusted water as a guilt-detector, a sort of trial, or ordeal, by water. Supposedly the people's physiological or psychological reactions to drinking the water would show which ones were guilty of participating in the idolatry. The smiting of the people referred to in 32:35 has been considered to be a reference to those who got sick after drinking the water because they were guilty of the idolatry. But Ex. 32:35 appears to be a statement about punishment rather than about testing.

16. *What excuse did Aaron give to Moses? (32:21-24)*

Aaron blames the people. Also he said that the calf formed itself (miraculously!) in the fire, and "came out" (under its own power!). It is hard to imagine that Aaron

did not have a sheepish grin after he told his story about the calf. What a "tall tale"! God was ready to destroy Aaron (Deut. 9:20).

Moses said, "What did the people do unto thee, that thou hast brought a great sin upon them?" Moses was astounded at Aaron. Aaron had failed miserably to be a strong leader. Moses' question was more designed to convict and reprove Aaron than to get information.

What Aaron said about Israel in 32:22 was very true. They were constantly "in evil." See 14:9; 15:24; 16:2, 20; 17:2, 4. Israel had been rebellious ever since Moses knew them (Deut. 9:7, 24).

Nevertheless, Aaron's answer was very evasive and defensive, like that of Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen. 3:12-13). Aaron shows no real sorrow for his sin.

Aaron addresses Moses as "My lord." See also Num. 12:11. This title has a servile tone about it that seems most unfitting from the one who stood with Moses on the bank of the Nile when it turned to blood (7:20).

17. *What call for decision did Moses make? (32:25-26)*

He stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Who is for Jehovah? Unto me!"

While this had the nature of an ultimatum, it also contained the opportunity of an amnesty.

Exodus 32:25 speaks of the people having "broken loose" (K.J.V., being "naked"). They had broken loose from all the regulations of God. The word does not mean to "make naked," and it is not so translated that way anywhere in the American Standard version. The Hebrew verb *para'* means "to loosen, to let loose, unbridle, to break out" (as a disorder). It may mean to "uncover" (or let loose), as of the hair (Num. 5:18; Lev. 13:45). But there is not one passage where it clearly refers to nakedness. This has a bearing on whether or not the "play" of 32:6 refers to a sex orgy. See notes on that verse.

Israel's "breaking loose" had given their enemies an opportunity for derision (literally, a "whispering"). The

enemies would include the nearby Amalekites and others who would hear about this. Compare Deut. 28:37. The sins of saints cause unbelievers to blaspheme God.

In these circumstances Moses made his ultimatum-amnesty proclamation. And all the sons (meaning descendants) of Levi gathered together unto Moses.

The response of the Levites comes as a surprise to us. Nothing previously written about the tribe of Levi (except possibly the faith of Moses' parents) causes us to think very highly of them. Levi and his brother Simeon were angry and cruel men. They massacred the Shechemites (Gen. 34:25-26). They hocked an ox (Gen. 49:5-7). Still, when the call came for men to stand with Moses, the tribe of Levi responded to a man. (Possibly the "all" may be used here a bit hyperbolically, as in other places. Compare Ex. 9:6.)

Several questions must remain unanswered: Were the Levites as a whole less guilty of participating in the idolatry than the other tribes? Was their family association with Moses cause for their response? Were they more willing to confess their sins than the other tribes?

The immediate response of the Levites suggests that if Aaron had boldly stood up and opposed the people's request that he make them "gods," he would have had many loyal Israelites to stand with him.

18. *What were the Levites commissioned to do? (32:27-28)*

They were to put on their swords and go through the camp slaying people. About 3000 fell that day.

Note that it was *Jehovah* the God of Israel who commanded this mass execution, but the "word of Moses" proclaimed it. A similar order to execute violators is in Num. 25:5.

The expression "from gate to gate" indicates that Israel's wilderness encampment had definite boundaries, and probably a fence with gates.

"Brother" means "fellow-Israelite." Fleshly ties must not be stronger than spiritual relationships. (Matt. 12:46-

50; 10:37; Luke 12:52-53; 14:26).

The small number slain (small in contrast to the total population) may indicate that not all the people were involved in the idolatry, or that God in His grace spared many offenders.

Three-thousand men were slain at Sinai for breaking the law. On the day of Pentecost after Christ ascended three-thousand law-breakers were made alive (Acts 2:41; Eph. 2:5). This is a vivid object lesson showing the differing natures of the law and the gospel.

The command to slay was a drastic test of faith for the Levites. But the punishment was just: "He that sacrificeth unto any God save unto Jehovah only, shall be utterly destroyed" (Ex. 22:20).

How could the Levites rampage through the camp killing without resistance? Was the meekness of the people due to the suddenness of the attack, or the guilt they felt for their sin, or the authority projected by Moses' language and bearing? It would seem reasonable that 22,000 Levites could slay 3000 people before the people realized what was happening (Num. 3:39). The people did not know what Moses had ordered the Levites to do. We suppose that the Levites slew only guilty idolaters, those whom they may have seen participating.

19. *What were the Levites called to consecrate themselves to?* (32:29)

They were to consecrate themselves to Jehovah, for a holy war against sinners. "Consecrate" means literally "fill the hand." Compare 29:9.

Exodus 32:29 is a difficult verse. Does the command refer to something that the Levites were called to do AFTER the 3000 were slain? (We favor this view.) Or is it merely a restatement of the order in 32:27? Or is it merely a report on the consequences of their slaying the 3000?

The R.S.V., which follows the Septuagint here, gives the verse the latter meaning: "Today you have ordained

yourselves." The Septuagint reads, "Ye have filled your hands this day to the Lord." It definitely seems that the imperative reading, "Consecrate yourselves," is the correct reading, rather than the indicative reading, "Today you have ordained yourselves."<sup>14</sup>

The words of 32:29 stand AFTER the report of the slaughter. Thus it seems preferable to interpret them as being Moses' words to the Levites after they had completed the punitive slaughter. After that fearsome event, they are called on to present themselves. ("Fill your hand!") They are to give themselves to service to the Lord that day, for service in time to come, so that every man of them might, if need be, be against his own father and mother, and thus to get themselves a blessing that day. They accepted the call.

The "blessing" which Levi was to obtain that day was the privilege of service in God's tabernacle (Num. 3:6-9).

Moses blessed Levi in Deut. 37:9 with these words:

Who said of his father, and of his mother, I have not  
seen him,  
Neither did he acknowledge his brethren;  
Nor knew he his own children:  
For they have observed thy word  
And keep thy covenant.

The previous ferocity of the Levites was now disciplined and consecrated to serve God alone. And thus the curse that once rested on them (Gen. 49:7) was turned into a blessing.

20. *What did Moses promise to do for the people? (32:30)*

He promised to go unto Jehovah (back up in the mount) to try to make atonement (covering) for them.

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<sup>14</sup>The Hebrew reading is an imperative, "Consecrate yourselves." The verb could possibly be rendered as an indicative (reading it as piel perfect instead of Qal imperative); "They have filled *your* (plural) hand." But the presence of the plurals "they" and "your" indicate that the imperative reading is the correct one, and the Greek reading is incorrect.

The "Ye" is emphatic: "You! you have sinned a great sin."

The word "peradventure" (meaning "perhaps") is a word that expresses hope in Jer. 20:12. But the same word expresses fear and doubt in Gen. 27:12. The use of this word suggests that Moses was not at all sure his efforts would be successful.

21. *What did Moses pray unto God? (32:31-32)*

Moses confessed their sin. He requested God to forgive (literally "lift up") their sin. And if God would not do this, to blot out his name out of God's book.

Exodus 32:31 mentions for the third time their "great sin." See 32:21, 30, 31. Regarding the "gods," see 32:1.

Moses' prayer was utterly selfless. He lived only for the people. His prayer was similar to Paul's in Rom. 9:3. He was willing to sacrifice himself for the people.

The last part of the request for forgiveness in 32:32 is not stated, leaving its conclusion to be supplied by the mind of the reader. The last part of 32:32 might have been "then I will be content," or "I will say no more," or "please do so!" For similar incomplete sentences, see Daniel 3:15; Luke 13:9; 19:42; Romans 9:22; I Samuel 12:14-15. (This type of expression is called aposiopesis.)

Moses' reference to the "book" of God is the first reference to this book in the scriptures. We do not know how Moses even knew such a book existed. We do not know what Moses understood the nature of this book to be. (Many facts and practices in divine religion had been taught to the pre-Mosaic patriarchs, concerning which we are told nothing of the way or time they were revealed. Examples include tithing, the priesthood, burnt-offerings, etc.)

This book is elsewhere called "the book of the living" (Psalm 69:28; Isa. 4:3), "the book of remembrance" (Malachi 3:16), and the "book of life" (Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 20:15; 13:8; 17:8).

We do not know for sure that the book mentioned by

Moses was the same book that we know as the book of life. Possibly this "book" was a list of those granted more lifetime on earth, and did not have reference to eternal life. We do feel, however, that it probably was the same book that we know as the book of life, because the names of those to be saved by God have been written in the book of life "from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 17:8). We do not assume that Moses knew as much about the book as we have learned by revelation since his time.

Moses prayed for Aaron also at this time. The exact time of Moses' prayer is hard to specify. Possibly it was during the forty-day period in the mountain that Moses was to in a few days (Deut. 9:18-20; Ex. 34:1-2, 28).

There would come a time when not even the prayers of Moses or Samuel could avert judgment upon Israel, but that time was not yet (Jeremiah 15:1).

22. *Was Moses' prayer granted?* (32:33-35)

The request (or offer) of Moses was refused. Moses could not be a substitute for Israel. (Only Christ could be a substitute.) Whoever had sinned would be blotted out of the book, not Moses.

Though God is forgiving, there are times when He will be no means clear the guilty (Ex. 34:7). This gives God no pleasure. "For he doth not afflict willingly ('from his heart'), nor grieve the children of men." (Lam. 3:32-33) But justice must often be administered, even when it is painful.

God foresaw that that generation would continue in their ways of unbelief. He foreknew that that generation would be rejected at Kadesh-barnea (Num. 14:22-35), and all perish in the desert (Ex. 32:34b).

"Forty years long was I grieved with that generation, And said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Wherefore, I swear in my wrath. That they should not enter into my rest" (Psalm 95:10-11). Hebrews 4:5-7 quotes this passage, and indicates that Israel not only did not get to enter into the promised



rest of Canaan-land, but they did not enter God's eternal rest. How totally tragic! (But the sad fate of Israel was written to warn us of the same danger! Heb. 4:11)

Nonetheless, God did allow the people to be led on by Moses and an angel to the place of which God had spoken (to the promised land). God foreknew they would never make it.

God promised that "My angel shall go before your face" (or presence). Regarding this angel see 33:2; 23:20-24; Num. 20:16.

The statement is 32:35 that "Jehovah smote the people" is indefinite as to when and how the smiting was done. The verb translated "smote" is related to the word translated "plague" (*negeph*) in Ex. 12:13; Num. 16:47. This suggests a deadly smiting. The R.S.V. translates it "The LORD sent a plague upon the people." It has been suggested that this plague was the possible consequence of the potion (the gold-dusted water) that Moses had made them drink.<sup>15</sup> This notion seems untrue. See notes on 32:20.

### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**33** And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, Depart, go up hence, thou and the people that thou hast brought up out of the land of E-gypt, unto the land of which I sware unto Abraham, to I-saac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it: (2) and I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Ca-na-an-ite, the Am-or-ite, and the Hit-tite, and the Per-iz-zite, the Hi-vite, and the Jeb-u-site: (3) unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people; lest I consume thee in the way. (4) And when the people heard these evil tidings,

<sup>15</sup>Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 1 (1969), p. 454.

they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments. (5) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Say unto the children of Is-ra-el, Ye are a stiffnecked people; if I go up into the midst of thee for one moment, I shall consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. (6) And the children of Is-ra-el stripped themselves of their ornaments from mount Ho-reb onward.

(7) Now Mo-ses used to take the tent and to pitch it without the camp, afar off from the camp; and he called it, The tent of meeting. And it came to pass, that every one that sought Je-ho-vah went out unto the tent of meeting, which was without the camp. (8) And it came to pass, when Mo-ses went out unto the Tent, that all the people rose up, and stood, every man at his tent door, and looked after Mo-ses, until he was gone into the Tent. (9) And it came to pass, when Mo-ses entered into the Tent, the pillar of cloud descended, and stood at the door of the Tent: and Je-ho-vah spake with Mo-ses. (10) And all the people saw the pillar of cloud stand at the door of the Tent: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man at his tent door. (11) And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his minister Josh-u-a, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the Tent.

(12) And Mo-ses said unto Je-ho-vah, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found favor in my sight. (13) Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found favor in thy sight, show me now thy ways, that I may know thee, to the end that I may find favor in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. (14) And he said, My presence shall go *with thee*, and I will give thee rest. (15) And he said unto him, If thy presence go not *with me*, carry us not up hence. (16) For wherein now shall it be known that I have found favor in thy sight, I and thy people? is it not in that thou goest with us, so that we are separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth?

(17) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken; for thou hast found favor in my sight, and I know thee by name. (18) And he said, Show me, I pray thee, thy glory. (19) And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and will proclaim the name of Je-ho-vah before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. (20) And he said, Thou canst not see my face; for man shall not see me and live. (21) And Je-ho-vah said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon the rock: (22) and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand until I have passed by: (23) and I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back; but my face shall not be seen.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading, propose a brief title or topic for the chapter.
2. Where was Moses directed to go? Who was to accompany him? (33:1, 12; 32:34)
3. What change does the command of 33:1 indicate had taken place in God's feelings toward Israel? (Compare 32:10.)
4. Who was to be sent before Moses and Israel? Why? (33:2; Compare 23:20-23.)
5. What was the land where they were going like? (33:3)
6. Why would God not personally go up with Israel? (33:3, 5)
7. What made the people mourn? (33:4) What did the people do that showed their sorrow? (33:4)
8. Why did God tell the Israelites to put off their ornaments? (33:5)
9. At what place did the Israelites strip off their ornaments? How long did this non-wearing of ornaments continue? (33:6)

10. Where did Moses take the "tent"? (33:7) What did he do with it? What did he call it? (Compare 27:21.) Was this removal of the tent done just one time? Was this the same "Tent" that is referred to in 26:36, 7?
11. What did the removal of the Tent from out of the camp symbolize or indicate?
12. Who went out to the Tent? (33:7)
13. What did the people do when Moses went out to the Tent? Where did they do this? (33:8, 10)
14. What happened when Moses entered the Tent? What did this symbolize or indicate? (33:9-10)
15. What was remarkable about the way the LORD spoke to Moses? (33:11; Compare Num. 12:6-7.)
16. Who remained at the Tent (possibly as a guard)? (33:11)
17. Where did the conversation of 33:12-23 occur?
18. What did Moses desire more information from God about? (33:12)
19. What had God said to Moses about Moses? (33:12, 17)
20. What did Moses want God to show him? (33:13)
21. For what two purposes did Moses want God to show him His way(s)? (33:13)
22. How did Moses want God to consider (or look upon) the nation (Israel)? (33:13)
23. Who would go with Israel? (33:14) What change in God's intentions does this indicate? (Compare 33:3, 5, 12.)
24. What is the "rest" of 33:14? (Joshua 21:44; 22:4; 23:1; Psalm 95:10-11; Deut. 12:9)
25. How strongly did Moses desire God's presence? (33:15)
26. How could it be known that Moses and Israel had found favor in God's sight? (33:16)
27. How was Israel "separated" from all other peoples? (33:16; Compare Num. 23:9.)
28. What is the "thing that thou (God) hast spoken"? (33:17; Compare 33:14-16.)
29. What is the significance of God's knowing Moses by *name*? (33:17)
30. How many times do forms of the word *know* occur in

33:12-17?

31. What did Moses request God to show him? (33:18)
  32. With what is God's "goodness" made synonymous? (33:19, 22)
  33. What would God proclaim to Moses? (33:19)
  34. What is the significance of "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious" in the setting (context) in which it was uttered? (33:19)
  35. What can man not see and yet live? (33:20, 23; Compare I Timothy 6:15-16; John 1:18. Compare Ex. 24:10.)
  36. What was the "place by me" (God)? (33:21; 34:2, 6)
  37. How would God "cover" Moses as He passed by? (33:21-22)
  38. What would Moses see of God? (33:23)
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### EXODUS THIRTY-THREE: GOD AND ISRAEL IN TENSION!

1. God's presence withdrawn; (33:1-3).
  2. The people in mourning; (33:4-6).
  3. The meeting-tent removed from camp; (33:7-11).
  4. The mediator in prayer; (33:12-23).
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### WHEN GOD WITHDRAWS HIS FACE! (33:1-7)

1. We journey without Him; (33:1-7).
  2. We confront Him with danger; (33:3, 5).
  3. We mourn; (33:4, 6).
  4. We seek Him at the distant place; (33:7).
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### THE FAR-OFF TENT OF GOD (33:7-11)

1. Placed afar-off because of sin; (33:7-8).
  2. Sought by men in need; (33:7).
  3. Fully accessible to the chosen mediator; (33:8-11).
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GOD'S ABOUNDING GRACE (33:12-17)

Grace, the source of hope . . .

1. To remove uncertainties; (33:12).
  2. To learn God's way; (33:13).
  3. To know God; (33:13).
  4. To have God's presence; (33:14-17).
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SEEING GOD'S GLORY (Ex. 33:18-23)

1. Man's desire to see God's glory; (33:18).
  2. Man's limitations in seeing God's glory; (33:20, 23).
  3. God's grace in showing His glory; (33:19).
  4. God's assistance in revealing His glory; (33:21-22).
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EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

1. *What is in Exodus thirty-three?*

The chapter tells of the tense period between Moses' prayer for Israel (32:31-34) and God's re-acceptance of Israel (33:14, 17). The early part of the chapter tells of God and Israel in tension, but it ends with the tension relieved and Moses asking God to show him His very glory.

The theme of the Lord's presence pervades all of chapter 33. How can a sinful people continue to experience God's presence at all? How can Israel survive without God's presence among them?<sup>1</sup>

2. *What are the critical theories about chapter thirty-three?*

Some critical scholars have expressed the view that this chapter consists of material from several sources. M. Noth considers 33:1-6 to be mostly of "Deuteronomistic origin" (sixth century) and not to be from just one source. He

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<sup>1</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

feels 33:7-11 is an old pre-priestly, pre-deuteronomistic tradition possibly "taken up" by J.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand *Broadman Bible Commentary* (1969) attributes 33:7-11 to E (supposedly *after* J), and 33:12-16 to J (tenth century).<sup>3</sup> Obviously there is not a unity of opinion about the "sources."

A view much more in harmony with the scripture itself and with the archaeological evidences is that of Cassuto:

For two consecutive passages [like 32:34-35 and 33:1-4] to treat of the same theme, with a few variations, was a common feature of [ancient] epic poetry. It will suffice, for instance, to point out that in the Ugaritic epic of Aqhat [fifteenth century B.C.] Daniel's action in a year of dearth is recounted in two successive paragraphs, which are identical except for the change of a few synonyms.<sup>4</sup>

Thus it appears that Moses wrote in the literary style of his time, and that suspicions about sources and additions are not based on solid evidence.

3. *Where was Moses directed to go?* (33:1)

He was directed to go up with the people into the land God had sworn to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

God's wrath of 32:10 had been softened by Moses' intercession. Compare 32:31. God was now allowing them to go up to the land. This broadens slightly the promise of 32:34. But still God was not Himself going up with them, lest he consume them. God refers to the people as "the people" rather than as "thy people" (as in 32:7). But God still had not called them "my people." Compare 33:13.

4. *Who would go before Israel?* (33:2-3)

An angel would be sent. See 32:34. Ex. 23:20-23 also refers to an "angel" who would be sent before them. But

<sup>2</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 255.

<sup>3</sup>P. 456.

<sup>4</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 425.

the "angel" of 23:20-21 was one like God Himself, if not actually God himself. On the other hand, the angel of 32:2 and 32:34 seems to refer to an ordinary angel, and the verse is a virtual refusal of the direct presence of God. Moses appealed to God in 33:12-16 to reverse this threat.

Regarding the Canaanite tribes, see 3:17. Regarding the "land flowing with milk and honey," see 3:8.

The reason for God's refusal to accompany Israel was "lest I consume thee in the way." God's anger toward Israel was such that if he did go up with Israel, He might destroy her because of her apostasy. Regarding "stiff-necked," see 32:9. God's presence with them would be a danger to them rather than a blessing. For in their state God would be a consuming fire in their midst (Deut. 4:24).

Israel was to be put on a level with other nations. It would lose its character as the people have a special covenant connection with Yahweh. See 33:16.

5. *How did the Israelites show their sorrow and mourning?* (33:4-6)

As a sign of mourning over the lost presence of God among them, the Israelites did not put on their ornaments. More than that, God commanded them to strip off the ones they were wearing. This practice of not wearing ornaments became a permanent custom in Israel thereafter. Israel must have seemed like a nation of ascetics and puritans in the ancient world. Putting off luxurious clothing and jewelry is a sign of mourning. Compare Ezek. 26:16.

Israel's mourning is the first real evidence of repentance in them. "Blessed are they that mourn" (Matt. 5:4). When the Lord is not in the midst of His people, it is a time to mourn! See James 4:9-10. Christians might well strip off some ornaments sometimes and mourn.

The "evil tidings" (literally, "this evil word") was the news that God would not go up in the midst of them. The tidings were "evil" in the sense of being painful, but certainly not morally evil. Actually, God was being very long-suffering to let them live at all.



The translation "If I go up into the midst of thee, . . ." is preferable to the King James reading, "I will come up into the midst of thee." The "if" is implied, if not actually in the Hebrew text.

The "one moment" is the time of a wink, or an instant. Ex. 33:5 could be translated: "(If) I go up in your midst (for) one instant (wink), I will finish you off! And now put off your ornament(s) from you, that I may know what I should do to you."

The wearing of ornaments might indicate a joyous defiance of God or an indifference to Him. Even in their humiliation God was uncertain what to do with them.

The "onward" of 33:6 is not actually in the text. It just reads "from Mt. Horeb." Horeb is the same as Sinai. See 3:1; 17:6.

The word "stripped" in 33:6 is from the same verb (*natsal*) that is translated "spoil" in 12:36: "they despoiled (or plundered) the Egyptians." The people who were once victorious and adorned are now themselves stripped of their ornaments by their sin.

The ornaments that had been partly used to make a golden calf were now available to make God's sanctuary. Ex. 35:22 makes plain that such trinkets were a major source of the offering of gold from the people. Some have suggested that the ornaments were religious medallions of some sort, and were associated with foreign gods. There is no real evidence of this.

#### 6. *Where did Moses pitch the Tent?* (33:7-8)

He pitched it outside of the camp, quite a ways from the camp. (The "camp" of the Israelites had definite boundaries and "gates." See 32:27.) Moses called this tent the "Tent of meeting," the same name that was given to the tabernacle room called the Holy Place. See 27:21; 29:42.

The exact reason for removing the tent from the midst of the camp is not stated. It is natural to assume that the separation was brought about by God's anger toward and

alienation from Israel. Or it may have been a means to keep a distance between God's "glory" and the people. (33:10)

Although the tent was moved from the midst of the camp, God had not withdrawn His presence altogether from them.

As far as we can tell, the removal of the tent was not done by any command of God, but was an act of spiritual discernment by Moses, in faith that God would not totally and finally reject them. (Pink)

When the Israelites now came to seek Jehovah, they had to depend on Moses. Moses had a very direct communication with God, more so than any other prophet ever. See 33:11; Num. 12:8. He did not commune with God in a trance or ecstasy, but as directly as one speaking to a friend.

In the Christian church we do not require such a prophet or direct revelation; for the faith has "once for all been revealed to the saints" (Jude 3); and we may gain a true understanding by reading. (Eph. 3:4)

What is the Tent referred to in 33:7? Probably it was a tent specially designated as the place for talking with God before the more elaborate Tabernacle was built. Certainly it was not the Tabernacle-tent itself. It probably was not Moses' own tent, for Moses left this Tent after communing with God, and returned to the camp, presumably to his own dwelling. Compare 18:7.

The verb "take" (or "took") in 33:7 is in the imperfect form, which usually indicates incomplete, repeated, or future action. This is the reason for the translation "Moses used to take. . . ." Most interpreters therefore feel that Moses' action of taking the tent out from the camp was not a single event, but one repeated many times.<sup>5</sup> The same imperfect "tense" form is used with the other verbs in 33:7.

However, in this instance the text clearly indicates that

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<sup>5</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

the Tent was not moved back and forth, but remained in one spot outside the camp, while Joshua stayed there constantly. Moses came back and forth, but the Tent stayed. The imperfect therefore does not here have the meaning of repeated action, as it usually does. Ex. 8:24 (Heb., 8:20) is another example of an imperfect form which does not express unfinished action, and is translated "The land was corrupted."

7. *What indicated God's presence at the Tent? (33:9-11)*

The pillar of cloud over the tent indicated God's presence there, like a flag-pole over a royal palace would point it out.

When Moses entered the Tent, the pillar of cloud descended, and Jehovah spoke to Moses. See Num. 14:14 and Ex. 13:21-22 concerning the cloud. Ex. 40:34-35 describes a pillar of cloud that covered the completed tabernacle. This surely was the same cloud as that of 33:9.

The subject of the verb "spake" in 33:9 is not stated, but obviously it is Jehovah.

When the cloud descended, the people would rise up and worship (bow down), each man at his own tent door.

The mention of Joshua stresses his closeness to Moses and to the sacred Tent, and therefore to God. Compare 17:9; 24:13; 32:17. Joshua received a befitting preparatory exposure to the people before he became the successor to Moses. He was a constant guard at the Tent.

It appears from Numbers 11:26 and possibly 12:4 that the Tent where Moses met God outside the camp was preserved even after the tabernacle was constructed; and that on some occasions of rebellion, unbelief, and murmuring among the people that God would appear in the cloud over this out-of-camp tent. This would surely dramatize Israel's estrangement from God at such times.

8. *What information, revelation, and consideration did Moses want from God?*

(1) He wanted to know the identity and status of the angel that God said He would send with them (33:2).

(2) He wanted to know God's "way," and (3) to know God

himself. (4) He wanted God to consider that the Israelites were HIS people.

Moses was fearful (rightly so!) that Israel would never make it through their journeys without God's own presence with them. Who was this "angel" that God said he would send with them? Moses was uneasy, even after the promise of 33:1-2.

The conversation between Moses and God in 33:12-23 seems to have taken place in the Tent of meeting (33:8-9). M. Noth writes that beginning with 33:12 Moses is "once again imagined" as being present on the mountain.<sup>6</sup> But this is hardly so.

The conversation of 33:12-14 is an illustration of the intimate way Moses was able to talk with God.

The command to "Bring up this people" was that which was spoken in 32:34.

We do not know when God had spoken the words of 33:12, "I know thee by name, and thou hast also found favor in my sight." Compare 33:17.

Moses asked God, "Show me now thy way." The Hebrew word for "way" is spelled as a singular word (as in K.J.V.), although most translations render it as "ways." We prefer the singular translation. The Greek O.T. translated (or paraphrased) the expression very perceptively: "Reveal thyself to me." That is really what Moses wanted. To know God's "way" is to know God himself.

Possibly the "way" could refer to the route through the desert that God would lead them over. (We doubt this view.)

The purpose for which Moses requested to know God's way was that he might "know thee, so that I may find favor and grace in thy sight." One act of grace (33:13a) would lead to obtaining even greater grace. One revelation of God's way would lead to an even deeper knowledge of God.

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<sup>6</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 256.

Finally Moses wanted God to "look upon this nation as THY people." Compare Deut. 9:29! God had spared their lives, and agreed to let them go to the promised land. But Moses wanted God to accept them again as His own people.

9. *Did God agree to go up personally with Israel to the promised land?* (33:14-16)

Yes. God pledged, "My presence shall go with thee." This may mean that the same divine "angel of his presence" promised in 23:20-22 would continue to accompany Israel. Compare Isa. 63:9. This angel's presence was God's own presence. That was guarantee enough that they would attain their goal.

"Presence" (literally, "face") may refer to God's literal presence, or to His gracious care (Ps. 24:6), or to His personal activity. "My presence" could mean "my person," as in II Sam. 17:11.

The "rest" promised was the secure possession of the promised land. See Deut. 3:20; 12:10; Josh. 1:13, 15; 21:44; 22:4; Heb. 4:8. Rest is always the longed-for goal of those on a journey.

Moses was glad for the promise of God's presence. How otherwise could it be known that Moses and the people had found favor in God's sight, except that God was in their midst? Observe Moses' stress in 33:16 on "thy people" (stated twice).

Israel's distinctiveness lay in their fellowship with God. This made them separate from all other nations. Num. 23:9; II Sam. 7:22-24; I Kings 8:53.

- Moses seemed to have a fear, even after the reassurance of 33:14, that the evil root of the people's rebelliousness might yet cause God's presence to depart from them. See 34:9. He wanted God's presence to be guaranteed by God's irreversible commitment, and not on the people's future faithful conduct. He sought guaranteed grace!
10. *Did God agree to accept again the people as His?* (33:17)

Yes! The acceptance was complete. God's acceptance of the people was based upon His acceptance of Moses.

God said, "I know you by name." Compare 33:12. What an illustration this is of our acceptance by God because of *Christ's* merit and His intercession for us! Rom. 8:34; Isa. 53:12.

11. *What all-surpassing thing did Moses ask God to show him?* (33:18-19)

He asked to see God's own glory. He wanted a revelation surpassing all former revelations (such as those of 16:7, 10; 24:16-17). There had been an obvious withholding of full revelation of God's glory in the former revelations, as wonderful as they had been.

We do not know exactly why Moses made this request. Possibly his sense of competency as a leader had been shaken by the events associated with the golden calf. Perhaps he just desired the closest association with God that could be had.

God granted Moses' request, not totally, but in a very large degree. God declared He would make all his "goodness" (Heb., "good") to pass before Moses, and would proclaim the name of Jehovah before him. Proclaiming the "name" of Jehovah seems to mean proclaiming His nature and person. See 34:6-7.

The "I" at the start of 33:19 is emphatic.

Observe that God's goodness and God's glory are equated in 33:19, 22. God's glory is *goodness*. "Goodness" (Heb., *tov*) means "excellence" (Ps. 119:66), "fairness," "beauty" (Hosea 10:11), "joy" (Isa. 65:14), "prosperity," "fortune," etc. "Goodness" here probably refers both to the brilliancy that strikes the senses; and also to the spiritual and ethical goodness of the divine being. See Ps. 31:19. Goodness is beautiful and glorious!

God declared in 33:19, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." Possibly God added this declaration here because Moses had repeatedly appealed to God on the basis of grace (or favor). See 33:12, 13, 16. God's words in 33:19b seem like a gentle reminder that although He would grant

Moses' request, pleas based on grace alone have limitations. God was not less gracious than Moses was, but God Himself would determine how far grace and mercy would be extended. Moses could not expect an unregulated supply of grace. Perhaps also God's words hint that it was an act of grace for God to show Moses his "goodness."

Observe that grace and mercy are among the most prominent attributes of God. In God's great self-proclamation He declared Himself merciful and gracious (34:6). "Man is never nearer to the Divine than in his compassionate moments." (J. H. Hertz)

Paul quoted part of Ex. 33:19 in Romans 9:15 to justify God's choice of Jacob over Esau and the temporary fall of the Jews from God's favor. God is above man's power to defy Him or even question Him when He makes a choice as to how grace is to be dispensed.

12. *Can man see God?* (33:20)

"Man shall not see me and live." Therefore God would not allow Moses to see His "face." Seeing "me" refers to the same act as seeing "my face." This meant seeing God in His limitless glory.

Numerous scriptures affirm that man cannot see God, and that no man has seen God. I Tim. 6:16; John 1:18; 6:46; I John 4:12. There was an awareness in the ancient world that seeing God was dangerous. (Judges 6:22; 13:22; Isaiah 6:6)

Nonetheless, some people have seen God! (1) the elders (Ex. 24:10); (2) Jacob (Gen. 32:30); (3) Abraham (Gen. 18:1); (4) Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:1); Isaiah (Isa. 6:1); etc. There is NO contradiction in this fact with the truth that "man shall not see me and live." Those who saw God either saw a partially concealed view of Him, or saw that God-one called the WORD, through whom God has always communicated Himself, and who later came into the world as Jesus. Compare Isaiah 6:1-10 and John 12:41.

13. *Where would Jehovah "pass by" Moses:* (33:21-23)

He would pass by a cleft in the rock, in which Moses

would be covered.

The "place by me" where Moses was to stand "upon the rock" was at the "top of the mount" (34:2).

The passing-by of God's glory (33:22) seems to be the act related in 34:6. God "passed by" Elijah at Mt. Horeb somewhat as He passed by Moses. (I Kings 19:11)

The "glory" of 33:22 is called "goodness" in 33:19.

The "cleft of the rock" may refer to a cave. Elijah was in a cave when God passed by (I Kings 19:9, 13). "Cleft" (Heb. *nigrah*) simply means a hole or dug-out place.

God's "hand" would cover Moses in the cleft while His unviewable glory passed over. Then God would take away His hand and Moses would see his "back" or "back part." It would be like seeing the sun by seeing its afterglow just after it set; or like seeing a ship by the magnitude of the wake it left behind it. There is no other way that man can behold God.

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Grace hath hid me safe in thee!" (Toplady/Pink)

"He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock,  
Where rivers of pleasure I see." (Fanny J. Crosby)

Commentators almost unanimously have written that the references to God's "hand," "face," and "back parts" must be understood as human terms used to describe the indescribable aspects of God's being in terms as definite as we can comprehend them. There is surely much truth in this, because God fills heaven and earth (Jer. 23:24) and inhabits eternity (Isa. 57:15). However, we must remember that we cannot improve upon the description of the event that is given. It is easy to explain away the specific reality of the event by trying to explain it abstractly. It is better to have the child-like faith that visualizes Moses in the cleft of the rock, covered by the hand of God, than to utter abstractions that make God unreal.



THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**34** And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon the tables the words that were on the first tables, which thou brakest. (2) And be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Si-nai, and present thyself there to me on the top of the mount. (3) And no man shall come up with thee; neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount; neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount. (4) And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Mo-ses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Si-nai, as Je-ho-vah had commanded him, and took in his hand two tables of stone. (5) And Je-ho-vah descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of Je-ho-vah. (6) And Je-ho-vah passed by before him, and proclaimed, Je-ho-vah, Je-ho-vah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth; (7) keeping lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation. (8) And Mo-ses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. (9) And he said, If now I have found favor in thy sight, O Lord, let the Lord, I pray thee, go in the midst of us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.

(10) And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been wrought in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of Je-ho-vah; for it is a terrible thing that I do with thee. (11) Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amor-ite, and the Ca-naan-ite, and the Hit-tite, and the Per-iz-zite, and the Hi-vite, and the Jeb-u-site. (12) Take heed to thyself,

lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee: (13) but ye shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and ye shall cut down their A-she-rim (14) (for thou shalt worship no other god: for Je-ho-vah, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God); (15) lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they play the harlot after their gods, and sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee and thou eat of his sacrifice; (16) and thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters play the harlot after their gods, and make thy sons play the harlot after their gods. (17) Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.

(18) The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, at the time appointed in the month A-bib; for in the month A-bib thou camest out from E-gypt. (19) All that openeth the womb is mine; and all thy cattle that is male, the firstlings of cow and sheep. (20) And the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break its neck. All the first-born of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty.

(21) Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in plowing time and in harvest thou shalt rest. (22) And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, *even* of the first-fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end. (23) Three times in the year shall all thy males appear before the Lord Je-ho-vah, the God of Is-ra-el. (24) For I will cast out nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou goest up to appear before Je-ho-vah thy God three times in the year.

(25) Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left unto the morning. (26) The first of the first-fruits of thy ground thou shalt bring unto the house of Je-ho-vah thy God. Thou shalt not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

(27) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Write thou these

words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Is-ra-el. (28) And he was there with Je-ho-vah forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

(29) And it came to pass, when Mo-ses came down from mount Si-nai with the two tables of the testimony in Mo-ses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Mo-ses knew not that the skin of his face shone by reason of his speaking with him. (30) And when Aar-on and all the children of Is-ra-el saw Mo-ses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. (31) And Mo-ses called unto them; and Aar-on and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Mo-ses spake to them. (32) And afterward all the children of Is-ra-el came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that Je-ho-vah had spoken with him in mount Si-nai. (33) And when Mo-ses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. (34) But when Mo-ses went in before Je-ho-vah to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out; and he came out, and spake unto the children of Is-ra-el that which he was commanded. (35) And the children of Is-ra-el saw the face of Mo-ses, that the skin of Mo-ses' face shone; and Mo-ses put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading, propose a brief title or topic for the chapter.
2. What was Moses to hew out? (34:1, 4)
3. Who would write the words on the tablets? (34:1; Deut. 10:2, 4)
4. Is a little blame laid upon Moses for breaking the first tablets? (34:1)

5. Who was to come up into Mt. Sinai with Moses? (34:2-3)
6. Had anyone gone with Moses up on the mount during the first stay there? (24:13)
7. To what part of the mount was Moses to come? (34:3)
8. In what did Jehovah descend onto the mount? (34:5; Compare 19:18; 24:15-16.)
9. What did Jehovah proclaim? (34:5)
10. List the characteristics which Jehovah proclaimed about himself. (34:6-7)
11. Why should God visit the iniquity of fathers upon the children? (36:7; Compare 20:5-6.)
12. What three things did Moses ask God to do for the people? (34:9)
13. What did God declare he would make? (34:10, 27)
14. How impressive would God's marvels be before the people? (34:10)
15. What was to be done with the Amorites, Canaanites, etc. (34:11)
16. What was to be done with Canaanite religious objects? (34:13)
17. What could making a covenant with the inhabitants of the land lead to? (34:12, 15-16)
18. What are "molten gods"? (34:17; 32:4, 8, 24)
19. What was to be done or not done during the feast of Unleavened Bread? (34:18)
20. What animals did God claim as his? (34:19)
21. What things were to be redeemed? (34:20; 13:12-13; Num. 18:15-16)
22. At what particular times were the people to be sure to rest on the seventh (Sabbath) days? (34:21)
23. How many compulsory feasts were to be attended by male Israelites each year? (34:22-23)
24. Why should the enlargement of the Israelites' borders strengthen their obligation to keep the three annual feasts? (34:24)
25. What was not to be offered with the blood of the sacrifices? (34:25)

26. How many of the covenant laws of 34:10-26 have parallels in the "covenant book" of Ex. chs. 20-23? (This will require some research.)
  27. What was Moses to do with the words that God spoke? (34:27)
  28. What did Moses not do during the time he was with Jehovah? (34:28)
  29. What words are called the "words of the covenant"? (34:28) Were these words an eternal covenant? (Jer. 31:31-32; II Cor. 3:6-11)
  30. What was unusual about Moses' appearance when he came down from the mount? (34:29) What had caused this?
  31. How did the people react to Moses' appearance? (34:30)
  32. Could the people look at Moses without being blinded? (34:30-31, 35)
  33. To whom did Moses speak the words of the commandment which Jehovah spoke with him? (34:32)
  34. When did Moses put on a veil? (34:33)
  35. Why did Paul say that Moses put on the veil? (II Cor. 3:13)
  36. Did Moses wear the veil when he came in before Jehovah (in the tent of meeting)? (34:34-35)
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#### EXODUS THIRTY-FOUR: THE COVENANT RENEWED

1. The tablets restored; 34:1-4.
  2. God's name proclaimed; 34:5-9.
  3. God's covenant pledged; 34:10.
  4. God's ordinances commanded; 34:11-26.
  5. God's words written; 34:27-28.
  6. God's commandments reported; 34:31-32.
  7. Moses' face shines; 34:29-30, 33-35.
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## SERMON ON THE NAME OF GOD (Ex. 34:5-7)

- I. An introduction by the Infinite God; 34:5.
  - II. A theme beyond compare (THE NAME!); 34:5.
  - III. An exposition (development) in detail; 34:6-7.
    1. Jehovah, Jehovah (A name doubly-declared).
    2. God (Mighty one!)
    3. Merciful!
    4. Gracious!
    5. Slow to anger!
    6. Abundant in lovingkindness!
    7. Abundant in truth!
    8. Keeping lovingkindness for thousands!
    9. Forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.
    10. Will by no means clear the guilty!
    11. Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children!
- 

## RENEWING THE COVENANT (34:10-26)

1. Promise of the covenant; 34:10.
  2. Prohibitions in the covenant; 34:11-17, 25.
  3. Practices (or precepts) in the covenant; 34:18-24.
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## GOD'S REQUIREMENTS OF HIS PEOPLE (34:18-24)

1. Keep the feasts; 34:18, 22-23.
  2. Present your firstborn; 34:20.
  3. Come before me with an offering; 34:20.
  4. Keep the day of rest; 34:21.
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## THE GLOW FROM GOD'S PRESENCE (34:29-35)

1. Comes from speaking with God; (34:29).
2. Comes upon a man unawares; (34:29).

3. Frightens sinful men; (34:30).
4. Veiled in men's presence; (34:33).
5. Unveiled in God's presence; (34:34-35).

THE FADING AND UNFADING GLORY  
(Ex. 34:33; II Cor. 3:13-18)

1. The fading old covenant glory was veiled.
2. The unfading new covenant glory is unveiled.

EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

1. *What is in Exodus thirty-four?*

The chapter tells of God's making a covenant anew with Moses and Israel. The broken tablets of the ten commandments were replaced (34:1-4, 28). God proclaimed to Moses His basic nature (34:5-9). God set forth some of the laws He required the people to keep under the renewed covenant (34:10-26). (Nearly all of these laws are repeated from the decalogue and the covenant book of chs. 21-23.) Again, as at the ratification of the covenant the first time (24:4-8), Moses *wrote* the words of God and told them to the people (34:27-35). When Moses came down to the people with the covenant words, his face shone. Moses veiled his face after uttering God's words to the people.

"The whole chapter is a magnificent witness to Moses' power of intercession before God." (Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 193)

2. *What are the critical theories about Exodus thirty-four?*

Many critics have held that Exodus 34 is a separate account of the giving of the Sinai covenant by a different author. Chapters 19-24 have been attributed to *E* (an eighth century Northern Kingdom Elohist writer), and chapter 34 to *J* (tenth century Jehovistic writer), who adapted old Canaanite rituals. Many critics have followed

the conjecture of the German poet Goethe, who in 1773 said that the regulations of 34:14-26 could be grouped into *ten* laws, and that these laws were actually the original ten commandments! Chapter 20 has been entitled the "ethical" (or moral) decalogue and chapter 34 the "ritual" (or cultic) decalogue. M. Noth says that these titles "express quite pertinently, though in somewhat unhappy terminology, a difference in the predominant interest [of the authors of chs. 20 and 34], but we cannot speak of a fundamental opposition."<sup>1</sup> Supposedly chapter 34 was written by a man predominantly interested in religious rituals, and came from an agricultural society; whereas chapter 20 was written by one primarily concerned with ethics, whose cultural and social setting cannot be identified. Such nonsense!

Only by assuming that Exodus 34 has a corrupt, jumbled-up text can Exodus 34:14-26 be arranged into ten commandments. Noth admits that the passage (34:10-26) now offers more than ten commandments, but he regards it as being full of later "deuteronomistic" insertions.<sup>2</sup> Goethe himself in his later and riper years spoke of his alleged discovery of ten commandments in Ex. 34:14-26 as a "freakish notion" due to insufficient knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

Actually Ex. 34:1 makes it perfectly clear that chapter 34 is a RENEWAL of the original covenant and not a distinct version of the covenant by another author. Also Deut. 9:9-20, 25-29; 10:1-5, 10-11 indicates that Exodus was a renewal of the covenant.

Almost all of the laws in 34:11-26 are like laws in chapters 20-23. This is easily understandable if chapter 34 is a renewal of the covenant of 20-23; but it is hard to explain if chapter 34 was a separate covenant document by a different author and two centuries older than chapter 20.

We should shun the terms "ethical decalogue" and

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<sup>1</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 265.

<sup>2</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 262.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, p. 368.



“ritual decalogue.”

3. *What was Moses to bring up into the mount?* (34:1-4; Deut. 10:1-2)

He was to bring two new tablets of stone. Moses was to hew these out and then God would write upon them the words that were on the first tablets.

The first set of tablets had been completely the work of God, both the hewing out of the tablets and the writing (32:16).

God's comment to Moses concerning the first tablets “which you broke” seems to us a gentle reprimand to Moses. “You broke them; you replace them.” Keil and Delitzsch suggest that God had Moses remake the tablets to show the same zeal that he showed in breaking them.

Moses was to be “ready” when he came up to God. Perhaps the “readiness” was similar to that commanded in 19:10-11, 14-15.

The “top of the mount” was the “place by me” of 33:21.

Moses was to go up completely alone this time. Not even Joshua was to go along. Compare 24:13.

No flocks nor herds were to feed before the mount while Moses was up in it. This restriction is similar to that imposed when the commandments were first given (19:12-13). Compare Hebrews 12:20.

God seems to have wanted His covenant WRITTEN. See 33:27; 24:4.

4. *What did the LORD proclaim about himself?* (34:5-7)

He proclaimed the name of Jehovah. The NAME of Jehovah expresses all that Jehovah is and does. Compare Ex. 6:3. God proclaims His saving ways; He proclaims Himself.

Luther called 34:6-7 the “Sermon on the name of the Lord.” It reveals the most hidden nature of Jehovah. It is impossible to express the Lord's nature better than by His name.

The proclamation of the name of the Lord is a fulfillment of the promise in 33:19.

The statement that Jehovah descended in the cloud is somewhat similar to 19:20. We suppose that it was at this time that Jehovah covered Moses in the cleft of the rock as He passed by (33:22). What Moses saw of God is not stated.

Some interpreters have translated 34:5b, "He (Moses) stood with him (God) there, and called upon the name." This is a grammatically possible translation, but is surely not the preferred one.

Exodus 34:5-7 is the second revelation of the NAME of the LORD. The first revelation (in 3:14-15) was of Yahweh as the self-existent savior. This revelation of the name is of a loving, forgiving, but NOT overindulgent savior.

Jewish interpreters (quite justly!) make much of 34:6-7, calling it The Thirteen Attributes of the Divine Nature.<sup>4</sup> Jewish interpreters have some variations among themselves in the way they divide 34:6-7 into thirteen attributes, but this is one such analysis:

(1) The LORD; (2) The LORD. (The Talmud explains the repetition of God's name as indicating that God is merciful to a man both before he sins and after he sins. Whatever change has to be wrought must be in the heart of the sinner, not in the nature of deity.<sup>5</sup>); (3) God (or Mighty one); (4) merciful; (5) gracious; (6) longsuffering; (7) abundant in lovingkindness (Heb., *hesed*); (8) abundant in truth; (9) keeping mercy to thousands; (10) forgiving iniquity (or guilt); (11) forgiving transgression; (12) forgiving sin; (13) will by no means clear the guilty.

We do not regard the division of these descriptions of God into thirteen points as a divine revelation. But we thank God for providing us this description of his glorious "name," and we worship Him!

Similar descriptions of God are in Psalm 103:8; 86:15; Num. 14:18; Deut. 5:9-10.

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<sup>4</sup>J. H. Hertz, *op. cit.*, pp. 362, 364.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

Some of the very FIRST things God says about Himself are that He is merciful and gracious. Compare 33:19!

To “clear” (34:7) means to declare innocent, to let go unpunished.

Observe the balance between love and justice, grace and firmness in God’s nature.

Concerning “visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children,” see notes on 20:5.

Some interpreters interpret 34:7a to mean “thousands of generations.” The word *generations* is not actually in the text at that point. There have been barely two hundred generations of men since creation.

The synonyms for *sin* in 33:7 are hard to distinguish precisely. Possibly *iniquity* refers to turning from the right course; *transgression* is rebellion; and *sin* is an act of missing the desired mark.<sup>6</sup>

5. *What was Moses’ response to God’s self-proclamation?* (34:8-9)

He responded by worship and by asking for acceptance of the people. He took advantage of God’s description of Himself as merciful and gracious to ask a favor.

Anyone who becomes aware of God as He described Himself in 34:6-7 will hurry, and bow, and worship. What is worship other than a heartfelt acknowledgement of the greatness of the Lord?

The request that the Lord (Heb., *Adonay*) would go with them is repeated from 33:15-16. God had already accepted this request in 33:14, 17; but seemingly Moses was still uneasy about the matter, not because he did not trust God, but because the people were “stiffnecked.” Note that Ex. 34:9 uses the name *Adonay* (meaning “my Lord”) as God’s title.

Moses did not pray for God to give them an inheritance, but to *take* them as His inheritance. Compare Zech. 2:12.

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<sup>6</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 440.

6. *What did God promise to make and do before the people?* (34:10)

God promised to make a *covenant*, and to do *marvels*. Thus the request of 34:9 was answered and accepted by the promise of 34:10.

The first and the last *I* in 34:10 are emphatic personal pronouns.

The verb "make" is a participle, indicating in some way a continuous action.

God's covenant would be like certain treaties and covenants called suzerainty treaties. Ancient kings (such as the Hittites) would make such covenants with their people. As covenants proclaimed by a superior to vassals, their effectiveness and force depended not on compliance by both parties to specified terms, but on the unilateral declaration and determination of the covenant-maker.<sup>7</sup>

God spoke to Moses (in 34:10) of "thy" people. But this expression no longer carried the idea of alienation that it carried right after the golden calf was made (32:7).

God promised to do "marvels" before "thy people." "Marvels" is a term referring to anything wondrous, or of which men stand in awe. The term was used in 3:20 to refer to the plagues sent upon Egypt. See also Judges 6:13; Psalm 26:7.

The marvels are spoken of (literally) as being "created." This term suggests that the likes of these marvels was never known before. Probably the marvels are the deliverances during future desert wanderings and the conquest of Canaan. The "covenant" was to include a host of miracles, such as driving out the Canaanites. See Deut. 4:38. God is a God of miracles, not a subject for theological speculation.

"Terrible" means fearsome, fearful, dreadful, wonderful, astonishing. Compare Deut. 10:21; Psalm 145:6.

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<sup>7</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, pp. 228, 229.

Probably 34:10 is the preamble to the covenant, and we should regard 34:11 as starting a new paragraph (as in R.S.V.). Cole feels we should take verses 10-11 as closely joined together, and together forming the covenant preamble.

The terms of the covenant in Ex. 34:11-26 are in NO way to be considered the complete covenant requirements. They are only a sampler of the full requirements set forth in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The same thing was true of the longer set of ordinances in Exodus 20-23, as explained in our notes before. The very absence of the ten commandments in Ex. 34 shows that it was not a full statement of the covenant.

7. *What did God command about the Canaanites?* (34:11-16; Compare 23:23-24, 32-33; Deut. 7:1-5; 12:2-3.)

Israel was to make no covenant with them, and was to destroy their religious objects utterly. Sadly, Israel later violated this command repeatedly. See Judges 2:1-2, 11-13; Josh. 9:3-27; Psalm 106:34-39.

It was GOD who would drive out the Canaanites, and not actually Israel. The verb translated "I drive out" expresses continuous action: "I am driving out" or "I am about to drive out." Compare 23:27-30. God was already softening up the Canaanites, even before Israel arrived.

Regarding the various Canaanite peoples, see 3:17.

Regarding the "pillars" (K.J.V., "images"), see 23:24.

"Asherim" (K.J.V., "grooves") were sacred trees or wooden poles dedicated to Asherah, a goddess of fertility often associated with Baal or with Baal's father El. Asherim are mentioned here for the first time. See Deut. 16:21; Judges 6:25; II Kings 18:4; 21:3.

In the common Hebrew Bible the word for "other" in 34:14 is printed with an enlarged *R* (*resh*) (*'achaR*) so no one could possibly confuse it with the quite similar-looking word meaning *one* (*'echad*).

The word for "jealous" in 34:14 is a very strong word. It is used only of God in the Old Testament. It expresses

none of the pettiness that is sometimes associated with jealousy, but means to burn with zeal, or be provoked to wrath. See Deut. 4:24; 6:15; Ex. 20:3-5.

Baal worship involved "playing the harlot" quite literally. See Num. 25:1-5; Hosea 4:13-14. Certainly it also constituted a spiritual immorality, and it is thus spoken of here for the first time. Compare Deut. 31:16.

Even the patriarchs Abraham and Isaac had recognized the dangers of intermarriages with Canaanites. See Gen. 24:3; 28:6; Joshua 23:12.

The commands against the Canaanites are sterner in 34:11-16 than in 23:23ff, possibly because of the golden calf incident.

8. *What law was given about molten gods? (34:17)*

They were not to be made "unto thee" (same phrase as in 20:4). "Molten" means melted and cast. The golden calf was molten (32:4), and therefore this command was a very live matter. The specific prohibition against molten images should have been needless after the very comprehensive law against idols of all types in 20:4-5; but the people had failed to heed it.

9. *What was the commandment about the feast of unleavened bread? (34:18)*

It was to be observed annually. Compare 12:14, 15-20; 23:15. (Ex. 34:18 and 23:15 are almost identical verses.) The feast of Unleavened Bread originated with the exodus rather than from events associated with an agricultural season, as some critics have alleged.

The Passover is not mentioned among the feasts in 34:18-23, probably because it was not one of the national feasts to which everyone journeyed, but was a feast observed in each home. It was very closely associated with the feast of Unleavened Bread.

Concerning the month Abib, see 13:4; 12:2.

10. *What was to be done with the firstborn? (34:19-20)*

They were given to the LORD or redeemed. See 13:2, 12-13; 22:29-30.

See 23:15 concerning the instruction "None shall appear before me empty."

The R.S.V. renders 34:19, "All that opens the womb is mine, all your male cattle, the firstlings, . . . ." A footnote by the word "male" says "Gk., Theodotian, Vg., Tg.: Heb. uncertain." It is simply not true that the Hebrew is uncertain. It differs hardly at all from the Greek. The Hebrew lacks a relative pronoun that we include in English, but it is quite clear. It reads, "Every firstborn of the womb (is) mine, and (or even) all thy cattle (that is) born a male, (the) firstborn of ox and sheep."

11. *What days and feasts was Israel to observe?* (34:21-26)

The seventh day (Sabbath) was to be a day of rest. Compare 20:8-10; 23:12.

The instruction to keep the seventh day as a day of rest during plowing time (K.J.V., "earring time") and harvest time is stated only in this verse. This was a faith-testing command. Rest days were to be strictly observed even at the times when the farmer was busiest and in greatest danger of losing his crop. The Sabbath day was a test of faith from its very first observance (16:4), and it always kept this character about it. God's people still must seek first the kingdom of God in all their activities. (Matt. 6:33)

The feast of weeks (also called the "feast of harvest" and the "feast of firstfruits") came annually in June, after the harvest. See 23:16; Deut. 16:10.

The feast of ingathering (also called "Tabernacles" or "Booths") came at the "year's end," literally at the "revolution" (or "circuit") of the year, in September/October. See 23:16.

Exodus 34:23 is almost identical to 23:17. Compare 23:14.

Exodus 34:23-24 alludes to a central sanctuary, which the Israelites would set up and go to after conquering the land. Critics take this as evidence of a post-Mosaic date for the passage. But those who believe that God can prophesy about events and places that are yet in the future

will accept the words as they stand. See Isa. 41:4, 23; 44:8.

Some Israelites feared that squatters and land thieves would claim and occupy their lands while they were away attending God's feasts. This was probably more of an excuse for neglect of worship than any real danger. But God reassured them that while they were at the feasts, no one would even covet (desire) their land, much less try to seize it. Furthermore, He would enlarge their national borders until there was such an abundance of land that no one would have any cause to covet his neighbor's land.

Exodus 34:25 resembles 23:18. Concerning the matter of not leaving Passover sacrifices uneaten till morning, see 12:10. Ex. 34:26 is similar to 23:19.

Observe the reference to "my sacrifice" in 34:25.

12. *What covenant words were written down?* (34:27-28)

The covenant commands of 34:10-26 were to be written by Moses. The ten commandments themselves were written by God. Compare 34:1. "These words" referred to in 34:27 seem to be the covenant words in 34:10-26.

From 34:27-28 alone it might be assumed that "he" who wrote the words of the ten commandments was Moses. However, this is not definitely asserted here. And the words of 34:1 and Deut. 10:2, 4 are conclusive in asserting that the writing of the ten commandments was the work of God.

In the same manner that Moses wrote the covenant ordinances of chapters 21-23, he also wrote the words of this covenant. (24:4, 7) It appears definite that God wanted His covenant in written form.

"Tenor" in 34:27 is literally "face." It is probably best to translate the expression simply "according to these words." (Harkavy's *Lexicon*; R.S.V.)

Deut. 10:10 repeats a fact asserted here, that Moses fasted during this second stay in the mount. He had also fasted during the first prolonged stay on the mount. (Deut. 9:9)

Deut. 10:1-5 tells that Moses made an ark of acacia wood for the ten commandments when he came down from



the mount, and this simple ark became the predecessor of the ark of the covenant described in 25:10ff.

The ten commandments are specifically identified as the "words of the covenant" in 34:28. This passage makes clear to us what words are referred to as the "covenant" when contrasts are made in the scripture between the "old covenant" and the "new covenant." (II Cor. 3:6-13; Jer. 31:31-32; Heb. 8:7-13).

13. *What was amazing about Moses' appearance when he came down from the mount? (34:29-30)*

His face shone, so that both Aaron and the children of Israel were afraid to come near him. The fear of Israel when Moses came among them with a glowing face is understandable after their recent experience with idolatry and the wrath of Moses!

Moses was unaware that his face was shining. He was not fully conscious of his own spiritual stature and privileges. Numbers 12:13 rightly describes him as the meekest of men. The glow surely proved that Moses had been with God.

The Hebrew verb translated "shone" ("shot forth beams") has a related noun often meaning "horns." Therefore the Latin Bible translated Ex. 34:29 as "having horns." From this rather bizarre translation, medieval art works, such as Michaelangelo's statue at Rome, represent Moses as having a pair of horns from his head!

The K.J.V. translation of 34:29, "while he talked with him," is translated more properly "because he had been talking with God." (R.S.V.)

Things exposed to light and radiation sometimes glow even after being removed from the light. Thus Moses, having been with God who dwells in light unapproachable (I Tim. 6:16), had acquired some of the glow of God (Rev. 21:23), even though he had seen only the "back part" of God (33:23). How he would have shone if he had stood before God in all His glory! God's glowing glory was manifested by Christ Jesus at His transfiguration. (Matt. 17:2; Compare

Rev. 1:16.)

The countenance of Moses did not shine after his first stay on the mount. Probably this happened because the divine presence was then withdrawn from Israel.

14. *What did Moses tell the people after he came down from the mount?* (34:31-32)

Moses spoke (unveiled!) to Aaron and all the rulers of Israel, giving them in commandment all which the Lord had told him in Mt. Sinai. Compare 24:3.

The word "returned" in 34:31 suggests that Aaron and Israel had at first fled in terror from Moses with his shining face.

The acts of sprinkling the blood and public declaration of acceptance of the covenant were not done this time, as they had been done when the covenant was first accepted (24:3-8). Possibly the reason for this was that this time the covenant was less based on the people's compliance and more on God's oath and His grace. Note in Judges 2:1 that God declared, "I said, I will never break my covenant with you."

Ramm remarks that it is proverbial that second weddings are very short. And thus at this second making of the covenant Moses merely assembled the people and announced the covenant with a minimal statement or two of what was involved.<sup>8</sup>

15. *When did Moses put on a veil?* (34:33-35)

He put it on *after* he finished speaking with them. He removed the veil when he went in to speak with Jehovah (presumably in the tent of meeting). Upon coming out, he spoke with the children of Israel that which was commanded by God. They saw his face shining and unveiled. Then he put the veil upon his face again, until he went in again to speak with God.

The Hebrew word for veil (*masweh*) is used only in this

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<sup>8</sup>Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

passage; but its meaning seems obvious from the story. Some interpreters have speculated that the "veil" was actually a priestly mask, such as priests in Egypt wore. But there is no real evidence for this idea, and it is contrary to the New Testament explanation of the veil.

Paul in II Cor. 3:7-18 says that Moses put the veil on his face so the Israelites would not see the "end" of the glory that was fading away (II Cor. 3:13). The Exodus narrative does not tell us why Moses wore the veil. It surely was not because the Israelites were not allowed to see the glow, or because it was so bright it blinded them. We believe Paul was an inspired interpreter, not just another speculative rabbinic interpreter.

Paul used the fading glory of Moses' face as a symbol of the fading glory of the old covenant that God made with Moses. That covenant has passed away, like the glow of Moses' face.

The veil also was a symbol of the hardening of the minds of the Israelites in rejecting Christ (II Cor. 3:14-15). For to this day, whenever Moses (that is, the writings of Moses, or the law) is read, a veil lieth upon their heart. This veil is removed when they turn to the Lord.

Somewhat as Moses had an unveiled association with the LORD, so believers in Christ, by the Spirit of the Lord, view with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, though beholding it as in a mirror. In the presence of that glory we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory. We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (I John 3:2).

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THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**35** And Mo-ses assembled all the congregation of the children of Is-ra-el, and said unto them, These are the words which Je-ho-vah hath commanded, that ye should do them. (2) Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a sabbath of solemn rest to Je-ho-vah: whosoever doeth any work therein shall be put to death. (3) Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day.

(4) And Mo-ses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Is-ra-el, saying, This is the thing which Je-ho-vah commanded, saying, (5) Take ye from among you an offering unto Je-ho-vah; whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, Je-ho-vah's offering: gold, and silver, and brass, (6) and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' *hair*, (7) and rams' skins dyed red, and sealskins, and acacia wood, (8) and oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense, (9) and onyx stones, and stones to be set, for the eph-od, and for the breastplate.

(10) And let every wise-hearted man among you come, and make all that Je-ho-vah hath commanded: (11) the tabernacle, its tent, and its covering, its clasps, and its boards, its bars, its pillars, and its sockets; (12) the ark, and the staves thereof, the mercy-seat, and the veil of the screen; (13) the table, and its staves, and all its vessels, and the showbread; (14) the candlestick also for the light, and its vessels, and its lamps, and the oil for the light; (15) and the altar of incense, and its staves, and the anointing oil, and the sweet incense, and the screen for the door, at the door of the tabernacle; (16) the altar of burnt-offering, with its grating of brass, its staves, and all its vessels, the laver and its base; (17) the hangings of the court, the pillars thereof, and their sockets, and the screen for the gate of the court; (18) the pins of the tabernacle, and the pins of the court, and their cords; (19) the finely wrought garments, for ministering in the holy place, the holy garments

for Aar-on the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office.

(20) And all the congregation of the children of Is-ra-el departed from the presence of Mo-ses. (21) And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, *and* brought Je-ho-vah's offering, for the work of the tent of meeting, and for all the service thereof, and for the holy garments. (22) And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted, *and* brought brooches, and ear-rings, and signet-rings, and armlets, all jewels of gold; even every man that offered an offering of gold unto Je-ho-vah. (23) And every man, with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' *hair*, and rams' skins dyed red, and sealskins, brought them. (24) Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought Je-ho-vah's offering; and every man, with whom was found acacia wood for any work of the service, brought it. (25) And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, the blue, and the purple, the scarlet, and the fine linen. (26) And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun the goats' *hair*. (27) And the rulers brought the onyx stones, and the stones to be set, for the eph-od, and for the breastplate; (28) and the spice, and the oil; for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense. (29) The children of Is-ra-el brought a freewill-offering unto Je-ho-vah; every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all the work, which Je-ho-vah had commanded to be made by Mo-ses.

(30) And Mo-ses said unto the children of Is-ra-el, See, Je-ho-vah hath called by name Be-zal-el the son of U-ri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Ju-dah; (31) and he hath filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; (32) and to devise skilful works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, (33) and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all manner of skilful workmanship. (34) And he hath put in his heart that he may teach both he, and O-ho-li-ab,

the son of A-his-a-mach, of the tribe of Dan. (35) Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of workmanship, of the engraver, and of the skilful workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any workmanship, and of those that devise skilful works.

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## EXODUS 35 - 39

These chapters repeat the material in chapters 25-31 almost word for word. The earlier chapters gave God's instructions about how to build the tabernacle. Chapters 35-39 tell how it was built part by part, following God's instructions word by word.

Naturally the forms of the verbs are changed from imperative ("thou shalt make"; 30:1) to indicative ("he made"; 37:25). Also the instructions in the earlier chapters about the *functions* of the tabernacle equipment are omitted in chapters 35-39 because the rituals associated with the tabernacle parts are given in the following books. Compare 25:30 with 37:16, and 28:35 with 39:26. Also information about how to set up the tabernacle parts is omitted in chapters 35-39 because chapter forty tells about setting up the tabernacle. Compare 25:16 with 37:5, and 30:18 with 38:18.

The *order* in which the tabernacle parts are described in 35-39 differs from the order in 25-31. Chapters 35-39 begin with a description of the basic architectural structure - the curtains, boards, bars, veil, and screen. The earlier chapters started by describing the most significant furniture - the ark, table, and lampstand. Possibly the building in which to house the items of furniture was made before the furniture. More probably a number of craftsmen were working on different parts simultaneously (see 36:2), and the order in which the parts are mentioned is not necessarily the same as the order of their construction.

The question naturally arises: Why should there be such extensive repetition of material in 35-39? Certainly it was not a mere accidental duplication of documents. The interesting additions and the rearrangements of material preclude this possibility.

Possibly the repetition was written to stress how faithfully and lovingly Moses carried out God's instructions. The phrase "as Jehovah commanded Moses" appears seven times in chapter thirty-nine and eight more times in chapter forty.

The skeptical critics at once suspect more "sources" as the explanation for repetition in 35-39. S. R. Driver<sup>1</sup> says, "If chapter 30 be allowed to belong to a secondary stratum of P [post-exilic Priestly writer], the same conclusion will follow for these chapters [35-39] as a necessary corollary. For in chapters 35-39 the notices referring to chapters 30-31 are introduced *in their proper order*; and chapter 30 alludes to the altar of incense." Martin Noth<sup>2</sup> regards chapters 35-39 as a later reworking of P. (He attributes chapters 25-31 to P.)

In reply to Driver we may observe that while the order in which the tabernacle parts are mentioned in chapters 30-31 is quite similar to that in 36-39, it is not identical. The anointing oil is mentioned just AFTER the laver in chapter thirty, but just after the altar of incense in chapter thirty-seven. But even if the items had been listed in exactly the same order in both groups of chapters, that would not prove multiple authorship for Exodus. It would seem to argue even more strongly for a single author for the book.

Cassuto<sup>3</sup> has a most valuable comment. He says that the repetition in chapters 35-39 has caused some to suspect a secondary stratum of P. But this conjecture is based on ignorance of the methods employed in the composition of books in the Ancient East. Thus in the Ugaritic epic of King Keret (about 1400 B.C.), the king saw El, the father of the gods,

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<sup>1</sup>*Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Meridian, 1958), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 274.

<sup>3</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 453.

in a dream, and received from him instructions concerning the offering of sacrifices, the mustering of an army, and other things. At the conclusion of the instructions, we are informed that King Keret did as El had directed in his dream. And his actions are described by the literal *repetition* of the terms of the instructions, except for changes in the verb form and other very minor changes - precisely what we find in the latter section of the book of Exodus. Chapters 35-39 are not therefore a later document. They are required just where they are, and if they were not there, we should have to assume that they were missing from the text.

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#### EXODUS 35 - 40 IN THE HEBREW AND GREEK BIBLES

In this book we have frequently referred to the wording of the Greek (Septuagint) Bible. (See Index under "Septuagint.") In chapters 1-34 there is a remarkably close overall agreement in the readings of the Hebrew and Greek Bible. There are indeed a few notable passages showing variations (for example, 1:5 and 12:40). But in most chapters only a few words, or sometimes a single verse, are different.

However, in chapters 35-40 there are very conspicuous differences between the Greek and Hebrew texts. Both tell of the construction of the tabernacle, but the order the events are related is quite different. The information is the same in both the Hebrew and the Greek, but the order of presentation certainly is not.

The question naturally arises: Which reading is closer to the original document of Exodus, the Hebrew or the Greek? How did the variations develop? Since we do not have the original document, we simply do not know. Perhaps the Dead Sea (Qumran) writings may yet shed some light on this.

Although certainty is impossible, we are strongly of the opinion that the Hebrew text (which is followed in our common



English Bibles) is preferable to the Greek reading of Ex. 35-40. Unless there is good evidence otherwise, the Hebrew Old Testament should consistently be regarded as a more trustworthy transmission of God's word than the Greek. The Greek is a translation of the Hebrew and has all the weaknesses inherent in any translation. Furthermore, Jesus endorsed the religion of the Jews as being the way of salvation (John 4:22). We suppose that this implies that He endorsed the Hebrew scriptures as the generally reliable ones.

Furthermore yet, there are certainly improbabilities in the way the Greek text of Ex. 35-40 is arranged. The very first tabernacle items described are the garments of the priests! See LXX, chapter 36. It is nearly incredible that the report about these garments actually preceded information about the making of the ark, the table, the lampstand, or the basic tabernacle structure. Also the Greek Bible mentions only the inner (linen) curtains in discussing the making of the tabernacle coverings. See LXX, 37:1-2. This just does not match up with the information in 26:1-14, whereas the Hebrew reading of 36:8-19 corresponds closely to the instructions in chapter twenty-six. Also it is very surprising to us that the Greek Bible gives information about such major items as the ark, table, and lampstand AFTER the information about less prominent things such as the curtains, veil, screen, and court. See LXX 38:1-17; 37:1-18. (See also the notes on 38:22.)

We know that in a very few verses the Greek Bible gives a reading that is more correct than the Hebrew. (For example, Psalm 19:4 has the word for "sound" [or "voice"] in the Greek Bible, rather than "line," which the Hebrew has. "Sound" makes better parallelism with the next line, and is the form quoted in the New Testament in Romans 10:18.) Nonetheless, we feel that the Hebrew Bible gives a more trustworthy form of the material in Ex. 35-40 than the Greek does.

We give here lists of the order of subject matter in Exodus 36-40 as it is given in the Hebrew Bible and in the Greek Bible.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Compare S. R. Driver, *Introduction to Literature of Old Testament*, p. 41.

The parallel (or nearly parallel) passages in the other version are listed alongside. Our lists start at Exodus 36:8, because the principle divergences begin there. (Admittedly Ex. 35:8-20 is arranged in a different order in the Greek than in the Hebrew, but the same material is presented.)

## HEBREW (MASORETIC) TEXT

36:8-19 (Tabernacle curtains)  
 36:20-34 (Boards and bars)  
 36:35-38 (Veil and screen)  
 37:1-9 (Ark)  
 37:10-16 (Table of showbread)  
 37:17-24 (Lampstand)  
 37:25-28 (Altar of incense)  
 37:29 (Anointing oil and incense)  
 38:1-7 (Altar of burnt-offering)  
 38:8 (Laver)  
 38:9-20 (Court)  
 38:21 (Introduction to sum of materials)  
 38:22-23 (Bezalel and Oholiab)  
 38:24-31 (Materials used)  
 39:1-31 (Priests' garments)  
 39:32 (Work finished)  
 39:33-43 (Delivery of tabernacle to Moses)  
 40:1-16 (Moses to rear up tab.)  
 40:17-33 (Tabernacle erected)  
 40:34-38 (Cloud and fire)

## GREEK (SEPTUAGINT) TEXT

37:1-2 (Much omitted from Heb.)  
 38:18-21 (Much omitted)  
 37:3-6  
 38:1-8  
 38:9-12  
 38:13-17  
 Lacking; Compare LXX 40:5.  
 38:25  
 38:22-24 (Some differences)  
 38:26  
 37:7-18  
 37:19  
 37:20-21  
 39:1-10  
 36:8b-40 (Garments listed in same order in Heb. & Gr.)  
 39:11  
 39:14-23  
 40:1-16 (Vss. 7-8, 11 of Heb. omitted. Some other differences also.)  
 40:17-33; 38:27 (40:20b, 28, 29b-32 of Heb. omitted. LXX 38:27 resembles Heb. 40:30-32.)  
 40:34-38.

## GREEK TEXT

36:8a (Intro. to robes)  
 36:8b-40 (Priests' garments)  
 37:1-2 (Curtains. Brief)  
 37:3-6 (Veil and screen)  
 37:7-18 (Court)  
 37:19 (Tab. service for Levites)  
 37:20-21 (Bezalel & Oholiab)  
 38:1-8 (Ark)  
 38:9-12 (Table)  
 38:13-17 (Lampstand)

## HEBREW TEXT

36:8a (Intro. to tab. curtains!)  
 39:1-31  
 36:8b-19  
 36:35-38  
 38:9-20  
 38:21  
 38:22-23  
 37:1-9  
 37:10-16  
 37:17-24

38:18-21 (Posts, rings, capitals, hooks, pins)	36:36, 38 (Considerably different from the Greek)
38:22-24 (Altar of burnt-offering)	38:1-7 (Numerous differences)
38:25 (Anointing oil & incense)	37:29
38:26-27 (Laver)	38:8; 40:30-32
39:1-10 (The gold, silver, brass)	38:24-31
39:11 (Israelites obey)	39:32b
39:12-13 (Leftover gold and cloth)	Lacking
39:14-23 (Items brought to Moses)	39:33-43
(Items listed in 39:14-21 differ in order from the Heb.)	
40:1-16 (Tabernacle set up; Greek lacks 40:7-8, 11 of Hebrew.)	40:1-16
40:17-33 (Lacks 40:28, 29b-32 of Heb.)	40:17-33
40:34-38 (Cloud and fire)	40:34-38

### EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading propose a brief title or topic for chapter thirty-five.
2. What restriction was imposed on kindling fires? (35:3) Where was this to be observed?
3. Who was to give an offering? (35:5, 21, 29)
4. How are the makers of the tabernacle described? (35:10; 28:3)
5. What items are referred to as the "tabernacle" and "its tent"? (35:11; Compare 26:1, 7.)
6. What items did the men and women bring in the offering? (35:22-24)
7. What work did the wise-hearted women do? (35:25-26; Compare Prov. 31:19.)
8. Who was the leading craftsman? (35:30; Compare 31:1-5.)
9. Who was the second notable craftsman? (35:24)
10. What were the craftsmen to do besides their skilled work? (35:34)
11. How is the verb "work" translated differently in the American Standard version from the King James version? (36:1)
12. Before whom had the donated materials been placed? Who came there to receive the materials? (36:2-3)

13. When were materials being donated? (36:3)
  14. What (joyfull) complaint did the builders have about the materials available? (36:5-7)
- 

## EXODUS THIRTY-FIVE: OFFERING, CRAFTSMEN!

- I. Offering
    1. Called for; 35:4-9.
    2. Contributed freely; 35:20-29.
  - II. Craftsmen
    1. Called; 35:10-19.
    2. Commissioned; 35:30—36:1.
- 

## EXODUS THIRTY-FIVE: COMMANDS AND COMPLIANCE

- I. The Lord's commands
    1. Sabbath rest; 35:1-3.
    2. Free-will offering; 35:4-9.
    3. Wise-hearted men to come; 35:10-19.
  - II. The people's compliance
    1. Offering collected; 35:20-29.
    2. Workmen commissioned; 35:30—36:1.
- 

## A BUILDING COMMITTEE'S DREAM! (35:20-29)

1. Immediate response. (35:20-29).
  2. Willing earnest response. (35:21-22).
  3. Sacrificial response. (35:22-24).
  4. Working response. (35:25-26).
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## WISE-HEARTED MEN! (35:10, 30—36:1)

1. Filled with God's Spirit; (35:30-31).
  2. Skilled in work; (35:32, 35).
  3. Committed to teach others; (35:34).
- 

## EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

1. *What are the parallel passages to the sections in chapter thirty-five?*

(1) 35:1-3 (on Sabbath): 20:8-11; 31:12-17; 34:21.

(2) 35:4-9, 20-29 (on offering): 25:1-7.

(3) 35:10-19 (on craftsmen): 31:1-11; 35:30—36:1; 38:22-23.

2. *What was the law about fires on the Sabbath day? (35:1-3)*

No fires were to be kindled on the Sabbath days throughout their habitations. Fire was certainly permissible at the tabernacle on the sabbaths for the sabbath sacrifices (Num. 28:9-10). It was only in their habitations that fire was not kindled.

This law is not stated elsewhere in the O.T. However, Ex. 16:23 does indicate that the manna for the Sabbath was to be cooked the day before the Sabbath. This law about no fires on the sabbath days strengthens the view that the seventh-day rest was never designed to be kept in all climates by all nations.

Note (in 35:1) that Moses assembled ALL the congregation of Israel. What a huge assembly this was, unless the expression refers only to the heads of the class as representatives of all the people. However, 35:20 indicates that "all the congregation departed from the presence of Moses" to go get their offerings.

The Sabbath was to be a "holy day," literally "holiness." (35:2)

The "sabbath of solemn rest" (Heb., *shabbath shabbaton*)

was a "sabbath of entire rest." See 31:15.

The reference to the sabbath in 35:1-3 comes as a surprise so soon after the command in 34:21. Even though 35:1-3 seems to be somewhat associated with the covenant stipulations of chapter thirty-four, the text makes clear that the commandment of 35:1-3 was delivered on a separate occasion from those spoken of in 34:31-32. Israel needed to be reminded to keep the sabbath days during the construction of the tabernacle.

3. *Who was to give an offering?* (35:4-9)

"Every one" (Heb., "all") who was willing (or generous) in heart was to bring an offering. The willingness is strongly stressed. See 35:21, 22, 29. Grateful hearts give willingly. God loves a cheerful giver (II Cor. 9:7). The temple of God cannot be built unless everyone takes a part (Eph. 4:16).

The offering is called (in Hebrew) a "heave-offering" (*terumah*). See 25:2; 29:27-28. This refers to something "lifted-up" (figuratively) as an offering to God.

See 25:3-7 concerning the materials mentioned in 35:5-9.

4. *How are the makers of the tabernacle described?* (35:10-19)

They were "wise of heart." (28:3; 31:1-5). Their "wisdom" was that which was shown by manual and artistic skill. See 35:31-32.

The construction work was not limited to Bezalel and Oholiab (35:30, 34), but was shared by every wise-hearted man.

"Covering" in K.J.V. of 35:12 refers to the entrance curtain, or screen, at the door of the Holy Place.

"Tabernacle" in 35:11 refers only to the inner linen curtains. See 36:8. "Tent" in 35:11 refers to the goats' hair curtains. See 36:14. The term "tabernacle" (same Hebrew word as in 35:11) refers to the entire structure. Thus the term "tabernacle" (*mishkan*) had both a broad application and a specific narrow application.

"Cloths of service" in K.J.V. 35:19 are the priests' garments. See 31:10; 39:1, 4.

5. *What items were brought as offerings?* (35:20-24, 27-29)

They brought items of jewelry - brooches (K.J.V., "bracelets"); earrings (the same term applies to both earrings and nose-rings. See Gen. 35:4; Ezek. 16:12; Isa. 3:21); signet-rings (Signet-rings had carved designs on them which were used to stamp the owner's name on documents.); armlets (K.J.V., "tablets." Literally "globules," probably referring to strings of beads, or necklaces).

Note that the rulers brought some expensive items - onyx stones, spices, etc. (35:27-28; 28:9, 17-20).

6. *What work did the wise-hearted women do?* (35:25-26)

They spun goats' hair into yarn, which was then woven into cloth. See Prov. 31:19. Spinning was done with a stick about eighteen inches long. It bore a round weight (called a spindle-whorl) on one end. This served as a fly-wheel to help rotate the spindle. A hook on the opposite end caught the raw wool, and the rotating motion twisted it into thread or yarn.

7. *Who were the two principal tabernacle workmen?* (35:30—36:1)

Bezalel and Oholiab. See 31:1-6; 38:22-23. The obscure tribe at Dan was honored by supplying a craftsman, as well as the prominent tribe of Judah.

These men not only did artistic and craft work themselves, but they taught others. "A light that cannot kindle other lights is but a feeble flame." (J. H. Hertz)

The work of making the tabernacle could only be done by those with divine enlightenment from the Holy Spirit. See 35:31-35. Note that Gen. 41:38 speaks of administrative ability and wisdom in social affairs as "the spirit of God." We do not often think of manual work and administrative ability as something that the Spirit of God assists. But on various occasions this has been so, and probably still is.

The word "engraver" in 35:35 is translated from a verb meaning to "cut" or "engrave." The "skilful workman" (K.J.V., "cunning workman") of 35:35 is one who devises and thinks out artistic designs and then produces them.

8. *Is the division between chapters 35 and 36 correct?*

It is not correct if chapters are expected to be rather complete blocks of subject matter. The discussion about the workmen in chapter 35 goes right on to 36:7, or at least to 36:1.

Possibly one reason for separating chapters 35 and 36 at the point where they are divided was the faulty translation of 36:1 in the Greek Bible (which is followed in the K.J.V.). It translates the verb "work" as a past (aorist), "wrought." The Hebrew very plainly gives it as a future (a perfect with *waw* consecutive), which should be rendered "shall work."

THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**36** And Be-zal-el and O-ho-li-ab shall work, and every wise-hearted man, in whom Je-ho-vah hath put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all the work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that Je-ho-vah hath commanded.

(2) And Mo-ses called Be-zal-el and O-ho-li-ab, and every wise-hearted man, in whose heart Je-ho-vah had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it: (3) and they received of Mo-ses all the offering which the children of Is-ra-el had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, wherewith to make it. And they brought yet unto him freewill-offerings every morning. (4) And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they wrought; (5) and they spake unto Mo-ses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which Je-ho-vah commanded to make. (6) And Mo-ses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from



bringing. (7) For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.

(8) And all the wise-hearted men among them that wrought the work made the tabernacle with ten curtains; of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, with cher-u-bim, the work of the skilful workman, *Be-zal-el* made them. (9) The length of each curtain was eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits: all the curtains had one measure. (10) And he coupled five curtains one to another: and *the other* five curtains he coupled one to another. (11) And he made loops of blue upon the edge of the one curtain from the selvedge in the coupling: likewise he made in the edge of the curtain that was outmost in the second coupling. (12) Fifty loops made he in the one curtain, and fifty loops made he in the edge of the curtain that was in the second coupling: the loops were opposite one to another. (13) And he made fifty clasps of gold, and coupled the curtains one to another with the clasps: so the tabernacle was one.

(14) And he made curtains of goats' *hair* for a tent over the tabernacle: eleven curtains he made them. (15) The length of each curtain was thirty cubits, and four cubits the breadth of each curtain: the eleven curtains had one measure. (16) And he coupled five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves. (17) And he made fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that was outmost in the coupling, and fifty loops made he upon the edge of the curtain which was *outmost in* the second coupling. (18) And he made fifty clasps of brass to couple the tent together, that it might be one. (19) And he made a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of sealskins above.

(20) And he made the boards for the tabernacle, of acacia wood, standing up. (21) Ten cubits was the length of a board and a cubit and a half the breadth of each board. (22) Each board had two tenons, joined one to another: thus did he make for all the boards of the tabernacle. (23) And he made the boards for the tabernacle: twenty boards for the south side southward; (24) and he made forty sockets of silver under the

twenty boards; two sockets under one board for its two tenons, and two sockets under another board for its two tenons. (25) And for the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side, he made twenty boards, (26) and their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. (27) And for the hinder part of the tabernacle westward he made six boards. (28) And two boards made he for the corners of the tabernacle in the hinder part. (29) And they were double beneath; and in like manner they were entire unto the top thereof unto one ring: thus he did to both of them in the two corners. (30) And there were eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; under every board two sockets.

(31) And he made bars of acacia wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle, (32) and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the tabernacle for the hinder part westward. (33) And he made the middle bar to pass through in the midst of the boards from the one end to the other. (34) And he overlaid the boards with gold, and made their rings of gold for places for the bars, and overlaid the bars with gold.

(35) And he made the veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen: with cher-u-bim, the work of the skilful workman, made he it. (36) And he made thereunto four pillars of acacia, and overlaid them with gold: their hooks were of gold; and he cast for them four sockets of silver. (37) And he made a screen for the door of the Tent, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of the embroiderer; (38) and the five pillars of it with their hooks, and he overlaid their capitals and their fillets with gold; and their five sockets were of brass.

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#### EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

(Questions over 36:1-7 are included in the notes on chapter 35.)

1. *Topic:* It is helpful to remember the contents of this chapter

under the title of ENCLOSINGS, because it tells of the curtains, boards, bars, etc. that enclosed the tabernacle.

2. *Outline:* (1) Workmen called; 36:2.  
 (2) Excessive materials donated by people; 36:3-7.  
 (3) Tabernacle curtains made; 36:8-13.  
 (4) Tent of goats' hair made; 36:14-19.  
 (5) Boards; 36:20-30.  
 (6) Bars; 36:31-34.  
 (7) Veil and screen; 36:35-38.
3. *Parallel passages:* (See the notes on the earlier parallel passages.)  
 (1) 36:2-7 (Offering) - 25:1-7; 35:4-9, 20-29.  
 (2) 36:8-19 (Curtains) - 26:1-14.  
 (3) 36:20-30 (Boards) - 26:15-25.  
 (4) 36:35-38 (Veil and screen) - 26:31-37.

4. *Notes:*

36:1 - The A.S.V. translation "shall work" is a better translation than the King James translation "wrought." "According to all" is more clearly translated "with respect to all."

36:3 - The offering is pictured as having been brought and placed in a heap before Moses. The craftsmen then came and took from it whatever they needed.

The people brought offerings every morning. The Hebrew idiom is picturesque: "In the morning, in the morning."

36:4 - "Wrought" is an old past tense form of the verb "work." The Hebrew text emphasizes the continuity of the work: they "were doing" it.

36:5 - The generosity of the Israelites reminds us of that of the churches of Macedonia (II Cor. 8:2, 3). These people are examples for us.

36:8 - The subject of the last verb ("made") in 36:8 is not stated, but the verb is singular: "he made them." The same is true of numerous verbs in the following verses (36:10, 11, 13ff). It is probable that the subject is "Bezalel" (as in 37:1). The A.S.V. supplies this reading

in italics. Possibly the subject is indefinite, and refers to whichever craftsman did each work.

36:8 does not indicate that the items were made in the exact order in which they are mentioned. Probably they were all being made simultaneously.

36:16 - The instructions in 26:9b about doubling back the sixth curtain (the one that lay at the front of the tabernacle) is not repeated here, because chapters 36-39 do not give details about how the tabernacle parts were positioned. Similarly 26:12-13 is not repeated after 36:18.

36:38 - "He overlaid their capitals and fillets with gold." In the passage parallel to this (26:37) it says only that he was to "overlay them (the pillars) with gold." This is an example of the infrequent but interesting variations between chapters 26-31 and 36-39.

### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**37** And Be-zal-el made the ark of acacia wood: two cubits and a half was the length of it, and a cubit and a half the breadth of it, and a cubit and a half the height of it. (2) And he overlaid it with pure gold within and without, and made a crown of gold to it round about. (3) And he cast for it four rings of gold, in the four feet thereof; even two rings on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it. (4) And he made staves of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold. (5) And he put the staves into the rings on the sides of the ark, to bear the ark. (6) And he made a mercy-seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half *was* the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. (7) And he made two cherubim of gold; of beaten work made he them, at the two ends of the mercy-seat; (8) one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other end: of one piece with the mercy-seat made he the

cher-u-bim at the two ends thereof. (9) And the cher-u-bim spread out their wings on high, covering the mercy-seat with their wings, with their faces one to another; toward the mercy-seat were the faces of the cher-u-bim.

(10) And he made the table of acacia wood: two cubits *was* the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. (11) And he overlaid it with pure gold, and made thereto a crown of gold round about. (12) And he made unto it a border of a handbreadth round about, and made a golden crown to the border thereof round about. (13) And he cast for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that were on the four feet thereof. (14) Close by the border were the rings, the places for the staves to bear the table. (15) And he made the staves of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold, to bear the table. (16) And he made the vessels which were upon the table, the dishes thereof, and the spoons thereof, and the bowls thereof, and the flagons thereof, wherewith to pour out, of pure gold.

(17) And he made the candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work made of the candlestick, even its base, and its shaft; its cups, its knops, and its flowers, were of one piece with it. (18) And there were six branches going out of the sides thereof; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side thereof, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side thereof: (19) three cups made like almond-blossoms in one branch, a knop and a flower; and three cups made like almond-blossoms in the other branch, a knop and a flower: so for the six branches going out of the candlestick. (20) And in the candlestick were four cups made like almond-blossoms, the knops thereof, and the flowers thereof; (21) and a knop under two branches of one piece with it, and a knop under two branches of one piece with it, and a knop under two branches of one piece with it, for the six branches going out of it. (22) Their knops and their branches were of one piece with it: the whole of it was one beaten work of pure gold. (23) and he made the lamps thereof, seven, and the snuffers thereof, and the snuff-dishes thereof, of pure gold. (24) Of a talent of pure

gold made he it, and all the vessels thereof.

(25) And he made the altar of incense of acacia wood: a cubit was the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof foursquare; and two cubits was the height thereof; the horns thereof were of one piece with it. (26) And he overlaid it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns of it: and he made unto it a crown of gold round about. (27) And he made for it two golden rings under the crown thereof, upon the two ribs thereof, upon the two sides of it, for places for staves wherewith to bear it. (28) And he made the staves of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold. (29) And he made the holy anointing oil, and the pure incense of sweet spices, after the art of the perfumer.

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#### EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

1. *Topic:* The Inside Furniture. The chapter discusses the ark and the mercy-seat (37:1-9), the table of showbread (37:10-16), the lampstand (37:17-24), and the altar of incense (37:25-29). All of these items were inside the tabernacle building.
  2. *Parallel passages:* (See the notes on the earlier parallel passages.)
    - (1) 37:1-9 (Ark and mercy-seat) - 25:10-22.
    - (2) 37:10-16 (Table) - 25:23-30.
    - (3) 37:17-24 (Lampstand) - 25:31-39; 27:20-21.
    - (4) 37:25-28 (Incense altar) - 30:1-10.
    - (5) 37:29 (Anointing oil and incense) - 30:23-25, 31-33, 34-38.
  3. *Notes:*

Several statements in chapter twenty-five about the positioning of the articles of tabernacle furniture are not repeated in the parallel sections in this chapter. Compare 25:15b and 37:5; 25:21-22 and 37:9; 25:30 and 37:16; 25:37b and 37:22.
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THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**38** And he made the altar of burnt-offering of acacia wood: five cubits was the length thereof, and five cubits the breadth thereof, foursquare; and three cubits the height thereof. (2) And he made the horns thereof upon the four corners of it; the horns thereof were of one piece with it: and he overlaid it with brass. (3) And he made all the vessels of the altar, the pots, and the shovels, and the basins, the flesh-hooks, and the firepans: all the vessels thereof made he of brass. (4) And he made for the altar a grating of network of brass, under the ledge round it beneath, reaching halfway up. (5) And he cast four rings for the four ends of the grating of brass, to be places for the staves. (6) And he made the staves of acacia wood, and overlaid them with brass. (7) And he put the staves into the rings on the sides of the altar, wherewith to bear it; he made it hollow with planks.

(8) And he made the laver of brass, and the base thereof of brass, of the mirrors of the ministering women that ministered at the door of the tent of meeting.

(9) And he made the court: for the south side southward the hangings of the court were of fine twined linen, a hundred cubits; (10) their pillars were twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets were of silver. (11) And for the north side a hundred cubits, their pillars twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, of silver. (12) And for the west side were hangings of fifty cubits, their pillars ten, and their sockets ten; the hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, of silver. (13) And for the east side eastward fifty cubits. (14) The hangings for the one side *of the gate* were fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three; (15) and so for the other side: on this hand and that hand by the gate of the court were hangings of fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three. (16) All the hangings on the court round about were of fine twined linen. (17) And the sockets for the pillars were of brass; the

hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, of silver; and the overlaying of their capitals, of silver; and all the pillars of the court were filleted with silver. (18) And the screen for the gate of the court was the work of the embroiderer, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen: and twenty cubits was the length, and the height in the breadth was five cubits, answerable to the hangings of the court. (19) And their pillars were four, and their sockets four of brass; their hooks of silver, and the overlaying of their capitals, and their fillets, of silver. (20) And all the pins of the tabernacle, and of the court round about were of brass.

(21) This is the sum of *the things* for the tabernacle, even the tabernacle of the testimony, as they were counted, according to the commandment of Mo-ses, for the service of the Le-vites, by the hand of Ith-a-mar, the son of Aar-on the priest. (22) And Be-zal-el the son of U-ri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Ju-dah, made all that Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses. (23) And with him was O-ho-li-ab, the son of A-his-a-mach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver, and a skilful workman, and an embroiderer in blue, and in purple, and in scarlet, and in fine linen.

(24) All the gold that was used for the work in all the work of the sanctuary, even the gold of the offering, was twenty and nine talents, and seven hundred and thirty shek-els, after the shek-el of the sanctuary. (25) And the silver of them that were numbered of the congregation was a hundred talents, and a thousand seven hundred and threescore and fifteen shek-els, after the shek-el of the sanctuary: (26) a be-ka a head, *that is*, half a shek-el, after the shek-el of the sanctuary, for every one that passed over to them that were numbered, from twenty years old and upward, for six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty men. (27) And the hundred talents of silver were for casting the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the veil; a hundred sockets for the hundred talents, a talent for a socket. (28) And of the thousand seven hundred seventy and five *shek-els* he made hooks for the pillars, and overlaid their capitals, and made fillets for them. (29) And the brass of the offering was seventy talents, and two thousand



and four hundred shek-els. (30) And therewith he made the sockets to the door of the tent of meeting, and the brazen altar, and the brazen grating for it, and all the vessels of the altar, (31) and the sockets of the court round about, and the sockets of the gate of the court, and all the pins of the tabernacle, and all the pins of the court round about.

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### EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

1. *Topic:* The Outside Furniture and court; Cost of Materials. The theme of Outside Furniture gives this chapter an easily-remembered topic that contrasts with that of chapter thirty-seven.
2. *Parallel passages:* (See the notes on the earlier parallel passages.)
  - (1) 38:1-7 (Altar of burnt-offering) - 27:1-8.
  - (2) 38:8 (Laver) - 30:17-31.
  - (3) 38:9-20 (Court) - 27:9-19.
  - (4) 38:22-23 (Builders) - 31:1-11; 35:10-18, 30—36:1.
3. *Questions Answerable from the Bible:*
  - (1) What was the source of the brass for the laver and its base? (38:8)
  - (2) Which tribe was to do service for the tabernacle? (38:21)
  - (3) Under whose "hand" (or leadership) was the sum (accounts) of the tabernacle materials counted? (38:21)
  - (4) What craft work was Oholiab particularly skilled in? What materials did he use? (38:23)
  - (5) How much gold was used in the sanctuary? (38:24)
  - (6) How much silver was used in the sanctuary? (38:25)
  - (7) How much silver had been given by each of the men over twenty? (38:26; Compare 30:12-14.)
  - (8) How many Israelite men were counted and assessed for silver? (38:26; Compare Num. 1:46.)
  - (9) What was the silver used for? (38:27-28)

(10) How much brass was contributed for the sanctuary? (38:29)

(11) What was the brass used for? (38:30-31)

4. Notes on Exodus 38:

38:1 - The fuller title "altar of burnt-offering" is used here, to distinguish the altar from the altar of incense (37:25). Ex. 27:1 simply referred to "the altar" because the altar of incense had not yet been introduced.

38:8 - Only here is the information given that the laver and its bases were made from copper from the mirrors of the ministering women. See notes on 30:17-21. The laver and its base were not made from the material donated in the Lord's offering (38:29), but from the brass mirrors of the women.

This verse refers to the "ministering women" for the first time. The verb translated "minister" (*tsabab*) means "to assemble for service" (Num. 4:23), "to assemble for military service, to go forth to war" (Num. 3:17). The verb is related to the Hebrew word for "host" (as in the "Lord of hosts"). The same word is applied to the women in I Sam. 2:22, whom the sons of Eli wickedly lay with.

Statements have been made that the reference to the women ministering at the door of the tent of meeting is an anachronism, because there was not yet any tent of meeting built before which they could minister. (See *Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1, [1969], p. 466.)

This statement is nonsense, if not blasphemy. The "tent of meeting" referred to is obviously the "tent of meeting" mentioned in 33:7. These women served there; and after the tabernacle was built, they continued their service around the new structure.

38:20 - The reference to the "pins" in the tabernacle is found only here. The word refers to a peg, nail or pin, something used for fastening. Probably it refers to the pins or stakes used to hold upright the tabernacle court and boards.

38:21 - Translation (with slight paraphrase in parentheses):

"These are the enumerations (or accounts) of (the materials collected for) the tabernacle, even the tabernacle of the testimony (or law), which were numbered (counted) by the order (literally "mouth") of Moses, for the service of the Levites, by the hand (the work of leadership) of Ithamar, the son of Aaron the priest." On Ithamar, see 6:23 and 28:1.

Moses specifically ordered an inventory of the materials used. Apparently the Levites did the tabulating and Ithamar supervised the Levites.

The "sum" (literally "enumerations") of the materials - the gold, silver and brass - is given in 38:24-31.

Observe the striking name "tabernacle of the testimony." Regarding the "testimony," see 25:1. "Testimony" means precept, law, or testimony, and refers to the ten commandments.

This verse is the first mention of the service of the Levites since they were consecrated to Jehovah in 32:29. The formal appointment of the Levites to the service of tabernacle is related in Numbers 3:5-51. A special setting-apart ceremony for them was done at yet a later time, and is mentioned in Deut. 10:8.

38:22 - High tribute is here paid to Bezalel. The Greek Bible relates erroneously that Bezalel had made the brazen altar of the brazen censers which belonged to the rebels who joined with Korah. See Numbers 16:36-39 for the real facts about this incident.

38:24 - A talent was approximately seventy-five pounds. A talent consisted of 3000 shekels, as can be calculated easily from 38:25-26. A shekel was about four-tenths of an ounce.

From these values we learn that the gold of the sanctuary amounted to one ton and 350 pounds. This would be worth over five and a half million dollars at \$150 an ounce. "Gold of the offering" is literally "gold of waving." It was in God's sight a type of wave-offering. See 29:26.

The amount of metals offered for the sanctuary may

seem very large. But vast amounts of gold, silver and copper are known to have been assembled by ancient kings. See Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 2, pp. 251-252, for examples. The Egyptians had a great love for valuable and elegant ornaments, gold, rings, necklaces, etc., as can be seen from their monuments. The Israelites had collected much of this Egyptian jewelry.

38:25 - The silver for the sanctuary amounted to four tons. The silver mentioned here was not the silver from the offering of 35:5, but was the silver obtained from the numbering of the men, who all gave a half-shekel when numbered. See 30:12-14. This silver was used for the silver sockets (pedestals), and for overlaying the capitals of the pillars.

We are not informed concerning the uses made of the silver referred to in 35:24. Possibly, as Cassuto suggests (*op. cit.*, p. 472), the silver in 35:24 is actually the same silver as that referred to in 39:25. This appears uncertain to us.

38:26 - The word *bekah* (from a verb meaning "to divide") means "half," hence, half-shekel.

Concerning the heavier "shekel of the sanctuary" see 30:13.

See 30:11-14 for the instructions about taking a census and collecting the half-shekel atonement money. A major census is described in Num. 1:1. It was taken only a month after the tabernacle was set up (Ex. 40:17). But the count in Ex. 36:26 was obviously taken *before* the tabernacle was built. Yet the number of people counted - 603,550 - is exactly the same in Exodus 36 and Numbers 1!

It appears from Numbers 1:18 that that count of the Israelites by families and by tribes was done in a single day! To accomplish such a feat would require complete cooperation by the people and thorough preparation and organization in advance by the leaders. Such preparation is exactly what the count in Exodus thirty-eight would

have provided. The names of the people were all already written down (possibly on potsherds). With the names already on hand, the census takers could quickly have checked and collated them into tribes and families. See Num. 1:2, 20, 22, 24, *passim*.

A collection of money similar to that mentioned in Ex. 38:26 was made in the time of King Joash (II Chron. 24:4-6), apparently at the same rate per head, for the repairing of the temple. This was not an annual tax, but a special one. The tax of Matt. 17:27 (which seems to have been an annual levy) was a later and different tax, even though it involved the same sum (half a shekel) as the special levy for the sanctuary.

38:27 - Regarding the "sockets," see 26:19-25.

38:28 - Regarding the pillars, see 27:10, 17.

38:29-30 - The brass (copper) of the offering amounted to two tons and 500 pounds.

The uses of the brass are described in 38:30. No mention is made of the laver among these uses listed, because the brass for the laver came from a separate source.

See Ex. 27:4 concerning the "brazen grating." This grating seems to have been a network of brass on the sides of the altar, through which a draft of air could be drawn up into the fire inside the altar.

38:31 - The heavy brass and silver sockets and other heavy items were transported about in six covered wagons pulled by twelve oxen. See Num. 7:2-5.

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Does the great amount of gold, silver, and brass in the tabernacle indicate that God's people should expect to live in wealthy surroundings and comfort? Does it indicate that we should build church buildings of luxurious quality?

The Israelites themselves, who made the tabernacle, were often brought low and even caused to hunger, that they might learn that man does not live by bread alone, but by the word of

God (Deut. 8:2-3). These people did not live in luxury, even though their tabernacle was somewhat luxurious. Neither can we as God's people expect soft luxurious living. The people of God have often been destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (Heb. 11:37). The early Christians took joyfully the spoiling of their possessions (Heb. 10:34). We really must not expect better treatment.

There is, however, another side to this matter. God's prophet Isaiah (60:5-14) spoke of the time when the "wealth of the nations shall come unto thee," referring to Zion, the people of God. Similarly Haggai 2:7-8 prophesied that "the precious things of all nations" would come to fill God's house with glory. In fulfillment of these prophecies, there have indeed been times when the church has had a great deal of wealth. Even Paul declared that he knew how "both to abound (have abundance) and to suffer need" (Phil. 4:2). Thus it appears that the church should not expect to be poor at all times in all places. The important thing is to learn to be content, whatever our lot, and not to set our hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God. (Phil. 4:11; I Tim. 6:17)

Does the luxury of the tabernacle suggest that we should build luxurious church buildings? Probably not. The New Testament does not even mention church buildings. The PEOPLE of God now constitute His temple, rather than a building of stones and gold (I Peter 2:5; Eph. 2:19-22). The Christians in apostolic times met in homes, public porches, school houses, etc. They were aware that everything in this earth is to be burned up (II Peter 3:10). They did not consider that the tabernacle or even Solomon's temple was a precedent to them to make luxurious structures. In fact, God had never asked Solomon to build any temple; and God caused the temple to be demolished when the people became unfaithful to Him. God dwells with him that is "poor and of a contrite spirit" (Isa. 66:2). We do not condemn the making of adequate attractive meeting houses. They may be helpful and even quite necessary. But the tabernacle is hardly a precedent to us to build buildings of great luxury. If God should grant

us on some occasions a degree of luxury, we shall pray it may be used to His glory. If we suffer want, we shall still praise Him, and be content.

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THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**39** And of the blue, and purple, and scarlet, they made finely wrought garments, for ministering in the holy place, and made the holy garments for Aar-on; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses.

(2) And he made the eph-od of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen. (3) And they did beat the gold into thin plates, and cut it into wires, to work it in the blue, and in the purple, and in the scarlet, and in the fine linen, the work of the skilful workman. (4) They made shoulder-pieces for it, joined together; at the two ends was it joined together. (5) And the skilfully woven band, that was upon it, wherewith to gird it on, was of the same piece *and* like the work thereof; of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses.

(6) And they wrought the onyx stones, inclosed in settings of gold, graven with the engravings of a signet, according to the names of the children of Is-ra-el. (7) And he put them on the shoulder-pieces of the eph-od, to be stones of memorial for the children of Is-ra-el; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses.

(8) And he made the breastplate, the work of the skilful workman, like the work of the eph-od; of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen. (9) It was four-square; they made the breastplate double: a span was the length thereof, and a span the breadth thereof, being double. (10) And they set in it four rows of stones. A row of sardius, topaz, and carbuncle was the first row; (11) and the second row, an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond; (12) and the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; (13) and the fourth

row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper: they were inclosed in inclosings of gold in their settings. (14) And the stones were according to the names of the children of Is-ra-el, twelve, according to their names; like the engravings of a signet, every one according to his name, for the twelve tribes. (15) And they made upon the breastplate chains like cords, of wreathen work of pure gold. (16) And they made two settings of gold, and two gold rings, and put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate. (17) And they put the two wreathen chains of gold in the two rings at the ends of the breastplate. (18) And the *other* two ends of the two wreathen chains they put on the two settings, and put them on the shoulder-pieces of the eph-od, in the forepart thereof. (19) And they made two rings of gold, and put them upon the two ends of the breastplate, upon the edge thereof, which was toward the side of the eph-od inward. (20) And they made two rings of gold, and put them on the two shoulder-pieces of the eph-od underneath, in the forepart thereof, close by the coupling thereof, above the skilfully woven band of the eph-od. (21) And they did bind the breastplate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the eph-od with a lace of blue, that it might be upon the skilfully woven band of the eph-od, and that the breastplate might not be loosed from the eph-od; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses.

(22) And he made the robe of the eph-od of woven work, all of blue; (23) and the hole of the robe in the midst thereof, as the hole of a coat of mail, with a binding round about the hole of it, that it should not be rent. (24) And they made upon the skirts of the robe pomegranates of blue, and purple, and scarlet, *and twined linen*, (25) And they made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates upon the skirts of the robe round about, between the pomegranates; (26) a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate, upon the skirts of the robe round about, to minister in; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses.

(27) And they made the coats of fine linen of woven work for Aar-on, and for his sons, (28) and the mitre of fine linen, and the goodly head-tires of fine linen, and the linen breeches



of fine twisted linen, (29) and the girdle of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, the work of the embroiderer; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses.

(30) And they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote upon it a writing, like the engravings of a signet, HOLY TO JE-HO-VAH. (31) And they tied unto it a lace of blue, to fasten it upon the mitre above; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses.

(32) Thus was finished all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting; and the children of Is-ra-el did according to all that Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses; so did they. (33) And they brought the tabernacle unto Mo-ses, the Tent, and all its furniture, its clasps, its boards, its bars, and its pillars, and its sockets; (34) and the covering of rams' skins dyed red, and the covering of sealskins, and the veil of the screen; (35) the ark of the testimony, and the staves thereof, and the mercy-seat; (36) the table, all the vessels thereof, and the showbread; (37) the pure candlestick, the lamps thereof, even the lamps to be set in order, and all the vessels thereof, and the oil for the light; (38) and the golden altar, and the anointing oil, and the sweet incense, and the screen for the door of the Tent; (39) the brazen altar, and its grating of brass, its staves, and all its vessels, the laver and its base; (40) the hangings of the court, its pillars, and its sockets, and the screen for the gate of the court, the cords thereof, and the pins thereof, and all the instruments of the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of meeting; (41) the finely wrought garments for ministering in the holy place, and the holy garments for Aar-on the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office. (42) According to all that Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses, so the children of Is-ra-el did all the work. (43) And Mo-ses saw all the work, and, behold, they had done it; as Je-ho-vah had commanded, even so had they done it: and Mo-ses blessed them.

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## EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

1. *Topic:* Priests' garments; Finished Work Presented. Much of the material in this chapter is parallel to material in chapter twenty-eight. Note that seven times in this chapter (and eight times in chapter forty) it says that things were made "as God commanded Moses" (39:5, *passim*).
2. *Outline:* A. Garments of priests; 39:1-31.
  - (1) Materials; 39:1.
  - (2) Ephod; 39:2-5.
  - (3) Onyx shoulder-stones; 39:6-7.
  - (4) Breastplate; 39:8-21.
  - (5) Robe of ephod; 39:22-26.
  - (6) Coats, head-coverings, breeches, girdle; 39:27-29.
  - (7) Golden plate; 39:30-31.B. Tabernacle brought to Moses; 39:32-43.
3. *Parallel passages:* (See the notes on the earlier parallel passages.)
  - (1) 39:1 (Materials) - 28:1-5.
  - (2) 39:2-7 (Ephod) - 28:6-13.
  - (3) 39:8-21 (Breastplate) - 28:15-30.
  - (4) 39:22-26 (Robe) - 28:31-35.
  - (5) 39:27-29 (Coat mitre, girdle) - 28:39-40, 42-43.
  - (6) 39:30-31 (Golden plate) - 28:36-38.

(Observe how closely the order of items described in chapter 39 follows the order in chapter 28.)

4. *Questions* on Ex. 38 answerable from the Bible:
  - (1) How were gold wires (or threads) obtained for weaving into the ephod? (39:3; 28:6)
  - (2) What is the golden plate on Aaron's mitre called in 39:30? Compare 28:36.
  - (3) How fully did Israel carry out Jehovah's commands about making the tabernacle: (39:32, 42)
  - (4) To whom were the items of tabernacle furniture bought? (39:33)

- (5) What was brought with the "pure candlestick"? (39:37; Compare 25:37-38.)
- (6) What is the "golden altar"? (39:38; 30:3; 37:25-26; 40:26-27)
- (7) What was Moses' response to the people who brought the tabernacle? (39:43)

5. *Notes:*

39:1 - Regarding the King James reading "cloths of service," see 31:10. Concerning the "blue, purple, scarlet," see 25:4; 35:23.

39:3 - The information about the obtaining of gold threads by cutting from thinly beaten-out sheets of gold is given only here.

39:10-13 - Exodus 39:10 may be translated "And they shall fill in it four rows of stone(s). . . ."

We do not know with certainty the identity or the modern names of all the gemstones mentioned.<sup>1</sup> Neither do we know how the names of the tribes were positioned upon the gemstones. But, using the arrangement of the tribes' encampments in Numbers two as a guide, and arranging the names from right to left (like Hebrew writing), we propose the following:

ZEBULUN - Carbuncle (Green emerald)	ISSACHAR - Topaz (Green peridot)	JUDAH - Sardius (Red Carnelian)
GAD - Diamond (Transparent, hard?)	SIMEON - Sapphire (Blue lapis-lazuli)	REUBEN - Emerald (Rich green turquoise)
BENJAMIN - Amethyst (Purple quartz)	MANASSEH - Agate (Banded red, white, brown)	EPHRAIM - Jacinth (Orange color)
NAPHTALI - Jasper (Red-brown, yellow)	ASHER - Onyx (Banded milky-white, black, red)	DAN - Beryl (Sea-green feldspar)

<sup>1</sup>See "Jewels," *Interpreter's Dictionary of The Bible*, Vol 2 (New York: Abingdon, 1962), pp. 898-902.

- 39:22 - We are not told exactly where the priest wore the robe of the ephod. We suppose it was worn under the ephod and under the breastplate, so that it did not cover the gems of the breastplate or the gorgeous ephod. The bells and pomegranates would hang below the ephod.
- 39:29 - The singular "girdle" with the definite article does appear to refer to Aaron's girdle. There is no special description of the girdles of Aaron's sons that are referred to in Ex. 28:40. We suppose that those were made of the same materials and in the same form as Aaron's, and that the singular "girdle" in 39:29 is a collective, or generic, expression referring to the girdles of all priests. (See Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 2, pp. 253-254.)
- 39:30 - The golden plate is called a "crown" (diadem) here. In 28:36 it is spoken of as a "plate" of gold.
- 39:31 - The construction details end at 39:31.
- 39:32 - Cassuto (*op. cit.*, p. 476) says that the word "finished" in 39:32 recalls Gen. 2:1 to our minds, where God "finished" the work of creation. (The same verb is used in both verses.) He feels that there are intentional parallels made between the completion of creation and the completion of the tabernacle. Compare Ex. 39:43 and Gen. 1:31 (Moses/God "saw."); Ex. 39:43 and Gen. 1:22, 28 (Moses/God "blessed.") This idea seems to us rather weakly supported by the evidence.
- 39:33 - "Tabernacle" in 39:33 probably refers to the inner curtains. "Tent" probably refers to the goats' hair curtains. See 40:19; 26:13.
- 39:34 - The "veil of the screen" (K.J.V., "vail of the covering") refers to the veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Compare 39:38; 35:12, 15; 40:3, 21.
- 39:37 - A new expression "lamps of the order" (or arrangement) appears in this verse. The expression uses a form of the word "order" employed in 27:21: "Aaron and his sons shall keep it in *order* from evening to morning

before Jehovah." The lamps were to be positioned in such an arrangement that they would give light toward the opposite side of the room.

39:40 - Regarding the "hanging of the court," see 27:9-15; 38:9-17.

39:42 - Credit was given to all the children of Israel, not just to the principal craftsmen.

39:43 - How Moses must have rejoiced to see the tabernacle completed! Less than two years before he had been a fearful shepherd. Now he has lived to see the fulfillment of God's promise: "Ye shall serve God upon this mountain" (3:12).

The work of building the tabernacle had been brief, but probably arduous. In a little over five months all the work had been done. See 19:1; 24:18; 34:28; 40:2.

The words "as Jehovah had commanded" describe ALL the work done. It was necessary to make the tabernacle according to HIS directions. Only God knew what was His plan to redeem man. Only God knew what pleased Him.

Jewish tradition attributes Psalm 90 to this occasion of completing the tabernacle. (J. H. Hertz, *Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, p. 388.) Note Psalm 90:17, the closing words of the psalm: "Establish thou the work of our hands upon us; Yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it." The Psalm is attributed to Moses by its title, but the idea that it was composed for this occasion is not a certainty.

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### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**40** And Je-ho-vah spake unto Mo-ses, saying, (2) On the first day of the first month shalt thou rear up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. (3) And thou shalt put therein

the ark of the testimony, and thou shalt screen the ark with the veil. (4) And thou shalt bring in the table, and set in order the things that are upon it; and thou shalt bring in the candlestick, and light the lamps thereof. (5) And thou shalt set the golden altar for incense before the ark of the testimony, and put the screen of the door to the tabernacle. (6) And thou shalt set the altar of burnt-offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. (7) And thou shalt set the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and shalt put water therein. (8) And thou shalt set up the court round about, and hang up the screen of the gate of the court. (9) And thou shalt take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is therein, and shalt hallow it, and all the furniture thereof: and it shall be holy. (10) And thou shalt anoint the altar of burnt-offering, and all its vessels, and sanctify the altar: and the altar shall be most holy. (11) And thou shalt anoint the laver and its base, and sanctify it. (12) And thou shalt bring Aar-on and his sons unto the door of the tent of meeting, and shalt wash them with water. (13) And thou shalt put upon Aar-on the holy garments; and thou shalt anoint him, and sanctify him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. (14) And thou shalt bring his sons, and put coats upon them; (15) and thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office: and their anointing shall be to them for an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations. (16) Thus did Mo-ses: according to all that Je-ho-vah commanded him, so did he.

(17) And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up. (18) And Mo-ses reared up the tabernacle, and laid its sockets, and set up the boards thereof, and put in the bars thereof, and reared up its pillars. (19) And he spread the tent over the tabernacle, and put the covering of the tent above upon it, as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses. (20) And he took and put the testimony into the ark, and set the staves on the ark, and put the mercy-seat above upon the ark: (21) and he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the veil of the screen, and

screened the ark of the testimony; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses. (22) And he put the table in the tent of meeting, upon the side of the tabernacle northward, without the veil. (23) And he set the bread in order upon it before Je-ho-vah; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses. (24) And he put the candlestick in the tent of meeting, over against the table, on the side of the tabernacle southward. (25) And he lighted the lamps before Je-ho-vah; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses. (26) And he put the golden altar in the tent of meeting before the veil: (27) and he burnt thereon incense of sweet spices; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses. (28) And he put the screen of the door to the tabernacle. (29) And he set the altar of burnt-offering at the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and offered upon it the burnt-offering and the meal-offering; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses. (30) And he set the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water therein, wherewith to wash. (31) And Mo-ses and Aar-on and his sons washed their hands and their feet thereat; (32) when they went into the tent of meeting, and when they came near unto the altar, they washed; as Je-ho-vah commanded Mo-ses. (33) And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the gate of the court. So Mo-ses finished the work.

(34) Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of Je-ho-vah filled the tabernacle. (35) And Mo-ses was not able to enter into the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of Je-ho-vah filled the tabernacle. (36) And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Is-ra-el went onward, throughout all their journeys: (37) but if the cloud was not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. (38) For the cloud of Je-ho-vah was upon the tabernacle by day, and there was fire therein by night, in the sight of all the house of Is-ra-el, throughout all their journeys.

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EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER FORTY  
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading, propose a brief title or topic for the chapter.
2. Who designated the day for the setting up of the tabernacle? (40:1-2)
3. On what day was it to be set up? (40:2, 17). How long had it been since Israel left Egypt? (12:6-8, 29-33)
4. By what name is the ark called in 40:3?
5. Where was the altar of burnt-offering placed? (40:6, 29)
6. Where was the laver placed? (40:7, 30)
7. What was the anointing to cause the tabernacle to be? (40:9)
8. What was to be done to Aaron and his sons? (40:12-15). Is this the same ritual described in 29:1-37 and Lev. chapter eight?
9. Who set up the tabernacle? (40:18)
10. What did Moses put into the ark? (40:20; Compare Deut. 10:4-5.)
11. On which side of the Tent of meeting was the table placed? (40:22)
12. Who performed the first priestly work of setting bread in order, lighting lamps, and burning incense? (40:22-29)
13. Who washed at the laver? (40:31) What parts of their bodies were washed?
14. What covered the tent of meeting when the tabernacle was finished? (40:34; Compare I Kings 8:10-11.)
15. What is the "glory of Jehovah"? (40:34; 24:17; Num. 16:43; Luke 2:9; Rev. 21:23)
16. Why could not Moses enter the tent of meeting for a time? (40:35)
17. How did the cloud signal for Israel to prepare to move? How did the cloud direct their journeys? (40:36-37; Num. 9:15-23)
18. How did the cloud appear by day and by night? (40:38)
19. Who could see the cloud? When? (40:38)



## EXODUS FORTY: TABERNACLE SET UP! GLORY OF THE LORD!

1. Command to set up the tabernacle; 40:1-15.
  2. Compliance of Moses; 40:17-33.
  3. Cloud of glory! 40:34-38.
- 

## GOD'S INVOLVEMENT IN HIS SANCTUARY (40:1-16, 34)

1. He determines who sets it up. (40:2)
  2. He determines when it is set up. (40:2)
  3. He directs the arrangement of all parts. (40:3-8)
  4. He commands the anointing of all parts. (40:9-11)
  5. He requires the consecration of its priests. (40:12-15)
  6. He covers the tent with glory. (40:34)
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## "AS THE LORD COMMANDED"! (40:16-33)

An overview of obedience! A chronicle of compliance!  
See 40:16, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32 - eight statements of obedience!

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## THE GLORY OF THE LORD! (40:34-38)

- A. At the tabernacle.
  1. Filled God's house; 40:34; II Chron. 7:1; Ezek. 43:5.
  2. Kept men at a distance; 40:35; II Chron. 7:2.
  3. Directed God's people; 40:36-37.
  4. Was visible to all! 40:38.
- B. At other places and times.
  1. Indicated God's presence when the law was given; Ex. 24:16-17.
  2. Indicated God's presence in anger; Num. 16:19, 42; 14:10; 20:6; Ex. 16:7, 10.
  3. Indicated God's presence in blessing; Lev. 9:23, 6.

4. Revealed to Moses; Ex. 33:18, 22.
5. Revealed to Ezekiel; Ezek. 1:28; 3:23; 9:3; 43:4-5.
6. Shone the night Christ was born; Luke 2:9.
7. The glory of the Lord is upon his people; Isaiah 60:1-2.
8. Christians behold it as in a mirror; II Cor. 3:18.
9. Will lighten the New Jerusalem. Rev. 21:23.

“Let the glory of Jehovah endure for ever!” (Ps. 104:31)

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### EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER FORTY

#### 1. *What is in Exodus 40?*

The chapter deals with the setting up of the tabernacle. It tells God's commands about how it was to be set up (40:1-15), and tells of Moses' compliance (40:16-33). The chapter closes excitingly with information about the cloud of God's glory filling the tabernacle and leading Israel through their journeys.

Note that eight times in the chapter the statement is made that Moses did just as the Lord commanded him.

The chapter is composed in accordance with the technique frequently used in various Biblical sections, and in general with the literary tradition of the Ancient East: one paragraph tells of the divine command, and the next records its implementation. (See Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 478.) Skeptical critics accuse it of being made of three parallel literary layers (40:1-17, 18-33, 34-38), each written separately, and all being additions to “P.” (See Martin Noth, *op. cit.*, pp. 282-283.)

#### 2. *When was the tabernacle to be set up? By whom? (40:1-2, 17)*

It was to be set up by Moses on the first day of the first month of the second year after their departure from Egypt. It had been eleven and a half months since they left Egypt, nine months since they arrived at Mt. Sinai, and less than

six months since Moses came down from Sinai after his second forty-day stay. Compare 12:2, 6.

3. *What was to "screen" (or cover) the ark?* (40:3, 21)

The VEIL was to "screen" the ark. The other "screen" at the entrance of the Holy Place is referred to in 40:5. Although the Hebrew verb translated "screen" (*sakak*) may mean "cover," it does not here indicate that the veil lay over the ark like a cover. The mercy-seat did that. But the veil did screen the ark from view from the Holy Place.

4. *What did Moses set on the table?* (40:4, 23)

He set the showbread in order upon it. Compare 25:30. It surely appears that the instructions about the showbread in Lev. 24:5-9 are here presupposed, and must have been issued before the tabernacle was set up.

Exodus 40:4 reads literally, "And thou shalt arrange its arrangement" (referring to the showbread).

5. *Where were the altar of burnt-offering and the laver located?* (40:6-7)

The altar was in the court, in front of the entrance to the tent of meeting (the Holy Place). The laver was between the altar and the tent of meeting. Note that the laver had water in it; but there is no indication that water was in its base. Compare 30:17-18. The translation "water therein" appears to be a little too definite; the Hebrew just says "You shall put water there." Note the separate anointing of the laver and its base (40:11).

6. *What effect was the anointing to have on the tabernacle and its furniture?* (40:9-10)

It was to make it "holy." The "it" in 40:9 refers to the tabernacle and all its equipment. On anointing, see 30:26-28.

Exodus 40:10 says that the altar of burnt-offering would be "MOST holy" after its anointing. Because all of the tabernacle equipment is said to be "most holy" in 30:29, we suppose that in 40:9-10 "holy" and "most holy" are parallel terms and not distinctions.

7. *Does 40:12-15 refer to the consecration ritual of the priests?*

Although both this passage and the passages about the priests' consecration mention washing, robing, and anointing the priests, it still does not seem that 40:12-15 refers to the consecration ritual described in detail in Ex. 29 and Lev. 8. There is no allusion in Ex. 40 to the elaborate program of sacrifices described in the other passages, nor to the application of the blood, nor to the seven-day stay at the tabernacle. Also it seems that Nadab and Abihu died during the consecration ritual (Lev. 10). There is no hint of such an event in Ex. 40. The consecration of 40:12-15 must have been preparatory and preliminary to the full ritual.

Concerning the "everlasting priesthood" (literally, "priesthood of eternity"), see 29:9 and Numbers 25:13.

8. *How fully did Moses carry out the instructions about setting up the tabernacle? (40:16-17)*

He obeyed in all points. The order in which his acts of obedience are listed (in 40:17-33) corresponds to that of the directions, in accordance with usual ancient literary practice. (Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 481)

9. *What did Moses place in the ark? (40:20)*

He placed the "testimony" in the ark, the tablets of the ten commandments. This verse seems to indicate that the pot of manna (16:33) and Aaron's budded rod (Num. 17:10) were not actually inside the ark, but were kept beside it. Compare Heb. 9:4. In the time of Solomon nothing was in the ark except the ten commandments (I Kings 8:9).

10. *What did Moses do with the lamps? (40:25)*

He "lighted" the lamps before Jehovah. Some translations (A.S.V. margin) have rendered this to mean "he set up" the lamps. But the verb used here refers to *lighting* the lamps in Num. 8:3 and Lev. 24:2, and probably means that here.

Needless to say, the lighting was not done the instant the lampstand was set in place, but after the erection and anointing of the tabernacle.

11. *What sacrifices did Moses offer?* (40:29)

He offered the burnt-offering and the meal-offering. Compare 20:24; 29:39-41. Moses himself performed the first priestly ceremonies in the tabernacle. After that the priests (the family of Aaron) and the Levites performed these functions. Observe that Moses offered incense (40:27), another priestly function.

12. *Who washed at the laver?* (40:30-32)

Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's sons. Compare 30:19-21. The detail of *Moses'* washing is not given in 30:19.

13. *What command and what promise were fulfilled when Moses finished the work?* (40:33)

The words of Ex. 25:8 were fulfilled: "Let them *make* a sanctuary, that I may *dwell among them*."

See notes on 39:32 concerning the expression "finished." See the outline on the Glory of the Lord near the start of the notes on this chapter.

14. *What covered the tent of meeting and the tabernacle?* (40:34)

The cloud of the glory of the Lord covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

This verse is quite poetic in wording (in Hebrew), and the two clauses show parallelism. (The second line repeats the thought of the first in slightly different words.)

The presence of the cloud was a fulfillment of the promise in 29:43, 45. God showed His approval of the Tent by descending in a cloud of glory. God's approval was based on what the tabernacle showed about the hearts of the people and about Himself, rather than on the material magnificence of the building.

God's glory had previously descended on Mt. Sinai (24:15-16). In a similar way the glory came upon the tabernacle. As Mt. Sinai had been a holy place where Israel met God, the tabernacle was to be a portable holy place (a portable Mt. Sinai!) where they would meet with God wherever they might be.

15. *Why could not Moses enter the tabernacle?* (40:35)

## LATER HISTORY OF THE TABERNACLE

1. It was probably set up at Gilgal after Israel crossed the Jordan into the promised land. (Josh. 4:19; 5:10; 9:6; 10:6, 43).
2. It was erected at Shiloh in the center of the land, and remained there through the period of judges. (Joshua 18:1; 19:51; I Samuel 1:3; 4:3, 12).

While at Shiloh, it was altered so as to have "doors" (I Sam. 3:15); and it came to be called the "temple." (I Sam. 1:9; 3:3).

3. The ark was captured by the Philistines (I Sam. 4:10-11), but was returned to Israel to Kiriath-Jearim west of Jerusalem. (I Sam. 7:1).

Shiloh seems to have been destroyed about 1050 B.C., possibly in the time of Samuel and Eli. (Jer. 7:12-14)

4. After the time of Eli it was removed to Nob (probably just north of Jerusalem). (I Sam. 21:1-9) The ark remained at Kiriath-Jearim till the time of David. (I Sam. 7:1-2; I Chron. 13:5-6)
5. By the time of David (about 1000 B.C.) the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, and the altar of burnt-offering had been moved to Gibeon, located five miles northwest of Jerusalem. (I Chron. 21:29; 16:39-40; II Chron. 1:3; I Kings 3:4; 9:2)
6. David brought the ark to Jerusalem, where he had prepared a new tent for it. (II Sam. 6:17; I Chron. 16:1)
7. Solomon built the temple, and replaced every part of the tabernacle except the ark of the covenant, which he placed in the Oracle (Holy of Holies) of the temple. (I Kings 8:4, 6)
8. Solomon's temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. After this we hear no more of the ark of the covenant. It was not replaced in the second temple by Zerubbabel (516 B.C.) II Maccabees 2:4-8 has a fanciful tale about how the prophet Jeremiah hid the ark of the covenant and the altar of incense in a cavern on Mt. Sinai.

Because the glory cloud filled it for a time. Compare I Kings 8:10-11. In a somewhat similar fashion, Moses did not immediately enter the cloud on Mt. Sinai (24:16-18).

16. *What guided the Israelites in their journeys?* (40:36-37)

The cloud. See Numbers 9:15-23; 10:11. The lifting up of the cloud was a signal for Israel to pack for moving. The people followed the cloud as it moved slowly in the direction God desired. When the cloud descended, they camped again.

"Let the fiery, cloudy pillar,  
Lead me all my journey through."  
(From "Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah")

The statement about the leading of the cloud presupposes that at least this part of Exodus was written late in their wilderness journeyings.

The verb form "went onward" (or "moved") indicates frequentative, repeated movements.

17. *How constant was the presence of the cloud?* (40:38)

It was always there, as a cloud by day and a fire by night. It was visible to all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys. God never forsook them.

Exodus 40:38 ends with the same words as 40:36. The words reverberate like a final echo of what was narrated previously in 13:21-22.

The book of Exodus ends with a confident look ahead toward Israel's journey to Canaan. This confidence belongs to the people of God in every age.

The book of Exodus ends with the house of God full of glory! May the house of God always be filled with the glory of God. "Jehovah will create over the whole habitation of mount Zion, and over all her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory *shall be spread* for a covering." (Isaiah 4:5)

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