

A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF EXODUS

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EXODUS

AN INTRODUCTION

CONSIDER THE GREATNESS OF EXODUS.

Nearly all the foundations on which Jewish life is built - the Ten Commandments, the historic festivals, the leading principles of civil law - are contained in the book of Exodus.

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 (1 Cor 10:11). The bondage in Egypt represents 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” which illustrates our “baptism unto Christ” (1 Cor 10:2; Gal 3:27). Israel’s failures in the 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 chapters 25-40, was a “figure for the time present” (Heb 9:9). It was the “shadow” of the church.

The greatness of Exodus radiates benefits and life-changing truth to ALL humanity. 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).

TWO MAJOR THEMES: REDEMPTION AND NATIONHOOD.

A. Redemption: Best stated in the book of Exodus itself. Exodus 6: 6,7 - *“Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: ⁷And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. Exodus 15:13 - Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.*

1. Psalm 111: 9 - *He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name.*
2. Outline of Redemption in Exodus:
 - a. Need for redemption (chap 1-6).

- b. Might of the Redeemer (chap 7-11).
 - c. Method of redemption (chap 12-18).
 - d. Duties of the redeemed (chap 19-24).
 - e. Provisions for the redeemed (chap 25-40).
- B. Nationhood. "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:
 - 1. Population;
 - 2. Liberation;
 - 3. Legislation;
 - 4. Organization.

All these stages will be observed in this study of Exodus.

The NAMES of the book of Exodus:

- A. In the Hebrew it is called *Shemoth*, meaning *names*. This is taken from the opening words of the book, *We'elleh shemoth*, which means "These are the names."
- B. In the Greek Bible (Septuagint) it is called *Exodus*, 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 . . ." The name applies more accurately to the first half of the book than the last half.
- C. 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.

BASIC OUTLINE.

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

WHO WROTE EXODUS?

It is generally accepted that Moses was the author of Exodus, along with the other four books of the Pentateuch. Consider the following:

A. Testimony in the book itself.

1. Exodus 17:8-16 - the story of the attack by Amalek is said to have been written by Moses. Exodus 17:14 - *And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.*
2. Exodus 24:4 - *And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.*
3. Exodus 34:27 - *And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.*

B. Testimony in other parts of the Old Testament.

1. Joshua 8:31 - *As Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lift up any iron: and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings.*
2. Judges 3:4 - *And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.*
3. 2 Chronicles 35:6 - *So kill the passover, and sanctify yourselves, and prepare your brethren, that they may do according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.*
4. Nehemiah 10:29 - *They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses (Heb. - by the hand of) the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes.*

C. Testimony of the New Testament.

1. Mark 7:10 - *For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death.*

2. Mark 12:26 - *And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?*
3. John 5:46,47 - *For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. ⁴⁷But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?*
4. John 1:17 - *For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*

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) eight verses of the Pentateuch." The Talmud was put into writing in the second and third centuries after Christ.
2. Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1,8. (Of our books) "five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origins of mankind till his death." (Josephus wrote about 80 A.D.)
3. 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 men of ancient times (or modern!) possessed this combination of qualities needed by any author of a book like Exodus?

THE DATE OF THE EXODUS.

- A. The exodus from Egypt occurred 480 years before the start of Solomon's temple, in the fourth year of king Solomon. 1 Kings 6:1 - *And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.*

The accepted date of the reign of Solomon is 970-931 B.C. Adding 480 years to this gives us a date of 1446 B.C.

- B. Queen Hatshepsut (1501-1448 B.C.) 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 have been a youthful “daughter of Pharaoh,” not yet queen.
- C. Thutmose III (1502-1448 B.C.) fits well as the Pharaoh of the oppression.
1. He came to power very near the time when Moses fled to Midian (about 486 B.C.). He was both step-son and son-in-law of Hatshepsut, and a bitter rival to her during the latter part of her reign. He made 17 military campaigns into Canaan and Syria.
 2. His personality (militaristic and bragging) fits well as the “pharaoh of the oppression.”
 3. A model and a painting of slaves making bricks comes from the time of his reign.
 4. He died shortly (one or two years) before Moses returned to Egypt from Midian. Exodus 2:23 - *And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died.* Exodus 4:19 - *And the LORD said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life.*
- D. Amenhotep II (1449-1422 B.C.) fits well as the Pharaoh at the time of the exodus.
1. The dates agree. Amenhotep II seems to have been unable to carry out any invasions or extensive military operations after his fifth year. Perhaps this was caused by the Red Sea disaster.
 2. His personality fits well. He was strong, athletic and insufferably boastful.
 3. He was succeeded by a non-firstborn son, Thutmose IV. All the firstborn of Egypt died at the passover time.
 4. The chief problem with adopting Amenhotep II as pharaoh of the exodus is that other scriptures seem to indicate that the Pharaoh perished in the sea. Exodus 14:28 - *And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.* Psalm 136:15 - *But*

overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy endureth for ever.

5. It is possible that the verses above refer to Pharaoh's overthrow and destruction in a representative way when his army was destroyed in the sea, as viewed from the west shore.

CREDITS.

All these notes were prepared over a period of 4 to 5 years while teaching a Wednesday night Bible class. While the list below may not be 100% complete, it is a compilation of the sources that I drew upon heavily while preparing the notes.

Exploring Exodus by Wilbur Fields, College Press, Joplin, Missouri.

Outlined Commentary on the Exodus by Bob Winton, Gallipolis, Ohio.

Holy Bible, KJV, Logos Bible Software.

ClickArt, Christian Graphics, Broderbund Software, Inc.

CHAPTER ONE

1. *Now these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt; every man and his household came with Jacob.*
 - a. In Hebrew, the first words are literally “And these . . .” which indicates a very close connection to Genesis. Genesis and Exodus are one single narrative by a single author.
 - b. Jacob was 130 years old when he came into Egypt. He left his home of many years but viewed his life as a pilgrimage, and this world as a temporary residence. Hebrews 11:9,10 - ⁹*By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: ¹⁰For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*
- 2-5. *Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, ³Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, ⁴Dan, and Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. ⁵And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: for Joseph was in Egypt already.*
 - a. Does Exodus 1:5 conflict with Acts 7:14? NO. Stephen quoted from the Greek Old Testament which reads 75 souls in Exodus 1:5. This is consistent with Septuagint rendering of Genesis 46:27 which is different from the Hebrew 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.”
 - b. Evidently, the Septuagint counted as “sons” of Joseph some of his grandsons or other descendants who are named in 1 Chronicles 7:14, 20-21. It is not known when this variant reading was first introduced but it does not discredit the reliability of the common Hebrew text.
6. *And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation.*
 - a. The deaths of Joseph and his generation are mentioned mainly to reveal the passage of considerable time. Joseph was 30 years old when he stood before Pharaoh the first time (Gen 41:46) and 110 at his death (Gen 50:22).
 - b. We are reminded by this verse that God notices the deaths of all His children. If He notes the fall of a sparrow (Mt 10:29), He will notice our death.

- c. A whole family died, an entire generation! It is appointed unto all men once to die (Heb 9:27).
- 7. *And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.*
 - a. The population increased tremendously. From a family of 70 men at the time Jacob came to Egypt, it multiplied until the men over 20 numbered 603,550 at their departure 430 years later (Ex 12:37).
 - b. This amazing growth fulfilled God's promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that he would make them become a "great nation" (Gen 12:12, 15:5, 26:4, 28:14, 35:11).
 - c. The increase in population in Egypt was a matter of praise to God in later centuries (Psa 105:12,23,24). Children and large families are considered a blessing and not a curse.
 - d. There is a progression of ideas in the four verbs expressing Israel's multiplication: They (1) "were fruitful," (2) "increased abundantly," (3) "multiplied," and (4) "waxed exceeding mighty."
 - e. The land in which Israel dwelt was the land of Goshen, 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 (9:26).
- 8. *Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.*
 - a. What happened in the government to bring about great changes? 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.
 - b. Possibly, this verse means there arose a new king *against* Egypt.
- 9. *And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we:*
 - a. This statement would more likely be true if spoken by a conqueror than by a native Egyptian. It is hard to imagine that the Israelites could outnumber the Egyptians. Israel only had about one-half million men 80 years later and these were loosely organized and poorly armed.

- b. Note in this expression that the king expresses fears of the Israelites to “his people,” presumably to a limited circle of trusted people.
- 10. *Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.*
 - a. The king knew that Israel was a foreign people in Egypt and a return to their own land was always a possibility, especially since Israel’s homeland of Canaan was near Egypt. The rulers absolutely had to have slave labor available if there was to be food produced and buildings built (1:14).
- 11. *Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.*
 - a. The Bible says the taskmasters job was “to afflict them” which indicates a basic cruelty in the rulers of Egypt. They also hoped that hard slave labor would hold down Israel’s birthrate and weaken their ability and desire to resist. This was an utter failure.
 - b. This bondage served God’s purpose. It began to take the love of Egypt out of the people. Egypt had been home for nearly 400 years. God knew they had to be weaned from Egypt. They were so “Egyptianized” that most had forgotten the religious practices and traditions of their forefathers. The Jewish *Midrash* of Exodus says that the Hebrews had set among themselves, “let us become like the Egyptians.” Even after Moses led Israel out of Egypt, periodically the Israelites wanted to return to Egypt (16:3, 17:3). Egypt had been a comfortable land where food and water were usually abundant.
 - c. Psalm 119:67 - *Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.* It is through affliction that God teaches His people true values.
 - d. The benefits to Israel from Egyptian oppression were not forgotten. Later Israelites preserved the memory of those experiences for reciting about them when they presented their first fruits unto the Lord (Deut 26:6).
 - e. The locations of the cities of Pithom and Raamses are still in dispute. Most scholars locate Pithom at Tell Er-Ratebah in eastern Goshen. Raamses is identified with the city in the northeast delta area also known as Avaris, Tanis or Zoan, while others would locate it on the eastern arm of the Nile delta at modern-day Quantir.
- 12. *But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.*

- a. The RVS says they were “in dread.” The Hebrew word is “very strong.” It means “to have a disgust, to feel horror, of fear.” Psalm 105:25 says that the Egyptians actually came to *hate* God’s people.
13. *And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour:*
- a. The “Egyptians” of 1:13 are probably not the same as the oppressors of 1:8. The oppressors of 1:8 were probably foreign conquerors. 1:13 plainly says the Egyptians oppressed them. These were probably Egyptian princes who overthrew the government about 1570 B.C. and started the powerful 18th dynasty in Egypt, the new kingdom. If so, the Egyptian rulers continued the oppressions upon the Israelites. It appears that chapter 1 deals with a 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.
14. *And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.*
- a. Bondage was extremely severe. 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. Deuteronomy 4:20 describes the Israelites experience as an “iron furnace.” Exodus 5:7,8 indicates that specific quotas of brick had to be made each day, but that at first the materials were all supplied.
 - b. Making bricks involved: carrying water; digging earth; mixing earth, water and straw; filling molds with the mud; removing dried bricks from the mold and transporting bricks by unaided manpower.
 - c. Israel’s bondage is an illustration of the bondage of sin. “The way of transgressors is hard” (Prov 13:15).
- 15,16. *And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah: ¹⁶And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.*
- a. The king sought the help of the midwives because his previous scheme to suppress Israel by slave labor had failed. The midwives were asked to kill male babies whenever they assisted a Hebrew woman in giving birth. Using the midwives concealed the king as a murderer.

- b. It is not known if the midwives were Hebrews or Egyptians. It is hard to imagine that the king would have expected Hebrew women to slay the children of their own people. Nonetheless, the midwives had the names of Semitic character (Heb. - like) and they feared God like good Hebrews. Shiprah means “beauty” and Puah means “splendor.”
 - c. Possibly these women were part of the “mixed multitude” (12:38) that came out of Egypt with the Israelites. We know that immigrants of various Semitic (Shemite) tribes had come into Egypt throughout its history.
 - d. Although only two midwives are named, this would not seem to be enough since there were probably one-half million Hebrew women and the birth rate was quite high. Maybe the two listed were the heads of some form of union and had other women working under them.
 - e. The work of the midwife was partly indicated in 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. The “birth-stool” of 1:16 literally means “two stones.”
 - f. Pharaoh wanted only the male babies killed. Why? Because the women did (and still do!) much of the hard labor, labor in fields and homes, spinning, needle work and cooking. Also, girls would be saved for future harems for the Egyptians were steeped in immorality (Gen 12:11,12). Also the boys might possibly become soldiers against Egypt.
17. *But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.*
- a. The midwives feared God more than Pharaoh. Proverbs 16:6 - *By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.* The expression “feared God” is used several times in connection with the feelings and actions of non-Hebrew. Some knowledge of God has pervaded the entire human race since creation (Gen 14:18,20:11)
 - b. The opposite behavior is to “fear not God” (Deut 25:18).
 - c. When civil authorities make laws contrary to God’s law, we must obey God. Acts 5:29 - *Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.* Daniel 3:16-18 - ¹⁶*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. ¹⁷If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. ¹⁸But if not, be it known*

unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

- d. Were the midwives justified in lying to Pharaoh, and did God reward them for doing so? Probably not. We have to conclude God would have saved the babies without their lying, just as he saved Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who boldly stated the truth about their intentions. The reward the midwives received (see vs. 21) was for sparing the male children rather than for lying. Never forget that the Bible accurately records many words and deeds that it does not necessarily approve of. Great Bible heroes like Abraham, David, Moses and 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. If not, we would all be doomed.

18-21. ¹⁸*And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive? ¹⁹And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them. ²⁰Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty. ²¹And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses.*

- a. Pharaoh was very upset because his plan had failed.
 - b. We do not know if the Hebrew women were delivering their babies very quickly or if this was just an excuse. We do not know that quick, easy delivery was a common physical ability of Hebrew women. Certainly Rachel had a hard delivery (Gen 35:16-18).
 - c. The reward to the midwives was that God made for them houses (households). Apparently 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 have to consider the high value God places upon saving children's lives and having households as related in this chapter.
22. *And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.*
- a. The fact that Pharaoh could enlist the cooperation of his people in the deed of throwing all baby boys into the river shows that many of the Egyptians were as evil as their king.

- b. 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 10 plagues, they should recall this incident to slaughter. For those who might say it was a different Pharaoh, remember that the same merciless disposition existed in both Pharaohs.

Bondage in Egypt / Bondage in Sin

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

CHAPTER TWO

- 1,2. *¹And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. ²And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months.*

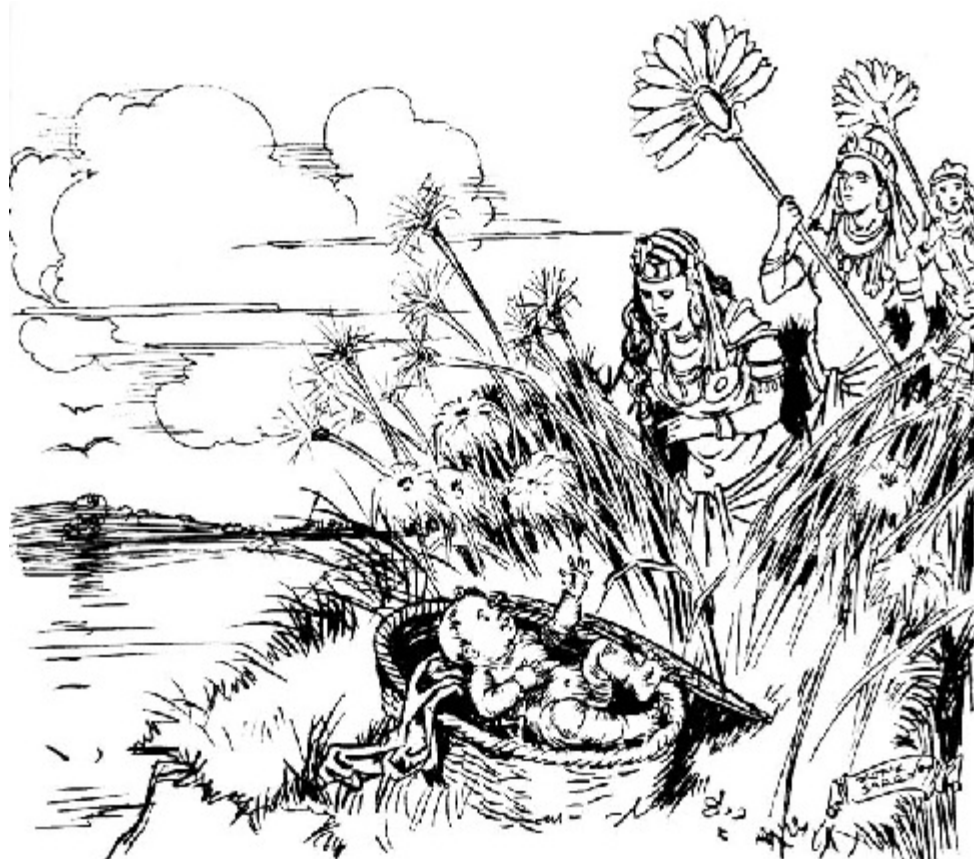
- a. Moses' father was named Amram, a man of the house (or tribe) of Levi. He was a grandson or later descendent of Levi. It appears from 2:1 that Amram went out and took a wife of his own choosing, a somewhat unusual act in a time when fathers usually arranged marriages for children.
- b. Moses' mother was named Jochebed, the daughter of Levi (possibly a first generation descendent of Levi and maybe his only daughter). She was born to Levi in Egypt (Num 26:59). She would have been Amram's aunt, but was not necessarily older than he.
- c. Moses was not the first-born in his family. He had a brother, Aaron, three years older than he (7:7). Also, he had a sister, Miriam (Mary), several years older yet. Some have said that since Miriam is called the "sister of Aaron" in 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.
- d. Moses' appearance was very handsome. The Hebrew bible says he was a "goodly" (*tov*) child. Acts 7:20 says he was "exceeding fair."
- e. Baby Moses was hidden because of the king's commandment to slay all baby boys. His parents (both of them) were not afraid of the king's commandment and hid him for three months.

- 3,4. *³And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. ⁴And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.*

- a. There are many reasons they could not continue to hide the baby. Any parents of a normal, strong-lunged three month old baby knows why one would be hard to hide. Also, the clothesline would betray you. The Jewish Midrash 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.
- b. Hebrews 11:23 - *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not*

afraid of the king's commandment. Since "faith cometh by hearing," possibly God had given some revelation to the parents about the future of the child and what they should do. Josephus says that Amram foretold how Moses would deliver Israel while Jochebed was still expecting. Such traditions are unverifiable. The faith of Moses' parents may have simply been based on their knowledge of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their seed. Obviously, their faith was strong enough that they dared to risk their safety.

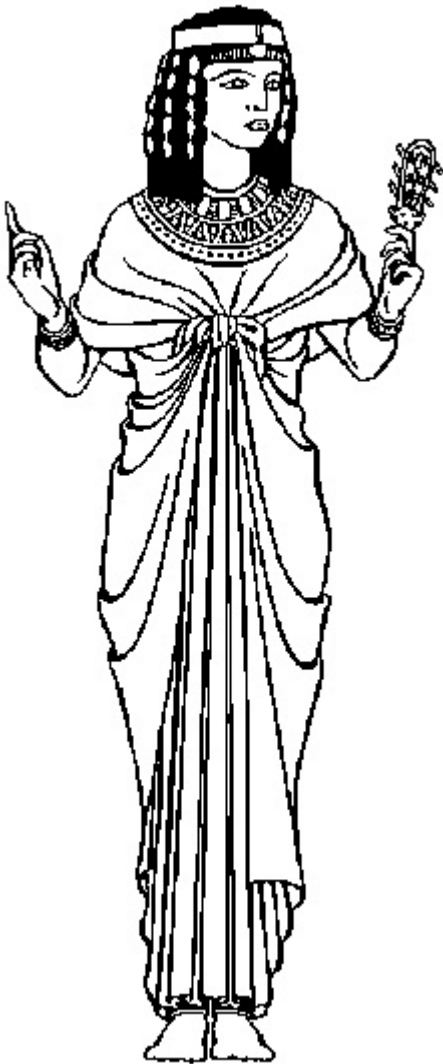
- c. There are no words to describe the importance of baby Moses. Through this child, God was preparing the emancipation of Israel at the very time when Pharaoh was planning their extermination. This child would become the greatest person of history prior to Jesus.
- d. His mother took an ark of bulrushes, a basket or chest made of papyrus, however, scripture does not say that she made it. The Hebrew word for ark (*tebah*) is used in scripture only in reference to Moses' basket and Noah's ark. Perhaps it is significance since both were means of deliverance. Moses' mother coated the ark with slime (bitumen or asphalt) and pitch (tar), making it water-tight. All these acts seem deliberately and calmly done. Surely Moses' mother knew what time and place that Pha-



araoh's daughter came to bathe at the river. Placing the sister (Miriam) at a distance from the basket to observe suggest that they expected someone to come.

e. Jochebed went home, leaving her child in the care of Miriam and of God.

5,6. *⁵And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. ⁶And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children.*



a. Pharaoh's daughter came to wash at the river but this was probably a religious ceremonial washing of some sort. The Nile river was the life stream of Egypt. The ancient Egyptians regarded the river as worthy of divine honors. They even wrote hymns to it. They felt that its waters imparted fruitfulness and long life. Note that even Pharaoh made frequent trips out to the water (7:17; 8:20).

b. Pharaoh's daughter had compassion on the child. Three major reasons are suggested: (1) natural female tenderness; (2) religious teaching among the Egyptians which required tenderness toward the suckling infant; and (3) the providential control of God.

7-9. *⁷Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? ⁸And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. ⁹And Pharaoh'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.*

a. The infant was given every possible care. He received all physical care and we can be completely sure that the baby was given spiritual care, hearing words and songs about God and His people, Israel. As far as we

know, that was the only training that Moses could have received about God, as at a young age he was taken to live with Pharaoh's daughter as her son. But the earliest impressions on a child often stick with them all through their life. This certainly proved true in the case of Moses.

- b. A wise teacher was asked, "When should a child's education begin?" He replied, "In the life of his great grandmother" (2 Tim 1:5).
 - c. The faith of Moses' mother was rewarded. First she cared for him at great peril; now under the protection of Pharaoh's daughter. First at her own expense; now with royal wages.
 - d. Who would have the most affect . . . the emancipated woman or loving mother? Who had a more lasting, powerful influence on the world, the Egyptian queen or Moses' mother?
10. *And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water.*
- a. The age at which Moses was turned over to Pharaoh's daughter is unknown, possibly 3-5 years. He was trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22). This would include languages, such as Egyptian hieroglyphic, Babylonian cuneiform and possibly the early Semitic alphabetic writing such as was then in use in the Sinaitic peninsula at Serabit El Khadim. 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 tells of Moses leading a victorious war against the Ethiopians and consummating marriage with an Ethiopian princess. She could have been the Cushite woman of Numbers 12:1. We do not know for certain.
 - b. Pharaoh's daughter gave Moses 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. In Hebrew Moses' name is *moshe* derived from the verb *masha* meaning "to draw out." His name had significant meanings relating to his life in both Egyptian and Hebrew languages.
- 11,12. ¹¹*And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. ¹²And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.*

- a. Moses made a decision to stand with his people, the Hebrews. Hebrews 11:24 - *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;* The very fact that he *refused* implies that some offer was made. His decision involved a complete severance from Egypt. He was now 40 years old (Acts 7:22). Whether or not his decision was made public or not, his actions spoke loudly of his decision. Hebrews 11:26 - *Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.* All who follow God will be reproached.
- b. He demonstrated his decision by going "out unto his brethren" and "looked upon their burdens," supposing that his brothers (the Hebrews) would understand that God was by his hand giving them deliverance (Acts 7:22). Up until now, he had not lived among his people and had not shared their burdens.
- c. He was not fearful when he broke the ties with Egypt and with Pharaoh's house (Heb 11:27), but later becomes fearful and flees to Midian (2:14).
- d. The Egyptian Moses slew was probably one of the taskmasters. He was smiting (beating) a Hebrew. The verb *smite* (*nakah*) in 2:11 is the same verb used in 2:12 to tell how Moses "slew" (smote, struck down) the Egyptian. This indicates that the Egyptian was beating the Hebrew to death.

13,14. ¹³*And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? ¹⁴And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known.*

- a. It is sad to note that even though the Hebrews were so preoccupied with Egyptian bondage, they still found time to quarrel among themselves.
- b. It is even sadder that we note that the deed of Moses the day before (the slaying of the Egyptian) was made known by the Israelite whose life he had saved. Gossip travels faster than "a speeding bullet."
- c. Moses did not seek to be a prince or a judge over his brethren. His words expressed no condemnation, he was only trying to resolve the matter. The wrongdoers reply was the condemnation.
- d. The fear shown by Moses simply suggests a very human quality in a very extraordinary man. Moses is not so different from us that we cannot identify with him. This also suggests the truthfulness of the story of

Exodus, a fictionalized narrative might glorify Moses and omit such a human quality.

15. *Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well.*

- a. Pharaoh must have received the news by way of the Israelite “grapevine.”
- b. Midian: area in the southeast of the Sinai peninsula, west of the gulf of Akabah. The Midianites mainly lived east of the gulf, but a few lived on the west side. It is there where Moses fled, traveling probably 250 miles from Egypt. Two verses confirm that he was west of the gulf (Ex 8:1,5).
- c. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham through his wife Keturah (Gen 25:2,4). They were remotely related to the Israelites.
- d. There were three main periods in Moses’ life:
 - (1) In Egypt as a prince;
 - (2) In Midian as a shepherd; and
 - (3) In the wilderness (desert) as the leader of Israel.
- e. Two possible reasons Moses came to the well are:
 - (1) He was weary and thirsty, and/or
 - (2) He hoped to meet someone. Wells were few and far between in this area and were common meeting places in any area. Jacob met Rachel at a well (Gen 29:10 cf 24:11) and Christ met the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well (Jn 4:5ff).

16,17. ¹⁶*Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father’s flock. ¹⁷And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.*

- a. The Midianites knew God by the name *El* (plural *Elohim*), a name which means “mighty one.” This is indicated by the name *Reuel* (2:18) which means “friend of God” or “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 (18:12) although the exact way these sacrifices were made is not known. The conduct of the shepherds towards Jethro’s daughters in 2:17 may indicate that this

person and office were lightly regarded by the idolatrous citizens of the immediate area.

- b. Reuel (Jethro) 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, but no mention is made of his wife. Part of Reuel's family is later referred to the Kenites (Jdgs 4:11, 1:16). The name Kenite in Aramaic means "smith" or "metal worker." 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. Possibly some members of the family were involved in mining as well as in shepherding.
- c. There were other names for Reuel. One was *Raguel*, which is given in the KJV of Numbers 10:29. Although the Hebrew form of that name is identical to that which is spelled R-e-u-e-l in Exodus 2:18. The other was *Jethro* (Heb. - *Yithro*). This alternate name is given in Exodus 3:1 and 18:1. Jethro may mean "his excellence." Exodus 4:18 gives a variant form of the name Jethro, *Jether*. We do not know why Reuel was also called Jethro. Several biblical people had two names. For example, Gideon was also known as Jerubbaal (Jdgs 6:27,32); Bartholomew as Nathanael and Solomon as Jedidiah (2 Sam 12:25); Simon as Peter (Jn 1:42) and Jehoi-achin as Jeconiah (2 Kgs 24:15; Jer 24:1).
- d. Moses was undaunted by his failures in Egypt to reconcile the fighting Hebrews. He still had spunk to stand up against wrongdoing. His impulses led to immediate action. The sisters were surprised at his actions (kind, courteous, drawing water for them). Usually, this was a woman's job. It appears the shepherds had been imposing on the daughters for a long time because when they were not delayed, they got home much sooner than usual. We wonder if Jethro knew of this ongoing problem and, if so, why he had not stopped it.

18-21. ¹⁸*And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, How is it that ye are come so soon to day?* ¹⁹*And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough 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 Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter.*

- a. The daughters called Moses an Egyptian because culturally, he was . . . in dress, in speech and in every outward aspect. Inwardly, he was NOT an Egyptian. It is from the heart that the expressions of life come forth.

- b. Jethro shows hospitality, gratitude and recognition of good personal qualities. He rather scolds the daughters for leaving Moses at the well. Parents should always teach their children hospitality, especially when kindnesses have been extended to them.
 - c. There is significance to the term “eat bread” in verse 20. It usually means more than casual hospitality. In those lands it involves a personal pledge of friendship and protection.
 - d. The expression “content” in verse 21 conveys no idea of satisfaction or concession about it. Moses simply agreed to dwell with the man. Perhaps he felt he had no where else to go. The fact that he could stay 40 years with Jethro suggests that Jethro must have been congenial. Also, Exodus 18:14ff suggests that Jethro was wise.
 - e. Very little is known about Zipporah. Her name meant “bird.” She wasn’t loyal enough to the Abrahamic covenant 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 (18:1,2). Unless she is the Cushite woman of Numbers 12:1, we hear nothing more about her. It appears that Zipporah was never really very sympathetic to Moses.
22. *And she bare him a son, and he called his name Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.*
- a. Gershom means “a stranger there.” Though Moses had safety, a wife and children, this name suggests that he felt a feeling of banishment in Midian. A second son, named Eliezer was born (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.
 - b. Moses’ sojourn in Midian brought about many positive results. One, he learned to trust in his own abilities. Two, he learned patience, at least more than he had before. Three, he learned many details about the land - its trails, its oases, etc. He was later to lead the Israelites through part of the very territory where he had labored as a shepherd. Four, Jethro, as a priest, had a positive influence on him. Some scholars believe that 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).
- 23-25.²³ *And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry*

came up unto God by reason of the bondage. ²⁴And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.

- a. The king whose death is mentioned in verse 23 was probably 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 exodus. Amenhotep II continued the earlier oppression of the Israelites.
- b. God heard: sighing, which is often an expression of grief (Psa 12:5); crying (Ex 3:9; Jas 5:4); and groaning (Ex 6:5). The fact that the Israelites cried unto God showed that they retained some faith in the God of their fathers. When the old oppressing king died, they prayed in hope. The bondage, however, continued for a time.
- c. A covenant has always been the cornerstone of God's dealing 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. God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15 involved promises of Israel's increase in population, its enslavement in a foreign country, its deliverance and the possession of the land of Canaan.
- d. Four actions are ascribed to God in 24 and 25. God heard, remembered, saw and knew. Verse 25, when translated very literally, says "and God looked upon the sons of Israel, and God knew." What more could one ask than that God would see us and know. To *know* means to know meaningful, by experience. It often has the idea of intimacy, of approval and acceptance.

CHAPTER THREE

1. *Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.*
 - a. Moses' new occupation was that of a shepherd (sheep, goats, small cattle). He was in the employ of his father-in-law, Jethro. Literally, he "was keeping" the flock, a continuing occupation. This job was usually considered the work of women or children. What a contrast to his previous lifestyle in Egypt!
 - b. To the Hebrews, the *backside* of anything was the west side. Americans have a different idiom and say "back East." Jethro apparently lived in the southeast part of the Sinai peninsula. Moses drove the sheep westward or north westward through a wilderness to patchy pastures around Horeb.
 - c. The expression "mountain of God" may mean only the great mountain. Tradition reaching back many centuries identifies it as Mount Sinai, or Jebel Musa (meaning mount of Moses) in the southern Sinaitic peninsula. This name would make perfect sense to those who first read Exodus because it was here that God came down and gave the ten commandments and other laws. Josephus says that men had the opinion that God dwelt at that mountain, therefore shepherds had not pastured there before Moses came. It is possible that the mountain was regarded as a holy mountain by the superstitious residents even prior to Moses.
 - d. The name Horeb comes from a verb meaning "to be dry." This is a very good description since it is rugged, mountainous, desert area with much granite. The name refers to Mount Sinai specifically and in general, the entire region thereabout. Horeb is found in numerous other passages (for example Ex 33:6; 17:6; 1 Kgs 8:9; 19:8).
2. *And the angel of the LORD 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.*
 - a. The angel of the LORD appeared to Moses. The word angel means messenger. Some contend that the messenger was God (Ref. 3:4,6). Since an angel is a messenger, he speaks with and by the authority of God.
 - b. Was the bush really burning? Absolutely! Verse 2 says "bush burned with fire but was not consumed." This point is made to refute some modern

commentators who seek to do away with the miracle of the burning bush. Some suggest it had brilliant flowers that looked like flame or sunlight was falling on it so as to produce a flame-like effect. Even more radical is the idea that the vision was only an inner experience in the mind of Moses and that one standing next to him would have seen nothing unusual.

- 3,4. *³And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. ⁴And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.*



- a. God called his name twice "Moses, Moses, . . ." in the manner He called Abraham (Gen 22:11).
 - b. In verse 4 note the interchange of divine names. 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.
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.*
- a. The taking off of the shoes 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).
6. *Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.*
- a. God describes himself to Moses as the God of his father, of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. This implies Moses had some knowledge of the patriarchal history in Genesis. The word father (singular) may refer to Moses' father Amram, about whom we know almost nothing. It may be a collective use of the term and refer to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses

receives communication from no new or unknown God, just a fuller revelation from Him whom His people have known before.

- b. Christ presented this passage as a proof of the resurrection of the dead to the Sadducees (Mt 22:32; Mk 12:6; Lk 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 500 years but he 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.

7,8. *⁷And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; ⁸And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, 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 Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.*

- a. People are always fearful to look on God and see His holiness and glory (Isa 6:1,5; Jdgs 13:22; Lk 5:8; 1 Kgs 19:13).
- b. God tells Moses why He has come down. It is to deliver Israel because He had seen their affliction and heard their crying and knew their sorrow. Also the time of which God had foretold to Abraham was nearly fulfilled. Genesis 15:13 - *And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; God keeps His promises and keeps His schedule.*
- c. God promises that His people will be brought to a large land. This is indicated by the number of tribes which they inhabited the country. “Flowing with milk and honey” means it was a land of pastures for flocks giving milk and a land of flowers from which bees could make honey. This description is repeated many times in other places.
- d. Sinuhe, an Egyptian fugitive who fled into the land of Canaan about 1960 B.C. described the land in a way similar to that 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.”
- e. Six “nations” are named that God will displace from Canaan. This is the first reference to them since God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:18-21. They will be frequently named after this point. According to Deuter-

onomy 7:1, each of these nations is said to be “greater and mightier than thou.” Genesis 10:15-19 reveals that these tribes were descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham. While they were distantly related by blood, these nations were not united. 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. These cities ruled as much territory as they could control. The Egyptians had general control over all of Palestine at this time, but when the Egyptian troops were absent, the Canaanites were not very loyal subjects.

- f. 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 (Num 25:1,2).
- g. The tribes :
 - (1) The Canaanites (the separate tribe) settled into the land about 1900 B.C. They gave their name to the whole land which included Phoenicia and the Mediterranean coastal area of Syria. Their areas included Jericho, Tyre, Sidon and Byblos (in Phoenicia).
 - (2) The Hittites were immigrant peoples from the Old Hittite empire (1800-1450 B.C.) in Asia Minor to the North (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. 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 (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 (Jdgs 1:21; 2 Sam 5:6; Josh 15:63).

9,10. ⁹*Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.* ¹⁰*Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.*

- a. Could Moses have disobeyed God's call to deliver Israel? He certainly could have! See Exodus 3:10, but, like Paul, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision (Acts 26:19).

11,12. ¹¹*And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?* ¹²*And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.*

- a. Moses appears to be hesitant to do God's will. Why would he say, "Who am I?" Undoubtedly, any human would have been frightened by such a commission. This seems very likely in light of Numbers 12:3 that says Moses was meek above all men on earth. Whatever the reason for Moses to hesitate, the scripture does not criticize him at this point.
- b. In all Moses gives five excuses to God for not liberating Israel.
 - (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).
- c. God reassured Moses by saying, "Certainly I will be with thee." Years later, Moses gave the same reassurance to Israel and to his successor, Joshua (Deut 31:8, 23).
- d. 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.
- e. The token or sign of God's assurance that He had sent Moses was that Israel and Moses would serve God upon the very mountain upon which Moses stood after God had brought them forth from Egypt. Moses was being called from the burning bush before Mount Horeb; he would return

to Horeb with Israel. This token required faith to accept. Some might feel it took more faith to believe the promise of the sign than it would take to attempt to lead Israel out. But the sign itself was such a daring and confident assertion that it would inspire confidence and courage.

- f. This token to Moses brings to mind 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.

13,14. ¹³*And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, 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? ¹⁴And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.*

- a. There are probably several reasons that the Israelites would ask Moses about God's name. Most 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. They received only the old name with new power and events associated with its meaning.
- b. It is not surprising that Israel wanted to know God's name. Can you conceive of *knowing* someone without knowing the name of that person? Manoah wanted to know God's name so that he could render honor (Jdgs 13:17). Jacob wanted to know the angel's name in Genesis 32:29.
- c. What is God's name? His name is I AM THAT I AM. This is probably better translated "I will be who (or what) I will be," since the verbs express future or continuing action. The Greek Old Testament translated it, "I am the being one" (*Ego eimi ho on*). Famous archaeologist William F. Albright rendered the name "I am he who causes (things) to be." 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. The name LORD (Jehovah or Yahweh) in 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 (cf Rev 1:4, 8; Isa 57:15). The possible implications in this name are as infinite as God Himself.

- d. In the same way that God the Father is the eternal I Am, Jesus is also called "I Am" (Jn 8:58). Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb 13:8).
 - e. Interestingly, the Jewish historian Josephus would not tell his Roman readers God's name as God told it to Moses. Modern Jews still will not utter aloud the name Yahweh. 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. Exodus 4:1 says that the Israelites would utter the name. Nowhere does the Old Testament hint that the name dare not be spoken by our lips. Of course, it should be used reverently or not at all.
15. *And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.*
- a. God's name Yahweh is His memorial. "Sing praises unto Jehovah, oh ye saints of his and give thanks until his holy memorial name" (Psa 30:4 ASV - see also Psa 97:12; 100:12, 135:13; Hos 12:5). By that name His person, nature and works are to be recalled. Allen 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.
 - b. Surely if God's name Yahweh is to be remembered throughout all generations, the Jews may have perverted this truth in refusing to utter it.
- 16,17. ¹⁶*Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt: ¹⁷And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.*
- a. Moses was told to gather and speak to the elders of Israel. The Israelites had very little formal governmental organization. The older men ruled in each location and family to the extent that their personalities and situations made possible.
 - b. The word *visit* is often used in the Bible of some particular saving act of God toward His people (see Lk 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

visiting them surely point to a fulfillment of Joseph's words, even though Joseph had been dead over 350 years.

18. *And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.*

- a. Would Israel believe the words of Moses? Yes. Exodus 4:39-41 reports that Moses and Aaron did gather the elders and spoke to them and they did believe, at least at first.
- b. God had said that Moses along with the elders should go speak to Pharaoh. As it turns out, only Moses and Aaron went (5:1,3).
- c. The words "God hath met with us" would imply to Pharaoh an almost hostile confrontation. "Our God has confronted us, and said to worship him, or else . . .!" Exodus 5:3 tends to confirm this idea.
- d. They were told they would travel a three day journey, though a place is not specified. 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 by 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 entered Egypt by invitation and surely could leave upon request.

19,20. ¹⁹*And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.* ²⁰*And I will stretch out 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.*

- a. God predicted that 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.
- b. God said that He would stretch out His hand. 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 chapters 7-13; “by strength of hand, Jehovah brought you out from this place” (Ex 13:3).

21,22. ²¹*And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty:* ²²*But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, 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 spoil the Egyptians.*

- a. 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 their many years of slave labor. However, the scripture does not suggest this as a justification of the act.
- b. Note that some Egyptian women lived in the same houses as the Hebrews. Apparently, not all Egyptians shared the hateful attitudes of their king.
- c. “Borrow” simply means to “ask.” No hint of returning the items is implied. Upon first reading, it would seem that God might be unfair towards some Egyptians, i.e., those living in the houses of the Israelites. We must consider the point made in verse 21 where God said that He would give the Israelite people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Several points must be pondered:
 - (1) God in stretching forth His hand did battle with and vanquished the Egyptian people.
 - (2) To the victor belong the spoils.
 - (3) Quite possibly, those mentioned as living in the houses of the Hebrews were not necessarily friendly but rather task masters assigned to watch over Israelite activities.
 - (4) Many Egyptians went out of the land with the Israelites during the exodus. These were Egyptians who were friendly toward Israel.
 - (5) In Genesis 12:3 God promised Abram that He would bless all who blessed Abram, and curse those who cursed him.
 - (6) God’s statement that Egypt would show favor to Israel would be as a result of the ten plagues making the Egyptian people willing to give Israel anything at all to get them to leave, including jewels, gold and raiment.

- (7) Since Israel lived in Egypt, all Egyptians could be considered neighbors.
- d. It is ironic to note that the Israelites were to place these jewels upon their sons and daughters. While the Egyptians were burying their dead firstborn, 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). Sadly, some of it went into the making of the golden calf (32:2).

CHAPTER FOUR

1. *And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.*
 - a. Moses felt sure that Israel would not believe him. Why should they believe a long-absent, sheep-herding, fugitive who had already failed in one attempt to convince them that he could deliver them. And, after all, it had been 430 years since God had spoken directly to any Israelite. Therefore, they were not accustomed to any communication from God (in scripture).
 - b. It is easy to think that because of Moses' excuse he lacked faith, but God had said that Israel would harken (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.
- 2-5. ²*And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine 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 Moses fled from before it.* ⁴*And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand:* ⁵*That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.*
 - a. The rod of Moses was 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. (Ex 4:17 - *And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.*)
 - b. There was special significance in the rod-to-serpent miracle. A carving of the serpent (cobra or uraeus) was placed upon the front of the crown by many Pharaohs. It was the 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. Moses used this sign by showing it to the elders of Egypt (4:30) and before Pharaoh during his second confrontation with him (7:10).

- c. The name of the Lord (Jehovah, Yahweh), the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, was to be made vivid by the miracle of the rod. Note the continued emphasis on God's name, and upon God's association with their forefathers (2:24; 3:15-16; 4:5; 6:2; etc.).

6,7. ⁶*And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow. ⁷And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh.*

- a. The significance in the sign of the leprous hand 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 Leviticus 13:45 - *And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.*
- c. Some examples of leprosy are Miriam (Num 12:10); Elisha's servant, Gehazi (2 Kgs 5:27); and that example in Leviticus 13:3 which also refer to the whiteness of leprosy. Quite possibly, the leprosy of the Bible was not 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. It is possible that the disease called leprosy in the Bible was actually another disease which caused similar symptoms but resulted in whiteness of the skin.

8,9. 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. ⁹And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also 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 water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land.*

- a. It seems that Moses' miracles were convincing to the Israelites, 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 the people who saw them (Jn 12:37). People whose faith depends on seeing signs often require a steady stream of miracles or they forsake Christ (Jn 6:14,30).

- b. Moses was told to perform a third miracle to make Israel believe. We have no record that Moses did this miracle in Egypt. The first of the 10 plagues consisted of a similar miracle, but on a nationwide scale (Ex 7:20-25).

10-12. ¹⁰*And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. ¹¹And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? ¹²Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.*

- a. Moses' excuse about not being eloquent was a miserable excuse and God did not accept it. His great ability to speak afterwards shows that he really was a capable speaker. The whole book of Deuteronomy consists of eloquent speeches by Moses. His excuse here comes close to blaming God for his imagined difficulty in speech.
- b. 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" 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 on human eloquence and wisdom (1 Cor 1:4,5). Many people thought the speech of the apostle Paul was of no account, but his influence was powerful in spite of this.
- c. It is the Lord who gives people their abilities and talents. 1 Corinthians 4:7 - *For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? . . . Nothing!* We must never low-rate the abilities God has given us (and therefore hesitate to use them), or overrate them (and become conceited).
- d. God provided Moses, his spokesman, "what you shall say." This involved general knowledge and ideas, but frequently specific words. To Jeremiah, God gave words (Jer 1:9). To Paul also (1 Cor 2:13). Prophetic inspiration often times involves dictation of divine words. Many scholars resist this idea, 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 (Jas 1:5) but not the miraculous revelations of words and thoughts such as Moses and the prophets received.

13,14. ¹³*And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send. ¹⁴And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is*

not Aaron the Levite thy brother? 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.

- a. Moses showed his reluctance to go by asking God to send someone else, but God had told *him* to go! So that his request might not sound so blunt (eloquent) Moses stated it with extra superfluous words. God was doing exactly what Moses asked Him to do, though Moses meant for God to not send him but send someone else. At this point, God becomes angry with Moses' unwillingness to go.
- b. Aaron, Moses' brother, who could speak well, was at that very time coming to see Moses. Probably, he was coming to visit Moses to report the good news of the death of the king (2:23; 4:19). He may not have known that the new Pharaoh would be just as bad as the former one. It would be interesting to know just how Aaron learned of Moses' whereabouts.
- c. This is the first time that Aaron is mentioned. It is interesting that God calls him a Levite. Probably, this is not in reference to the coming of the Levitical priesthood, but simply in recognition of the fact that he was of the tribe of Levi. Remember that Moses was also a Levite.

15-17. ¹⁵*And thou shalt speak unto him, and put 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 he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.* ¹⁷*And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.*

- a. Moses would use Aaron's assistance in that Moses would put the words (of God) into Aaron's mouth (by first putting them into his ears - verse 30). We wonder why Moses could not speak to Pharaoh himself 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. God would direct both Moses' mouth so that he would speak to Aaron correctly, and with Aaron's mouth so that 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" (2 Pet 1:21).
- b. An interesting phrase is used in verse 16 which says, "Thou shalt be to him instead of God." This simply refers to the fact that Aaron must get his utterances totally from Moses, just as Moses got his message totally from God (Ex 7:1-2, 19).

- c. The rod of Moses would play a significant role in the events that are to follow. By the rod, he would perform the miracles. This came to pass in chapter 7:10,20 and chapter 8:5,16 and other passages.

18,19. ¹⁸And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father in law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace. ¹⁹And the LORD said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life.



- a. Moses' first act after his conversation with God was to return back to Jethro, no doubt driving the sheep back with him. He did not tell Jethro about his experience in the wilderness, but simply said that he wanted to go back and visit relatives. He probably thought Jethro would think he had lost his mind. Maybe Moses was not yet quite convinced himself! Jethro was agreeable to Moses' request, even though it was to involve the departure of Jethro's daughter and grandchildren.

- b. God repeats His command to Moses to go to Egypt, this time reassuring him that those who sought him were dead. It is at this point that Moses learns of the death of his enemies in Egypt. There is no indication that he knew it before God revealed it to him. Moses probably had assumed that after 40 years there would be those who would like to take his life. In spite of this, he was willing to go even before God's reassurance.

20-22. ²⁰And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand. ²¹And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go. ²²And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn:



- a. Moses leaves with his wife and his two sons (Gershon and Eliezer). The second son is mentioned here for the first time. All three apparently rode on one ass (the Greek reads asses). The “rod of God” in Moses’ hand is prominently mentioned. This title occurs also in 17:9. It is called the “rod of God” because God used it in such a powerful way.

- b. Would God really harden Pharaoh’s heart, and then punish him for his hard-hearted deeds? 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 (2 Thess 2:10-12). Romans 9:17,18 - *¹⁷For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. ¹⁸Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.* PLEASE REFER TO SUPPLEMENTAL HANDOUT.

- c. 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 understanding the expression. The Pharaohs called themselves the “sons of Ra” (the sun god) or some other deity. Pharaoh’s oldest son (or heir) would be especially 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 who he called out of Egypt. Isaiah 64:8 speaks of the Lord as Israel’s father.

23. *And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.*

- a. This threat or warning is directed straight at Pharaoh. The term *firstborn* here consists of all the firstborn of all the people of Egypt. They were Pharaoh's firstborn because all the people of Egypt were regarded as belonging to Pharaoh. The death of all of Egypt's firstborn would be a calamity to exceed all calamities!

24-26. ²⁴*And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him.* ²⁵*Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me.* ²⁶*So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision.*

- a. The above verses, upon reading, seem to be very problematic. They seem to be out of context with the preceding and following scriptures. Although there is much debate about the full meaning, with the information given we can discern much valuable information. The following will be a list of the things that we can know for a certainty, and things that we can conjecture to be very probable.
- b. After Moses had conversed with God at the burning bush, he returned to the home of Jethro, gained his permission to return to Egypt and set out with his wife and two sons. At some point on the journey, possibly the first night, they decided to spend the night at an inn. At this point in time, for some reason, God *sought* to kill Moses. Because scripture says that God *sought* implies that Moses was quite possibly stricken with a fatal illness. On the other hand, it may simply have been a death warning. We cannot conceive that if God wanted to slay a man, that He would be unsuccessful. There may have been the appearance of a "death angel" to Moses - an angel prepared to slay. Balaam was warned by just such an angel - Numbers 22:31 - *Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.*
- c. Next we have to ask why God sought to kill Moses. It would appear from reading that the reason is somehow tied to the actions of Moses' wife, Zipporah. Moses was an heir to the Abrahamic covenant set forth in Genesis 17. Apparently the younger son, Eliezer, had not yet been circumcised. To fail to perform this rite upon one's son was to cause him to "be cut off from his people." He would be excluded from the divine blessings and promises given to the chosen people. So, here we find Moses going to Egypt to be accepted as leader of the chosen people, but he had a son of his own who could not be properly identified with them. Moses had not paid due regard to God's ordinance. Regardless of how great or how trivial we view one of God's commandments, they all carry the same requirement for obedience.

- d. For whatever reason, Zipporah becomes the central character in acting on behalf of her husband. She is the one who takes a sharp stone and circumcises the child. It has been suggested by some that Zipporah possibly found the rite of circumcision repulsive and had been instrumental in preventing her son's circumcision up to this point. Some have said it was a case of an over-indulgent husband's attitude toward an over-indulgent mother. Her actions at this point may have been because Moses was incapacitated (illness or whatever). At any rate, she was definitely the one to perform the rite. The likelihood of her disgust towards circumcision can be seen when she casts the foreskin at the feet of Moses and said, "Surely a bloody husband art thou to me."
- e. At this point, according to verse 26, God lifted the threat of death. Zipporah repeats herself and then explains that it is because of the circumcision.
- f. Zipporah and the two sons were sent home by Moses and are not mentioned again until they rejoin Moses in the wilderness where he has led the Israelites (Ex 18:1-5). We do know that after circumcision, a healing period is necessary, which would have made travel difficult or required a delay in Moses' return to Egypt had they not returned home.
- g. Lessons learned:
 - (1) All commandments of God are essential.
 - (2) God is not a respecter of persons.
 - (3) When we are disobedient, punishment can be harsh.
 - (4) Being chosen by God does not exempt one from obedience.



- (5) The husband is the head of the household and religious leader of his family and will be held accountable.
- (6) We cannot ignore a commandment just because we do not like it.

27,28. ²⁷And the LORD said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him.

²⁸And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him.

- a. God spoke to Aaron and told him to go meet Moses in the wilderness. Specifically, they met at Horeb or Sinai. God directed Aaron to a certain place, at a certain time, as He did later to Phillip in Acts 8:26. Moses had made quite a long trip, perhaps as much as 70 miles. He traveled from the burning bush at Horeb, back to Midian and back again to Horeb with his family. His meeting with Aaron would be a strong sign of divine favor to Moses (4:14).
- b. At this point Moses relays two things to Aaron:
 - (1) The words of God - all the things God had told him, and
 - (2) All the signs that God had commanded him to do. There is no indication that Moses performed these signs for Aaron, but he did tell him about them.

29-31. ²⁹And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel: ³⁰And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. ³¹And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.

- a. Moses and Aaron gathered together the elders of the children of Israel to speak to them that they in turn could relay all these words to the people.
- b. As was planned, Aaron spoke all the words that God had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. Most likely, Aaron did not actually do the signs. He probably announced that they would be done and then Moses did them. At this point, Aaron is very prominent as the spokesman here at the beginning of Moses' work of deliverance but Aaron's prominence later diminishes.
- c. Israel's response was that of belief. They then bowed their heads in worship. They believed as God had foretold (3:18), and not as Moses feared (4:1). The Israelites believed when they first heard Moses, but their faith did not stand up in subsequent tests. They started well, and God would only give them one test at a time. Each experience could lead into a harder test to follow and to opportunity for even greater victories of faith.

CHAPTER FIVE

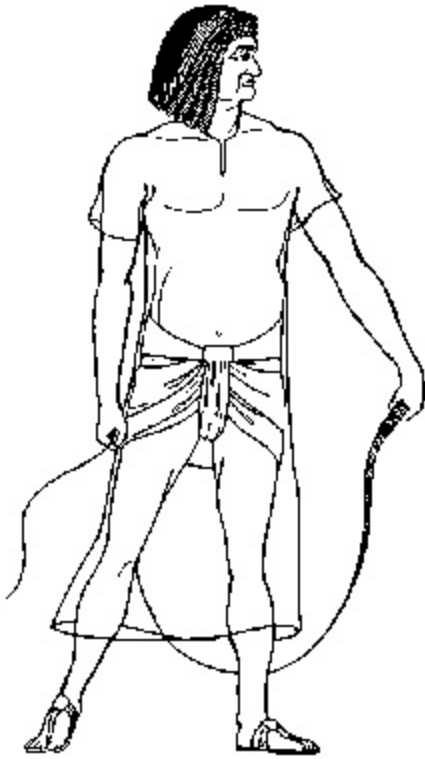
1,2. *¹And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness. ²And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.*

- a. The first thing Moses and Aaron did before Pharaoh was to set forth the authority of Jehovah, 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 (chapters 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 (cf Amos 1:3; Jer 2:2). It must have taken a lot of courage to go before the great Pharaoh and demand that he let Israel go. Moses had plain warning that Pharaoh would NOT let them go (3:19).
- b. 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. Israel had to go into the wilderness for the sacrifice, because they would sacrifice animals sacred to the Egyptians (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).
- c. Chapter 3:18 says that the elders were to go in before Pharaoh with Moses and Aaron. Where were they? The Jewish Midrash 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 18th dynasty Egypt was in far off Thebes in the south. 18th dynasty kings frequently visited the very important Nile delta area. The fact that Pharaoh could communicate the "same day" (5:6), indicates that Pharaoh was near the Israelites that lived by the delta.
- d. The request put before Pharaoh was not at all unreasonable. 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. Pharaoh's refusal shows his complete lack of consideration for people, and his lack of fear and understanding of God. By refusing a small request, his real heart-nature was exposed and his conduct condemned. Notice that Moses refers to the God of *Israel*. This is one of the earliest references to Israel as a people or as a 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.

- e. Apparently, Pharaoh knew nothing about Jehovah. He asks, “Who is Jehovah that I should harken to his voice?” Nevertheless, 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 willfully ignorant. He regarded himself as a god so he would disregard any god other than Egypt’s gods. He would soon regret asking, “Who is Jehovah . . . ?” He was to become VERY well acquainted with the power of Jehovah. Sennacherib of Assyria in later years asks a similar question about Jehovah with equally disastrous results (2 Kgs 18:35). In spite of the harsh treatment received at the hands of Pharaoh and his people, God later graciously told the Israelites “Thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian” (Deut 3:7).

3-5. ³And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days’ journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the LORD our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword. ⁴And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get you unto your burdens. ⁵And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens.

- a. Moses 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. Although the request was strong, Moses worded it politely. Again, remember that Moses was under no illusions that Pharaoh would grant the request. It was only the first barrage in the assault on Pharaoh.
- b. Apparently, Pharaoh regarded the Hebrews as only 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 “sand-crossers.” They are also called the Habiri (or Habiru, Khapiru or Apiru), a name applied to peoples in various places who existed outside the normal establishments of society, somewhat like our gypsies.
- c. Pharaoh regarded Moses and Aaron as nothing more than slaves who ought to be out working with the rest of their people, at “your burdens.”
- d. Apparently the “people of the land” refers to 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. Another possibility is that this term refers to them as Pharaoh’s 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.

- e. Obviously Pharaoh is very put out with Moses and Aaron because their actions have caused the people to rest from their burdens. To Pharaoh, their time was his treasure.

6-9. ⁶*And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying, ⁷Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves. ⁸And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish ought thereof: for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God. ⁹Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard vain words.*

- a. There were three classes of officials over the Hebrew workers:
 - (1) “Taskmasters” (*sare missim*) Egyptian officers apparently over large labor gangs (1:11);
 - (2) “Taskmasters” (*nogesim*) literally the title means oppressors. It seems to refer to Egyptian supervisors of smaller work crews (5:6,14); and
 - (3) “Officers” (*shoterim*) 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 or week. Notice that Pharaoh issues new work orders the very same day!
- b. Pharaoh ordered that the Hebrew slaves go find their own straw for brick-making but make just as many bricks as they did when straw had been brought to them. Obviously, specific daily quotas 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 a

much heavier work load on an apparently permanent basis. Probably, Pharaoh sensed that their request was only the beginning of bigger aspirations.

- c. Egyptian mud sticks together well enough that straw is not actually needed to hold the 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, not to mention that the straw comprised some volume of each brick. Not having straw would make the 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.
- d. Because Pharaoh was cruel, he accused Israel of being idle; he was looking for something to accuse them of so that he could oppress them. They had not really been idle except for the one meeting with Moses and Aaron. Pharaoh would still say they were idle even after the Israelite workmen themselves told him of their true situation (5:16,17). This charge of idleness was only an excuse to treat them cruelly.
- e. Pharaoh regarded the words of Moses and Aaron as “vain words.” In other words, lies 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.
- f. We can understand Pharaoh’s reaction to Moses much better by understanding the type of person Pharaoh was. The following is a letter telling of some of the exploits of Amenhotep II (1448-1422 B.C.), the Pharaoh of the exodus: “Now, further his majesty appeared as king as a goodly youth. When he had matured and completed 18 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 200 men. When there was a pause, after they attained half an iters course (probably 5/8ths of a mile), they were weak, their bodies were limp, they could not draw a breath, whereas his majesty was strong under his oar of 20 cubits in length (about 34 feet). He drew 300 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 three inches), with 20 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 or heard of . . .”

10-14. ¹⁰And the taskmasters of the people went out, and their officers, and they spake to the people, saying, Thus saith Pharaoh, I will not give you straw. ¹¹Go ye, get you straw where ye can find it: yet not ought of your work shall be diminished. ¹²So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw. ¹³And the taskmasters hasted them, saying, Fulfil your works, your daily tasks, as when there was straw. ¹⁴And the officers of the children of Israel, which Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten, and demanded, Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your task in making brick both yesterday and to day, as heretofore?



- a. With the absence of straw, the Israelites were forced to find and use 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 brick making. Now they had to go out and pull up stubby ends of wheat stems attached

to the roots and 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.

- b. The presence of stubble indicates that this occurred after the barley and wheat harvest - near the end of April or early May. At this time of year, a horrible sand-wind blows over Egypt, often for days on end. The Israelites' suffering must have been intense. Why would they have ever longed at a later time to return to Egypt (16:3)?

- c. By no means could the Israelites fulfill the heavier work demands put upon them. The Hebrew “straw bosses” were beaten with sticks by the Egyptians, because their crews had not made the daily assigned quotas of brick. The Egyptians had set this up deliberately. These impossibly difficult quotas were just the excuse for the persecution the Egyptians intended to lay upon the Israelites.

15,16. ¹⁵*Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? ¹⁶There 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.*

- a. It was the Israelite officers who went to Pharaoh in person. They took matters into their own hands. Moses had failed initially to get them delivered, so they went to Pharaoh seeking fair treatment. Notice that the Israelites meekly refer to themselves three times as “thy servants.”
- b. The Israelites 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 Old Testament 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 shows how submissive the Israelites felt.

17-19. ¹⁷*But he said, Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the LORD. ¹⁸Go therefore now, and work; for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks. ¹⁹And the officers of the children of Israel did see that they were in evil case, after it was said, Ye shall not minish ought from your bricks of your daily task.*



- a. The Israelites saw that they were in an evil situation. It seems that they were extremely slow in figuring this out. The root of their troubles was with Pharaoh himself, not with his taskmasters. Perhaps in their desperation, they had believed what they wanted to believe . . . that surly pharaoh would help them when he knew the truth about them. That hope was now dashed. To whom could

they now turn for help? They did not turn to God! Instead, they turned to bitterness (5:21; 6:9).

20-23. ²⁰*And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh: ²¹And they said unto them, The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us. ²²And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? ²³For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.*

- a. It appears that Moses and Aaron had stationed themselves in the road from Pharaoh's house, probably hoping for a more cheerful report.
- b. The Israelites called upon Jehovah to judge (condemn, punish or damn) Moses and Aaron. Their statement is nearly a curse. What hypocrisy! 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.
- c. Literally translated, the Israelites accused Moses and Aaron of causing them to stink in the eyes (nostrils) of Pharaoh. In truth, the Israelites did not have a very good savor to Pharaoh even before the arrival of Moses: they were already enslaved!
- d. They also accused Moses of putting a sword "in their hand to slay us." These first accusations against Moses by the Israelites were just the beginning of a torrent of such objections to his leadership that would later grieve him (see 14:11; 15:24; 16:2 ; and on and on and on).
- e. Moses responded to the Israelites' rejection by returning to Jehovah. This expression is beautiful in its simplicity, implying constant communion with God. He then prayed, asking God why He had done evil to the Israelites. Moses' words do not appear to be critical, but words of inquiry and prayer. They do, however, carry an urgency: "Why did you ever send me?"
- f. The word "evil" refers to calamity, misfortune or other adversities, rather than to moral evil. Moses' prayer here is the first of many prayers he uttered after the times the people challenged his leadership (cf Ex 32:1, 11; Num 11:11).

CHAPTER SIX

1. *Then the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.*
 - a. In the next to last verse of chapter 5 Moses asks God, “Why is it that thou has sent me?” Here in the first verse of chapter 6, we find God’s response. God would show Moses how He would deal with Pharaoh and cause him to drive Israel out of his land.
 - b. “By a strong hand” means “with a powerful force” and “with urgency.” It refers to Pharaoh’s hand rather than to God’s hand. But, God does indeed lay His hand heavily upon Pharaoh (7:4-5; 13:3). This would break Pharaoh’s resistance so that Pharaoh himself would thrust Israel out of his land (12:33,39).
 - c. In looking ahead, this 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. Now we shall see how God strengthened Moses and confirmed him in his labor.
- 2,3. *²And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: ³And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.*
 - a. God’s statement “I am the Lord . . .” should be considered most reassuring. 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 (cf 3:14,15). In this chapter God repeatedly reassures Moses and Israel by saying, “I am Jehovah” (6:2,7,8,29). Proverbs 18:10 -*The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.* 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 reassuring thoughts then we need to study and meditate more concerning it.
 - b. God was known to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as God Almighty (Heb. - *El Shaddai*). This name is especially prominent in Genesis 17:1 where God gave the covenant of circumcision to Abraham. It also appears in Genesis 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3. The Greek Old Testament translates it as panto-crator, 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 Old Testament. A variant form, Eloah, also occurs (Deut 32:15; Psa 18:31; Job 3:4 and other places in Job). The most ancient meaning of Shaddai is quite uncertain. Some connect it with the Assyrian word Shadu, meaning mountain. This could be the origin of the word, without its preserving any polytheistic implications, such as El Shaddai was once a mountain worshipped as a God. Psalm 36:6 does speak of God's righteousness as being like a great mountain.

- c. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did know that God's name was Jehovah (Gen 12:8; 14:22; 15:8; 21:33; 24:3; 26:22; 27:27; 28:16; 49:18). In Genesis 22:14, Abraham called the place where he almost sacrificed his son Isaac JEHOVAH-JIREH, meaning Jehovah will see or provide. In fact, Genesis 4:26 indicates that men began to call upon the name of Jehovah back in the time of Enoch, the great-grandson of Adam. How then can Exodus 6:3 say that God was not known to them by His name Jehovah? The explanation would seem to be that although they knew the name, they did not realize the full implication of what the name implied. 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 how He delivered His people. Even we do not really know a person when we only know his name. 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 Ezekiel 39:7 and Jeremiah 6:21 and Isaiah 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 6:21). Also, "My Holy name will I make known in the midst of my people Israel" (Ezek 39:7).
- d. 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.

4-6. ⁴And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers. ⁵And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. ⁶Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:

- a. In God's covenant with Abraham, which extended to the children of Israel, He promised to multiply their numbers and give them the land of Canaan

(Gen 17:4,7,8). 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).

- b. God 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 a most consistent quality of God. How greatly this should reassure us who are under such NEW covenant promises. Hebrews 8:12 - *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.*
- c. The word redeem in verse 6 basically 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 and 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 Christians are redeemed (1 Pet 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 tribulation and persecution, but God does redeem us from the sin, death and distresses that are beyond our ability to conquer.
- d. The term "stretched-out arm" is a visible, powerful and active arm, like the arm of a warrior ready for battle. The idea of God's stretched-out arm and His great judgements reappears later in Exodus 13:3 and Deuteronomy 5:15.

7-9. 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 the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.* ⁸*And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD.* ⁹*And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.*

- a. Including those mentioned in verse 6, God makes seven great promises to Israel:

- (1) I will bring you out;
- (2) I will rid you of bondage;
- (3) I will redeem you;
- (4) I will take you for my people;
- (5) I will be to you a God;
- (6) I will bring you into the land; and
- (7) I will give the land to you for a possession.

In these seven great 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 (cf Isa 40:3; Mk 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.

- b. God declared that He would take Israel unto Himself to be His people. Israel was a stiff-necked and rebellious people. God's choice of Israel was an act of incredible grace and forbearance. It would seem that the actual time and place when God took Israel as His people was at Mount 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).
- c. In this age, we Christians are the people of God, whether we be Jews or Gentiles (Eph 1:4; 2 Cor 6:18; Rev 21:7).
- d. The heritage referred to here was the land which God swore to give to Abraham (cf Neh 9:15). A heritage is a possession, often one received as an inheritance. Interestingly, the term *heritage* is applied in Deuteronomy 33:4 to the law (or Torah) itself.
- e. Moses presented God's words to the children of Israel but they would not harken to His words. 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 long suffering had shrunk to shortness of spirit. Israel's vital energy and hope was shortened and sapped.

10-13. ¹⁰And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ¹¹Go in, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land. ¹²And Moses spake before the LORD, saying, Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips? ¹³And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, and gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

- a. Apparently Moses was very despondent because of the course of events, but 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 a hesitant person needs. Note that God again reemphasizes His order in verse 13.
- b. It is also interesting to note that the demands upon Pharaoh have increased. Previously, it was only for permission to go and sacrifice (5:1). Now, Moses is to demand that Israel is to be released.
- c. The uncircumcised lips mentioned in verse 12 seem 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 of 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.

14-25. ¹⁴These be the heads of their fathers' houses: The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel; Hanoch, and Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi: these be the families of Reuben. ¹⁵And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman: these are the families of Simeon. ¹⁶And these are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations; Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari: and the years of the life of Levi were an hundred thirty and seven years. ¹⁷The sons of Gershon; Libni, and Shimi, according to their families. ¹⁸And the sons of Kohath; Amram, and Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel: and the years of the life of Kohath were an hundred thirty and three years. ¹⁹And the sons of Merari; Mahali and Mushi: these are the families of Levi according to their generations. ²⁰And Amram took him Jochebed his father's sister to wife; and she bare him Aaron and Moses: and the years of the life of Amram were an hundred and thirty and seven years. ²¹And the sons of Izhar; Korah, and Nepheg, and Zichri. ²²And the sons of Uzziel; Mishaël, and Elzaphan, and Zithri. ²³And Aaron took him Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab,

sister of Naashon, to wife; and she bare him Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. ²⁴And the sons of Korah; Assir, and Elkanah, and Abiasaph: these are the families of the Korhites. ²⁵And Eleazar Aaron's son took him one of the daughters of Putiel to wife; and she bare him Phinehas: these are the heads of the fathers of the Levites according to their families.

- a. It seems very out of place that a genealogical list would be inserted into the account at this point. We ask why but no one knows 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. But what can believers say to account for the genealogy listed here? Verse 27 indicates that the genealogy is to highlight and identify the persons Moses and Aaron at this dramatic moment in their history.
- b. The first 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 persons who will be prominent in the later history of Israel's wilderness wanderings and the conquest of Canaan.
- c. The "heads of fathers' houses" is a technical term for clans or families; or for a collection of families called by the name of a common ancestor.
- d. As far as Reuben's descendants are concerned, only his sons' names are given. Their names are identical to the list in Genesis 46:9. The Reubenites are also listed in Numbers 26:5-9 and 1 Chronicles 5:1ff.
- e. Of Simeon's descendants (verse 15), only his sons' names are given and the fact that one son (Shaul) was the son of a Canaanite woman. The list here is like that of Genesis 46:10 and is similar to those in Numbers 26:12-14 and 1 Chronicles 4:24ff. The marriage of Simeon to a Canaanite woman speaks loudly of 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. In verse 16 we find the names of the three sons of Levi, Gershon, Kohath and Merari. Remember these names! These were fathers of large families which later had specific assignments in transporting and caring for the tabernacle in the wilderness (see Num 3:14ff). A comment in *Preacher's Homiletic Commentary* about these genealogies is very good: these genealogies are like great stone bluffs, sterile looking, but there is a spring at their feet.

- f. Clearly, there are gaps in the genealogy given for Levi (verses 16-20). This is indicated by the fact that all three of Levi's sons had been born before Jacob's family had 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 80 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 is the fact that at Mount Sinai, less than two years after the time of Exodus 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 on average that there would have been about 2,147 Amramites. But Amram, the father of Moses, had only two sons (Moses and Aaron) and these had fewer than ten descendants at Mount 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.
- g. The sons of Kohath mentioned in verse 18 are (1) Amram (not the father of Moses); (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. Uzziel's sons helped bury Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:4).
- h. Moses' father and mother were Amram and Jochebed (his father's aunt - see notes on 2:1). The name Jochebed means "Jehovah (Jah) is (my) glory." This shows that the name Jehovah was indeed used before Exodus 6:3.
- i. Aaron's family: His wife was Elishaba, better known as Elizabeth. She was of the tribe of Judah. Her brother Nashon was one of the princes of the tribe of Judah, so she would be a princess (1 Chron 2:10). She was also a sister to a direct ancestor (Nahshon) of Christ. Her father was Amminadab and her grandfather was named Ram (Mt 1:4; Lk 3:33; Ruth 1:18-20). Aaron's children were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. Memorize these names now, preferably in pairs. Aaron's sons (descendants) later became the priests in Israel (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 Abithar (1 Chron 24:3; 1 Sam 1:9). Still later the high priesthood reverted to the house of Eleazar through Zadok (1 Kgs 2:26,27,35).

- j. In verse 24 Korah is mentioned. Korah led a great rebellion against Moses at Kadesh-Barnea (Num 16; Jude 11). Centuries later the surviving sons of Korah became famous temple musicians among the Levites of Israel (1 Chron 6:22,23). The titles on Psalms 42, 44-49, 84,85, 87,88 attribute these Psalms to the sons of Korah.
- k. Verse 25 names Eleazer and Phinehas. They will become extremely significant with the passage of time. Eleazer will become high priest after the death of his father, Aaron (Num 20:23-28). He will be priest during Israel's conquest of Canaan and the division of the land (Josh 14:1). Phinehas, the son of Eleazer, will succeed him as high priest (Josh 24:33). Phinehas is renowned for spearing an adulteress couple and thereby averting God's judgment upon Israel (Num 25:7-11; Psa 136:30).

26-30. ²⁶*These are that Aaron and Moses, to whom the LORD said, Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies.* ²⁷*These are they which spake to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt: these are that Moses and Aaron.* ²⁸*And it came to pass on the day when the LORD spake unto Moses in the land of Egypt,* ²⁹*That the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, I am the LORD: speak thou unto Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say unto thee.* ³⁰*And Moses said before the LORD, Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me?*

- a. Verses 26 and 27 again refer to Aaron and Moses. The purpose of this reference is to draw 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 verses 14-25. The story now resumes where it left off at verse 13. We are reminded in verses 26 and 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.
- b. It is important to note that as Moses and Aaron speak, they speak God's words. This is comparable to the command in 7:2.
- c. The next paragraph actually begins at verse 28 and extends on through 7:7. It is unfortunate that the chapter division was placed where it is. Verses 7:1-7 continues God's reassurance to Moses, telling how He will harden Pharaoh's heart, work wonders in Egypt and bring out the children of Israel.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1-3. *¹And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. ²Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land. ³And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.*

- a. God's charge to Moses began in chapter 6:28 and will extend on through 7:7. The story of Moses' and Aaron's second encounter with Pharaoh is in verses 8-13. At this encounter the miracle of the rod changing into the serpent is displayed. The story of the first plague, the river-to-blood disaster, is in 14-25. Some have dubbed this chapter "the conflict begins." The conflict referred to is the battle between God and Pharaoh. The battle consisted of ten plagues, and Jehovah won the conflict. The stories of the ten plagues are found in chapters 7-12.
- b. Note the change in Moses' relation to Pharaoh. 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 would not be arrested. He would work miracles and speak the divine message. Although Moses had been fearful of confronting Pharaoh, he had no cause for fear.
- c. The relationship now of Aaron to Moses would be that of a 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.
- d. Moses was to speak unto Aaron "all that I command thee." It is necessary that God's men speak the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Leaving out some of God's words would be just as bad as our saying some things wrong.
- e. Note that God promised to do two things when Aaron spoke to Pharaoh:
 - (1) He would harden Pharaoh's heart; and
 - (2) Multiply His signs (miracles with a meaning) and wonders in the land of Egypt.

4-7. *⁴But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. ⁵And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel*

from among them. ⁶And Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded them, so did they. ⁷And Moses was fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old, when they spake unto Pharaoh.

- a. The “great judgments” in verse 4 is referring to the ten plagues of Exodus 7-12. The word judgments here refers to acts of punishment. These judgments redeemed Israel and punished Egypt. Many modern “preachers” seek to omit real judgment on the part of God, while still preserving the love of God. But love, in that case, ceases to be holy love, and disappears into sentiment. This is a false analysis of God’s nature.
- b. Egypt would learn a great lesson “that God was Jehovah.” 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 also learn that all their gods were merely fiction.
- c. At this time Moses was 80 and Aaron was 83 years old. Moses’ life is divided into three nearly equal parts:
 - (1) 40 years in Egypt as a prince (thinking he was somebody);
 - (2) 40 years in Midian as a shepherd (finding out he was a nobody);
and
 - (3) 40 years in the desert as leader of Israel (learning what God can do with a somebody who realized he was a nobody).

8-13. *⁸And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, ⁹When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent. ¹⁰And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. ¹¹Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. ¹²For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods. ¹³And he hardened Pharaoh’s heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.*

- a. When Moses goes before Pharaoh, God said that Pharaoh would ask for a miracle. Moses would tell Aaron to cast his rod before Pharaoh and it would become a serpent. Of the three miracles given to Moses to do (4:1-9), only the rod-to-serpent miracle was done before Pharaoh. The water-to-blood sign became the first of the ten plagues. The leprosy sign is not referred to after it was shown to Moses.

- b. The serpent referred to in 7:9 is (in Hebrew) a *tannin*, meaning a large reptile, sea or river monster. The Jewish commentators rendered it as crocodile. The Hebrew word for serpent in 4:3 is *nahash*, meaning a serpent or snake. In the Greek LXX it is rendered in both 4:3 and 7:9 as *drakon*, meaning dragon or (in later times) serpent.
- c. Upon witnessing this miracle, Pharaoh calls in his wise men, 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.
- d. In back of Pharaoh's act lay a total unwillingness to accept any suggestion that he and the other gods of Egypt were not supreme. King Amenhotep II (probably this Pharaoh) entitled himself "the son of the sun god, Ra, . . . Amen-hotep-the-god-Ruler-of-Heliopolis, given life forever; the good god, likeness of Ra, . . ." To him Moses' miracle was a 15-cent stunt that was not about to make him relinquish his lofty views of his own omnipotence.
- e. One has to wonder how Pharaoh's magicians were able to duplicate the miracle. In truth, we do not know. We only know that the effect produced was similar enough to Moses' miracle to satisfy Pharaoh. Four possibilities are asserted by various commentators:
 - (1) An optical illusion produced in the mind of the viewer by Satan or evil spirits;
 - (2) Effective slight-of-hand, possibly aided by Satan;
 - (3) Supernatural feats by demonic assistance (many would lean to this possibility); or
 - (4) 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 of the snake, they partially paralyze it in such a way that they become stiff and unmoveable, thus seeming to change them into rods. However it was done, we can be sure that it was not by powers given through Satan, but rather trickery, illusion or focused distraction such as is used by modern day magicians (David Copperfield, etc.). The great inferiority of the magicians' enchantments to Moses' power was shown when Aaron's serpent ate up the magicians' serpents. Their folly became obvious to all except the willfully blind.

- f. Although the Exodus text does not indicate who these sorcerers were, they are mentioned by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:8,9 as Jannes and Jambres. Their names are also found in the Jerusalem Targum (a second century A.D. Jewish writing). Magicians were very important in the bureaucracy of the ancient Egyptian government. They were a professional class, and held high government positions as advisors and diviners. Pharaoh called upon them to interpret his dreams (Gen 44:8).
- g. Pharaoh behaved exactly as God had said, he would not harken.

14-18. ¹⁴And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he refuseth to let the people go. ¹⁵Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water; and thou shalt stand by the river's brink against he come; and the rod which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thine hand. ¹⁶And thou shalt say unto him, The LORD 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 wouldest not hear. ¹⁷Thus saith the LORD, In this thou shalt know that I am the LORD: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood. ¹⁸And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall loathe to drink of the water of the river.

- a. Moses went to the Nile River brink to meet Pharaoh. We get the impression that Pharaoh went there regularly, perhaps every morning (8:20). 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 fatted 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.

- b. Moses is to set forth the demand of God, that Pharaoh let Israel go out of his land, so Israel could serve Him in the wilderness.
- c. God said that the water-to-blood miracle would made Pharaoh know that He was Jehovah. This idea is repeated so many times in Exodus that we need to pay special heed to it (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.
- d. Was the "blood" really blood? Most commentators would assume that any thick red fluid would correspond to the description of the river as "blood." 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; and that we should compare this miracle to Joel 3:4 where the moon is said to turn into blood. We do not know if this “blood” was exactly like body blood to the extent it might be 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 must 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.

- e. The effects produced by this change were that the fish would die and the river would stink. The water became loathsome and undrinkable. Such a pollution of the Nile would have had religious implications to thoughtful Egyptians, it being one of their gods.

19-21. ¹⁹And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone. ²⁰And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. ²¹And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.



- a. It appears that the effected area covered not only the Nile River but also its branches and the delta and the canals. The canals had been dug in many places over the region for irrigation. It also effected the pools (or reservoirs) and any container of wood and stone in which Nile water was stored.
- b. It is certain that Pharaoh was a witness to Moses and Aaron smiting the water and 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. The Nile River is a huge river. The delta of the Nile is nearly 150 miles wide and 125 miles 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 effects all of Egypt. Therefore, the plague got the attention of all Egypt. Both the Egyptians and the Israelites would see God's power on a massive scale.

22-25. ²²And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them; as the LORD had said. ²³And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also. ²⁴And all the Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river. ²⁵And seven days were fulfilled, after that the LORD had smitten the river.

- a. We wonder how the magicians got into the act of changing water to blood. We do not know. Maybe they were accompanying Pharaoh as he came out to the water. Maybe he summoned him, as he did before (7:11).



Hâpi,
the god of the Nile

- b. Hapi, the god of the Nile, was often depicted as holding a table or altar on which are vases for libations, lotus flowers and fruit. 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.
- c. How were they able to change the water to blood? Presumably by the same tricks by which they changed rods to serpents (7:11,12). According to the scriptures, they could not possibly perform their trick on anywhere near the same scale because there would have been virtually no water to change to blood. Possibly, they did get some water by digging holes (7:24). 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. Sadly, Pharaoh's heart was wicked enough that their tricks satisfied him and he found justification to accept the magicians act.

- d. The scriptures do not tell us definitely if the Israelites had good water or not. In later plagues, a distinction between the treatment of the Israelites and the Egyptians definitely occurred. Josephus (in *Antiquities II*) gives

the following account: “such 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.”

- e. It appears the Egyptians were successful in obtaining water by digging shallow wells. Note that “all” the Egyptians dugged 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.
- f. The “seven days” probably refers to the duration of the water-to-blood plague. Some would suggest that it was the interval of time between the first and second plague (the frogs). We assume from the reading that after seven days the flow of fresh water from the upper Nile cleansed the river in lower Egypt.
- g. It is interesting to consider the time span of the plagues. 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 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. But this is mostly guess work.

CHAPTER EIGHT

This chapter contains the stories of three plagues - the frogs, the lice (or gnats) and the flies. This 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.

1,2. *¹And the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me. ²And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs:*

- a. Jehovah gave Pharaoh a demand and a threat. He demanded that Pharaoh let Israel go so that they might serve Him. *Serving* God in this case involved sacrificing to Him (3:12,18) otherwise, God threatened to smite ALL of Pharaoh's land with frogs if he refused to let Israel go. Refusing seemed to be 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).
- b. In Egypt, frogs were highly regarded . . . that is, 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. 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 death. She also supposedly assisted women in childbirth, and was a symbol of the resurrection and fertility.

3,4. *³And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine 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: ⁴And the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants.*

- a. According to the scripture, the frogs from the river would go *everywhere*. Frogs would enter the houses where they would be particularly offensive to the scrupulously clean Egyptians. 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; frogs do not normally seek dry places like beds or ovens, nor do they crawl on people.

- b. An Egyptian oven was only a hole in the earth, in which 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 impossible.

5-7. ⁵*And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thine hand with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt.* ⁶*And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt.* ⁷*And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt.*

- a. The plague began when Aaron stretched forth his hand with his rod in hand over the rivers (referring to the branches of the Nile Delta), the streams (or canals) and pools. Aaron used the rod in the first three plagues (7:19; 8:5,16).
- b. This plague was not a mere inconvenience; it was disastrous; 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, sleep, eat or move about without the most dreadful interference from the frogs. Frogs leaped upon and crawled over people wherever they were. It would be reasonable to assume 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 frog. 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.
- c. The magicians responded to this plague by using their "enchantments" to bring up more frogs upon the land of Egypt. Without a doubt, this did not help the Egyptians. They needed frogs removed, not more frogs. But to Pharaoh, the implications of the magicians duplicating the frog miracle were more important even than relief from the plague. At least he could satisfy himself that he was not dealing with a uniquely powerful Jehovah and a uniquely powerful Moses.

8-10. ⁸*Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Intreat the LORD, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD.* ⁹*And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me: when shall I intreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and thy houses, that they may remain in the river only?* ¹⁰*And he said, To morrow. And he said, Be it according to thy word: that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the LORD our God.*

- a. It would appear that Pharaoh 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.
- b. He asks Moses to intercede with Jehovah to take away the frogs. In return, he promised to permit Israel to go and sacrifice. Sadly, he did not keep this promise. This pattern of appeal-promise-reneging 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 (1 Kgs 13:6), and Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:24). Pharaoh was like people who repent and make promises when in the anguish of a sickroom, in a storm, in war or bankruptcy. Such repentance and promises often do not last long when the troubles are past.

- c. In verse 9 Moses uses the term "glory over me." 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.
- d. It would seem that Pharaoh would ask for immediate relief from the plague. Instead, he asked to wait until "tomorrow." Possibly, Pharaoh hoped 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

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 helplessness." He was still basically unwilling to yield to the claims of God upon him and to Moses' authority.

- e. Through Moses' intercession with Jehovah Pharaoh would learn a valuable lesson: that there was no one else like Jehovah, *our* God. 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; 2 Sam 7:22; Isa 46:9).

11-14. 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 Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh: and Moses cried unto the LORD because of the frogs which he had brought against Pharaoh.* ¹³*And the LORD did according to the word of Moses; and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields.* ¹⁴*And they gathered them together upon heaps: and the land stank.*

- a. When the frogs would depart from the people, they would be in the river only. Obviously, their presence in the river indicates that the river was no longer polluted. The blood was all gone.
- b. In order to pray to God, Moses "went out" from Pharaoh. This he did also after the plague of flies (8:29), hail (9:29) and locusts (10:18). Often prayer is best done privately. It would seem that praying in Pharaoh's presence would be like casting pearls before swine.
- c. Did Moses' prayers remove the frogs? Yes! Indeed! The frogs outside of the river, in fields, in courtyards and houses ALL died. They were gathered (maybe raked up) into heaps, and the land *stank* once again (cf 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.

15. *But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.*

- a. When the plague was removed Pharaoh 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.
- b. The plagues so far had caused total disruption to the people of Egypt and their usual life patterns, not to mention 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 passed their lives separate from animals; the Egyptians have animals always living with them (the murrain of cattle disrupted this lifestyle!) . . . They are religious to excess, far beyond any other race of men . . . They wear linen garments (see 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 was turned to blood?) Besides which, they observe, so to speak, thousands of ceremonies."

16-17. ¹⁶*And the LORD said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.*

¹⁷*And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.*

- a. Note that 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.
- b. The "lice" as they are referred to were 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. Nevertheless, 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*) so did the Jewish Talmud; and these renderings have influenced most later translations. The Greek Old Testament (LXX) renders it as *sknips* (pl. *skniphes*), probably meaning flea. The *skniphes* were small insects which pierced the skin, and set up intolerable itching, also penetrating 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.
- c. The gnats (or lice) originated from the dust of the earth. "ALL the dust of the earth became lice throughout all the land of Egypt." We do not suppose that every particle of dust in Egypt became an insect on a one-to-one basis, but the expression certainly refers to a limitless host 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 plague six and seven (9:6,9,25).

- d. The lice surely had a devastating effect upon the inhabitants of Egypt for they were upon both man and beast. Psalm 105:31 - *He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, and lice in all their coasts.*

18,19. ¹⁸*And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man, and upon beast.* ¹⁹*Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God: and Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.*

- a. The magicians 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. It appears that maybe this was the limit God had set for their powers of trickery that they used to change the rods to serpents, made water to blood and produce frogs. The magicians had tried to salvage their own honor and the reputation of their gods, but now their folly became manifest (obvious) to all men (see 2 Tim 3:8,9).

One has to 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 (cf 1 Sam 6:3,9; Lk 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” (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.” The magicians do not imply that they are converted to Moses’ God; but they surely recognize that he is a God, and has some very potent powers.

- b. The confession of impotence by the magicians did not convince Pharaoh of the need of ceasing his resistance to the command of God. His heart was hardened.

20,21. ²⁰*And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh; lo, he cometh forth to the water; and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, 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 Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are.*

- a. Moses was commanded to rise up early the next day and meet Pharaoh at the water, presumably at the brink of the Nile (cf 7:15). Moses was to make the same demand as before (7:16; 8:1). Pharaoh was surely getting the message by this time.
- b. Egypt would be accosted by many kinds of flies! In fact, swarms! The Hebrew word here translated “swarms” (of flies) means “mixture.” Psalm 78:45 says, *He sent divers sorts of flies*; this is an accurate rendering of the idea. The Hebrew word is similar to that used in Exodus 12:38, where it refers to the *mixed* multitude that left Egypt with the Israelites.

The Greek Old Testament 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. Other translations have been made of “swarms.” The Jerusalem Bible and Berkeley version give it as gad flies, a word referring to any of various flies, as horseflies, botflies, warble flies, that bite and annoy livestock. This may be 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 in 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.

22-24. ²²*And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth.* ²³*And I will put a division between my people and thy people: to morrow shall this sign be.* ²⁴*And the LORD did so; and there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt: the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies.*



- a. Note that there would 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 to make this truth very real to Pharaoh (7:5,17; 14:4,18).

- b. The text states that God would put a *division* between His people and the Egyptians. Another meaning for the word *peduth* (Hebrew) is redemption. Considering the text, this is a good translation. 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 blessing.
- c. The plague of flies was to start the very next day! They arrived just as predicted. This fulfillment shows that the plague was a miracle.
- d. The land was *destroyed*, 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 (Jdgs 6:4; Mal 3:11). Psalm 78:45 says, *The flies ate them up*. The plague is said to have been grievous, meaning heavy, massive, 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.

25-27. ²⁵And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land. ²⁶And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the LORD our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? ²⁷We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the LORD our God, as he shall command us.

- a. The plague of flies brought Pharaoh 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 to compromise with Moses. Persecutors like Pharaoh never want God's people to go far out of their reach and power.
- b. 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 (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).
- c. The Israelites could not sacrifice in the land of Egypt because 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 (3:18). Moses did not specify what the Egyptians would find abominable to 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 suggest that during their stay in Egypt, the Israelites had not sacrificed to their God.

28-30. ²⁸And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away: intreat for me. ²⁹And Moses said, Behold, I go out from thee, and I will intreat the LORD that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, to morrow: but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD. ³⁰And Moses went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD.

- a. As a compromise offer, Pharaoh said he would let Israel go and sacrifice in the desert out of Egypt; only they should not go far away. Pharaoh's offer here is a significant concession, and shows that the plagues were truly having an effect on him. Note Pharaoh's request for Moses to "intreat" 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 but not to condemn them by the example of a righteous life.
- b. Moses cautions Pharaoh that he should not "deal deceitfully any more." Pharaoh had done deceitfully when he promised during the plague of frogs to let Israel go, but then refused to do so after the plague ended (8:8,15). God's servants like Moses are ready to help persecutors in misery and pray for them. But they also warn them of their sins.

31,32. ³¹*And the LORD did according to the word of Moses; and he removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one.* ³²*And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.*

- a. After Moses intreated the Lord, He lifted the plague so completely that there remained not one fly. Note how great God's deliverance is. The flies were removed in answer to prayer. God removes swarms of judgments when His servants pray to Him.
- b. Pharaoh fulfilled his promises to Moses by hardening his heart again, and would not let Israel go. He broke his promise this time just as he did when the plague of frogs was removed (8:8,15).

CHAPTER NINE

1-3. ¹Then the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. ²For if thou refuse to let them go, and wilt hold them still, ³Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous murrain.

- a. After the plague of flies God sent Moses back to Pharaoh, probably 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 sixth time that this demand was made to Pharaoh (5:1; 7:2,16; 8:1,20)
- b. If Pharaoh 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 from the Latin *mors* (meaning death). We do not know the exact nature of this plague, whether it was like anthrax, rinderpest or some other disease. Nevertheless, it was deadly!
- c. 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 the food supply. The change from affecting personal comfort to economic disasters shows a worsening of the plagues.
- d. This 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 the cattle in the fields; those that were sheltered indoors escaped. This partly explains why some cattle survived the plague (9:10,21).

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 did 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. However, numerous evidences have been brought forth showing that camels were in limited use during the time 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 200-1700 B.C., including its domestication." Also, from the city of Byblos comes an incomplete camel figurine of the 19th to 18th centuries B.C.

4-7. ⁴And the LORD shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and there shall nothing die of all that is the children's of Israel. ⁵And the LORD appointed a set time, saying, To morrow the LORD shall do this thing in the land. ⁶And the LORD did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died: but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one. ⁷And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

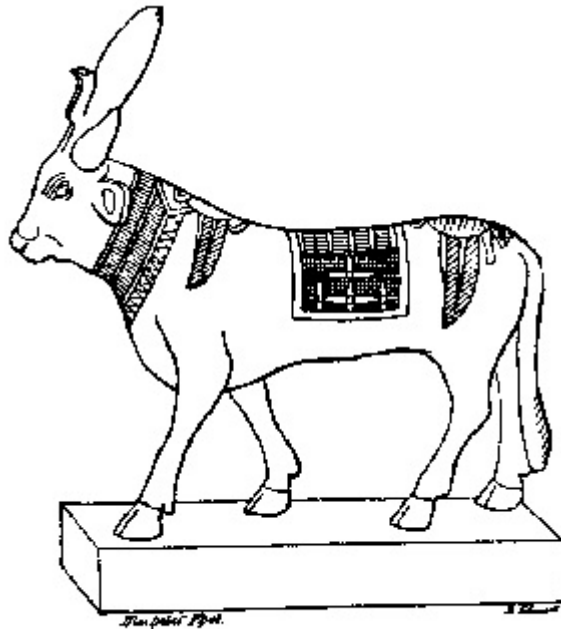
- a. The murrain did not affect all the animals. It did not kill the Israelites' cattle. God had placed a distinction between the Egyptians and Israelites (8:22). The fact of this distinction clearly shows that the death of the cattle had miraculous features. Also, the setting of a specific time for its coming makes it miraculous.
- b. 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 is in complete control of the entire world.



Het-Heru (Hathor)

- c. "All the cattle of Egypt died." This *all* is restricted in 9:3 to those "which are in the fields." 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 was nothing in comparison. Thus, we find that there were some cattle still remaining in 9:19 and 12:29.
- d. 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 the equivalent of \$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 64 large burial chambers lay along the avenue. Remains of drink-offerings dedicated by visitors were still lying near some of the sarcophagi.



The Apis Bull

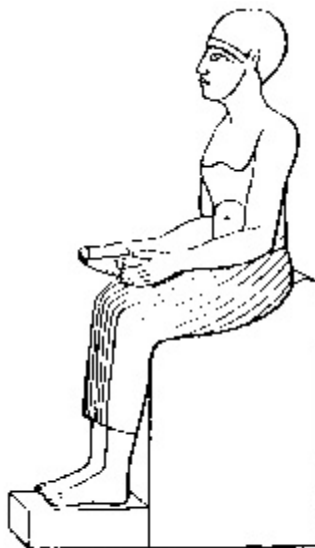
- e. Pharaoh himself sent investigators who found that not even one Israelite cow had died in the plague. The possibility that such a thing might have happened in an ordinary plague is almost nonexistent. Nonetheless, Pharaoh's heart was stubborn and he probably attributed the sparing of the Israelites' cattle to natural causes; or, more probably, he just did not let himself think about it.

8-10. ⁸And the LORD said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. ⁹And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt. ¹⁰And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast.

- a. To start the plague of boils, Moses and Aaron both took 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 have suggested that the ashes came off an altar for human sacrifice. This does not seem to be true, as we have no evidence that the Egyptians burned human bodies. More probably the ashes came from a brick kiln or smelting furnace. 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.

- b. The effect of the ashes 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 death 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 intensity of the plagues.



Ī-em-hetep

- c. In Deuteronomy 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 Exodus 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.

11,12. ¹¹*And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.* ¹²*And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses.*

- a. The magicians did not fare very well with this plague. After just being "loused-up" (8:18,19), they now find themselves "boiled." God's judgment comes upon the high and the low alike. They were in such great pain that

they could not stand before Moses. They were in such misery that they could not bear to remain in one position for more than a few seconds. To stand face to face with Moses in a confrontation was utterly beyond their power.

- b. Once again, Pharaoh refused to let Israel go, just as God had said (4:21).

13-15. ¹³*And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. ¹⁴For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. ¹⁵For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth.*

- a. Moses was to again meet Pharaoh at an early hour (cf 8:20), possibly at the water's edge again (7:15; 8:20). There Moses spoke God's demand that Pharaoh let Israel go so that they could serve Him (see notes on 9:1).
- b. In this particular case, God said that he would send the following plagues upon the *heart* of Pharaoh and upon his servants. These last three plagues would be of greater severity than the previous ones, and point toward the final decisive blow. These plagues attacked Pharaoh's 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 is 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.
- c. 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; 1 Sam 4:17), slaughter, stroke or striking.
- d. God had considered smiting Pharaoh and his people with a pestilence that would have killed them all. The word for *pestilence* is the 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, by the grace of God, He has no pleasure in the death of the sinner (Ezek 33:11), but only desires that the sinner may turn from his wicked ways and live.

16,17. ¹⁶*And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. ¹⁷As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?*

- a. God makes it known that Pharaoh had been spared all this time for a number of reasons. God was showing Pharaoh His power and that God's name might be declared throughout all the earth. Remember WE must now declare Moses' deeds and God's wonders in Egypt and in the ages since that His name may be honored throughout all the earth.
- b. The KJV of Exodus 9:16 says, *For this cause, I have raised thee up*. This is very similar to the wording used by Paul in Romans 9:17. What does "raise thee up" mean? It seems to mean two things: (1) I have raised you up to be king in Egypt; and (2) I have spared you against these plagues. The Hebrew Bible simply reads (as also in the ASV) "I have made thee to stand." The Greek Old Testament says, "On account of this I have preserved thee." The RSV gives a similar reading: "I have let you live." 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). 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.
- c. There are those who do not feel that verse 17 is actually a question. It is given as a question in the KJV, the ASV, the Berkley Bible, the New American Bible and the Living Bible. The RSV, 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.

18-21. ¹⁸*Behold, to morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now.*

¹⁹*Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die. ²⁰He that feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants*

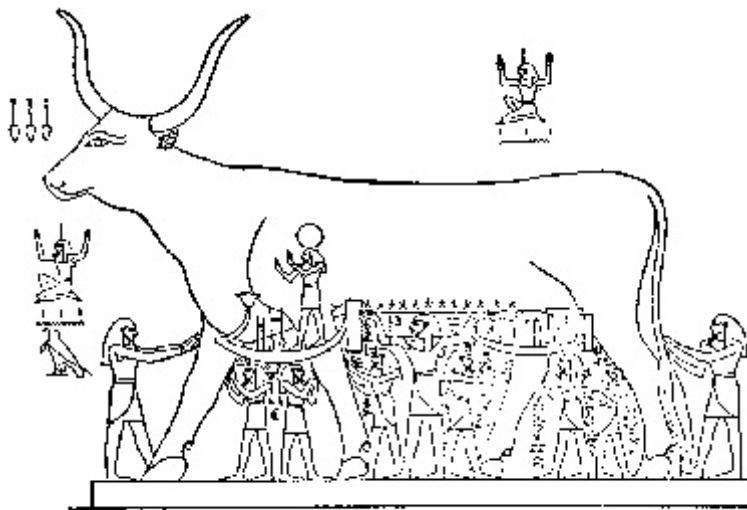
and his cattle flee into the houses: ²¹And he that regarded not the word of the LORD left his servants and his cattle in the field.

- a. The hail would begin “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 very 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!
- b. Moses announces that there would be opportunity to escape the hail. That opportunity would be that men and beasts that came in from the fields and took shelter in the houses would be saved from the hail. Those that remained outdoors would be killed by the hailstones. This warning was an act of pure divine mercy.
- c. 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 similar expression to Exodus 7:23, where Pharaoh did not “set his heart” on the matter after the water was turned into blood.
- d. This is the first plague where we see indications that the warnings were taken seriously by the Egyptians. This is definite progress toward victory. We imagine that Pharaoh must have been displeased to see his subjects obeying the word of Moses and Aaron.
- e. 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 peoples houses, a custom in many lands.
- f. Giving attention to the word of God is the condition for deliverance from the coming judgments of God, but to receive deliverance, we must not only heed His word but also *obey*.

22-26. ²²*And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. ²³And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. ²⁴So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. ²⁵And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt 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. ²⁶Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.

- a. The plague of hail began when 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).
- b. In this plague there was thunder, hail and fire (presumably lightning) going to the land. Jehovah rained upon all the land of Egypt. Psalm 78:47,48 - ⁴⁷*He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycomore trees with frost.* ⁴⁸*He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts.* Psalm 105:32,33 - ³²*He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land.* ³³*He smote their vines also and their fig trees; and brake the trees of their coasts.*
- c. Assuming that the hailstorm covered only the habitable area of Egypt, it would be a ribbon-shaped hailstorm, about 10 miles wide and 400 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 occasionally accompanies the rain, but with no severity. South of this area, rain is a rare occurrence. The rains usually fall from January to April. This is the time when the cattle are likely to be outdoors.
- d. The extent of the hail disaster was indicated by the Egyptians themselves. In 10:7 they beg Pharaoh to release Israel before any more plagues came. The economy of the country had been ruined.
- e. Once again the children of Israel were spared the consequences of the plague.



The Celestial Cow

- f. Another god of Egypt was 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.

27-30. ²⁷*And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.*

²⁸*Intreat the LORD (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.* ²⁹*And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the LORD; and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know how that the earth is the LORD'S.* ³⁰*But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the LORD God.*

- a. As a result of this plague Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron, confessed his sin and asked for prayer that the hail would stop. He promised to let Israel go. The terribleness of this plague really seized him. Pharaoh had given up on calling on his magicians. The solution was obviously only in Moses and Aaron.
- b. The wicked often seek the prayers of the righteous when they find themselves defeated. Note the cases of King Jeroboam I (1 Kgs 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 most certainly had sinned many times before this.
- c. Pharaoh's confession that Jehovah was righteous and he and his people were wicked is definite progress. He had once stated that he did not even know Jehovah (5:2). The Holy Spirit convicts the world of righteousness, that is, of God's righteousness and Christ's righteousness (Jn 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 the plague (cf 8:8; 8:28).
- d. Pharaoh made an unconditional promise to let Israel go if the thundering and hail stopped.
- e. Moses went out of the city to pray. He was utterly confident that his prayers would stop the hail - and they did! Moses indicated to Pharaoh that he was to learn from the plagues that the earth (or the land) was the LORD'S! Pharaoh had already learned that Jehovah was a God and that there was no one like Him. He is now to learn that Jehovah owns and controls all the land. Psalm 24:1 - *A Psalm of David. The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.*

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, exaltation and victory. It is not Pharaoh who controls and owns the earth. It was not even the gods of Egypt, but YAHWEH, God of Israel!

- f. Moses did not trust Pharaoh's promise to release Israel. He knew he would not keep it. Moses knew this by God's revelation, rather than by his own natural understanding of human nature. Isaiah 26:10 - *Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.* Note the full name Jehovah God in 9:30. It appears that Moses relished speaking this name in all its fullness in Pharaoh's hearing.

31-35. ³¹*And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was bolled.* ³²*But the wheat and the rie were not smitten: for they were not grown up.* ³³*And Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread abroad his hands unto the LORD: and the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth.* ³⁴*And when Pharaoh 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 Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go; as the LORD had spoken by Moses.*

- a. The flax and the barley were smitten by the hail. 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. 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) is a grain much like wheat, but inferior to it.
- b. The desperate Egyptians were sorely frightened and in deep sorrow. Their sky-goddess Nut could not protect them from hail from the sky (she is often pictured as lanky, nude female arching from horizon to horizon across the sky, touching the ground with fingertips and toes). The goddess Isis and the god Seth were also thought to have care over agricultural production. These gods were silent.
- c. Pharaoh did not keep his promise to let Israel go. Instead, he hardened his heart as did his Egyptian servants. Pharaoh did reveal (unintentionally) that God's treatment of him was completely just. In refusing to let Israel go, Pharaoh sinned "yet more."

CHAPTER TEN

- 1,2. *¹And the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him: ²And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye may know how that I am the LORD.*
- a. 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 his 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.
 - b. It would seem that by this time Pharaoh had gone past the point of no return although he could always change his mind and obey God. Moses was sent to him primarily to provide an opportunity for God to work further signs upon Pharaoh and his people. By Moses' going to Pharaoh and warning him of the next plague Pharaoh would know that the next plague was no accident.
 - c. Moses himself most certainly told the next generation about the miracles and signs in Egypt (Deut 7:8,18,19). But Moses was not the only one who 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 exult in God's triumphs in Egypt.
 - d. God repeated again His desire that Israel would know that He was Jehovah! 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.
- 3-6. *³And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me. ⁴Else, if thou refuse to let my people go, behold, to morrow will I bring the locusts into thy coast: ⁵And they shall cover the face of the earth, that one cannot 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: ⁶And they shall fill thy houses, and the houses of all thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians; which neither thy fathers, nor thy fathers' fathers have seen, since*

the day that they were upon the earth unto this day. And he turned himself, and went out from Pharaoh.

- a. 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. But he had hardened his heart afterwards. 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 he might be blessed, for God exalts the humble (Jas 4:10).
- b. The locusts would be brought in *tomorrow*. Likewise the plagues of hail, murrain and flies were announced one day in advance.
- c. The locusts 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.
- d. Joel 2:9,10 refers to a later locust plague - *⁹They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. ¹⁰The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:*

7-9. *⁷And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed? ⁸And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, Go, serve the LORD your God: but who are they that shall go? ⁹And Moses 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 the LORD.*

- a. The servants of Pharaoh urged him to let the Israelites go. They had already suffered much in the previous plagues - the frogs, boils, 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 a 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."

- b. Pharaoh made an offer to Moses but he was not very sincere. He did tell Moses and Aaron to go and serve Jehovah their God (note that he also used God's full title). But almost before he finished uttering the offer, he was hedging, and demanded "who and who (else) will be going?" Thus his question reads in Hebrew.
- c. In his response to Pharaoh, Moses shows total confidence, total freedom and total certainty as to who would be leaving Egypt. He declared that with their young, with their old and with all their possessions they would go!
- d. Moses again made the demand that Pharaoh let them go and sacrifice, the demand he made at the very first meeting with Pharaoh (5:1).

10,11. ¹⁰*And he said unto them, Let the LORD be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you. ¹¹Not so: go now ye that are men, and serve the LORD; for that ye did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.*

- a. Pharaoh defiantly refused to let all Israelites go. 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").
- b. 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.
- c. Pharaoh's restriction of permission to depart to the men only was pure tyranny, without reason or mercy. Even the Egyptians, according to Herodotus, held religious festivals at which women were in the habit of going with men. He tells of men and women sailing together to the assembly, vast numbers in each boat and that the number of men and women sometimes amounted to 700,000.
- d. 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.

12-15. ¹²*And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail hath left.* ¹³*And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts.* ¹⁴*And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: 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 in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt.*

- a. As God commanded, Moses stretched forth his hand and rod. Then, the LORD caused a wind to blow from the east for 24 hours, all day and all night and the next morning the cloud of locusts appeared and then settled all over Egypt. Sometimes locusts 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.
- b. Usually locusts come into Egypt from the south or the southwest (from Ethiopia and Libya). But sometimes they do come into Egypt from the east, from Arabia. 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.
- c. The locusts utterly covered the land, so that the land was 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 (cf Joel 2:2,3; Psa 105:34,35; 78:46).
- d. 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 100 to 200 million locusts. They are hardy creatures. They can fly up to 20 hours continuously at 10-12 miles per hour. Locusts have been tracked as far as 900 miles in 14 days. 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 grain fields to stubble and even wild marsh reeds disappear. While locusts hoards are often a mile or less in width, clouds of locusts have been known to extend over 500 miles and be so thick as to hide the sun completely as they fly over.

16-20. ¹⁶Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. ¹⁷Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me this death only. ¹⁸And he went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD. ¹⁹And the LORD turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red sea; there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt. ²⁰But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go.

- a. Obviously, the locusts had their intended effect. Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron in haste, 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 himself. Moses complied with Pharaoh's request, went out from him and entreated Jehovah.
- b. 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 their remained not one locust in the land of Egypt. Only God could remove such a scourge. Swarms of fully mature locusts are impossible to discourage once they have settled to feed. They are very difficult to eradicate with any quantity of poison that is not also deadly to other creatures.
- c. This is the first mention of the Red Sea (Heb. - *Yam Suph*). Most likely this is the same sea that we now refer to as the Red Sea.
- d. Again, Pharaoh would not let Israel go because of his hardened heart.

21-23. ²¹And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. ²²And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: ²³They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.



Amen-Rā

a. The darkness of this plague 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, he also was a sun-god. He was the chief deity of Thebes, the capital city during the 18th dynasty, the time of Moses.

b. 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* . . .).

c. What caused the darkness? Was it a supernatural darkness, like that which came the

day Christ died (Lk 23:44)? The Greek Old Testament reads in Exodus 10:22, *There was darkness, very black, even a storm, over all the land of Egypt three days.* It is possible that the darkness could have been caused by a dust storm. The other plagues involved the 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.



Rā

d. To those people who lived in western Kansas during the "dust bowl" days of the early 1930's, the effect was devastating. The dust cloud 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.

- e. What a terrifying prospect lies in store for those condemned to hell, in the "outer darkness" (Mt 8:12)! If Pharaoh found the darkness of Egypt terrifying, what a fearsome fate awaits those "to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever!" (Jude 13).

24-26. ²⁴And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you. ²⁵And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the LORD our God. ²⁶Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the LORD our God; and we know not with what we must serve the LORD, until we come thither.

- a. Again, Pharaoh makes a compromise offer to Moses. He would let all the Israelites go, but they must leave the 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 the Egyptians, as a pledge of the Israelites return. Possibly 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.
- b. It is very likely that Pharaoh had great difficulty contacting Moses in the pitch black darkness.
- c. In response to Pharaoh's offer, Moses 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, 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 very near so.
- d. By making this extra demand, Moses seems to be forcing the issue between himself and Pharaoh to a decisive climax. He was not giving one concession to Pharaoh; rather, he was upping his demands.
- e. 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.

27-29. ²⁷*But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go.* ²⁸*And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die.* ²⁹*And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more.*

- a. Apparently the plagues and Moses' attitude had taken their toll on Pharaoh. 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, that after just one more plague, Pharaoh's servants would come down to him, bow down and plead with the Israelites to leave (11:8). Even Pharaoh himself eventually came to Moses and begged for them to leave (12:30,31).
- b. Moses did warn Pharaoh of the final plague before leaving Pharaoh's palace, as ordered. 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.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. *And the LORD said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether.*
 - a. Chapter eleven gives the account of 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 also tells of Pharaoh's rejection of Moses and God's message.
 - b. This revelation was made to Moses either during his hot conversation with Pharaoh or sometime prior to his arrival at Pharaohs' house. The latter view seems more plausible although either could be the case. Perhaps this occurred during the three days of darkness.
 - c. The word for *plague* in 11:1 is not used elsewhere in Exodus. Its most numerous occurrence is in Leviticus 13-14, where it refers to the plague of leprosy. It means a *blow* or *striking*. It was to be the final decisive blow.
- 2,3. *²Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold. ³And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.*
 - a. The Israelites were to ask for jewels of silver and gold. The word for *jewels* actually means *vessels*, but the fact that they were of silver and gold justifies the translation.
 - b. 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.
 - c. The word *borrow* in the KJV is a little misleading. It should be translated as *ask*. Neither the Israelites nor the Egyptians interpreted their asking as borrowing. No one hinted that the items would be returned.
 - d. It is interesting to note that the Egyptians looked upon Moses and the Israelites with favor . . . Moses was even considered very great! This was predicted to Moses back at the burning bush (3:20-22).

- e. The people of 11:3 seem to be the *Israelite* people. At this moment, Moses was very high in the esteem of the Israelite people. Not long before they had scorned him (5:20-21); and very soon after this they will be scorning Moses for all their troubles (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 should serve as a warning to us not to low-rate ourselves too much.

4-6. ⁴*And Moses said, Thus saith the LORD, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: ⁵And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. ⁶And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more.*

- a. God told Moses that the last plague would strike at about midnight. The hour of this plague would make its coming even more dreadful! God did not specify which midnight. We know from 12:1 that a new month (called Abib) had then started. Exodus 12:3 tells us that on the 10th day of that month each family was to select a lamb. Then on the 14th day of the month the lamb would be slain (12:6). Thus the “midnight” was at least four days distant and maybe more. But Pharaoh did not know this. Possibly the approach of each midnight gave him premonitions of terror as he recalled Moses’ words.
- b. 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. 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 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.

- c. In this last plague God would go out into the midst of Egypt. All the firstborn of Egypt would die, those high-born and low-born, and the firstborn of all beasts. There would be a great cry of anguish throughout all the land of Egypt. The lowly maid servant (slave woman) working at the mill would see her firstborn die. Pharaoh on his throne would suffer the same. Pharaoh’s forefathers had once tried to slay the babes of Israel (1:22). Now all Egypt is sentenced to have its firstborn die.

- d. The death of firstborn beasts would be impressive in Egypt where many beasts are worshipped as manifestations of various gods.
- e. Ramm comments 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 (Mt 25:30). The cry that was to arise out of 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.

7,8. *⁷But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. ⁸And 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 Pharaoh in a great anger.*

- a. God makes it clear that he makes a distinction between the Egyptians and Israel. 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 Josh 10:21.)
- b. 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.
- c. After the plague Pharaoh's servants 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).
- d. Moses left the presence of Pharaoh hot with 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.

9,10. *⁹And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt. ¹⁰And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh: and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land.*

- a. Even after all this, Pharaoh would not change his mind. God cautioned Moses to not 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 Israel” (7:4; 4:21). There is a marvelous review and summary of the first nine plagues in these two verses (9 and 10).
- b. Exodus 11:9,10 are truly transitional verses. From this point on, Moses will be dealing with Israel and not with Pharaoh.

CHAPTER TWELVE

God's instructions to Moses in the land of Egypt occupy 12:1-20. These instructions concern 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, how the Egyptians thrust out the Israelites and how the Israelites collected jewelry from the Egyptians. It gives the account 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).

1,2. *¹And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, ²This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.*

- a. God gave the instructions about the passover and the feast of unleavened bread while the Israelites were still in Egypt. Of the three annual feasts of the Israelites, the passover alone is said to have been instituted in Egypt. Critics maintain that the passover information in Exodus 12 is a very late priestly composition (5th 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.
- b. The month in which the passover occurred thereafter became 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 epic in Israel's history.

The month containing the passover was anciently called Abib, and occurred partly in our March and partly in April. Exodus 23:15 - *Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt . . .* This month was called Nisan after the Babylonian captivity (see Est 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 September/October. 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 and sin was a bondage, like Israel's in Egypt. When anyone is in Christ, lo, he is a new creature! (2 Cor 5:17).

- 3-5. ³*Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: ⁴And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. ⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:*

- a. An animal was to be selected for the passover. 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, this 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 in HIS mind. That lamb is the Christ, our passover, who has been sacrificed for us! (Jn 1:29; 1 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.
- b. The lamb was to be selected on the 10th day of the month. Presumably, it was kept apart from the rest of the flock. It was to be slain on the 14th 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! (1 Pet 1:19,20).

- c. In Exodus 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 humanly-created denominations destroys the spirit-given unity of the whole world-wide congregation of God.
- d. 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 10 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.

- e. The lamb to be selected was to be without blemish, having no sores, scars or deformities (cf Lev 22:20-22). Likewise, Christ was without blemish of sin (1 Pet 1:19; Heb 4:15). The lamb was to be a male one 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 Genesis 21:4 where we are told that Isaac was circumcised when he was a "son of eight days," that is, eight days old. Leviticus 27:6 has a similar wording: "From a son of a month unto a son of five years."

Our Lord Jesus, like the full-grown yearling lamb, was offered at the peak of his young maturity, a little beyond age 30 (Lk 3:23).

6. *And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.*

- a. The lamb was to be killed by the whole congregation "between the two evenings." 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 (Rom 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.

- b. The lamb was slain about sunset. Deuteronomy 16:6 - *Thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun.* Exodus 12:6 literally says “between the two evenings.” The meaning of this is not absolutely certain, but the Jews interpreted it to mean between 3:00 and 6:00 in the afternoon. Supposedly if it were after sunset, it would place the sacrifice on the next calendar day. The annual Day of Atonement was on the 10th day of the seventh month, but the observance began on the 9th 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 thereafter.

It is noteworthy that Christ died at the ninth hour, about 3:00 p.m., which was the time the passover lambs began to be slain.

- c. Was the passover a sacrifice? It certainly was a sacrifice. Notice that the passover ritual is called the sacrifice of the Lord's passover (Ex 12:27; 34:25; Deut 16:2). The only reason to hesitate to call the passover a sacrifice is that its original observance in Egypt did not involve the use of alters or priests. This was due to the fact that the first passover was kept during the patriarchal age before the law of Moses set up a system of priests, alters, etc. 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 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.

The fact is stressed 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. 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.

7. *And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.*
- a. The blood from the sacrifice was placed on the two side posts and on the lintel across the top of the doorway 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 of uncleanness. Hyssop is a lowly plant, sometimes growing out of cracks and walls (1 Kgs 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 (Psa 51:7).
 - b. 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 on our hearts (that is our souls) will be the only criterion for determining whether we receive eternal life or eternal punishment (see 1 Pet 1:2; Heb 12:24).
 - c. Exodus 12:22 speaks of dipping the hyssop in the blood in the basin. The Hebrew word translated *basin* (*saph*) indeed means basin or bowl, but it is also translated threshold or seal. The Greek Old Testament translated it in Exodus 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 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?
 - d. 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 (page 373). Possibly some superstitious people did believe that this was true; but it has no proven connection with the acts of the Israelites.

8-10. ⁸*And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. ⁹Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the putrulence thereof. ¹⁰And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.*

- a. In preparing the lamb for the passover, it was to be 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 can be reasonably 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.
- b. The Greek Old Testament (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 (Jn 19:36).
- c. Unleavened bread is made without yeast or other "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 (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 (2 Cor 5:7; Lk 12:1; Mk 8:15). These are "leaven" which must be put out of Christian's lives.
- d. The bitter herbs that were served with the unleavened bread and roasted lamb probably were symbols of the previous suffering of the Israelites. The bitter herbs here are also referred to in Numbers 9:11. The Jewish writings called the Mishna allowed as bitter herbs lettuce, chicory, pepperwort, snakeroot or dandelion. The Mishna dates from second century B.C. to second century A.D.
- e. The reason is not clear why no leftovers were kept from the passover feast. Perhaps it was to cause the participants to associate this food exclusively with the deliverance they experienced that night. Another possibility is that leftover fragments may have been used as objects for

superstitious practices. Any leftover fragments might have fallen into irreverent hands which might treat them spitefully.

11,12. 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 the LORD'S passover.*

¹²*For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.*

- a. The Israelites were to eat the passover in haste. The hour was probably late by the time the lamb was roasted and served and the lamb had to be eaten by midnight (11:4; 12:29). There were also many other last minute jobs for the Israelites, as anyone 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. Little did the Israelites dream that those same clothes and shoes they had that night would be miraculously preserved for 40 years in the desert (Deut 29:5; Neh 9:21).
- b. 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. 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.
- c. 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 1 Kings 18:21. This meaning does not seem to apply to the matter of the passover.
- d. Disaster would strike Egypt the night of the passover in that 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 beasts. By this act, God would perform (literally "do") judgments against all the gods of Egypt (cf Num 33:4). Note that it was GOD who passed over the land. No "destroying angel" is mentioned here; but further explanation will be given on verse 23.

- e. “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.
- f. 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.”

13,14. 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 the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.* ¹⁴*And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.*

- a. The blood had a specific purpose. It 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” (verse 23); to one another. Consider the impact of the words: “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.”
- b. The word *plague* in verse 13 does not necessarily 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. 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* 47 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 Psalm 78:50,51, we find 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 must believe that this was a miraculous judgment in the fullest sense of that term. Still, we cannot deny the testimony of Psalm 78; 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 beast. It did not strike in houses with blood at the doors.

- c. The passover was to be observed every year thereafter as a memorial and as a feast unto Jehovah, throughout Israel's generations, forever. The old testament records just six times when the passover was kept: (1) Egypt (Ex 12); (2) Sinai (Num 9); (3) Canaan (Josh 5); (4) Hezekiah (2 Chron 30); (5) Josiah (2 Kgs 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.

15-25. ¹⁵Seven 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 Israel. ¹⁶And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you. ¹⁷And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever. ¹⁸In 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. ¹⁹Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land. ²⁰Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread. ²¹Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover. ²²And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. ²³For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. ²⁴And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. ²⁵And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service.

- a. During the seven days following the passover would be the observance of the feast of unleavened bread. 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 Israelite's houses. This was a convenient ordinance for the Israelites who left Egypt to observe. They left in such a hurry that their bread was not leavened anyway. It appears that Moses did not relay God's

instructions

instructions (15-20) concerning the feast of unleavened bread until after their departure was under way. Verse 17 speaks of Israel's departure as a completed act, which had occurred "this day." Moses gave the

about the passover at least four days in advance and gave a last day reminder about killing the passover. 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.



- b. During the feast of unleavened bread, Israel was to hold holy convocations (assemblies) on the first and seventh day 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. God stressed that they were to observe the feast when they arrived in Canaan (13:5,6).
- c. The New Testament explains leaven as a symbol of corruption and evil influence (Mt 16:6; Mk 8:15; 1 Cor 5:7). 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) forever (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.
- d. Failure to keep the feast was to be punished by being cut off from the congregation of Israel. Exactly what this punishment involved is not clearly specified, whether execution, expulsion from access to the temple sacrifices, or from buying and selling among Israelites or from all social contacts with the people. These are all dire penalties.

- e. Moses called the elders and told them again the information God had given approximately a week before (12:3-7). Moses added statements about using hyssop. He also added statements about not leaving the houses that night until morning. Hebrews 11:28 - *Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them* (KJV).
- f. In verse 23 we read about the “destroyer.” We suppose that he was an angel sent by God. Psalm 78:49 says, *He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them* (KJV) (literally, angels of evil). Whether this 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 (2 Sam 24:15,16).

In Exodus 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. Scripture does not contain the expression “death angel.” “Destroying angel” might be a more correct 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 can only operate within the limits that God will tolerate. Satan could only afflict Job to the degree that God consented to tolerate (Job 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. Satan is a being who was created by God. It was God Himself, accompanied by HIS destroyer(s), who went forth that night to take vengeance.

26-28. ²⁶*And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? ²⁷That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD’S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped. ²⁸And the children of Israel went away, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.*

- a. In future generations, when the Israelites would observe the feast, the children would ask questions about it, as children do! The parents were to be prepared to answer all questions. In the modern Jewish 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 whenever it came up.

- b. John Davis, in his book "Moses and the Gods of Egypt," points out that the concern that 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 that they see. It is God's plan that the children be taught from infancy to serve God intelligently.
- c. 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. This fact transforms the passover from a ritual of the past to a reality in the present.
- d. The word *passover* is applied to:
 - (1) The lamb killed in the sacrifice (12:21);
 - (2) To all the events of the feast (Lev 23:5); and
 - (3) To the Lord's act of mercy in sparing the Israelites (Ex 12:14).
- e. Upon hearing the words of Moses, the Israelites not only obeyed, but obeyed worshipfully. Their obedience was purely an act of faith in God and Moses. However, after seeing the plagues Moses had predicted and brought upon Egypt, the people certainly should have had faith.

29,30. ²⁹*And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle.*

³⁰*And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.*

- a. At midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. There was not a house where there was not one dead. There arose a great cry in Egypt as the firstborn expired (cf 11:6). God had foretold to Pharaoh, *And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even 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.

- b. 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 covered by the blood (see 1 Thess 5:1-3; 2 Thess 1:7,8; Rev 1:7).
- c. The Egyptians did not see the “destroyer(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. 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 maidservant that is behind the mill.” But on the passover night, social status made no difference. Only the blood mattered.
- d. 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 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” seems 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 punishment upon the ungodly (from *Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. I, page 365).

31-33. ³¹*And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said. ³²Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. ³³And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men.*

- a. Upon the death of the firstborn all the Egyptians, including Pharaoh, rose up in the night, 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, they would all be dead men!
- b. 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 light of the fact of Pharaoh’s assumed divinity. “Bless me also” is a request that God would save them from further disasters, and perhaps restore the plague-battered land.

- c. 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! All Egypt was glad when the Israelites departed. Psalm 105:38 - *Egypt was glad when they departed: for the fear of them fell upon them* (KJV).
- d. 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.

34-36. ³⁴*And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders.* ³⁵*And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment:* ³⁶*And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.*

- a. The people of Israel 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 for their needs.
- b. Israel left on foot, as pilgrims, not in chariots. They left carrying their kneading troughs bound up in cloths upon their shoulders. (This was surely better than carrying bricks whether made with or without straw!) Israel's first experiences of freedom involved the labor of long walks, 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.
- c. The Egyptians gave the Israelites jewels (literally vessels) of silver and gold; and also clothing.



(The desert can be very cold at night and in the mountains it does occasionally snow so extra clothing would be valuable.) As God 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. The scripture says that they *spoiled* 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).

- d. 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). Psalm 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.

37. *And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children.*

- a. When the children of Israel left Egypt, they journeyed from Rameses to Succoth. The Rameses of 12:37 is presumably the same place referred to in 1:11. It must have been a thrill to say, “Goodbye 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 12 miles south of Tanis. Extensive temple ruins from the time of King Rameses II have been found at Tanis, but no remains of the 18th 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. Most experts agree that Qantir is the site of what was Rameses.

Succoth is generally thought to be the hill-mound of Tell el-Maskhuta, about 10 miles west of Lake Timsah. Succoth means “booths” or “tents” or “temporary dwellings.” While the Israelites were traveling from Rameses to Succoth (a distance of about 38 miles or three days traveling), 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.

- b. When the Israelites left Egypt there were 600,000 on foot that were men, besides children. This is a round number. The same number is given in Numbers 11:21. A census at Mount 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 2½ 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. Nonetheless, we believe it is the correct figure. J. H. Hertz tells that at the close of the 18th century, 400,000 Tartars started from the confines of Russia to the Chinese border in a single night. In the censuses recorded in the book of Numbers (chapters 1 and 26), 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.

- c. Some 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. Answer: Parts of the Sinai are greener than is generally realized. That is beside the point. The scripture unhesitatingly asserts that there was simply NOT enough food for the Israelites in Sinai (Ex 16:3 and Num 11:6). The Israelites were maintained by the miraculous manna from the LORD for 40 years (Ex 16:35 cf Jn 6:31,32,39).
 - (2) The number in Exodus 12:37 is thought by some to have been transferred from the census figures taken by King David over 400 years later (1 Chron 21; 2 Samuel 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 (1 Chron 21:5; 2 Sam 24:9). 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 will accept the words of Jesus about the reliability of God's law: Luke 16:17 - *And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.*
 - (3) Egypt could not have kept in subjection a people numbering over 2 million. Bernard Ramm asserts that all Egypt had only about 7 million people and an army of not over 25,000. 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 2 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 by 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, clan or tribal subdivision. Mendenhall suggests that the *eleph* was a "military unit." Thus, Israel supposedly had about 600 families in its total population with a population of perhaps 6,000. Others suggest up to 25,000. Answer: This argument is weakened by the fact that the large total is broken down into 12 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. We also read in Joshua 8:3 that an Israelite army of 30,000 attacked Ai. 5,000 more joined the army (8:12). Surely this could not mean 30 families plus 5 families.
- (5) If Israel had a population of over 2 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 230 hours to pass a given point; and would need for bare subsistence 900 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.

38,39. 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 Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual.*

- a. A mixed multitude accompanied Israel out. A multitude means MANY. They were also accompanied by a very large number of flocks and herds. The reference to cattle indicates that the bondage did not extend to the confiscation of livestock.
- b. The racial identity of the mixed multitude is not known. They may have been the 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 in the group. Some may have been Egyptians who were converted as a result of the plagues.
- c. This mixed multitude proved to be a thorn in the flesh for 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).
- d. 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 also be Ananias and Sapphira. Like a net full of mixed fish, or a grain field infested with tares, so God's congregation is often mixed (Mt 13:25-30,47,48).

40,41. ⁴⁰*Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. ⁴¹And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.*

- a. Israel had been in Egypt 430 years. They came out at the end of 430 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 430 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.
- b. Although there are some problems associated with this 430 year period, we believe that it is the correct number. The Hebrew interpretation gives the number of years as 430. We accept this statement without any qualification. The statement of Stephen in Acts 7:6 is in basic agreement with the chronology in Exodus: Acts 7:6 - *And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring*

them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years. It is supposed that the number Stephen gave is a round number for the 430 years in Exodus 12.

- c. 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.

42. *It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations.*

- a. The Israelites were to commemorate the night of their deliverance by an observance to the Lord. This verse appears to be an exhortation by Moses inserted when he wrote the book of Exodus sometime after the events of the passover night. This verse leads directly into the instructions about the passover (43-49).
- b. Notice that verse 42 states twice that the night was to be a night of observance. Future generations were to make special observance of that night. This should speak also to us in retrospect about the great significance of the passover observance.

43-50. ⁴³*And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof: ⁴⁴But every man’s servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. ⁴⁵A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof. ⁴⁶In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof. ⁴⁷All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. ⁴⁸And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, 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: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. ⁴⁹One law shall be to him that is home-born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you. -*

⁵⁰*Thus did all the children of Israel; as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.*



- a. Here we find listed supplementary instructions about the passover. 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, we suspect that these instructions were given at this early point in Israel's journeys, perhaps at Succoth, to clarify to both Israelites and non-Israelites how His passover was to be observed.

- b. Basically, the instructions were that a hired servant or sojourner (alien) living among the Israelites was *not* to take part in 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. Numbers 19:14 refers to strangers keeping the passover "according to the statute of the passover." Probably this refers to the laws in Exodus 12:43-48.
- c. The passover belonged only to covenant-keepers. The instructions given here probably were uttered to persuade the non-circumcised fellow-travelers with the Israelites to get into Israel all the way or to expect none of the blessing of Israelites. In our times, people sometime attend worship, meetings and other activities, but never consent to be baptized and become part of the church. Much like the mixed multitude accompanying Israel, they enjoy God's people, but do not desire to acknowledge their need for further obedience.
- d. The instructions about the passover listed here seem to be stated in seven laws. 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 (v 43), (b) the circumcised may eat (v 44), (c) no settler or hired servant may eat unless circumcised (v 45), (d) eat it in one house (v 46), (e) all the congregation shall keep the feast (v 47), (f) let sojourners be circumcised (v 48), (g) the circumcised aliens shall be accepted as are natives of the land (v 48). Note: the last two regulations may constitute only one.
- e. In verse 46 is a law about the bones of the passover lamb. Not a bone of it shall be broken (cf Num 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 would be hard to imagine any other satisfactory explanation for this law. Psalm 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 verse 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.

51. *And it came to pass the selfsame day, that the LORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies.*
- a. This verse refers back to 12:41. Note the reference to the “self-same day” in both 41 and 51. The interruption of 42-49 cleared up some of the relationships between the mixed multitude which left with Israel and with Israel itself. Verse 51 connects the following laws (in Ex 13) about the firstborn to the preceding material.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

If we could place a theme on chapter 13, it would be “Demands and Directions to the Redeemed.” God’s redeemed people have obligations to Him as well as directions from Him. The chapter opens with God’s command to Moses to sanctify (consecrate) all the firstborn of Israel, both of men and of beasts.

The chapter continues with Moses’ speech to the people (3-16). This speech dealt with two matters: (1) the observance of the feast of unleavened bread (3-10); (2) the consecration or redemption of their firstborn (11-16). The chapter closes with information as to how God wondrously led the Israelites as they left Egypt (17-22).

The words of God to Moses and Moses’ words to the people 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 (5) and how they would there keep the feast of unleavened bread and set apart their firstborn in that land (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 his words had come from God.

1,2. *¹And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ²Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.*

- a. 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 males only. Daughters and female animals were apparently affected by this regulation. To sanctify is explained in verse 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 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).
- b. 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 Hebrews 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, teachers, 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.

3,4. ³*And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten.* ⁴*This day came ye out in the month Abib.*

- a. It appears Moses spoke to the people on the first day of their departure. Literally, Exodus 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.
 - b. Note 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; (2) about sanctifying their firstborn to the LORD.
 - c. Note the emphasis on Moses' command, "Remember this day." 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. 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.
 - d. Israel departed in the month Abib. 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 Exodus 13:4; 23:15; 34:18 and Deuteronomy 16:1. In Exodus 9:31 the same word refers to the ear (or head of grain): "the barley was in the ear." In Leviticus 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.
5. *And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, 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.

- a. The Israelites were commanded 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.
- b. Only five of the seven “nations” in the land of Canaan are named here. The Greek Old Testament adds the names of the Gergashites and Perizzites. Concerning these seven “nations” (see Ex 3:8 also cf Gen 15:19-21; Ex 23:23-28). These people in Canaan (all of whom were collectively called Canaanites) were not actually separate sovereign nations. They were in fact 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.
- c. 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.

6,7. *⁶Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the LORD. ⁷Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.*

- a. The major feature of the feast would be the eating of unleavened bread for a week. No leaven was permitted within the Israelites property during that time. On the seventh day of this period, there was a feast to Jehovah.

8-10. *⁸And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt. ⁹And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD’S law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt. ¹⁰Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.*

- a. The Israelites were to tell their children that the reason for eating unleavened bread that week was to serve as a reminder for all that God did for them when he brought them out of Egypt.
- b. To show their devotion to the Lord for bringing them up out of Egypt, the Israelites 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 ways, their deliverance was to be made unforgettable to them

throughout future generations. (“Unto the” 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.

- c. The exact form of the sign which God had in mind is not specified. The 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 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 Matthew 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.
- d. The scripture seems to indicate that the sign was the deliverance from Egypt (13:8) or was the feast of unleavened bread. 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. It is equally wrong to insist on an exclusively 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.

11,12. ¹¹*And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee, ¹²That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD’S.*

- a. The firstborn of man and beast were to be set apart to the Lord. Literally, they were to cause the firstborn to “pass over.” Sometimes this expression meant to sacrifice (2 Kgs 23:10), and sometimes it meant to transfer over to (Num 27:8). Both of these meanings seems 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).

- b. The paragraph included in verses 11-16 is a detailed exposition by Moses about God's law concerning sanctifying the firstborn. This law is briefly stated in verses 1 and 2. At Mount Sinai, God commanded the entire tribe of the Levites (the descendants of Jacob's son, Levi) to be set apart to Him instead of the firstborn of each family in every tribe (Num 3:5-13,41, 45).
 - c. Exodus 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.
13. *And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem.*
- a. The firstborn were set apart to the Lord in the following ways: (a) firstborn lambs, kids or cattle were sacrificed (v15). 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 22:4; 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 (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).
- 14,15. 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 the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: ¹⁵And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem.*
- a. There was a connection made between Israel's deliverance from Egypt and the practice of redeeming the firstborn. 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.

- b. Certainly man 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. In all cases, however, our rendering must be in compliance to His will.

16. *And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt.*

- a. The "frontlets" mentioned here seem to refer to some type of object, strap or bandage about the head. The wearing of such an object 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.
- b. 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 *tephillin* from the Hebrew word for prayer. Also see notes on 3:19). God surely intended that His instructions regarding these frontlets be left simply in the form in which His divine wisdom stated them, without any ecclesiastical interpretation and enforcement. Deuteronomy 4:2 - *Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.*

17. *And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt:*

- a. God did not lead Israel by the short route, along the Mediterranean seacoast linking Egypt and Canaan. This was a heavily traveled route, approximately 150 miles across. The route crosses a sandy desert (the desert of Shur). It would have required only about two weeks to travel this way.
- b. This route was called the Way of the Sea (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.
- c. The Bible calls this road the Way of the Philistines, because Philistines had settled along the southwest coast of Canaan, and the road would

pass through the area settled by them. Exodus 15:14 also mentions the Philistines.

- d. The Philistines made their major migration into Canaan about 1200 B.C., coming from Crete or Caphtor and other islands in the Mediterranean. 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. However, some recent archaeological inscriptions indicate the presence of settlers in the area of Philistia considerably before 1200 B.C.
- e. Note that GOD LED the Israelites. He chose their path. Psalm 23:2 - *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.* Psalm 37:23 - *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*
- f. God knew that the Israelites were not yet able to face war. Exodus 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 (1 Cor 10:13). Psalm 103:14 - *For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.*
- g. 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 tabernacle worship center and a priesthood. Frankly, they needed to be converted (turned) to the LORD.
- h. Spiritually, Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan was a much longer journey than the physical trip. The people had to be converted from the idolatry of Egypt to the service of God. They were to be transformed from slaves into spiritual leaders. The harsh Sinai desert became a demonstration area and a school where they could daily see God's power and care, and learn to totally rely upon Him. God did not intend that they should ever return to Egypt, either in body or in spirit (Deut 17:16; Neh 9:17; Num 14:4; Josh 24:14).
- i. 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.

18. *But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.*

- a. God led the children of Israel 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. Extensive study has led to the firm belief that the *Yam Suph* is simply the same body of water which we call the Red Sea, and here in Exodus 13:18, it particularly refers to that arm of the Red Sea called the Gulf of Suez.
- b. One wonders what wilderness (or desert area) is referred to as the “wilderness of the Red Sea.” Most scholars 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 feel that the desert referred to was that which lay between Egypt and the Red Sea and not that of the Sinai peninsula. Verse 20 indicates that they came into the wilderness after they left Succoth. The location of Succoth (Tell Maskhuta) is only about 10 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.
- c. The term “wilderness” in Exodus generally refers to the wilderness in Sinai, east of Egypt (cf Num 33:8; Ex 3:18; 5:3). This gives additional support to the view that Israel traveled east from Succoth into the Sinai wilderness, traveling 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).
- d. Note that the Israelites camped in “Etham, in the edge of the wilderness.” (Ex 13:20 and Num 33:6) The Wilderness of 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. The fact that Israel came out into the Wilderness of Etham AFTER they crossed the Red Sea gives support to the view that the place called Etham was in the wilderness area east of the present Suez Canal, in the Sinai peninsula.
- e. It would appear that the children of Israel had weapons when they went out of Egypt. The term “harnessed” is derived from the Hebrew word *chamushim* which is a difficult term but usually means “armed.” It is used in Judges 7:11, Joshua 4:12 and 1:14. All of these passages refer to armed men. It would be hard to see how Israel could have come out of Egypt heavily armed, well-disciplined and trained for warfare. The 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 definitely included military leadership. Josephus tells that Moses defeated an Ethiopian army by clever strategy (*Ant. II, X, 2*). This story can neither be verified nor disproved.

19. *And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.*

- a. When Israel left Egypt, they carried with them 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 350 years before was coming to pass in their day (Gen 50:24,25). Hebrews 11:22 - *By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.*
- b. 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.

20-22. ²⁰*And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness.* ²¹*And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: ²²He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.*

- a. Etham lay in the "edge of the wilderness." The term wilderness, as it is used in Exodus, usually refers to the desert area of the Sinai peninsula, east of the present Suez Canal and the Gulf of Suez (3:1,18; 15:22). The exact location of Etham is not known. It is thought to lay east or southeast of Lake Timsah. It would be reasonable to suppose that Etham lay in the Wilderness of Etham. This area 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.)
- b. Israel was led by a pillar of cloud and fire. This column in the air above them began to lead them at Succoth. It had the appearance of smoke (or cloud) by day and of fire by night. There was only one pillar: Exodus

14:24 - *And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through THE pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians* (emp. added). The pillar is sometimes referred to as “the cloud,” even when it was shining as fire in the dark (Ex 14:19; Num 9:21).

- c. The cloud must have been huge and high to have been visible to all the Israelites. It would seem that during the first few days of their journeys, the Israelites traveled some at night as well as during the daytime. They sought to put as much distance between them and Pharaoh as possible. From Succoth to the Gulf of Suez by a route along the east side of the Bitter Lakes is about 55 miles. This could have been traversed in about four days of hard marching.
- d. The scripture does not say that the cloud was a type of any one particular thing. We can safely say that it was representative of God leading his people during that present age. God now leads us by the Bible.
- e. Those who hold the “liberal” view of scripture, that it is merely a human production, naturally reject any miraculous views about the cloud. They assert (without proof) such ideas as the story of the cloud “goes back to observation of an active volcano located perhaps as far away as Midian.” They will always assert that whatever the cloud was, it was a *natural* phenomena. Some feel the entire story of the cloud is a vivid but *figurative* way of describing the reality of God’s presence with his people. Scripture presents it as very real and very miraculous.
- f. The cloud LED God’s redeemed people (Psa 78:14). 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 Ex 40:34-38; Num 9:15-23; 10:11,12,34.)

CHAPTER FOURTEEN



INTRODUCTION

This chapter tells of Israel's miraculous crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of the Egyptians who pursued them. 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). This chapter also makes the meaning of baptism clear. We are told in 1 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 on 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 the name of the Lord.* (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 6, 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 (1 Pet 3:21; Mk 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.

1,2. *¹And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ²Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea.*

- a. Surprisingly, 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) Baalzephon. Israel was to encamp in a vulnerable place, as if just waiting for Pharaoh to respond.
- b. The identifications of Pihahiroth, Migdol and Baalzephon 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, Lake Menzaleh, Lake Timsah, the Bitter Lakes and the Red Sea. We feel that the sea referred in 14:2 (and subsequently) is the Red Sea, Gulf of Suez. Acceptance of this view certainly requires acceptance of miraculous features in the crossing! We assuredly regard the crossing as miraculous in many respects.
- c. 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 Mount Seir (Edom) to Kadesh (Kadesh-Barnea). This was a generally westward turn, as a check of the map will show. Israel had been traveling in the wilderness, 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. This is mentioned to show that “turn back” does not necessarily have to mean a completed reversal of direction, as from south to north. A turn to the west would fulfill the command completely.
- d. The exact locations of Pihahiroth, Migdol and Baalzephon 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. 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 Mount Atakah, just west of

the Gulf of Suez tip would be a most probable location. Baalzephon, 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 Baalzephon in later centuries, located on the south tip of Lake Menzaleh. But another site named Baalzephon must be referred to here, since Lake Menzaleh is far more than a three days’ journey from Marah (see Num 33:8; Ex 15:22).

U. Cassuto refers to an Egyptian papyrus which refers to a tower of Baalzephon located near the Bitter Lakes. The existence of this second site certainly shows that we are not forced to accept Wright’s location near Lake Menzaleh as the only possible one.

3,4. *³For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. ⁴And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so.*

- a. Upon hearing of the location of the Israelites, Pharaoh would think that they were entrapped in the land. The suggested location of the Israelite camp is in an area hemmed in by Mount 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.)
- b. Three reasons are given for the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart: (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 (cf 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). 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.
- c. It seems odd that Pharaoh’s heart could again be hardened after enduring the ten plagues upon Egypt, including the loss of all the first born. Observe the text carefully and note the heart of Pharaoh. We are first told that Pharaoh would take notice of Israel’s detour, as if in exultant amazement. Obviously the Egyptians had spies, trackers and runners reporting on the journey of Israel. When Pharaoh heard of Israel’s position, his heart was changed toward the people and he regretted having let them go (4:5).

5. *And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?*
- a. When Pharaoh heard that Israel had fled, 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 which 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.
 - b. 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).
 - c. "Fled" does not suggest that Israel left surreptitiously, without Pharaoh's being aware of it. Far from it! They left in full view of the Egyptians, with a high hand, defiantly (Num 33:3,4). The word "fled" here is probably intended to give the idea that they had utterly left the country. Moses had previously proposed to Pharaoh should go a 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 way, stop, worship and return. Now he learns that they have FLED the country! Indeed they had. By this time Israel had been traveling almost four days and probably more, and had gone about 60 miles and were still going, but suddenly news comes to Pharaoh that the Israelites are entrapped in the wilderness as a result of an unexpected detour.
- 6,7. ⁶*And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: ⁷And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them.*
- a. Pharaoh prepared his chariot, and took his people with him. He took 600 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, horsemen (15:1) and an army (footmen) (14:7,9,17).
 - b. The word *chariot* in 14:6 is singular in Hebrew. But so also is the obviously plural chariots in 14:7 and 9. The Hebrew *rekeb* often means chariotry, or chariots, in a collective sense (cf Jdgs 4:3). Thus here it

probably refers to Pharaoh's chariots generally, rather than to Pharaoh's own personal chariot.

- c. "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 18th dynasty kings in battle in Canaan and Syria.
- d. 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 to assert that the biblical record in here in error. However, the significance of a related word in the Ugaritic texts means only "chariot warriors," without reference to the number of them. 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.
- e. 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).

8-10. ⁸*And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand.* ⁹*But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baalzephon.* ¹⁰*And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.*

- a. Concerning the hardening of Pharaoh's heart (see notes on 14:4).
- b. The Egyptians finally overtook the Israelites by the sea, by Pihahiroth, before (in front of, east of) Baalzephon (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.
- c. Israel's reaction upon seeing the host of the Egyptians was that of great fear and they cried out to the LORD. However, their cry seems to have been a cry of 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 harkened to them.

11,12. ¹¹*And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? ¹²Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.*

- a. The response of Israel to Moses must have sounded bitter indeed. “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.
- b. We have no record that the Israelites had spoken the exact words quoted in verses 11 and 12 in Egypt. However, the fearful spirit expressed by these words is quite similar to that expressed in Exodus 5:21. Possibly they had indeed uttered these words, even though we have no record of it.
- c. Psalm 106:7,8 - ⁷*Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea. ⁸Nevertheless he saved them for his name’s sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known.*
- d. 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.

13,14. ¹³*And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. ¹⁴The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.*

- a. Consider the powerful words of Moses: “Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD . . .” Moses’ faith is truly remarkable. He urged them to be quiet, for the LORD would fight for them. “In quietness and confidence shall be your strength” (Isa 30:15). They were to stop their outcries.

- b. The word *salvation* here means deliverance and victory (cf 1 Sam 14:45). However, we must not interpret it as if it refers 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.”
- c. The concept of the LORD fighting for His people is a common one in the Old Testament (see Josh 10:14; Psa 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).

15,16. ¹⁵*And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: ¹⁶But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.*

- a. God told Moses: “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).
- b. The use of the rod again by Moses 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 (14:21,26).

17,18. ¹⁷*And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. ¹⁸And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.*

- a. The Egyptians would pursue Israel because 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.
- b. By the defeat of their army, the Egyptians would know that the Israelites’ God was the LORD Jehovah! This thought has been stated repeatedly in Exodus (see notes on 7:5,17; 8:10,22; 14:4).

19,20. ¹⁹*And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: ²⁰And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.*

- a. 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.)
- b. The divine angel of the LORD traveled before Israel in the pillar of cloud (13:21; cf 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 (cf 25:22).
- c. Verse 20 clearly indicates that during that night it was dark on the Egyptian’s side of the cloud, possibly utterly dark so as to limit movement, and suggesting again the plague of darkness. However, the cloud lighted up the night on the Israelites’ side of it. The Israelite camp and probably the Sea beside them were dazzlingly floodlighted.
- d. The Greek Bible (LXX) has a different wording in verse 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.



21. *And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.*

- a. Three things divided the sea: (1) Moses’ rod; (2) the LORD; and (3) a strong east wind. The dividing of the sea was fundamentally a miracle by God. No other explanation can fully account for it. The east wind played a big part in the dividing of the sea. The

strong east wind blew all night, and made the 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.

- b. S. C. Bartlett, who was an eye witness traveler 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 15-20 years. De Lesseps had seen the northern end of the Sea in places blown almost dry. Bartlett refers also to the map of Maritime Canal Company, which reported that the ordinary difference between high and low tide in a calm sea was only 8/10ths of a meter (about 31 inches). However, the difference between the highest and lowest known seas (during a storm) was 3.24 meters (over 10 feet). This is a remarkable confirmation of the biblical information about the effect of the powerful winds on this part of the sea.
- c. If you think it seems 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 the wind.

22. *And the children of Israel 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.*



- a. The waters indeed formed a wall--a wall on the right and on the left. Exodus 15:8 - *And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.*
- b. According to the official Israel survey map, the waters at the north end of the Gulf of Suez have a depth of at least 5 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 down into the water. There are no sudden drop-offs. The crossing place would be about 4 miles across. We should not picture in our minds that Israel's crossing path was narrow; it was probably more than a mile wide.

- c. They walked across on dry ground, through the Sea! Dr. Edward Robinson 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) during the morning watch, between 2:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. They must have marched slowly because of encumbrances. If the column moved 1,000 abreast, it would occupy a space more than $\frac{1}{2}$ mile wide, and being at least 2000 people in depth, would extend for not less than 2 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 distance of four miles across. The whole body of Israelites could have passed over the distance of four miles easily during the morning watch time, when the Egyptians were troubled as they tried to pursue Israel.
- d. Hebrews 11:29 - *By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.* Isaiah 63:12,13 - ¹²*That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? ¹³That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble?* (cf Psa 77:19,20, 66:6).
- e. According to Psalm 77:16-18, a terrible storm 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. This of course is uncertain. In as much as the “wind blew all night,” 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.

23-25. ²³*And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. ²⁴And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, ²⁵And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians*

said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

- a. It would appear that the Egyptians followed the Israelites into the dry path across the Red Sea when the Israelites were mostly, if not completely, across. The crossing had begun some time before the morning watch (about 2:00 a.m.). We wonder if the Egyptians even noticed the walls of water on either side. A 15 foot wall of water ½ mile away might not appear too threatening, especially at night, with a deep darkness about them, and more especially if their attention was diverted by lightning and howling winds.
- b. The Egyptians 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. Then, in the middle of the night, they see the Israelites several miles away, almost across the Sea. They surely recalled how the Israelites had been blocked by the Sea only a few hours before. They probably wondered how in the world the Sea had been cleared up before them! Then, there was that light from the cloud, lighting up the path, even though it was 2 o'clock in the morning! Besides that, a storm overhead began to flash lightning, to boom thunder and pour rain, while the wind blew violently. All of this was so unusual, even eerie, that we wonder if they would have gone after the Israelites had not their hearts been so hardened.
- c. 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. This discomfiture came as a result of the thunderstorm (Psa 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 useless. 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.
- d. 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).
- e. The Greek Bible says the LORD "clogged" their chariot wheels. This reading is followed in the RSV. Possibly the sand may have balled up in their chariot wheels, jamming and immobilizing them and even producing the break off 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.

- f. Psalm 77:15-20 - ¹⁵*Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.* ¹⁶*The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled.* ¹⁷*The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad.* ¹⁸*The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.* ¹⁹*Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.* ²⁰*Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.*

26-28. ²⁶*And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.* ²⁷*And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.* ²⁸*And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.*

- a. 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 verse 27 is rendered “wonted flow” in the RSV. In Genesis 49:24, it refers to the strength of weapons (a bow). Parallels in other Semitic languages suggests 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.

- b. The Egyptians fled “against it” (RSV, “into it”). This expression carries the idea of an encounter or meeting. 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 sea bed in a rushing tide. What horror the Egyptians must have felt as they saw themselves trapped and unavoidably confronted by this water. Their bodies and chariots were swept eastward by the waters and dumped on the seashore (14:30). Not even one escaped. All were destroyed: chariots, horsemen and all the army (see Neh 9:11; Psa 106:11; 78:53; Ex 15:1,7).

- c. Jehovah overthrew the Egyptians. This literally says that he “shook off” the Egyptians. The same word is used in Nehemiah 5:13 and Psalm 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.
- d. Did Pharaoh himself perish in the Sea? It appears that he did. Absolutely all of those going into the Sea perished (verse 28). Seemingly, Pharaoh went with the host. “He shall follow after them” (verse 4). “I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host” (verse 4). The king “took his people with him” (verse 6). “When Pharaoh drew nigh . . .”(verse 10). God “overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea” (Psa 136:15).

This poses a big question for us: who then was this Pharaoh? We have been suggesting that he was Amenhotep II, and still hold this view. However, the mummy of Amenhotep II (with his great bow along side it) is preserved to this day, something that would not be true if he perished in the 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, means 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 proposes that the drowned 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 certainly are not held by most Egyptologists.

- 29. *But the children of Israel 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.*

- a. Many people wonder why this verse appears to an almost exact repeat of verse 22. 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. Another possibility is that the repetition is made to stress the contrasting fates of Egypt and Israel.

30,31. ³⁰*Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. ³¹And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses.*

- a. The last that Israel saw of the Egyptians, they were dead upon the sea shore! Obviously this was the east shore. They could not have seen them four miles away on the east shore. This was final retribution, measure for measure. For casting the infant sons of Israel into the water (1:12), Egypt had perished in the water.
- b. 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 until the body was properly interred. One is reminded of Revelation 19:17,18 - ¹⁷*And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; ¹⁸That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.*
- c. 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.
- d. The death of these enemies should suggest 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).
- e. The crossing of the Red Sea had a profound effect upon the Israelites. They feared the LORD. They believed the LORD and His servant Moses. Israel had once before believed (4:31), now their faith is renewed and enlarged. Israel had been saved from the hand of the Egyptians. They had now seen the power (literally hand) of the LORD (cf 15:6).

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Chapter 15 contains the following sections: (1) the song of Moses and the children of Israel (1-18); (2) the song of Miriam and the women (20-21); and (3) the record of Israel's travels from the Red Sea, through Marah, to Elim (22-27). A good title for this chapter would be "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.

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 phrase in verses 6 and 11. Using these verses as dividing points, we could outline the strophes thus: (1) the triumph of the Lord (1-6); (2) the tragedy of the Egyptians (7-12); and (3) the transfer (or transition) of Israel (13-17). A good way to divide the song into sections is on the basis of its thought divisions: (1) what the LORD IS (1-3); (2) what the LORD DID (4-16a); and (3) what the LORD WILL DO (16b-18).

The purpose of this song 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.

Exodus 15 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, such as Nehemiah 9:9ff, Psalms 78:11ff, 77:16ff, 105, 106:7ff and Habakkuk 3:8ff. 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.

1. *Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.*
 - a. The song which Moses led Israel in singing is comprised entirely of praise and adoration of the Almighty. After affirming the glorious triumph of God over Egypt, Moses states that He had thrown the horse and his rider into the sea.
 - b. "On the incomplete and uncertain determination by archaeologists that the Egyptians had no cavalry, and that soldiers did not ride horseback, this is

alleged by some to be an anachronism, despite the fact of its being vigorously disputed by eminent Egyptologists” (Coffman, p. 202).

2. *The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.*
- a. God is proclaimed to be the source of their strength and the object of their song. They speak of preparing for him a habitation or as the ASV gives it “this is my God, and I will praise Him.” “It was so natural a thing that, after the miraculous deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, they should turn their eyes to Canaan and, looking forward with certainty to the possession of the promised land, should anticipate with believing confidence the foundation of a sanctuary there, in which their God would dwell with them . . .” (Keil, pp. 50f).
 - b. The Hebrew word for LORD (Jehovah) in verse 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 (Psa 77:11; 89:8; 94:7). *YAH* is the last syllable in *Hallelujah*, meaning “Praise you Jah!” The name carries the idea of being.
 - c. God had promised that He would fight for Israel (verse 4), and now He is praised as a man of war.
- 4,5. *⁴Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea. ⁵The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone.*
- a. God cast Pharaoh's chariots and army into the sea. He “cast” them into the sea by compelling them to enter the seabed. His chosen captains were sunk (or drowned; the verb is passive) into the Red Sea. The “depths have covered them.” The depths suggest the deep sea waters, not a swampy, marshy, reedy area. Depths is the plural of the word *deep* referred to in Genesis 1:2.
 - b. 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 stones.
- 6,7. *⁶Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. ⁷And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.*

- a. God's right hand is glorious in power, and dashes the enemy into pieces (cf 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 the Psalms, where it occurs over 20 times. 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 (Jn 4:24), fills heaven and earth (Jer 23:23-24) and does not have hands like ours.
 - b. The word "excellency" (or majesty) in verse 7 is from the same root as triumphed in verse 1 and refers to God's splendor, highness and glory. Note the reference to God's wrath in verse 7. God's wrath consumes (or eats up) his enemies like fire consumes stubble.
- 8-10. ⁸*And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.*
⁹*The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust 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.*
- a. The sea waters had assumed a position of being "piled up" in a "heap" and were "congealed." Congeal means to thicken or condense. They were a "wall" (verse 14:22). The term heap is a word chiefly used to describe the Red Sea crossing and the crossing of Jordan (Psa 78:13; 33:7; Josh 3:13,16). Cassuto says that the word "heap" plainly suggests a miraculous piling up of the waters.
 - b. The enemy had planned to pursue, to overtake, to divide the spoil, to destroy Israel. In the Hebrew reading the threats of verse 9 are short, crisp words, expressing the eagerness of the foe and his 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 (Ex 34:24). It has a strong irony when applied here to Israel.
 - c. Once again the idea is conveyed that they sank into the waters, but this time as lead rather than stone.
- 11,12. ¹¹*Who is like unto thee, O LORD, 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.*
- a. This song here states that there is NONE like unto the LORD; not even among the gods. The "gods," or mighty ones, are probably in reference to the idols and false gods of the heathen. Whether the word gods (Heb. -

elim, plural of *el*) refers to mighty men (Ezek 32:21), to mighty angels, or to other supposedly-existing mighty gods, NO ONE is like the LORD.

- b. Many biblical references assert that there is no one like the LORD (see Deut 3:24; Psa 71:19; 86:8; 89:6,8; Jer 10:6; Mic 7:18; 2 Sam 7:22; 1 Kgs 8:23). The LORD is glorious in holiness. Holiness means uniqueness, separation, distinction and moral perfection (see Lev 19:2). 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).
 - c. The song says the earth swallowed the Egyptians. Actually, 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. This meaning makes good sense here.
 - d. Verse 12 is probably the end of stanza two (7-12) of the song, a stanza dealing with the destruction of the Egyptians.
13. *Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.*
- a. God had done much for His redeemed people. He had LEAD the people whom He had redeemed. 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 Exodus 6:6.
 - b. God's leading His redeemed people was an act of "loving-kindness" (or steadfast love (Heb. - *hesed*) (see Ex 34:6,7). *Hesed* is the great covenant word of the Old Testament to describe God's unfailing attitude of love toward His people. *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 Psa 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.
 - c. God's "holy habitation" 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 in Jerusalem. Verse 17 of this chapter 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 verses 13-18 were written AFTER Israel's occupation of Canaan (*Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. I (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 (6:8) as being "as good as done"? Faith gives substance to things hoped for.

- d. The verse tenses in 13 through 15 shift back and forth, between perfect (indicating completed action) and imperfect (incomplete action). "Lead," "guided," "heard" are in the perfect tense. However, "tremble" (KJV "be afraid") in verse 14 and "take hold" in verse 15, and "shall fall" and "be still" in verse 16 are imperfect. The 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.

14-16. ¹⁴*The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.* ¹⁵*Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.* ¹⁶*Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased.*

- a. The events surrounding the crossing of the Red Sea had great effect on nearby nations. They had heard about it and 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 Hab 3:7; Josh 2:9,11,24; Num 22:3; 1 Sam 4:6-8).
- b. Palestina (Philistia in all other translations) 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) settled there from Crete and other 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).
- c. Edom lay just southwest 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 Mount Seir. The title *chiefs* (or dukes) of Edom seems to be a technical title for Edomite rulers. It is used in Genesis 36:15-19.

- d. The phrase “melt away” in verse 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).
- e. The “passing over” of the people in verse 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 (Josh 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 (Num 32:20,21,27).
- f. The word “purchased” in verse 16 means to procure, buy, acquire, get, obtain. Truly God had obtained Israel as a people by His wonderful deeds. A participle form of the word translated *purchase* (*qanah*) is used in Genesis 14:22 as a title for God (possessor or maker). Possibly therefore the meaning is that God “created” the people Israel, as well as “purchased” them.

17,18. ¹⁷*Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established.* ¹⁸*The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.*

- a. The promised homeland of Israel is described with three different terms in this verse: (1) “The mountain of thine inheritance;” (2) the place of God’s dwelling; and (3) the “sanctuary.” It is interesting 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 especially favored, we do not know. Numerous other passages confirm this idea (see 2 Kgs 17:25,26).
- b. The term “mountain” is an interesting title for the land of Israel. Psalm 78:54 - *And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased.*

Perhaps it was given this title of mountain because of its prominence among nations, like a mountain among hills (cf Isa 2:2; Psa 68:16).

- c. The term “sanctuary” (holy place) seems to refer to all of the land of Canaan, and not just Jerusalem and the temple. Sanctuary in later times did often refer to the temple (Psa 73:17). This fact causes some skeptical authors to assert that Exodus 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. Verse 18 proclaims that Jehovah shall reign forever 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. The kingdom of God existed in Moses' time (Ex 19:6; 1 Chron 29:11), exists now as the church (Col 1:13; Heb 12:28; Rev 1:9) and shall exist hereafter (2 Pet 1:11; 2 Tim 4:18).

19. *For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.*

- a. The restatement of the Red Sea story at the end of the song is probably inserted to make the transition into the following prose narrative. It most certainly strengthens the assertion of verse 18 that Jehovah shall reign forever. Interestingly, this verse has three clauses, each of which ends in Hebrew with the word sea.

20,21. ²⁰*And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. ²¹And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.*



- a. 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.
- b. 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 Exodus 15 and was written by a different author than the writer of 15:1ff. Another

writer (S.R. Driver) gave a contradictory, though equally radical view, saying that verse 19 is a “later redactional edition,” written AFTER 15:1-18. Allen Cole proposes that Moses’ song was a “theological expansion” of Miriam’s song. 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.

- c. In verse 20 Miriam is mentioned for the first time by name and by title. She is called the “prophetess” (cf Num 12:2; Jdgs 4:4; 2 Kgs 22:14; Isa 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.
 - d. 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 90 years old at this time.
 - e. A timbrel is a small hand drum, similar to a tambourine (without the jingling metal pieces - see Psa 81:2, 68:25; 149:3). Its Hebrew name (*toph!*) resembles its sound (*thump!*)
 - f. The Hebrew women and men danced on occasions of victory (1 Sam 18:6) and on special religious holidays (Jdgs 21:21; Psa 30:11; 150:4; 2 Sam 6:14). These dances seemed 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; 1 Pet 4:3).
22. *So Moses brought Israel 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.*
- a. After crossing the Red Sea, Israel 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 10-12 miles east of the Red Sea. The wilderness of Shur lies in the NW part of the Sinai peninsula, south of the 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 east coast of the Red Sea almost to Marah. It would be about 35 to 40 miles from Israel’s crossing point to Marah.

- b. There are springs (called the 'Ayun Musa or Springs of Moses) lying about one and one-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 found them to be in a hillock some 16 feet above the level of the surrounding plain, containing a basin 12-15 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.
- c. The land 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).
- d. 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 have certainly continued up into March/April when Israel passed through. Little wonder the Israelites were dreadfully distressed when they reached Marah and found no good water.
- e. 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. This area is NOT good pasture land, but there was some pasture for Israel's flocks in transit.

23,24. ²³*And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah.* ²⁴*And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?*

- a. When Israel arrived at Marah, 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.
- b. Marah is generally identified with the spring 'Ain Hawwarah. Bartlett 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 upon 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.

- c. Verse 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."
 - d. Israel's response to the bitter waters was to murmur against Moses. 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 (1 Cor 10:10,11).
25. *And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,*
- a. It is interesting that these bitter waters were sweetened when Moses cast a certain tree into the water. No known tree can instantly (or even gradually) sweeten spring water. Therefore it is simple to conclude that this was a miracle (cf 2 Kgs 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.
 - b. 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 helped to prepare the people spiritually for their acceptance of the law at Mount 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.
 - c. At Marah God made for them a statute (or law) and an ordinance (or judgment). Possibly the words of God in verse 26 constitute the law and ordinance. If so, the ordinance is extremely general in nature. If verse 26 is not the ordinance referred to, then we simply do not know what it 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: "If thou wilt diligently harken to the voice of the Lord thy God, . . ."

26. *And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.*

- a. God promised Israel that if they obeyed His commandments, He would put none of the diseases which He had brought upon the Egyptians upon them. Deuteronomy 7:15 extended this promise into the time after Israel entered and occupied Canaan. Deuteronomy 28:58 warned that they would get plagues in Canaan if they were disobedient there.
- b. Some have wondered why the words about Jehovah being their healer are inserted here. It may have been a broader application of all the healing of the bitter waters of Marah. God would heal all their bitter diseases just as He had sweetened the waters. It may also 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 Psa 78:49,50 and notes on Ex 12:29). A redeemed people must be a holy, spiritual people.

27. *And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters.*

- a. Upon their arrival at Elim Israel encamped by the waters from 12 springs in an area graced by 70 palm trees. These specific details about these numbers show that Moses definitely was an eyewitness.
- b. It is about seven miles from Marah to Elim, an easy days' journey. S. C. Bartlett found much shrubbery on the journey between the two. 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 at the rate of several barrels a minute. There are several considerable pools of water overgrown with rushes that 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.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

This entire chapter deals with the giving of the manna. The whole chapter helps direct our minds toward Jesus Christ, who is the living bread which came down from heaven.

1. *And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt.*
 - a. From Elim, Israel first went to an encampment by the sea (see Num 33:10). Going southward from Elim, Israel passed the mountain 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 one-half hours. It is about 20 miles and probably took Israel two days. This area by the sea at the mouth of the valley is a sandy plain, extending some four or five miles from the shore, shut in by a range of wild cliffs. Here there was room for a great camp. The modern town of Abu Zenima lies in this area. From the encampment by the seaside, it appears that Israel continued southward into the El-Murkhah Plain, and this plain is to be identified with the Wilderness of Sin.
 - b. The name "Sin" has no connection with the English word "sin." The names "Sin" and "Sinai" are very similar. The meaning of both these names is uncertain.
 - c. In the El-Murkhah Plain there is a spring about three miles from the sea, which is next in importance to the Springs of Moses and Elim. The traveler Burkhardt told of finding in this area many fissures in the rocks filled with winter rains. Thus, Israel probably had water in the Wilderness of Sin, but no food.
 - d. 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 (Ex 12:6). They had traveled approximately 175 miles during that month.
- 2,3. *²And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: ³And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.*
 - a. Once in the Wilderness of Sin, Israel complained about a lack of food. Notice that the WHOLE congregation murmured. After seeing all the

plagues in Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea and the leading of the cloud, they still lacked faith in God.

- b. 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?
- c. 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).
- d. Israel had left Egypt in haste and carried no leftover food (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. 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). Had they actually had bread to the FULL? Surely not! This exaggeration was really a propaganda blast to hurt Moses. They even declared that they wished they had died in Egypt at the hand of the LORD, presumably in the ten plagues (cf 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!

4,5. *⁴Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. ⁵And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.*

- a. God would feed Israel by raining 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. This bread is called "angels' food" in Psalm 78:25. This expression could be translated "bread of God" or "bread of the mighty ones." In 1 Corinthians 10:3 it is called "spiritual food." In America bread is a side dish to a main meal. In countries of the Middle East bread is the basic item in the diet of many.
- b. A day's portion of manna was to be gathered for each and every day. This instruction reminds us that we are to pray for our daily bread (Mt

6:11). A day's portion of manna was an omer full (16:16). This would be approximately six and one-half pints or 3/4 of a gallon.

- c. Besides providing nutrition, this bread was also 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 day, when once they had learned that any excess collected on other days spoiled after one day? Would they rest on the seventh day? 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. We must expect to be tested; it is God's way with His people.

6-8. ⁶*And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt: ⁷And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD; for that he heareth your murmurings against the LORD: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? ⁸And Moses said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD.*

- a. By God providing food for them, Israel was to know that Jehovah had brought them out of Egypt! It 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 that very evening.
- b. 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.
- c. Verse seven emphasizes that Israel would see the glory of Jehovah at the very time when He was hearing their murmurings against Him. 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.
- d. After his opening announcement in verse seven 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 would give them bread "to the full."

9-12. ⁹*And Moses spake unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before the LORD: for he hath heard your murmurings. ¹⁰And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. ¹¹And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ¹²I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: 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 the LORD your God.*

- a. Moses knew what God would give to Israel for food because God had revealed it to him (16:12). God communicated with Moses directly (Num 12:8). Note that the message which God told Moses to tell Israel in verse 12 is the very message that Moses delivered in verse eight. Possibly, we should translate verse 11 to read, "And 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.
- b. 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.
- c. 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 lightning. 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 southeast.
- d. Israel was at this moment in deep unbelief. God was extremely perturbed and declared, "Ye shall know that I am the LORD your God."

13,14. ¹³*And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. ¹⁴And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground.*

- a. In the evening, the quails came up and covered the camp. In the spring each year, quails migrate in great number from the interior of Africa and

Arabia, across the Sinai Peninsula and into southern Europe. They return from the northern countries in autumn. 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 land, they can be caught easily. The birds are good eating and were a favorite delicacy of the Egyptians. Ancient Egyptian paintings show people hunting quails with hand nets thrown over the bushes where they were nesting.

- b. The manna 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 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 “angel’s food” (or “bread of the angels”) in Psalm 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), which seems to be a fragrant and transparent resin resembling wax. It had a sweetish taste, like wafers made with honey (16:31), and like fresh oil (Num 11:8). It could be baked, boiled or ground into a meal.

15. *And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.*

- a. The name “manna” 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. The name was sometimes shortened to man (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, and is a recognized ancient form of the interrogative. The Greek Old Testament renders Man Hu? by the Greek words for “what is this?”

16,17. ¹⁶*This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents.* ¹⁷*And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less.*

- a. The amount of manna to be collected varied somewhat from person to person, “each man according to his eating.” Generally it was an omer for each “head” (or person). As a unit of measure, the omer was the tenth part of a ephah (verse 36), that is, about six and one-half pints. The omer is referred to in the Old Testament only in this chapter.
- b. 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. It is not likely that every household in Israel possessed a pot holding exactly one omer. Thus, some gathered more and some less.
- c. It has been calculated that at one omer per head daily, Israel would have collected 12 million pints, or nine million pounds daily and over 1 million tons annually!
- d. By no means could the manna be considered a natural phenomenon. 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 year round for 40 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 specific day, the very day after God had predicted its appearance; (4) the fact that the manna could be found for six days each week, but was not there on the seventh day (verse 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 (verse 24); (6) the fact that the manna could be boiled in cooking, but melted in the heat of the sun (verses 21 and 23).
- e. 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 ½ pound of the “manna.” 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.

18. *And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.*
- a. 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.
 - b. 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. It has been suggested that Paul seemed to understand it that way (2 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 to 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! The apostle Paul in chapter eight of 2 Corinthians refers to Exodus 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 our abundance with those in want, that there may be an equality.
 - c. It is doubtful 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 . . .”
 - d. The way the manna supply in each home equalized out certainly hints at some degree of miraculous control of the matter. We have to conclude it was miraculous since everyone’s needs were supplied, whether they gathered much or little. This seems to have been a rather obvious fact. Their food supply, like their clothing (see Deut 29:5), was always adequate for their needs.

19-21. ¹⁹And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning. ²⁰Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them. ²¹And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted.

- a. The manna could not be stored up. This was prevented by both 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. They were to live in a situation wherein they had to depend on God every day for that day's needs. Some Israelites failed this first test with the manna. They tried (vainly) to store some up. Moses became very angry with these people.
- b. The word "melted" in verse 21 may mean "became loathsome." The Hebrew word is similar to a word used in 1 Samuel 15:9 to refer to vile and worthless animals of the Amalekites.

22. *And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.*

- a. On the sixth day the people gathered two omers per head, or twice as much as usual. The manna was twice as plentiful on the sixth day as on the other days. Verse 22 refers back to verse five. The scripture does not mention the fact that Moses told the people the words of God in verse 5, but we assume he did.
- b. The rulers of the congregation reported to Moses that the people had collected twice as much. Possibly Moses had requested them to report to him about this. The reference to these rulers raises questions about the organization of the Israelites. Exodus 34:31 refers to the rulers. Very little is known about the organization of the Israelites and their tribes, at least at this point in time.

23-26. ²³And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. ²⁴And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. ²⁵And Moses said, Eat that to day; for to day is a sabbath unto the LORD: to day ye shall not find it in the field. ²⁶Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none.

- a. The seventh day is called the sabbath. Sabbath is a word derived from the Hebrew *shabath*, meaning to cease or rest. A stronger word *shab-baton* is used in verse 23 just before the usual word for sabbath. Elsewhere, this word is used only of New Year's Day and other particularly holy festival. By this word God stressed the great importance of this first sabbath rest day in the wilderness.
- b. In this verse 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 Mount Sinai. In verse 23 there is no general prohibition of all work, only of gathering manna. Verses 29 and 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 Exodus 20:8-11.
- c. Keil and Delitzsch agree that it is perfectly clear from the event that the Israelites were not acquainted with any sabbath observance at this time, and that it was only through the decalogue (the ten commandments) that the sabbath was raised to a legal institution.
- d. Some modern religious groups which keep the seventh day (Saturday) as a holy day of assembly and rest, generally seek to prove that the Hebrews (and their forefathers) knew of a weekly sabbath before Mount Sinai. The sabbath is called "holy" in verse 23, but it is NOT at all certain that it had been revealed or observed as a national sacred day prior to Sinai.

27,28. ²⁷*And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. ²⁸And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?*

- a. Not all of the Israelites obeyed the sabbath law. Some went out to gather manna on the seventh day, as on the preceding six days. One has to marvel at their behavior. Had they not collected enough on the sixth day for two days? Were they 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?
- b. God was angry because of the people's disobedience. He said to Moses, "How long refuse ye (plural) to keep my commandments?" Deuteronomy 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 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 (cf Josh 7:1; 2 Sam 21:1).

29-31. ²⁹See, for that the LORD 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. ³⁰So the people rested on the seventh day. ³¹And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.

- a. Verse 29 is a recap of the commandment for observing the sabbath day.
- b. Every person was to abide in his own place (tent); and the people rested that day.
- c. Regarding verse 31 see notes on verses 13,14.

32-34. ³²And Moses said, This is the thing which the LORD commandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt. ³³And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations. ³⁴As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept.

- a. God here gives instructions for establishing a memorial. 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.
- b. The manna carried with it a moral significance: that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word from the mouth of God (Deut 8:3). This idea was to be kept vivid for all future generations. Hebrews 9:4 says the manna was kept in a golden pot. This is also the Greek reading of verse 32.
- c. 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).
- d. 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 verses 33,34 tell of events occurring some months, or longer, after the original giving of the manna. This is not a problem. Remember that Moses wrote the book of Exodus through divine inspiration and looking back on past events. Some statements may be made simply to clarify a point. Not every event related in the Bible (or any other history book) is related in precise historical sequence. This does not discredit the Bible’s accuracy or inspiration.

- e. 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 (1 Kgs 8:9).
35. *And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.*
- a. The Israelites ate manna for 40 years (Neh. 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 (Josh 5:10-12).
 - b. Verse 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).
36. *Now an omer is the tenth part of an ephah.*
- a. One wonders why the description of the omer is inserted at this point. Possibly because the omer was a unit of measure not generally familiar to and employed by the Israelites. The word is used several times in chapter 16 but it occurs nowhere else in the scriptures. Edward J. Young says that the omer was not actually a measure, but a 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.

BREAD FROM HEAVEN:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| The manna was: | given to the undeserving (16:2,3).
given as a test (16:4,28; Deut 8:16).
given to teach (16:6,12,32; Deut 8:3).
given without fail (16:35). |
| God's purpose: | to fill them with food (16:12,16; Mt 6:31-33).
to see if they would walk in His laws (16:4, Deut 8:16).
to show that He led them out of Egypt (16:6).
to show that He was Jehovah, their God (16:12).
to show His glory (16:7).
to silence their murmurings (16:7,8,12). |

to introduce the sabbath law (16:23,25,29).
to humble them (Deut 8:16).
to teach that man does not live by bread alone, but by
every word of God (Deut 8:3).
to point toward Jesus, the living bread from heaven
(Jn 6:41, 48-51).

MANNA, A TYPE OF JESUS:

Manna met a need	Jesus meets our needs
Manna came from "heaven"	Jesus came from heaven
Manna provided for ALL Israel	Jesus provides for ALL mankind
Manna gave temporary life	Jesus gives eternal life
Manna was not recognized/known	Jesus was not recognized/known
Manna was test for Israel	Jesus is the test of our relationship with God (1 Cor 1:22,23)

MANNA, A TYPE OF GOD'S WORD:

From heaven, not earth
Came to the people
Had to be eaten
To be gathered (read) daily

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

This chapter of Exodus contains two very distinct sections: (1) the giving of water from the rock of Israel (1-7); and (2) Israel's battle with Amalek (8-16).

1. *And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink.*
 - a. From the wilderness of Sin, the whole congregation journeyed by stages 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.
 - b. The location of Rephidim is not known for certain. Verse 6 indicates that it was very near to Horeb (Mt. Sinai). Also, 18:5 relates that Moses was camped at the "mount of God" when his father-in-law, Jethro, came to him. This occurred at Rephidim (19:2). Keil and Delitzsch are probably 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 called Wady Rephayid. This lies some 15 miles northwest of Sinai. It is an inconsequential wady. Most scholars see little to commend the identification except a partial resemblance between the names. For Israel's encampment by the seaside, there are two main routes by which they 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 have been about the same length, about 110 miles. Most scholars agree that the southern route is much more the probable, yet no one can be completely certain.
- 2,3. ²*Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?* ³*And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?*
 - a. The Israelites chided Moses because they had no water and they demanded that Moses give them water. It was an angry confrontation. They did not just murmur; they chided Moses. The verb translated "chide" is the Hebrew *rib*, 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).

- b. Note that in verse 3 the Israelites accused Moses of trying to kill them (cf 16:3). In addition, they added to their charge that Moses was trying to kill their defenseless children and cattle. The reference to cattle indicates that they had many animals.
 - c. 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 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 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).
 - d. God's people must expect to face problems, discomforts, dangers and tribulations. They must be spiritually prepared to trust God when such experiences arrive.
4. *And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.*
- a. It is apparent that Moses continued to trust in God even when they were without water. In verse 2 he reproved the people, asking them why they tempted the LORD. In this situation, Moses went and cried (prayed) to the LORD: "What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me." The Israelites on several occasions were ready to stone leaders with whom they were displeased (Num 14:10, 1 Sam 30:6).
 - b. Did Israel tempt God? Yes! They tempted (or tested) the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?" (verse 7). 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 "meat for their lust." Seemingly, they did not really need all they were demanding. God wanted to prove 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 - see also Mt 4:7). Testing God shows a lack of faith.



5,6. ⁵And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. ⁶Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite

the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

- a. When he went to provide water, Moses took with him some men from the elders of Israel (not all of the elders). 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).
- b. Psalm 78:15,16 - ¹⁵*He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. ¹⁶He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.*

This text implies that the water came from the rock and flowed to the people, probably for several miles. This miracle could be considered a shadow of the spiritual waters (Christ) that was to come (1 Cor 10:1-4).

- c. When Moses performed this miracle, God stood before Moses upon the rock in Horeb (Mt. Sinai). We assume that the statement, "I will stand..." meant that the pillar of cloud and fire would stand. Here again, God condescended to man's level by manifesting Himself in one spot, though He fills heaven and earth.

7. *And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?*
- a. Moses named this place Massah (meaning tempting or proving) and Meribah (meaning strife, chiding or quarreling). 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* as it is used here the idea of moral temptation, but only the idea of testing.
 - b. The name Meribah was also given to a second place where God miraculously provided water from a rock (Num 20:1,13). The events occurred in different places and 40 years apart in time. It seems a little unusual that two places would get the same nickname.
 - c. The two stories of God's providing water for Israel (Ex 16; 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.
8. *Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.*
- a. A hostile tribe came to Rephidim and fought Israel. They were known as the Amalekites and were apparently led by one named Amalek, who was a grandson of Esau (Gen 36:12). The Amalekites were his descendants. These people are mentioned at least 25 times in the Old Testament. Amalek feared not God (Deut 25:17-19). As Israel passed through the valleys on the way to Mt. Sinai, they became strung out into a column, perhaps ten miles long. Amalek smote the stragglers at the rear of the column when they were faint and weary. 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).
 - b. 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 sites and springs in Sinai. It certainly would seem that their intention was to destroy Israel if possible.
 - c. 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.

9. *And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.*

- a. Moses selected Joshua to lead Israel into battle. Joshua 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 chieftain of the tribe of Ephraim (Num 13:8). His name had originally been *Hoshea* (meaning salvation). To that name, it appears Moses added God's name, *Yah* (or *Jah*), making his name Joshua (Heb. - *Yehoshua*'), meaning "Jehovah is salvation."
- b. One has to be impressed with Joshua's faith, courage and immediate obedience. For 40 years he was Moses' principle 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 KJV refers to him as *Jesus* in Acts 7:45 and Hebrews 4:8.
- c. Note that during the battle, Moses went to the top of the hill with the rod of God in his hand. We suppose Moses had received instructions from God about going up on the hill while Joshua was fighting Amalek.

10-13. ¹⁰*So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. ¹¹And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. ¹²But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron 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. ¹³And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.*



- a. When Moses went to the top of the hill, he was accompanied by Aaron and Hur. Hur is mentioned again in Exodus 24:14. A man named Hur is named in Exodus 31:2 as the grandfather of Bezalel, a builder of the tabernacle. He is also mentioned in 1 Chronicles 2:3-5 and 18-20. We cannot

be certain that the Hur of Exodus 31 is the same man as in Exodus 17:10. Josephus (*Ant. III, ii, 4*) says that Hur was the husband of Miriam. The Bible does not bear this out.

- b. There was great significance in Moses lifting up his hands. It meant victory if he did and defeat if he did not. It could be that the lifting up of his hands was at least a symbolic act of prayer. The expression “lifting up the hands” frequently refers to prayer. 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 until the sun went down that day. Remember that at this point in time, Moses was 80+ years old.
 - c. 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. At the very least, we can say that Moses’ lifting up his hands pointed toward God as their only strength for victory. It would be difficult to think that Moses was not praying, considering how often he prayed on other occasions.
 - d. Think about 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.
 - e. The battle was severe and lasted all day. This indicates both the strength and determination of their assailants. It started as an 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 out of Egypt (13:18).
 - f. 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).
14. *And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.*

- a. 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 (Num 24:20; Deut 25:17-19). It was centuries before this prophecy was fulfilled. In the time of King Saul (1050 to 1010 B.C., about 400 years after Moses), God sent Saul to wipe out the Amalekites (1 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 were smitten. We read no more about them after that.
- b. 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.
- c. The command to write given to Moses indicates that Moses was proficient in writing, but it really tells little about the composition of Exodus. Numbers 33:2 says that Moses wrote all the places where Israel encamped, by the command of the Lord. Probably Moses had been doing a little writing as he journeyed, although he surely had very little time to do this during their marches. Moses is again commanded to write in 24:4 and 34:27.
- d. 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. Most likely, 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 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

15,16. ¹⁵*And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi: ¹⁶For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.*

- a. After the victory over Amalek, Moses built an altar and called its name "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 scripture where memorial names were given to alters 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).
- b. Very literally translated, verse 16 says, "For (because) a hand upon (or against) the throne of Jah; War for Jehovah with Amalek from generation, generation." This seems to simply say that because the hand (or power) of Amalek was lifted against the throne of Yah, or Jehovah, Jehovah

would have war with Amalek throughout every generation. The expression, "God's throne" implies His kingdom, which includes His people, Israel. Admittedly, this verse is 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? Some understand it this way and take the verse to mean God hath sworn with His hand upon His throne that He will have war. As we take an oath with our hand upon a Bible, so Jehovah makes an oath with His hand upon the throne. This seems a poor interpretation. Jehovah can swear on nothing greater than Himself (Heb 6:13). (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? This is a more preferred view. It makes clear why Jehovah decreed war against Amalek from generation to generation.

- c. Even the translators of the Greek Old Testament seem to have had difficulty with verse 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 exact wording for a translation remains a problem, however, the general idea that the LORD was going to fight Amalek is always clear in the verse.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The subject matter of chapter 18 deals with 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.

There are also spiritual implications that may be observed in this chapter. 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 "seed" (descendants) of Abraham.

1. *When Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father in law, heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, and that the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt;*
 - a. Jethro 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).
 - b. It is notable that Jethro had heard that the LORD 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.
 - c. 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 the KJV and RSV, but brother-in-law in the ASV. 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.
- 2-4. *²Then Jethro, Moses' father in law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back, ³And her two sons; of which the name of the one was Gershom; for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land: ⁴And the name of the other was Eliezer; for the God of my father, said he, was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh:*



- a. Jethro brought with him Zipporah, Moses' wife and their two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. We last read of these in chapter 4, verses 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 at any time after that. We feel that Zipporah and the sons returned to Midian shortly after the inn experience.

- b. It is noteworthy that Moses had been separated from them for no less than six months, and probably much longer.

5-7. *⁵And Jethro, Moses' father in law, came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness, where he encamped at the mount of God: ⁶And he said unto Moses, I thy father in law Jethro am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her. ⁷And Moses 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.*

- a. Jethro met Moses at the mount of God at Rephidim. This location appears to have been very close to Sinai, in the Waddy esh-Sheikah, perhaps within ten miles of Mount Sinai. Most likely Moses' camp was somewhat in advance of the great majority of the Israelites' tents.
- b. All the events at Rephidim - the water from the rock, the war with Amalek and Jethro's visit - all occupied only 15 days (see 16:1; 19:1).
- c. From the wording it appears that Jethro sent word ahead to Moses of their arrival. Moses then went out to meet Jethro. Moses bowed before Jethro, then kissed him. They asked one another about their welfare. Even today Arabs still make a big ceremony out of greetings. No business can be discussed until all the personal news has been inquired into. The word translated "welfare" is the Hebrew *shalom*, meaning peace. Moses respected Jethro for his wisdom, his age and for being his father-in-law.

Such humility and respect for age is not popular in our times, but is highly commended in the scripture, and needs to be restored.

8. *And Moses told his father in law all that the LORD had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the LORD delivered them.*
 - a. Moses told Jethro all that JEHOVAH had done. He gave all the credit to Jehovah, which was surely the right thing to do. He also reported that 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 murmuring and disobedience!
 - b. 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 (cf Num 20:14). Interestingly, the text does not suggest that Moses related to Jethro about the rebelliousness of the people.
- 9,10. *⁹And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. ¹⁰And Jethro said, Blessed be the LORD, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.*
 - a. Upon hearing the news from Moses, Jethro rejoiced. Then he blessed Jehovah for delivering the people (cf 1 Kgs 8:56).
 - b. 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 shepherding.
11. *Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them.*
 - a. Jethro's testimony gives praise and glory to the LORD. He understood that Jehovah excelled the gods of Egypt in the very thing in which their gods (and their worshipers) haughtily claimed superiority (such as the power to preserve their people).
 - b. 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.

- c. On the other hand, we do not assume that Jethro did not at least know the name of Jehovah and somewhat about Him. Chapter 2, verse 16 calls him the priest of Midian. The use of the word “now” in 18:11 simply contrasts present knowledge with former knowledge, not present knowledge with former total ignorance of Jehovah.
12. *And Jethro, Moses’ father in law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses’ father in law before God.*
- a. At this point Jethro 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 emphasizes 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. Aaron had not actually met Jethro previously.
 - b. Jethro offered his sacrifices to God (Elohim). This is a very striking expression. In no other account of sacrifices in the Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy) 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.
 - c. Concerning the sacrifices that Jethro offered, we know very little about how these were practiced before the giving of the law on Mount 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. We do know this much: since the very beginning, God has required blood sacrifices from His worshipers (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.
 - d. The expression “before God” in verse 12 does not imply that the tabernacle had yet been built and that this visit by 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.”

- e. Jethro's visit must have been very reassuring to both Moses and Israel. Moses had had nothing but trouble and contention with Israel from the very beginning of their journey. Problems had arisen with hunger, thirst, quarreling and attack by enemies. Surely Jethro's friendly visit was 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 by God. Cassuto entitles chapter 18 "Israel Welcomed as One of the Nations of the World." In one sense, he is correct in this statement. However, Israel's "welcome" was by NO means the unanimous sentiment of the surrounding nations.

13,14. ¹³*And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening. ¹⁴And when Moses' 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 by thee from morning unto even?*

- a. Jethro saw Moses spending all the day judging the disputes between the people. The Israelites had said some very harsh things against Moses, but they turned to him in times of disagreement among themselves.
- b. Probably, the expression "from morning unto evening" should not be taken to mean every second of all that time.

15,16. ¹⁵*And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God: ¹⁶When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.*

- a. Moses made known unto the people the will of God in cases of dispute. He taught them the statutes (ordinances) of God and His laws.
- b. Moses was unique among prophets in that God spoke to him face to face (mouth to mouth) Numbers 12:8. 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.
- c. 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.

- d. 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).
- 17,18. ¹⁷*And Moses' 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 this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.*
- a. Jethro points out that Moses' work as a judge was not good because he could not handle it all by himself 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 sun waiting for their cases to be heard.
 - b. Like many Christian leaders, Moses was wearing himself out by unnecessarily trying to do everything single-handedly. This is not always the sign of over-ambition. Sometimes it is the mark of the over-conscientious and the overanxious. 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 (2 Sam 15:1-6).
 - c. Jethro's warning and 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). On another occasion he asked, "How can I bear the load and burden of you?" (Deut 1:12).
- 19,20. ¹⁹*Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God:* ²⁰*And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.*
- a. Although relieving himself of much of the burden, Moses would still retain certain responsibilities for himself: (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 only the hardest cases that other judges could not decide.
 - b. Jethro recognized Moses' unique relationship with God. By this relationship Moses could come "before God," or "Godward."
 - c. Jethro's words "and God shall be with thee" seem to be a polite way of urging Moses to do as he proposed. But it also carries the idea of submission to God's will, if God would not confirm his advice (see 18:23).
- 21,22. ²¹*Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of*

thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: ²²And 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: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee.

- a. The four major qualifications are spelled out for those men to be appointed as judges: (1) Able men. The word here translated here “able” often means strength, usually physical. The Greek Old Testament translates it *dunatos*, meaning strong, mighty, powerful. We would 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: Deuteronomy 1:16,17 - ¹⁶*And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. ¹⁷Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God’s: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it.*
- b. A sort of chain-of-command was established with the judges. 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. 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.
- c. “At all seasons” (verse 22) simply means at all ordinary times.

23-25. ²³*If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace. ²⁴So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said. ²⁵And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.*

- a. If Moses took the advice of Jethro the result would be two-fold: (1) Moses would be able to endure his workload. (2) The people of Israel would be able to go to their place in peace. “Their place,” of course, was Canaan. Jethro apparently recognized this as the appointed and true home of Israel.
- b. Although Moses does follow the advice of Jethro, he does not implement the plan immediately. This is done later at Mt. Sinai (Deut 1: 9-18). From reading the text here in chapter 18, one might get the impression that Moses appointed the judges right away. However, the text does not actually say that he did it that day. We must realize that setting up a

system of over 70,000 judges was not the work of a few minutes or even a few days! In fact, we find that the appointments did not occur until near the end of their stay at Mt. Sinai, which was nearly a year. Also, the people themselves selected their judges after Moses laid down the qualifications for them, an example later followed by the apostles (Acts 6:3). Most likely, Moses did not even know most of the judges personally.

- c. Verse 24 says “Moses hearkened” to Jethro. Meekness was a notable quality in Moses (Num 12:3). Moses’ willingness to obey God and to take sound advice was part of his great strength of character.

27. *And Moses let his father in law depart; and he went his way into his own land.*

- a. The visit ends with Jethro departing to his own land, Midian (see notes on 2:15 regarding the location of Midian). It is supposed that Zipporah and the two sons stayed with Moses, though we read nothing more about them being with Moses. In the land of Canaan, many years later, we read of Moses’ grandson (Gershom’s son) Johnathan becoming an idolatrous priest (see Jdgs 18:30).



- b. When Israel left 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 (Jdgs 1:16; 4:11,17; 1 Sam 15:6).

CHAPTER NINETEEN

This chapter tells of the things that occurred just before God gave the covenant of the ten commandments. Some have called the chapter “READY FOR GOD’S COVENANT.” The people were made ready by (1) their arrival at the destination, Mt. Sinai (1-2); (2) God’s promise to take them as His own (3-6); (3) Their public promise to obey God (7-8); (4) The Lord’s last minute instructions (9-15); (5) The Lord’s descent upon the mountain (16-25). The Greek version of verse 1 contains the word *exodos*, from which we get the name *exodus*, meaning “going out.”

1. *In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.*
 - a. Israel arrived at Mt. Sinai 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 14th day of the first month (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 45 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 50 days after the passover. This may be correct, but it cannot be proved from the text. Verse 11 indicates that the Lord came upon Mt. Sinai on the third day after their arrival. These three days, plus about 45 days of journeying, give a total of approximately 50 days.
 - b. God’s promise to Moses about Israel’s serving Him “in this mountain” (3:12) was fulfilled upon their arrival there. It is believed that the name Wilderness of Sinai refers to the plain of Er-Rahah at the north edge of Mt. Sinai, at the foot of the peak Ras Safsafah. This peak is 6,540 feet high and is part of an oval-shaped ridge with a second (and higher) peak - Jebel Musa or the Mount of Moses - at its south end. Jebel Musa is 7,647 feet high. The name Wilderness of Sinai is sometimes applied to the entire southern area of the Sinai peninsula covered by granite mountains. But in the context 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 travelers in the area report it is only about 7,000 feet long and 400-600 feet across; 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 only about 145 acres. Furthermore, a small hill lies between the plain and the mountain, 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. As it is found today, this area is in no way fit 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 ½ mile across, 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 Leja, which opens into er-Rahah on the west, is an extensive recess about 1½ miles long and ¾ mile broad. This would add substantially to the camping ground. No other districts in the premises affords such excellent pasturage as the immediate neighborhood of Mt. Sinai. There are four streams of running water and there are several springs and cisterns.

- 2,3. ²*For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.*
³*And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel.*

- a. Israel had just left Rephidim. Rephidim had been a place of several events - water from the rock, war with Amalek and Jethro's visit. It was not far from there to the "mount of God," probably only one day's journey of about 10 miles.
- b. Jehovah called Moses from the mount. The text implies that Moses heard the voice of the LORD 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).
- c. The expression "house of Jacob" is not found elsewhere in the Pentateuch, but it is very appropriate in the light of God's promise to Jacob (Gen 46:4).
- d. Note that Moses went up unto *God* (the general term for God as creator and ruler - Elohim), 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.

- 4-6. ⁴*Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, 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 a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:* ⁶*And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of*

priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.



- a. Israelites had seen God do 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 mother eagle will tear up her nest and thus force the eaglets to fly. In a similar way, God had compelled Israel to leave Egypt. Then He protected them in their spiritual immaturity as they journeyed.

The reference in verses four and five to eagles' wings and the conditional nature of God's covenant reminds us of Deuteronomy, which stresses the same points. God's revelation is consistent through it all! The word *eagle* in the text may refer to the Palestinian vulture (see Deut 32: 9-12).

- b. Exodus 19:3 begins a great block of divine teaching that stretches all the way into Numbers 10.
- c. Note God's purpose in delivering Israel: He brought them unto Himself! He wanted Israel to keep His COVENANT and to become His own covenant people.
- d. The word covenant refers to a formal arrangement of relationship between two parties. Covenants can be made between individuals and/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 dealing with His people. God made a covenant with Noah (Gen 9:9), Abraham (Gen 15:18) and others. Unless we grasp the idea of covenant, we simply will not fully understand Exodus.
- e. The law which God gave through Moses to Israel is presented as a covenant (24:7,8; 34:27). Chapters 19 through 24 tell of the giving of the covenant and its ordinances. Chapters 32-34 tell how the covenant was broken by the making of the golden calf and then how the covenant relationship was restored.
- f. 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 inferior. Such covenants may be 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.

- g. God proposed three things to make of Israel: (1) A peculiar treasure; (2) A kingdom of priests; (3) A holy nation. All of these titles are now applied to the people of the Lord's church (1 Pet 2:9). "A peculiar treasure" means one belonging privately to a king. Israel was very precious to God. This phrase sounds more partial than it really is. There was no 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 could exalt any people by choosing them, but no people could exalt and elevate God. He 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, 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 (1 Pet 2:9; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 6:20).

- h. "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. They are also referred to as a "royal priesthood" (1 Pet 2:9).

The fact that Israel was a kingdom of priests suggests that their individual and collective purpose was to function as a mediator between God and men of all nations. They were to be living examples of what God would do with and for obedient mankind, were to teach the ways of God to men and otherwise help men come to God.

- i. Israel was to be "a holy nation." The primary meaning of *holy* is not separated but "to be pure, splendid, untarnished." The meaning of *holy* is not to be weakened by saying that a thing is holy inasmuch as it is the exclusive property of God. Sin opposes holiness and the sinner resists sanctification. It is God's intention that holiness shall prevail and the

unholy be destroyed if they will not repent. Holiness means being like God. That means more than belonging to an exclusive group labeled “holy” (or private property).

That Israel would become a nation is one of the primary themes of the book of Exodus. God had promised Abraham that He would make him to become a great NATION (Gen 12:2). When they left Egypt they were far from being a nation. They were a band of escaped slaves without homeland, national constitution, an established system of government, judges or priests. The events at Mount Sinai brought Israel into nationhood.

7,8. *⁷And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. ⁸And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.*

- a. ALL the people answered TOGETHER, “All that the LORD hath spoken we will do.” Their spontaneity and unity rejoice us, until we recall how quickly they forget their promises.
- b. Israel’s religion was openly presented by God. There were no secret doctrines to a favorite class, no book of mysteries; but a divine offer to rich and poor, young and old, learned and unlearned. This divine offer could never be earned, it had to be personally accepted. This was not an imposed religion.
- c. The statement is made twice that Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD (8,9). Maybe Moses rejoiced to report their good words to the Lord. Maybe he felt that the people had finally been converted.

9. *And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD.*

- a. This verse makes it very clear that God spoke primarily to Moses rather than with the people. God said, “I come unto thee. . .that the people may hear when I speak with thee.”
- b. God would appear in a thick cloud of miraculous nature to certify Moses unto the people as His mediator. Even today we must accept Moses as God’s spokesman of that time.
- c. God’s appearances are often associated with clouds and smoke (see Isa 6:1-4; 19:1; Num 11:25; 1 Kgs 8:10; Ps 97:2; Rev 1:7).

10,11. ¹⁰*And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, ¹¹And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.*

- a. In preparation for this coming event, the people were (1) to wash their garments; (2) to abstain from sexual relations (verse 15); and (3) to set bounds (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.
- b. "Sanctify" means to separate, make holy, pure and set apart for God's use.
- c. "The third day" in verse 11 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 Christ said He would "rise on the third day" (Mt 16:21).
- d. "Against the third day" (verse 15) means for or on the third day.
- e. Abstinence from sexual relations prior to God's descent upon Mount Sinai does not indicate that this is evil or even questionable. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament approve of sexual relations between married people as good, necessary, protective and enjoyable (see Prov 5:18-20; 1 Cor 7:2-5).
- f. 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. This is the heart of the biblical concept of revelation. God comes down to man. John 3:13 - *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.*

12,13. 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: ¹³There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount (trumpet: or, cornet).*

- a. The people were to be kept away from the mountain 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 mountain. The people were to neither go up into the mountain nor even touch the edge of it while God was appearing upon it. Death by stoning or shooting with arrows was the penalty for this disobedience. This command was apparently terrifying to the people. Hebrews 12:20 - *For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart.*

The reason for such a stern restriction was very basic: Sinful mankind cannot approach 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 cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 15:50).

- b. When the trumpet (Heb. - yovel or ram's horn) sounded a long blast, the people would 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 (verse 24). Probably the verse refers to what is related in verse 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.

14,15. ¹⁴*And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.* ¹⁵*And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives.*

Regarding verses 14,15 (see notes on verses 9 and 10).

16-18. ¹⁶*And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.* ¹⁷*And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.* ¹⁸*And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.*



- a. When God descended upon the mountain, there were thunders, lightnings, a thick cloud, the voice of a trumpet (Heb. - *shofar*, a horn or cornet) and an earthquake. The whole mountain smoked, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire (probably lightening; see 2 Kgs 1:12). The smoke rose like smoke from a furnace (cf Gen 19:28). Deuteronomy 5:4 - *The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire.*
- b. The people trembled at this spectacle. What Israelite could doubt that God was there when he saw this display? It was God's intention that His fear should be before their eyes (20:20). Surely there was fear in their eyes.
- c. This was no ordinary thunderstorm on Mt. Sinai. Thunderstorms are not uncommon during the winter, but the Israelites arrived in early June, well past the season for these storms. Surely there was never a thunderstorm that had the appearance of God's coming.

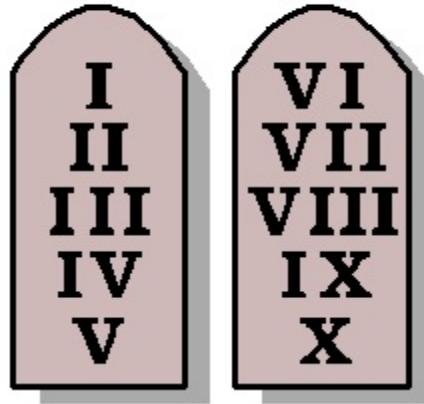
- d. These awesome events at the giving of the law are referred to in Hebrews 12:18,19 as a contrast to a less spectacular and gentler giving of the gospel. Hebrews 12:18,19 - ¹⁸*For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, ¹⁹And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more.*
 - e. Moses assembled the people at the nether (lower) part of the mount, but not where they could touch it. Their encampments probably extended for some distance, possibly even for several miles in front of the mount and into the adjoining valleys. Apparently Moses directed them into a very compact group.
- 19,20. ¹⁹*And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. ²⁰And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.*
- a. Moses was called to the top of the mountain by the voice, or sound, of a trumpet that continued and grew louder. At this point, Moses spoke to God but we do not know what he said. Perhaps he asked God what he should do. Scripture says that the Lord answered him with a voice. The Hebrew word for voice may also be translated thunder as in 9:23. In this case, the voice (or thunder) was understandable by Moses. Jehovah then called Moses to the top of the mount and he went up (cf Jn 12: 28,29).
 - b. The trumpet definitely appears to have been a supernatural one of God rather than a trumpet of man. This trumpet will sound again at the Lord's second coming (1 Thess 4:16; 1 Cor 15:52). Nehemiah 9:13 - *Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments.*
- 21-25. ²¹*And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish. (charge: Hebrew - contest) ²²And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them. ²³And Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to mount Sinai: for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it. ²⁴And the LORD said unto him, Away, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aaron with thee: but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the LORD, lest he break forth upon them. ²⁵So Moses went down unto the people, and spake unto them.*

- a. One wonders why the command about keeping the people away from the mountain is repeated here in these verses. It may have been necessitated by man's perverse desire to look upon forbidden things and by God's determination to keep the people off the mountain. Yes, the command to keep off the mountain had already been given once and the barricade had been set up about the mountain, but just as Eve longed for the forbidden fruit and the men of Beth-Shemesh looked into the ark of covenant when they knew better (1 Sam 6:19), possibly some Israelites on this occasion were thinking about venturing beyond the fence. Moses thought that everything was secure (verse 23), but God had a deeper knowledge of what was in the men than did Moses. Apparently some were tempted with a plan to "break through" and "gaze" (verse 21).
- b. The identity of the priests referred in verse 22 is not made clear. Certainly they were not the sons of Aaron (Ex 28:1), nor were they the firstborn of every family (Num 3:12,13). We can only assume that these were the ones who had been carrying out the duties of the priestly office according to rights and customs that had been previously employed. Exodus 24:5 tells of 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 verse 22. Some have suggested that elders were the priests or that the heads of families served in that function.
- c. Verse 25 ends rather abruptly. The words of Moses to the people are not recorded, but must have included God's repeated warning in verse 21.
- d. As we come to the end of chapter 19 we are now eagerly expecting the giving of the covenant of the law. All things have been made ready. 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.
- e. It is interesting to note that in verse 24 God commanded that Aaron was to ascend the mountain with Moses, but he did not go up the mountain until after Moses himself had received the law of Exodus 21-23 (see 20:21). After this God called Moses to come up with Aaron, Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, and 70 elders (24:1). But even these were to worship afar off, and only Moses came near to Jehovah.

CHAPTER TWENTY

THE TEN

COMMANDMENTS



1,2. ¹And God spake all these words, saying, ²I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

- a. God Himself uttered the ten commandments. In the Hebrew God is referred to as *Yahweh*, which is the covenant name of God as God of Israel. Notice how the Bible text links GOD to the WORDS which were spoken. Deuteronomy 5:22 - *These words the LORD spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.*
- b. From references given of this event in other places in scripture, it would appear that the law was given by angels: (1) Acts 7:53 - *Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.* (2) Galatians 3:19 - *...(the law) was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.* (3) Hebrews 2:2 - *For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast.*

From these references, we learn that the law was in some way communicated by God through angels. We do not know the methods by which this was done. It does not appear that the decalogue (ten commandments) was delivered by angels, but rather directly to the people by God's voice, "face to face" (Deut 5:4) .

- c. In verse two God makes certain declarations of Himself. It would appear that God declared His great acts to cause the Israelites to pay very close attention to the words He was about to say. Although God had brought

Israel out of Egypt, that did not mean that they were without responsibilities to Him.

- d. The LORD had declared many times in earlier chapters that the people would know that He was Jehovah (6:7). Surely by now His name had great meaning to them.
- e. Jewish scholars generally regard verse two as the first commandment of the ten. The famous Jewish commentator Cassuto says that verse two is not a command, only a proclamation introducing the speaker. Nonetheless, the Jewish designation of verse two as the first commandment does emphasize the great truth that we cannot hold the moral values of the ten commandments without having faith in the God who is the giver of those commandments.

3. *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

- a. The “before me” literally 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 Genesis 11:28, Job 1:11, Ezekiel 40:15 and Exodus 18:13. These passages illustrate the meaning of “before me.” This expression may also imply “against me” or “in opposition to me.” The Hebrew preposition *al* has this meaning in Ezekiel 5:8 and Psalm 3:1.
- b. This verse clearly teaches that God will not tolerate recognition of any god except Him. Israel was to practice a genuine monotheism. Some liberals view this verse as not saying that only one god exists, but that the LORD was supreme among the gods of the ancient near East.
- c. History would show that while Israel remained true to the one true and living God, she was victorious and united. When she forsook the LORD, she was defeated and fragmented.

4-6. *⁴Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or 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: ⁵Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; ⁶And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*

- a. A graven image is a carved image of wood, stone or other such material. Our word engrave is from the same root.

- b. A likeness is a form seen by man, rather than an image made by man. In verse 4 “likeness” refers to a statue or painting of anything they may have seen.
- c. The command forbidding the making of any graven images was in total opposition to the religious practices of all the world at that time. No wonder God elaborated upon this commandment more than He did upon obvious commandments such as “thou shalt not kill.” The two commandments that are elaborated upon at greater length - the graven image and the sabbath commandments - are the ones that deal with completely new religious ideas and, therefore, need a more thorough presentation.
- d. Israel was not forbidden to make any statues or paintings. They were forbidden to make such things “unto thee,” that is as objects of worship. God commands them to make golden cherubim (angel figurines) upon the ark of the covenant. We would assume that these were made by an “engraver” (cf Ex 28:33). In Solomon’s temple there were decorations of cherubim, flowers and palm trees (1 Kgs 6:32). Decorations of lions, oxen and cherubim decorated the lavers by Solomon’s temple (1 Kgs 7:29). Moses made a brass snake at God’s command (Num 21:8,9). Not all statues and works of art were forbidden to Israel, only those which were objects of worship. Even the brass snake was destroyed when it became an object of worship (2 Kgs 18:4).
- e. The “water under the earth” is simply the water lying below the surface of seas, rivers, etc. This point is clarified by Deuteronomy 4:18, which refers to the “fish that are in the water under the earth.” To be under (or below) simply means lower than ground level at the surface of the water.
- f. God is a jealous God in that He is full of zeal and ardor against those who give recognition and worship to graven images when God alone deserves such. This word “jealous” is a term applied exclusively to God (cf Deut 34:14). This word does not suggest the pettiness and nastiness that we often associate with jealousy. Isaiah 42:8 - *I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.*
- g. In verses 5 and 6 God says He will recompense the iniquity of the fathers upon the children. One has to ask if this is true and is it fair? It is true and one can be assured that it is fair! It would be fair even if we did not understand why God did it, because God is always just (Rom 3:26).

To properly understand, first consider Deuteronomy 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 sin (cf Ezek 18:4,20). Also note that the word translated “third generation” (*shillesh*) means a great-grandchild. The expression “third and fourth generation” may simply refer to future indefinite generations (cf Amos 1:3,6).

The best way to understand this grave warning is to see the way God carried out His judgment against those who were disobedient. Biblical history teaches us that God endured the wrongdoing of people with great long-suffering. His patience had a definite limit. When God finally exacted His punishment on later generations, it was inflicted upon them for their own sins and also those of their fathers. But - and this is very important - God did this only to the descendants who continued the wickedness of their fathers. To those who loved Him He showed great lovingkindness.

One very good illustrated example would be King Manasseh who was a very evil king. His deeds brought the sentence of destruction upon the kingdom (2 Kgs 21:10-15). On the other hand Manasseh’s grandson, Josiah, kept God’s covenant and was not punished (2 Kgs 22:16-20). Josiah’s goodness did not turn away God’s wrath upon the sins of Manasseh (2 Kgs 23:26,27); and the penalty for all fell in the time of Josiah’s son, Zedekiah (Manasseh’s great-grandson, “the third generation”), who “did that which was evil” (2 Kgs 24:19).

Another example was King Ahab, upon whom God threatened judgment for his sins (1 Kgs 21:19, 22-26). King Ahab repented somewhat and “walked softly” (1 Kgs 21:27). God postponed His judgment (2 Kgs 21:29), but carried it out upon Ahab’s son, Jehoram, who “walked in the ways of Ahab” (2 Kgs 3:2,3; 9:24). Also, because of King Jehu’s sins (2 Kgs 10:29; Hos 1:4), his great-grandson, Zachariah, was slain (along with the entire dynasty) because “he (Zachariah) did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, as his fathers had done” (2 Kgs 15:9).

- h. The “thousands” in verse six has no reference to a sequence of generations. There have been less than 200 generations in all the time since Moses’ life.
 - i. The force of this commandment is reestablished in Christ’s covenant and is found in 1 Corinthians 8:5,6 and in Acts 14:15.
7. *Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*
- a. The term “in vain” (or “for vanity”) has at least three distinct meanings:

- (1) It means the use of God's name in backing up a LIE. Several verses illustrate this meaning of the term "vain:" (a) Isaiah 59:4 - *None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.* The word "lies" is the same Hebrew word translated "vain" in Exodus 20:7 (Heb. - *shav*). (b) Exodus 23:1 - *Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.* (c) Hosea 10:4 - *They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.*
 - (2) This usage refers to using God's name in an idle, irreverent or flippant way. Its meaning is illustrated in the following passages: (a) Malachi 3:14 - *Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: ...* (b) Psalm 60:11 - *Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man.* (c) Psalm 119:37 - *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.* The Greek Old Testament agrees with this meaning of the word vain where it is translated in the phrase *epi mataio* for "something worthless."
 - (3) "In vain" also means to use God's name in blasphemy, in defiance or any other wicked purpose. Psalm 139:20 - *For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain.*
- b. This commandment condemns the cursing and much of the slang language that seems to be so popular in our society. Psalm 19:14 - *Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.*
- A person's name is inseparable from the person who bears it. Therefore, if we use the name wrongly, we use the person wrongly. In the old testament, one could swear by God's name IF they swore the truth (Lev 19:12; Jer 4:2; 2 Sam 2:27). The new testament forbids taking oaths in God's name (Mt 5:34-37; Jas 5:12). In Matthew 6:9 Christ gave the example of the model prayer. In it, He clarifies this by saying, "hallowed be thy name." Psalm 111:9 says, "Holy and reverend is his name."
- c. Many Jewish interpreters have felt that this law meant that God's name should not be uttered unnecessarily in common conversation. In the centuries after Moses' time, the Jews pronounced the divine name Yahweh only once each year, and that by the high priest when he gave the blessing on the day of atonement. Jehovah's name was used quite freely by Godly people in the old testament age.

8-11. ⁸*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: ¹⁰But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

- a. The law concerning the sabbath had two parts: (1) keep it holy; and (2) do no work on that day.
- b. The sabbath day is the seventh day of the week, which would be Saturday on our current calendar. Many people mistakenly refer to Sunday (the first day of the week) as the sabbath day.
- c. The word “remember” in verse eight may simply mean to faithfully observe. But most likely, it implies that the people already knew something about the sabbath and were to remember by the appropriate obedience. They knew that the manna had not been provided on the sabbath days and they knew they were to rest on that day (Ex 16:22,23,29). Scripture gives no indication that man knew anything about the sabbath day until the giving of the manna. Nehemiah 9:13,14 - ¹³*Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: ¹⁴And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant.* Even though God had rested on the seventh day after creation, He did not command man to keep the seventh day until Exodus 16 and 20.
- d. The sabbath was given for three primary reasons: (1) to provide a day of rest for both men and beasts. The Hebrew work for sabbath means a day of rest. The related verb means to cease or rest. This principle of a day of rest each week is both needful and delightful. All work activities were to cease with the exception of those circumstances that were unavoidable. Types of work that were forbidden included plowing, reaping, pressing wine, bearing burdens, carrying goods, trade, holding markets, gathering firewood and kindling; (2) to remember that the LORD is the creator of the world. It is this idea that places this commandment in the Decalogue rather than being one of many other ordinances concerning holy days; and (3) to remember that the LORD had brought them out of slavery in Egypt. This idea is found in Deuteronomy 5:15. This would apply ONLY to Israel and it shows that the sabbath was never intended to be observed by all races and nations.

- e. Are Christians to keep the sabbath as a holy day? Emphatically, no! We live under a new covenant (2 Cor 3:6) and this covenant does not include any commandment concerning the sabbath day. The early Christians met on the first day of the week, and did so under the oversight and direction of the inspired apostles (Acts 20:7). The first day of the week is not called by the name “sabbath” in the new testament. Instead it is referred to as the Lord’s Day (Rev 1:10). Colossians 2:16,17 - ¹⁶*Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: ¹⁷Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.*
12. *Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*
- a. The commandment here is that parents are to be *honored*. The reward for obedience would be that the children’s days might be long in the land that God was about to give them. The word *honor* as it is used here is the same word often applied to that *honor* that is due to God (Prov 3:9, Isa 43:23). The Hebrew noun is *kabod* and the verb is *kabed*. This is often translated as “glory” and is applied to God’s glory (Ex 16:7; 24:17; 40:34; 1 Kgs 8:11). The Greek Old Testament translated *honor* as *timao*, a verb that refers to *honor* rendered to elders, rulers, superiors, guests and in the relationship of men to gods. This should be sufficient to show that honoring parents was taken very seriously by God.
 - b. Honor was to be shown in four ways: (1) by showing respect. Leviticus 19:3 - *Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.* (2) by obeying them (Deut 21:18-21 and Eph 6:1); (3) by caring for them in their later years (Mk 7:10-12 and 1 Tim 5:4,8); (4) negatively, parents were not to be cursed or struck (Ex 21:15 and Lev 21:15,17).
 - c. The commandment of honoring parents is listed immediately after the law about the sabbath. These two commandments are mentioned together in Leviticus 19:3. It could be that God intended they should be associated together. It is interesting to note that in societies where divine worship is not practiced, the elderly are often neglected, rejected and even turned out. It is sad that our society worships youth and older age is dreaded or despised. So many people put much effort in trying to remain forever young only to find out that the task is impossible.
 - d. In Ephesians 6:2 the apostle Paul states that this commandment is the “first commandment with a promise,” the promise that their days would be long in the land which the LORD gave them. Attached to this is the promise “that it may go well with thee” (Deut 5:16). Obedience by

children, as a rule, will result in good health, safety and wisdom. All this plus the blessings of God will generally make the days of our lives longer. On the other hand, one must not assume that obedience to parents would guarantee a long life in every case any more than a lack of obedience would guarantee a short life in wicked people. This promise appeared to have a collective national application. If the children obeyed obedient parents, their nation would survive longer. If they were disobedient, their nation would be carried into captivity. In this particular age, most of God's promises were of a material nature because the people were still spiritual children (Gal 3:23-25). Sadly, many Christians today are still in that state.

13. *Thou shalt not kill.*

- a. This commandment, when properly understood, forbids murder, manslaughter and suicide. Most certainly, the Hebrew word *ratsah* translated "kill" referred to murder. It has this meaning in many other references (Num 35:16-18 and others). In the following chapters, more detailed laws are given concerning murder. Please note 21:12 and 14.
- b. The word "kill" also applies to manslaughter. It has this meaning in more than a dozen references (Num 35:16-21; Deut 4:42; Josh 20:3; Num 35:6,11 and others). The following chapters will give more specific details about manslaughter. We have a divine obligation to protect the lives of others in all of our activities. We are not to kill in carelessness, anger, hatred or vengeance. When we read "thou shalt not kill," there is no specific object that is named. Therefore, the verse most certainly forbids killing ourselves (suicide) as well.
- c. This commandment does NOT forbid capital punishment when it is administered by authorized judges following God's directions. Genesis 9:5,6 - ⁵*And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.* ⁶*Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.*

In the following three chapters, there are at least eight offenses for which God commanded that men should be executed. Both Peter and Paul believed in capital punishment (Acts 25:11, Rom 13:4, 1 Pet 2:13-15).

- d. This commandment likewise does not forbid war. Wars were frequently instituted by God (Ex 15:1; Deut 20:1; Ex 17:6; Num 10:9).
- e. Matthew 5:21,22 - ²¹*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:* ²²*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 to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

14. *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

- a. In the Old Testament the term *adultery* generally meant sexual relations between a man and a married women (other than his wife) or betrothed women (Gen 39:9). Both the 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 for help (see Deut 22:23-27). Betrothal or engagement was regarded as being just as binding as was the marriage contract. If a man lay with a virgin, he had to pay a dowry to her father and then take the woman as his wife - and he could never leave her (Deut 22:28,29; Ex 22:16,17).
- b. The law given through Moses did not directly forbid polygamy or concubinage, although the idea of one wife for one man for life with no divorce had been God's intention for man from the very beginning (see Mt 19:7,8).
- c. Adultery in its strictest sense is limited to relations with a married woman, but the law also dealt with other types of sexual offenses. These include homosexuality (sodomy) (Lev 20:13), bestiality (Ex 22:19), sexual relations with relatives (incest) (Lev 20:14-21) and rape (Deut 22:25-29). Although there was not a specific law that forbade seeking prostitutes, God did indicate that the practice was detestable 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 later writings by the prophets (Hos 4:11,14) and other writings (Prov 6:26; 29:3), God clearly expresses His condemnation of prostitution. The New Testament condemns lying with harlots in the severest language (1 Cor 6:15-18; Eph 5:5,6).
- d. The law against adultery is an absolute necessity for the security and happiness of the home and family. Matthew 5:27,28 - ²⁷*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:* ²⁸*But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

15. *Thou shalt not steal.*

- a. The law about stealing simply stated was "Do not do it!" Every unlawful acquisition of property by violence, embezzlement, cheating, forgery, etc., is forbidden. Even subtle methods like moving over a neighbor's property

boundary marker (usually just a rock pile or stake) were forbidden (Deut 19:14). The law forbade stealing people (kidnaping) (Ex 21:16). The laws and penalties for stealing are expanded in 22:1-4.

- b. Ephesians 4:28 - *Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.* 2 Corinthians 8:21 - *Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.*
- c. The eighth commandment protected the right of private property. Not even a king dared to steal the property of one of his subjects without just compensation (1 Kgs 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 indeed a God-given right, and it is the basis for the only social and economic system that will produce enough wealth to supply a nation.

16. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*

- a. We normally think of witnessing in the context of testimony in courts of law, therefore, bearing false witness meant lying in court or committing perjury. However, the commandment is broad enough to include all lying in our daily lives (see Psa 40:4; 101:7; Prov 6:16,17). According to Leviticus 19:16, even tattling and unfounded, unkind gossip were forms of false witness. Ephesians 4:25 - *Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another* (cf Col 3:9; Rev 21:8,27).
- b. The question is asked, "Who is thy neighbor?" It would seem that "neighbor" probably means "all men." The term "neighbor" in Exodus 11:2 referred to anyone near to a person. In Leviticus 19:18 "neighbor" is parallel to "children of thy people" (or Israelites). Leviticus 19:34 says that the Israelites were to love the stranger that sojourned with them "as thyself." For this reason, Jewish scholars have interpreted the "neighbor" in this command to refer to all men. Jesus, in the story of the good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37), taught that our "neighbor" is anyone who needs our help.
- c. The commandment to always be truthful in dealing with our neighbor is so contrary to usual human conduct that it surely bears the marks of God's divine authorship on its very face.

17. *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.*

- a. The word “covet” means to desire. The Hebrew word (*hamad*) is translated “desire” in Psalm 68:16 - *Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell in it for ever.* The word itself does not necessarily suggest EVIL desire. In the same way, the Greek (*epithumeo*) means evil ONLY when desire is directed toward unlawful things. Sin has its beginnings in wrong thoughts and desires. This commandment is aimed at cutting off sin at the root - our own desires and cravings.
 - b. Deuteronomy 7:25 - *The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it is an abomination to the LORD thy God.* Joshua 7:20,21 - ²⁰*And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done.* ²¹*When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.* Micah 2:2 - *And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage.*
 - c. James 1:14,15 - ¹⁴*But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.* ¹⁵*Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* James 4:1,2 - ¹*From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?* ²*Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.* 1 John 2:15,16 - ¹⁵*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* ¹⁶*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*
18. *And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.*
- a. Upon seeing and hearing the events that had just taken place, the crowd of Israelites fled from the mountain in near panic. This is in stark contrast to the account given by Josephus (*Ant. III,v,6*) where he states that the multitude *rejoiced* at what was said. This contradiction shows that the writings of Josephus are NOT inspired and that he would sometimes embellish his writings.

- b. The Hebrew word translated “saw” is a participle and carries the idea of a continuous viewing. This indicates that their perception of the events was not after the giving of the of the commandments, but during it.
- c. Verses 18-21 give the introduction to the “book of the covenant” (Ex 24:4,7), that body of laws given by God and recorded in 20:18- 23:33. This “book” contains many enlargements upon the ten commandments and introduces some new material.

19 *And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.*

- a. The people wanted to hear God’s words, but they wanted to hear them from Moses. They wanted Moses to listen to the awesome voice of God and then have Moses speak to them. They were afraid that they would die if God spoke to them.
- b. It would be easy to criticize Israel because of their fear of God’s voice, but it probably would not be fair to do so. Even Moses felt some fear during the events (Heb 12:21). At any rate, Israel did desire to hear what God had to say. It is doubtless that if any of us now living would have been any less scared than they were. It is interesting that the thing that Israel dreaded, Moses desired greatly (Ex 33:18).
- c. Deuteronomy 5:28-33 - ²⁸*And the LORD heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the LORD said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. ²⁹O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever! ³⁰Go say to them, Get you into your tents again. ³¹But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it. ³²Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. ³³Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess.*

In verse 28 we read that God graciously accepted the Israelites words and promise to Moses. God knew that the people would not live up to their promises but he was nonetheless gracious at the time. The people were sent back to their tents while Moses was called to stand by the Lord and hear His commandments.

- d. We can all learn a lesson from the fear of God's voice by Israel. We shall ALL hear God's voice in the time to come. Not only will the earth shake, but the heavens as well (Heb 12:26). If Israel, who had accepted God's covenant, was terrified, how much more will they be who have not accepted God at His final coming?

20,21. ²⁰*And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. ²¹And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.*

- a. Three purposes for God's coming to the people are listed here: (1) to prove (or test) the people; (2) that His fear may be before them; and (3) that they sin not.
- b. Proving Israel is a frequent theme found in Exodus. God did not test Israel to discover for Himself how they would react in any situation. He already knew. But as any good teacher knows, a test is a powerful training tool in and of itself. It intensifies study and provokes thought. The awesome demonstrations at Sinai brought the Israelites face to face with the reality of God's power and majesty...something many had failed to accept.
- c. God wanted to put the "fear of God" into the people. Proverbs 16:6 - *By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.*

22,23. ²²*And the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. ²³Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.*

- a. Israel was not to make gods of silver or gold. This is another expression of the second commandment. In fact, twice in verse 23 God declared, "Ye shall not make...." The building of the golden calf (chapter 32) would soon violate this commandment.
- b. After Israel left Mount Sinai, she began to encounter the many pagan people of the region. All of these had their own religions, idols, temples and alters. There was the strong likelihood that Israel would pick up these practices and corrupt her true worship. Therefore, God gave the restrictions on worship in verses 23 through 26.

24,25. 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 all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. ²⁵And if thou wilt*

make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.

- a. Alters were to be made of earth or unhewn stones. These would be the humble alters of wanderers, to be used and then abandoned. Why God commanded they use of these materials is not known. It would prevent a very 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 not be long until God would give Israel the instructions about how to build the altar for use in the tabernacle. It would be made of wood and brass (27:1-8).
- b. Two types of offerings were to be made on the altar: burnt offerings and peace offerings. These are two very ancient types of offerings (Gen 8:20, 22:2; Ex 18:12). The offering of sacrifice indicates a break of fellowship between God and men. Burnt offerings involve 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.
- c. Sacrifices were to be made at every place where God would cause His name to be remembered. As God led Israel from one encampment to another by His guiding cloud, they would set up their altar at each stop. Please note that only ONE altar for all the people is mentioned in verse 24. Note that in Exodus 24:4 that the people set up 12 pillars, but only one altar. From its very beginnings, Israel's worship was to be centralized. This is in perfect agreement with the restriction in Deuteronomy 12:11 that all offerings in the promised land were to be made in the place which Jehovah would choose. God's word is consistent within itself.

26. *Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.*

- a. Steps were NOT to be made up to God's altar so that the priest would not have any portion of his body revealed which would be deemed immodest. We know that priests in ancient Mesopotamia sometimes were totally naked. This was not the situation among the Israelites, however, as immodesty by priests was forbidden. According to chapter 28:42, God's priests even wore pants to allow even greater modesty.
- b. God made clothes for Adam and Eve after they sinned (Gen 3:21). It is common that when people turn away from God, they want to throw off their clothing and "break loose" and act like animals (Ex 32:25). God's people should always dress modestly (1 Tim 2:9).

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Chapter 21 contains the first group of the “judgments” (or ordinances) of the LORD. These will extend through chapter 23. In this chapter laws will be given about slaves, crimes that would require the death penalty, various offenses involving injuries and property losses. We must always be aware that it is our duty as Christians to “establish” the law (Rom 3:31). We can be no less concerned about the lives and safety of those around us than were those people under the law of Moses. While we are not under the law, we do fulfill the law by loving our neighbor as ourselves (Rom 13:9,10).

1. *Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them.*
 - a. What are judgments? The Hebrew word *mishpatim* means judicial decisions, decisions at law or legal rulings. The word judgments implies yet another concept: that of justice. The Hebrew word is often translated justice (Ex 23:6; Deut 16:19). This fact implies that perfect justice for all social relationships is found in God’s ordinances. It has never been found in those of men.
 - b. Verse one begins with the word “now” (Heb. - *and*) and links the following ordinances with the words of God in the preceding chapter (the decalogue). This word tying the two together shows that ALL are part of the same covenant.
2. *If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.*
 - a. If a Hebrew bought a slave, the slave was required to serve for six years. In the seventh year, he would be free without payment of any redemption or ransom price. He was, in fact, to be given liberal gifts of food and livestock (Deut 15:12-15). The same rule applied to women servants as well.
 - b. The word translated “servant” means a bond servant or slave. We should not picture this slave as a victim of some harsh or cruel system. The slavery actually had the social function of caring for the destitute. Historically, the service of Hebrew bondmen to their masters was rather mild. They were to be treated as hired servants rather than as slaves, and not to be ruled over with harshness (Lev 25:39-43). They were to observe the sabbath days just like the rest of the family.
 - c. The servant was to be released in the seventh year of his service, which was not necessarily the sabbatical year which occurred every seventh year and was observed by all of Israel (Ex 23:10,11). Servants were also

to be freed in the year of jubilee, every 50th year, even if it occurred one year after they signed on (Lev 25:10,39-41).

- d. What is a Hebrew servant? It must be considered synonymous with an Israelite. This identification is supported by the parallel passage in Deuteronomy 15:2. This is further indicated by the fact that Leviticus 25:44-46 says that strangers and foreigners bought by Israelites were kept as bondmen forever.

3,4. ³*If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. ⁴If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself.*

- a. The law was rather specific concerning a servant's family. If he became a servant alone, he was liberated alone. If he was married when he became a servant, his wife went out with him free. If, during his service, the master gave him a wife and she bore him children, the man went free alone and the wife and children stayed with the master. Note that the servant had no right to contract a marriage for himself, the master had to give him the wife.
- b. The law may seem severe in that the wife may not be allowed to go free with her husband. One major reason would be that any woman given to the servant in marriage would probably have been a foreign, permanent bondwoman. It is doubtful that the master would have had authority to give away a Hebrew woman indentured for only six years. It would also have represented a substantial financial loss for the master if both were freed.

5,6. ⁵*And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: ⁶Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also 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.*

- a. A Hebrew servant could commit himself to a lifetime of service. If the servant loved his master, his wife and/or his children more than his freedom, he could declare a lifetime of allegiance. This would be done by a declaration before the judges and marked by the piercing of the servant's ear with an awl (cf Deut 15:16,17).
- b. The very fact that this law is given shows that servants would desire permanent servitude frequently enough that a law was needed to set forth the proper procedure. The law indicates that many Hebrew masters were kind to their servants. This, coupled with the desire of some men to not

abandon their families, resulted in a significant number remaining with their master as permanent servants.

7-9. ⁷*And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, she shall not go out as the menservants do. ⁸If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her. ⁹And if he have betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters.*

- a. Maidservants were not released after six years because these women became concubines or secondary wives to the master. Note that the master espoused her to himself or one of his sons.
- b. The word “maidservant” used here is Hebrew *‘amah* and 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 borne of a maidservant (Jdgs 9:18). These examples show one common meaning of the term maidservant. The term is also employed to describe primary wives such as Hannah (1 Sam 1:11), Abigail (1 Sam 25:25), Bathsheba (1 Kgs 1:13) and Ruth (Ruth 3:9). Therefore, the term does not always indicate a servant-concubine.
- c. If the maidservant displeased her master he could permit her to be redeemed (bought back). She was probably purchased by some Israelite outside of his family because her father was too poor to buy her back. The law strictly forbade the master to sell her to a foreign power.
- d. If the maidservant was taken as a wife for a son, then they were to be treated like daughters.

10,11. ¹⁰*If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish. ¹¹And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money.*

- a. The maidservant 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 paying money for her. Food is literally translated “flesh,” suggesting that she was not to get a mere subsistence but meat and other quality food.
- b. “Duty of marriage” or “marital rights” may mean simply a place to live and the right to associate with the family like other members. It could also mean the right to bear children of the master.

12-14. ¹²*He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death. ¹³And 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. ¹⁴But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.*

- a. The penalty for killing another person was that of death unless it happened accidentally or unintentionally. In that event, the slayer had to flee to a place of safety prepared for this situation. A willful slayer, however, was to be put to death, even if he fled to the Lord's altar for safety. This law applied to all Israelites as well as non-Israelites living among them.
- b. Genesis 9:6 - *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.*

This law dates back to the time of Noah and was given to the whole of the human race. Human life is sacred and whoever assails this sanctity must forfeit his own life. But the life of the slayer is also sacred so his life was not to be taken if the death was accidental. Human life is so sacred that even an accidental killing brings drastic consequences and the normal life patterns of the slayer would be interrupted.

- c. The place of safety for a slayer to flee was called a city of refuge. There were six of these designated in the land of Israel (Num 35:10-34; Deut 19:1-10; 4:41-43; Josh 20:1-9). Although not specifically stated, perhaps a temporary place of safety was designated while wandering in the wilderness.
- d. The murderer had no place of security (Num 35:16-21). Throughout history, in all cultures, killers have fled to sacred places in hopes of escaping punishment. David's general, Joab, and David's son, Adonijah, both did this, fleeing to the altar and clutching its horns (1 Kgs 1:50; 2:28-34).
- e. Verse 13 has an interesting phrase...it describes an accidental killing as an act of God; "if...God deliver him into his hand;..." Our lack of understanding about God's workings in man's affairs would not allow stating positively how far God's actions should be applied. Is every man's death under God's direction? Or do time and chance bring about events without definite purpose or pattern (Eccl 9:11)? Psalm 37:23 teaches that *A good man's goings are ordered by the LORD*. We must still recognize that many choices are left up to us and that every action, good or bad, will have appropriate consequences.

15. *And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death.*
- a. This ordinance is directly connected to the commandment about honoring father and mother. To strike a parent would surely bring death.
 - b. The verb translated “smite” (*nakah*) sometimes means to smite hard enough to kill (Ex 2:12). This suggests that the beating of a parent as referred to here was a violent form. Note that in verse 12, “smiting” could lead to death. The Jewish rabbis interpreted verse 15 to mean that only when a blow left a bruise upon the parents was the death penalty to be invoked. It would seem that it would not matter whether a blow left a bruise or not since it would be the attitude of the heart that mattered most (see verse 17).
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.*
- a. The penalty for kidnaping was death. Obviously God hated this crime. Deuteronomy 24:7 - *If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him, or selleth him; then that thief shall die; and thou shalt put evil away from among you.*
 - b. The kidnapper’s crime was condemned even if he hadn’t collected a ransom and still possessed the victim. Remember Joseph’s brothers who kidnaped him and sold him into slavery (Gen 37:25-28). God hated this act.
17. *And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.*
- a. The penalty for this crime was also death. Leviticus 20:9 - *For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him.*
 - b. The Hebrew verb (*qalal*) translated “curse” has several applications. It often referred to language like our modern profanity (1 Sam 17:33; 2 Sam 16:5). The dictionaries define it to mean “to esteem lightly, hence to revile, curse or execrate.” In Deuteronomy 23:4 it means a curse of supernatural type, like voodoo or hexing. In 1 Samuel 2:30 the word is translated “lightly esteemed” and means the opposite of honoring. Jesus quoted Exodus 21:17 in Matthew 15:4 and Mark 7:10, condemning the Pharisees for neglecting to care for their parents. To curse parents has a very broad meaning.

- c. Respect for parents is commanded in the New Testament in Ephesians 6:1. God's attitude is no less strong today than it was in Moses' time about those who curse their parents.

18,19. ¹⁸*And if men strive together, and one smite another with a stone, or with his fist, and he die not, but keepeth his bed: ¹⁹If 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.*

- a. In the event that two people engaged in a fight and a non-fatal injury were to be inflicted, the person who inflicted the injury was to pay for the loss of the injured person's time off from work and to be completely healed, meaning to pay for medical care. Except for this requirement, he was to be "quit," that is free and clear of further liability. The guilty party had to pay "workers' compensation" and "health benefits!"
- b. If the injured person died, then verse 12 would apply. Verse 18 seems to apply to an unplanned fight. The suggestion of using impromptu weapons like the fist or a stone would not show premeditation. We would expect that if it were planned, the guilty party would have carried some form of weapon.

20,21. ²⁰*And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished. ²¹Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money.*

- a. If a master were to beat a slave to death, the master would "surely be punished." But if the slave survived the beating for a day or two, the master would not be punished because the financial loss of the slave's services was considered punishment enough. This passage must refer to foreign slaves because Leviticus 25:44-46 declares that Israelite bond servants were not to be made to serve "with rigor."
- b. If the master killed a slave, the punishment is not specified. Some think the master was executed as verse 12 directs. This does not seem very likely because if the punishment for killing a slave was the same as killing any other person, there would be no purpose in this distinct law which applies only to slaves.
- c. The "rod" referred to was probably the instrument customarily used to chasten a slave (see Prov 10:13; 13:23). "Under his hand" means during the act of the beating or very soon thereafter. The fact that a beaten slave lived for a day or two was considered proof that the master did not intend to kill him.

- d. If all this seems harsh, and somehow ungodly, consider that the law (verses 26,27) declared that permanent physical injuries to the slave, i.e., loss of eye, tooth, etc., brought about his release from slavery. Because public sentiment might arise against a master and because the Israelites as a whole were commanded by God to consider the rights of the slave, they were usually treated in a very good manner.

22,23. ²²*If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine.* ²³*And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life.*

- a. The New King James reads - *If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine.*

This would mean that the guilty party would pay for the trauma inflicted upon child, mother, etc. Since the child survived, there would be no further punishment. The amount and extent of the punishment was to be determined by the husband and the judges.

- b. But, if harm followed, then the one who injured the woman was punished by being injured in a similar manner to the injury that was inflicted. What is this "harm" (mischief) that might follow? This word ('ason) is found elsewhere in scripture only in Genesis 42:4,38 and 44:29. In these passages it seems to signify serious harm at least and most likely death. We assume that the same meaning applies here and means death to the child.

- c. The expression "that her fruit depart" could be literally translated "and her children go out" (of her womb). The word translated "fruit" is *yeled*. This word is almost always translated "child" (72 times in the KJV). Sometimes it is rendered boy, son or young man. The use of the word *yeled* in verse 22 to describe the woman's aborted fetus points directly at the advocates of "legalized" abortion.

24,25. ²⁴*Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,* ²⁵*Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.*

- a. In the event someone brought about a miscarriage by the harming of a woman, that person would be 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 (cf Lev 24:17-21). To some, this may seem severe, but it makes the punishment

fit the crime. It also prevents extreme and harsh retaliations. It was intended as much as a deterrent as a penalty.

- b. In ancient times, wrongdoings were often punished according to the law of unlimited revenge. This would allow for an offender's entire family to be wiped out for his violation (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.

26,27. ²⁶*And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake.* ²⁷*And if he smite out his manservant's tooth, or his maidservant's tooth; he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake.*

- a. This law is stated very simply. If a master inflicted a permanent injury on his servant (male or female) then the servant was to be set free in payment for the injury.

28,29. ²⁸*If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit.* ²⁹*But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death.*

- a. If an ox were to gore a person to death, it was to be stoned to death and its flesh could not be eaten. The owner of the animal would then be clear of any further responsibility. However, if the ox had been known in the past to be a troublesome animal, and the owner had not kept it put up, and it gored a person to death, then the ox and the owner were to be stoned to death. Most likely injuries by other animals would be handled in the same manner.
- b. Genesis 9:5,6 - ⁵*And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.* ⁶*Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.*
- c. The ox that killed was slain because it had taken a human life, that which is a divine gift and in the image of God. The act of killing is so extreme that even a beast, though it has no moral sensibilities, was removed from existence to show the horror of killing. Negligence on the part of the owner was imputed to be a capital offense.

- d. Possible reasons for the ox not being eaten lie in the fact that stoning it would not allow for proper bleeding for slaughter and stoning would cause the meat to be badly bruised.

30,31. ³⁰*If there be laid on him a sum of money, then he shall give for the ransom of his life whatsoever is laid upon him.* ³¹*Whether he have gored a son, or have gored a daughter, according to this judgment shall it be done unto him.*

- a. The owner of the ox could escape execution if the other people involved (family of the dead person and authorities) agreed to lay upon him a ransom for his life. In that case, he had to pay whatever judgement was levied.
- b. Verse 31 makes clear the impartiality of the law. It mattered not if the victim were even a son or daughter, the penalty was still the same.

32. *If the ox shall push a manservant or a maidservant; he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.*

- a. If an ox gored a slave (whether male or female) the owner gave the slave's master 30 shekels of silver and the ox was stoned.
- b. This is one of the very few rules in Israel's law that shows a difference in the value of slaves and free men. Regardless, the slave was still a person, and the ox that gored the slave was put to death. Interestingly, we note here the price of a dead slave.

33,34. 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, and give money unto the owner of them; and the dead beast shall be his.*

- a. This ordinance again reflects on a person's negligence. A price was to be paid for the negligence to make amends with the offended party.
- b. Pits of various types were common in Israel. They were dug into the bedrock for water cisterns, grain storage, animal traps, etc.
- c. Romans 13:9,10 - ⁹*...and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* ¹⁰*Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

35,36. ³⁵*And if one man's ox hurt another's, that he die; then they shall sell the live ox, and divide the money of it; and the dead ox also they shall divide.* ³⁶*Or if it be*

known that the ox hath used to push in time past, and his owner hath not kept him in; he shall surely pay ox for ox; and the dead shall be his own.

- a. On occasion, a person's animal may injure or kill another's and the owner not be negligent. However, restitution was still required by the law. The live ox would be sold and the money divided between both owners. Also the dead ox was divided between them. This most likely ended up with both men losers, but not to the degree they would have been without the law.
- b. If the ox that killed was known in the past to be a gorer, and the owner had been warned but was negligent and did not keep the animal in, then the owner paid totally for the dead ox and the carcass was his.
- c. The concern often expressed in the Old Testament prophets for fair dealing had its roots in the law of Moses and, 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 indentured servitude.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

This chapter continues God's covenant ordinances, which are found in chapters 21-23. This chapter deals with the punishment of thieves, damage to field produce, goods left in the care of non-owners, etc. This chapter also has a section of laws protecting the weak (vs. 21-27) and closes with ordinances about duties to God.

1. *If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.*
 - a. The rate of restitution for stealing an ox and killing or selling it was *five* times! The rate for a sheep (or goat) was *four*. Killing or selling the animal would indicate that the theft was deliberate. The rate was different because the ox had a greater value. Not only was it a work animal, but it took many years to train an ox well.
 - b. The fourfold restitution of a sheep is referred to in King David's condemnation of the man who stole the little ewe lamb (2 Sam 12:6). Men have always had harsh laws against theft because it hits them where it hurts - in the pocketbook. They may turn their heads at immorality (if no one is physically hurt), but theft is not so readily excusable. These ordinances clearly demonstrate that theft is not excusable in God's eyes either.
- 2,3. *²If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him. ³If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.*
 - a. If a thief was caught breaking in at night and was killed in the act, his killer was not held accountable for the death. If the sun had risen and the thief was slain, his slayer had blood guiltiness upon him. The dead thief's relatives could attempt to take the life of the one killing the thief (cf 21:12).
 - b. The principle given here is that human life is of greater value than property. If the thief were breaking in at night, there was the possibility that he was going to harm or kill the householder and/or his family; thus, the householder was not held accountable since this may have been necessary self-defense. But in the day time, the thief's intentions (whether just stealing or seeking to harm people) would probably be visible by his actions.
 - c. If the thief had no means to repay for his crime, then he was to be sold into slavery. This may mean that the thief would have a period of

servitude with the victim to repay for the loss of property or sold to another individual to make immediate restitution.

4. *If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double.*
 - a. If the thief were caught “red-handed,” he had to pay double. He had to return the stolen animal and provide another. Possibly, the reason for the lesser penalty (double instead of four-fold) was that if the stolen item was still with the thief, he 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.
 - b. It should be noted that as these laws are listed in chapters 21-23, they are not set forth as a comprehensive and systematic presentation of all of Israel’s laws. They are a “sampler” of the fuller code of laws found in Leviticus, Deuteronomy, etc. These chapters do not contain all laws on the same topics grouped together in a legal or literary style.
5. *If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man’s field; of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution.*
 - a. If a man pastured his animals in another man’s field or vineyard, he was to make restitution out of the best part of his own field or vineyard. The original text indicates 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...” This law would be applicable whether the pasturing is intentional or not.
 - b. The law of Moses set a stiff penalty for grazing another’s field. Isaiah 3:14 speaks of elders and princes in the land who ate up the vineyards of the poor and would suffer God’s judgement. Probably at some time in the past, inconsiderate people thought they could profit more by pasturing another man’s field than the law could possibly require in punishment. Therefore, God decreed that they had to make restitution from the best part of their fields.
6. *If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed therewith; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution.*
 - a. If a person built a fire that burned another man’s field, he would have to make restitution. The fire referred to would be one that “got away.” Even a small fire started for cooking or burning off stubble might break free in a

strong breeze which would catch in the thorns and quickly spread to fields of standing grain.

- b. Palestinian thorns are very flammable during the dry season and are used for fuel by the poorer people. These thorns and thistles along with sheep dung used for fertilizer made an almost explosive combination. In late June, the air and the breeze is extremely dry and a fire would be nearly impossible to extinguish.

7-9. *⁷If a man shall deliver unto his neighbour money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen out of the man's house; if the thief be found, let him pay double. ⁸If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the judges, to see whether he have put his hand unto his neighbor's goods. ⁹For all manner of trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing, which another challengeth to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbour.*

- a. If goods were left in the care of another and were stolen, and the thief were to be found, then the thief was to reimburse double.
- b. If the thief were not caught, then the person to whom the goods had been entrusted had to clear himself. The phrase "unto the judges" has been translated a number of ways. The ASV translates the phrase "unto God." This would indicate that possibly God would reveal in some way who the transgressor was. This could possibly have been done by the priests by their Urim and Thummin, or some other means of obtaining information from God (Ex 28:30; Deut 1:16,17).
- c. The American practice of "finders-keepers" was not in the vocabulary of the Israelites. If the owner of stolen goods were ever to find the missing article, he could claim it on sight because it would always remain his possession.

10-13. *¹⁰If a man deliver unto his neighbour 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: ¹¹Then shall an oath of the LORD be between them both, that he hath not put his hand unto his neighbour's goods; and the owner of it shall accept thereof, and he shall not make it good. ¹²And if it be stolen from him, he shall make restitution unto the owner thereof. ¹³If it be torn in pieces, then let him bring it for witness, and he shall not make good that which was torn.*

- a. If livestock were in the care of someone besides its owner and it died, was hurt or driven away (by an enemy or wild animals) and no one saw it happen, an oath was to be sworn in Jehovah's name as to the innocence

of the keeper. Again, it would seem that in some way Jehovah would make known the truth. If the keeper was innocent, no restitution was made.

- b. Natural losses were not the responsibility of the keeper. If wild animals killed a sheep, etc., the keeper could show the remains of the animal as proof to avoid restitution.
- c. If the animal(s) were stolen, the keeper had to make restitution to the owner. The keeper was responsible to protect against theft. Genesis 31:39 relates how Laban required Jacob to repay for stolen animals.

14,15. ¹⁴*And if a man borrow ought of his neighbour, and it be hurt, or die, the owner thereof being not with it, he shall surely make it good. ¹⁵But if the owner thereof be with it, he shall not make it good: if it be an hired thing, it came for his hire.*

- a. If a person borrowed an animal and it were hurt or died and the owner was not present, then the borrower had to pay for the animal. However, if the owner were present, the borrower was not responsible for any damage. Presumably, the owner could have done something to prevent the loss.
- b. If a person had hired (or rented) the animal and it was hurt or died, then the renter did not have to make it good. The owner assumed the risk in exchange for the hire.

16,17. ¹⁶*And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife. ¹⁷If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins.*

- a. If a man seduced a virgin, he had to pay the father of the virgin bride-money (dowry) and take the woman as his wife. This dowry at the time of writing was 50 shekels of silver. In addition to this, the man could never divorce her (Deut 22:28,29). If the father of the virgin for unknown reasons *absolutely* refuses to let her go, the man still had to pay the dowry.
- b. If the woman were a betrothed virgin, then both she and the man were to be put to death. If the man forced the woman and she cried for help, only the man would be put to death (see Deut 22:23-27).
- c. It seems strange that these laws would be listed along with laws concerning property, but a man's daughters were his property, though few looked upon their children as no more than property. In that culture, if a young woman was not a virgin, she was usually rejected as a candidate

for marriage (see Deut 22:14ff). To violate a woman meant financial loss to the father and emotional trauma for the woman.

- d. These laws in Exodus and Deuteronomy help to explain the dilemma of Joseph in Matthew 1:19 upon finding out that Mary was with child.
- e. As you can see, the law listed here in Exodus is not the full rendering of the law. This is merely a sampler with more detailed ordinances to follow later in Deuteronomy.

18. *Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.*

- a. This verse does NOT give authority to Christians today to execute witches, whether they be real or unreal. We are not under the covenant of the law of Moses which commanded this. In addition, to force confessions out of witches (or anyone else) by torture was never part of the Jewish law, much less Christian doctrine.
- b. Other passages condemning witchcraft, sorcery, consulting with a “familiar spirit,” etc. are found in Leviticus 19:31; 20:6,27; Deuteronomy 18:10,11; 1 Kings 21:6; 1 Chronicles 10:13; Isaiah 8:19,20; Micah 5:12. The New Testament condemns sorcery and witchcraft in Galatians 5:20; Revelation 21:8; 22:15. It is considered an abomination to God.

19. *Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death.*

- a. Having any type of sex with an animal was punishable by death. In the Hebrew, this verse begins with “All.” All parallel passages begin the same way.
- b. This unnatural act was partly legal among the Hittites. Those who did evil with a pig were to die. Those performing these acts with a horse or mule were free from penalty.
- c. In Canaanite literature (Ugaritic) there is a story of Baal (the god) coupling with a cow in order to be saved magically from death. In the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh, there are several references to the relations of the goddess Ishtar with various animals. Underscore another reason for the children of Israel NOT to be like their pagan neighbors.

20. *He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed.*

- a. Anyone who sacrificed to any god other than to the true God was to be stoned to death (Deut 17:2,3,5; 13:1-16).

- b. The Hebrew verb translated “utterly destroyed” is *haram*. This verb and its related noun *herem*, denote something that is accursed or set apart for destruction by God or by God’s orders. These religious overtones are absent in other words that mean to kill or destroy. In simple terms, those who sacrificed to other gods were accursed, put under ban and devoted to destruction.
21. *Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.*
- a. Any stranger who was journeying through their land was not to be wronged or oppressed. The Israelites had once been sojourners in Egypt and knew how it felt to be a stranger in a foreign land. Protecting an alien from wrong is a basic act of godliness (cf 23:9).
 - b. The “strangers” appear to refer to resident aliens living among the Israelites (Ex 20:10; 23:12). Deuteronomy 10:18,19 - ¹⁸*He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.* ¹⁹*Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt* (cf Lev 19:34; Mt 25:35).
 - c. Love for strangers was not the practice in most ancient nations. The Egyptians hated strangers and the Greeks called them barbarians.
- 22-24. ²²*Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child.* ²³*If thou afflict them in any wise, 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.*
- a. God made it clear that if anyone afflicted the widows or orphans, He WOULD hear their cries and His wrath would wax hot and He would cause the afflictors to be slain with the sword. Killing with the sword refers to wars in which men and their families would die.
 - b. Throughout scripture God has made it clear 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; Psa 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.
 - c. The punishment of making the wives widows and the children fatherless is severe but appropriate punishment to those who would afflict a widow or orphan.
25. *If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.*

- a. If a person loaned money to a poor person, they were NOT to speak or act roughly to those debtors. Neither were they to lay interest charges upon these people. Note that the poor are called “my people.” The Israelites were not to act like the demanding creditors in 2 Kings 4:1 and Matthew 18:28, and seize a debtor or his family or land.
- b. The law about not charging interest applied only to Israelite debtors. They could charge interest to foreigners (Deut 23:19-21). Nehemiah 5:3-10 condemned wealthy Jews for charging usury (interest) to their less fortunate brothers (cf Psa 15:5). In modern times money is usually loaned for commercial purposes, to increase capital, increase business or enhance ones comfort. It is perfectly proper that a reasonable interest can be expected in this type of transaction; therefore, verse 25 does not mean that we should demand that the banks stop charging interest. Neither does this verse mean that one cannot invest and expect a return. Christ himself approved the taking of interest from a bank (Mt 25:27; Lk 19:23). This is totally different from making gain from a neighbors needs or just being callous to the needs of a brother in Christ.

26,27. ²⁶*If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: ²⁷For that is his covering only, it is his raiment 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.*

- a. Any personal item that was necessary to a man's life (essentials) were not to be taken as security (or pledge) for a loan. A creditor could not take a poor person's garments...it may be all he had. In the daytime it would be his clothing and at night it would be his bedding.
- b. If the poor man's garment was taken for security it had to be returned before the sun went down the same day.
- c. Another item that could not be kept as security for a loan was a handmill or millstone (Deut 24:6). Without these items a poor man or woman could not grind grain for daily bread.

28. *Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.*

- a. The Israelites were not to revile or curse their rulers. This applied to rulers who were unreasonable, unjust and harsh as well as to noble and respected ones. The apostle Paul quoted this verse in Acts 23:5 (cf Rom 13:1-7; Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 2:13-17).
- b. The KJV says “thou shalt not revile the *gods*.” The marginal reading gives “judges.” The Greek Old Testament also renders “gods.” The Old

Testament nowhere recognizes the existence of other gods. Neither does it command us to speak of them respectfully.

- c. The word translated “gods” is *elohim*, the word which is usually translated *God*. While being plural in form, it is singular in meaning when referring to God. The word *elohim* basically can be translated “mighty ones” (see Gen 23:6). Its singular form “el” means a mighty one, a powerful one. Because of this, it is sometimes applied to judges or other mighty rulers among men. It also refers to angels (Psa 8:5), which are mighty.
- d. Based on the above information, the rendering for *elohim* in this verse refers to judges or other dignitaries among men. The fact that it is made parallel with “ruler of thy people” would support this view.
- e. Revile is from the same Hebrew word translated “curse” in Exodus 21:17. Leviticus 24:15,16 tells of one who blasphemed God’s name and was stoned to death for doing so.

29,30. ²⁹*Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn 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 his dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me.*

- a. The firstfruits of all crops and the firstborn, both man and beast, belonged to God. This verse may refer to several (or all) types of offerings of grain and produce and not just to the firstfruits, although it certainly includes firstfruits and may refer to them primarily. The Greek version renders it “Thou shalt not keep back the first-fruits of they threshing floor and (wine) press.”
- b. The Israelites were not to delay offering their firstfruits or any other offering. This might sometimes be a temptation.
- c. The law about giving firstfruits and firstborn is given more fully in Leviticus 19:23-25; Numbers 15:17-21; 18:12-17; Deuteronomy 26:1-11; 15:19,20. The first produce of everything was the Lord’s.
- d. 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 (cf 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).
- e. The firstborn animal was left with its mother seven days and then on the eighth day was brought as a sacrifice and offering. It would seem that in

the first seven days the animal was not sufficiently developed to be a suitable sacrifice.

31. *And ye shall be holy men unto me: neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs.*
- a. The Israelites were to be holy men unto God. Among other ways, their 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 by beasts. Such flesh was to be cast to the dogs. They must not eat carrion. Leviticus 17:15 decreed that those eating an animal that died of itself or was torn by beasts were ceremonially unclean until the evening.
 - b. We presume that the rule forbidding the eating of animals torn in the field relied on the fact that those animals were not properly bled in slaughtering. The people who ate of them would eat blood (see Lev 17:11-15). The restriction on eating blood has been carried forward to the New Testament for today's Christians (Acts 15:20).
 - c. All Israel was a holy nation (Ex 19:6; Lev 19:2). According to 1 Peter 2:9 Christians today are a holy nation.

CHAPTER 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.

1,2. *¹Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. ²Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment.*

- a. If a person heard a false report they were NOT to pick it up and tell it to others, nor was it to be uttered in court as testimony. The first two verses could be literally translated "you shall not take up something you have heard that is false; put not your hand with a wicked man to conspire to be a witness of violence."
- b. There are five brief negative commands in these two verses, each introduced by a negative particle (in Hebrew). These would be guidelines in maintaining justice for all men. These are 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. Psalm 101:5 - *Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off...* Leviticus 19:16 - *Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD.*
- c. An "unrighteous witness" is a witness of violence, that is, one who inflicts violence upon others. Violence need not always be physical violence in order to be very hurtful. A person 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).
- d. 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 undue pressure. Christ was crucified through mob action instigated by a few leaders (Mt 27:20). Mobs, multitudes and majorities are often in the wrong. Only Noah was righteous in his time (Gen 7:1 cf. Mt 7:13,14).

3. *Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause.*

- a. This verse does not say that a poor man is wrong in his cause just because he is poor. The Israelites were to promote JUSTICE. True justice favors neither the poor nor the rich; neither does it disfavor poor or rich. Leviticus 19:15 - *Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.*
- b. 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). Yet they have their own special temptations (Prov 30:9,14). We must consider that the poor man may be just as selfish, cruel, dishonest, lazy and covetous as anyone else. Men can be “minded to be rich” even when they are not rich (1 Tim 5:9). When a poor man has broken the law, he is to be punished just as anyone else.
- c. The Israelites were not to be swayed by pressure from a crowd, sympathy for the poor, hatred of the powerful or even revenge. 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.

4,5. 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, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.*

- a. If a person saw his enemy's donkey going astray, he was to SURELY bring it back to him. Deuteronomy 22:4 - *Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again.*

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 very short step from the kind of actions suggested by these verses to the “love your enemy” of Matthew 5:44 (cf. Rom 12:20). Leviticus 19:18 - *Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.*

- b. Verse 5 describes a situation in which one would see his enemy with his donkey. The enemy obviously has been cruel to his beast and has overloaded it until 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 disregards his natural inclination of walking away, rather, he

shall most certainly give assistance and working WITH his enemy, release the donkey.

- c. If the law taught men to be good to their enemies (as it certainly did), what did Jesus mean by saying, “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy”? (Mt 5:43). This was a direct charge against the people of that day because they had twisted the scriptures. The LORD corrected that thought in Matthew 5:44 by saying *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.*

6,7. ⁶*Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause. ⁷Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked.*

- a. Men were not to wrest the justice due to the poor man in his lawsuit. *Wrest* means to stretch out, distort, turn aside or pervert. The word translated *justice* in verse 6 is *mishpat* which means judgment. It is the same word occurring in 21:1 where it is translated “judgments” or ordinances.
- b. Note that in this verse the poor are “thy poor.” This hints at the fact that the poor are our brothers and our responsibility. We cannot have the attitude “they are no concern of mine.”
- c. Verse 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. Verse 7 seems to be primarily directed at judges in court. We should 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 (acquit, declare not guilty) the wicked person. It is interesting that the word “wicked” is singular, emphasizing every individual’s responsibility in this matter.

8. *And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.*

- a. Bribery is a sin. A bribe blinds those whose eyes are usually open and watchful and perverts the words of those usually righteous. We should never allow ourselves to be deceived by the power of a bribe whether making the bribe or receiving.
- b. Bribery was a very common practice in biblical times (and still is - see Amos 5:12; 1 Sam 8:3; Psa 26:10; 2 Chron 19:7; Isa 1:23; Ezek 22:12).

Proverbs 15:27 - *He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.*

- c. No specific penalty is set in the law for accepting bribes (or making them). But in the rule of God over men, it did NOT go unpunished. The “righteous” would be referring to anyone who gives in to the temptation of a bribe, though they would be normally a trustworthy individual.
9. *Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.*
- a. The Israelites were not to oppress a stranger because they too had once been strangers in Egypt and therefore should know the heart of a stranger (cf 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 “rest.”
- 10,11. ¹⁰*And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof:*
¹¹*But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard.*
- a. Israel was to sow seed and gather crops for six consecutive years, but in the seventh years the land lay fallow, uncultivated. The olive yards (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 Leviticus 25:1-7 and Deuteronomy 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; Neh 10:31).
 - b. The word “rest” in verse 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).” This alone has some very interesting spiritual implications (see Deut 15:1,2).
 - c. 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 (2 Chron 36:21).

12. *Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.*

- a. The purpose of the seventh day rest was a rest for ALL, even for the work 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 Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15.

13. *And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.*

- a. 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 those sojourners' gods. This prohibition about uttering the names of gods should have prevented marriages and other contacts with idolatrous people.
- b. This verse may account in part 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 (Jdgs 6:32) became Jerubbesheth (2 Sam 11:21); Eshbaal (1 Chron 8:33) became Ishbosheth (2 Sam 2:8); Meribaal (1 Chron 8:34) became Mephibosheth (2 Sam 4:4). Note that the book of 1 Samuel, which is prophetic in character avoided the name Baal.
- c. Note that verse 13 opens with a general exhortation to obey in all things that they were told by God through Moses.

14-17. ¹⁴*Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. ¹⁵Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:)* ¹⁶*And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. ¹⁷Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD.*

- a. Israel was required to keep three annual feasts. 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 (1 Sam 1:3,4,22; Lk 2:41-43). Israel's religious observances were the one factor in their society which could hold the nation together.

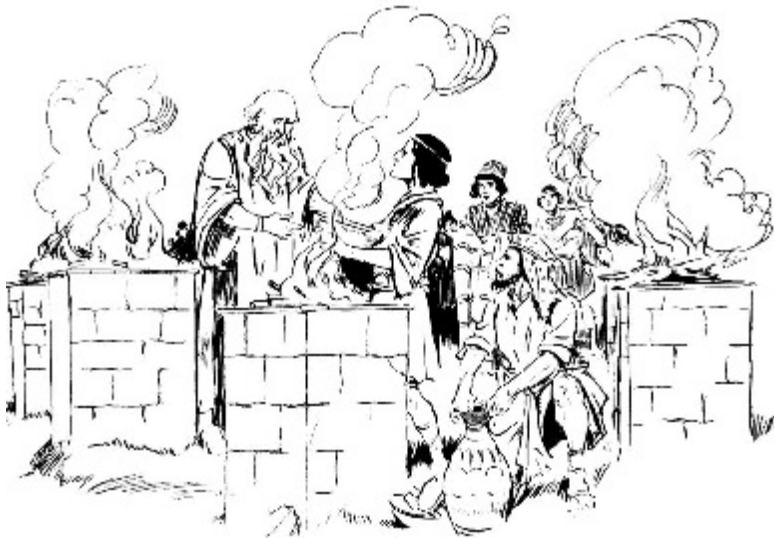
- b. The three feasts mentioned here are not given in full detail. This view relates the observance of the feasts to the previous paragraph. Verse 13 told of a false way to worship God, verses 14-17 gives the true way.
- c. First listed was the feast of unleavened bread. This seven-day observance was immediately preceded by the passover, which, surprisingly, is not mentioned here. While not mentioned specifically, the statement “which I commanded you” must refer to the giving of the passover and the feast of unleavened bread as listed in Exodus chapter 12. The phrase “none shall appear before me empty” means that no man was to come to the three feasts without an offering . . . empty-handed.
- d. The second listed was the feast Old Testament harvest. It is also referred to as 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 50 days after the first grain was harvested and was a harvest feast of dedication and thanks to God.
- e. The third listed feast was that of ingathering. It was also referred to as the feast of booths or tabernacles. The proper observance is described in Leviticus 23:34; 39-43; Deuteronomy 16:13-15 (note Jn 7:2). This feast occurs in late September, “in the end of the year,” that is, of the civil year, which begins in autumn, as distinguished from the religious year, which began in the spring.

The 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 yearly of their wilderness wanderings. An extensive series of sacrifices was offered each day of this feast.

18,19. ¹⁸*Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the morning.* ¹⁹*The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.*

- a. They were NOT to offer leavened bread with the blood of sacrifices. Also they were NOT to let the *fat* or sacrificed animals remain unburned overnight. Leviticus 3:17 - *It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood.* The fat or sacrifices were all burned, even in the peace offerings, which were partly eaten by the offerer (Lev 1:8; 3:3-5; 4:8,19). Thus no fat should have ever been left unburned overnight (cf Lev 19:6).

- b. Israel's burnt-offerings (animal sacrifices) were to be accompanied by a grain (or meal) offering, sometimes 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 of double importance during the week of the feast of unleavened bread, when no leaven was to be seen in their property (Deut 16:4; Ex 13:6-11; 12:15-20). Leaven was a symbol of evil influence and sin (1 Cor 5:7,8 with Mt 13:33 being an exception)).



- c. During the feast of unleavened bread, no sacrificed flesh was to remain until the morning . . . eat it or burn it. At the original passover (Ex 12), nothing was left until the morning. This rule seems to have applied to all of Israel's sacrifices. They were not to be treated as leftover garbage.

- d. Kid goats offered for sacrifice were NOT to be boiled in their mothers milk. It is generally understood that this law makes allusion to Canaanite religious practices. Instructions for this very practice was found on Ugaritic tablets.
- e. 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 to prepare meat and milk dishes.

20,21. ²⁰*Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.* ²¹*Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him.*

- a. God would send an Angel to keep them in their journey. The word "Angel" means *messenger*. This angel was not a thing but a personality with the ability to pardon transgressions and God's name was in Him (literally, in the midst of Him). This phrase means God's presence was in Him. Biblically, NAME often means one's entire being, nature and authority (Psa 8:1; 20:1; Acts 8:12).

- b. This angel (messenger) was surely none other than the divine person called the Word (Jn 1:1), who later came to earth as Jesus Christ. Malachi 3:1 - *Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.* Isaiah 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.* Isaiah 9:6 - *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

Looking back, the New Testament recognizes the presence of the Christ with the children of Israel..... 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 - *¹Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; ²And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; ³And did all eat the same spiritual meat; ⁴And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*

- c. Israel was warned not to provoke the angel of God. “Provoke” means “to make bitter”(Marah). Psalm 78:40 - *How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert!*

22,23. *²²But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. ²³For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off.*

- a. If the children of Israel were obedient, then the Angel would bring them unto the Canaanite nations where God would “cut them (the Canaanites) off” (destroy them). This would be a gradual process (see verse 29).
- b. Notice in these verses how closely linked are God and “the Angel.” “If thou shalt indeed obey *His* voice, and do all that *I* speak;...” This is an accurate description of the relationship of Jesus and the Father. John 10:30 - *I and my Father are one.* John 8:28,29 - *²⁸Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. ²⁹And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.*

- c. For God to be “an enemy unto your enemies” is a fulfillment of God’s covenant promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3. Psalm 139:21,22 shows that God’s enemies are also the enemies of God’s people. The New Testament speaks of those that are “enemies of the cross of Christ” (Phil 1:18).
 - d. Some say that the idea of God being an enemy to Israel’s enemies is no more than theological propaganda which justifies Israel’s conquest of the land and differs from views expressed other places in the Old Testament that God is the God of all nations. This idea fails to consider the depravity and iniquities of the Canaanites. Genesis 15:13-16 - ¹³*And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; ¹⁴And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. ¹⁵And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*
24. *Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images.*
- a. Anything pertaining to idolatry was to be UTTERLY destroyed. Even more so, these false gods were NOT to be worshipped, neither were any of the deeds to be mimicked.
 - b. The “works” of the Canaanites included burning their sons and daughters in fires to their gods (see Deut 12:30,31). The Israelites were not to even “inquire” about the false gods (Deut 6:14).
- 25,26. ²⁵*And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee. ²⁶There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil.*
- a. If Israel would serve God, He would bless their bread, their water and their health. Their “bread” would be their grain harvest (Deut 28:5). The “water” would be the needed rainfall (Deut 28:12). The promise to protect the Israelites from sickness is repeated several times in scripture (Ex 15:26). Deuteronomy 7:15 - *And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee.*
 - b. God also promised that there would not be a woman in the land who would miscarry or be barren. Deuteronomy 7:14 - *Thou shalt be blessed above*

all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle.

- c. In addition to these blessings, God also promised that their lives would be long and full. Their people would not die young before they had fulfilled their potential in life. Exodus 20:12 - *Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.* Genesis 25:8 - *Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people.* 1 Chronicles 23:1 - *So when David was old and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel.*
- d. The Christian cannot claim all these material, physical promises in the law. But we do live under a covenant with “better promises” (Heb 8:6)

27,28. ²⁷*I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy 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 hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee.*

- a. God had promised His help in defeating the Canaanites. He would send His “fear” before them and would destroy the people in Canaan causing Israel’s enemies to turn their backs (turn and run) on Israel. God spread His terror ahead of Israel by causing reports and rumors about the invincible power of God’s children to be widely circulated (see Josh 2:9,11; Deut 2:25; Ex 15:14-16; Num 22:2,3; 1 Sam 4:6-8).
- b. Furthermore, God promised to send hornets before Israel which would drive out the Canaanite nations (Deut 7:20). The closeness of verses 27 and 28 suggests that the “hornet” and “fear” may refer to the same thing, the psychological and social weakening of the people’s courage and ability to resist. All this God promises to do and would show Israel His power since these nations were mightier and more powerful than Israel (Deut 11:23; 4:38).

29,30. ²⁹*I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast 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.*

- a. God did not promise that this would happen quickly. Contrarily, He said, it would take a long period of time. If the land were to be left without people, it would soon become desolate and run-down. Israel was to occupy the cities, houses, fields and vineyards of the former inhabitants (Deut 6:10, 11). All of these would soon be run-down and in disrepair if left unoccupied.

- b. The danger that wild beasts (lions, bears, wild dogs, etc.) would multiply in the land if the people were not occupying it was a very real peril. 2 Kings 17:24-26 - ²⁴*And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.* ²⁵*And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew some of them.* ²⁶*Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land.* Leviticus 26:22 - *I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your high ways shall be desolate.*
 - c. Israel's conquest of Canaan took between six and seven years (Josh 14:7,10; Num 14:33). God cast out those nations before Israel little by little. Other reasons for the slowness in conquering the land were (1) Israel transgressed God's covenant, and He wanted to test Israel as to whether they would walk in His ways or not (Jdgs 2:20-23; 3:4); (2) to teach them war, or that is, how to fight (Jdgs 3:2).
 - d. Even after Israel had conquered much of the land, various tribes were slow in occupying it (Josh 18:1-3). They lacked the aggressive faith to take over the land.
31. *And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee.*
- a. God in this verse sets the boundaries of the land that Israel will occupy; 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) to the river (the Euphrates). The boundaries of the promised land are given several places in scripture (i.e., Deut 11:24; Gen 15:18; 1 Kgs 4:21).
 - b. One must note that while God would deliver the inhabitants of the land into Israel's hand, Israel had to "drive them out." God required human effort with His divine assistance.
32. *Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods.*

- a. No covenant was to be made with the inhabitants of the land or with their gods. The Hebrew says that no covenant was to be made “TO” them. Israel was to enter the land as a conqueror. They were not to extend amnesty nor to deal with the people as equals, with whom a covenant might be made (Ex 34:12-16; Deut 7:2,3). They would be allowed to make peace covenants with cities far off from their land (Deut 7:1,2; 20:10-15).
 - b. The Canaanites and their gods would cause Israel to sin against God and this would be a snare (trap) to Israel. Sadly, Israel did fall into this snare! Psalm 106:36,37 - ³⁶*And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them.* ³⁷*Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils.*
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.*
- a. This verse marks the end of “book of the covenant.” This section has included chapters 21-23 and possibly a small part of chapter 20. It has given the terms upon which God would enter into a covenant with Israel. The next chapter moves to the actual ratification of this covenant. In light of the nature of the relationship between God and Israel, it seems appropriate that the covenant book should end with commands forbidding Israel to make any covenant with any other gods or men.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Chapter 24 is one of the most sublime and glorious chapters in the Old Testament. Arthur Pink stated that there was 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 His son do we have anything equal to this chapter (Jn 1:14). This chapter has often been called the Old Testament Mount of Transfiguration! It is the climactic point of the history in Exodus.

In this chapter, we have the call to Israel's representatives to come up to Jehovah (24:1, 2). This indicates achievement of direct fellowship with God.

The chapter then continues by telling of Moses' reading the book of the covenant to the people, the people's acceptance of it and the ratifying of it by the sprinkling of blood (3-8). This is the fulfillment of the promise made in 19: 5,6 by God to take Israel as His special people, a holy nation.

This chapter also records the actual meeting with God by Israel's leaders. They saw God and ate and drank with Him in security (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 for forty days.

1,2. *¹And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off. ²And Moses alone shall come near the LORD: but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him.*

- a. God commanded Moses, Aaron, Aaron's two sons (Nadab and Abihu) and 70 men of the elders of Israel to come up on the mount and worship from "afar off." Only Moses would be allowed to approach God. The people in general were not to go up with them. It appears that Moses had come down from the mount after hearing the words in chapters 21-23 (note 20:21). Either Moses was already down at the start of chapter 21 or was in the process when God spoke the words in verse one.
- b. Twice in this chapter Nadab and Abihu are named (1 and 9). They shared in the honor and privilege of seeing God (9,10). They are referred to elsewhere in Numbers 3:4, Leviticus 10:1,2 and Exodus 6:23. They are remembered mainly because they died by fire from the LORD, sent upon them when they "offered strange fire." The repeated mention of them in Exodus 24 speaks of lost opportunities, of high privilege 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.

- c. It appears that the 70 elders were accepted representatives of the entire nation (Ex 24:14; Num 11:6; Ex 18:12; 3:16; 12:21; 17:5). Some disregard the number "70" as a "loose traditional number" but we will accept it as precisely correct. The fact that these representatives had to worship "afar off" shows that men cannot approach God on the basis of their own works or personal righteousness. Even at best, we need a mediator.
 - d. The fact that Moses alone could come near to Jehovah indicates again his unique position as mediator and a type of Christ, our mediator, who draws near unto the presence of God for us (Heb 9:24).
3. *And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.*
- a. Moses told the people all the "words of the Lord, and all the judgements." The people responded to Moses by unanimously declaring that they would do all the words which Jehovah had spoken.
 - b. One would suppose that the "words" and "judgements" (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 from 20:22 through 23:23. It seems very unlikely that Moses repeated the words of the ten commandments since all of the Israelites had heard these for themselves from God's own voice (Deut 4:33,36).
 - c. After hearing Moses speak, ALL the people answered with ONE voice saying, "ALL the words which the LORD hath said will we do." This immediate and unanimous response makes us want to forget how short-lived their obedience truly was. It would be less than forty days until they make the golden calf.
- 4,5. *⁴And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD.*
- a. Note the three things Moses did:
 - (1) He wrote all the words of the Lord.
 - (2) He built one altar and set up twelve stone pillars.
 - (3) He sent young men of the nation to offer burnt-offerings and peace offerings. Let's look more closely at each of these actions.



- b. After orally delivering God's word to the people, Moses then records (writes) them on parchment or papyrus. Both acts would have required inspiration from God (cf Jn 14:26). Many passages confirm and affirm that Moses wrote a great deal of material.
 - c. The altar Moses built would have been made of earth or uncut stone (20:25). The altar seems to have symbolized God's presence among the Israelites. The twelve pillars symbolized the twelve tribes of Israel. The act of erecting stone pillars as memorials when a covenant is made is found elsewhere in scripture . . . Genesis 31:45 and Joshua 24:25,26.
 - d. The burnt-offerings and peace-offerings are the most ancient forms of offerings for Israel (see 20:24). Later God revealed His will on other and more involved types of offerings, like sin, trespass and meal offerings (Lev 1-7). The burnt-offerings represented man's guilt and God's condemnation of the guilt. The peace-offerings represented the harmony that was brought about by making the burnt-offering. Only the peace-offerings were partly eaten by the offerer (Lev 7:15,16). Note that the sacrifices were made unto the Lord in accordance with 22:20.
- 6,7. ⁶And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. ⁷And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.
- a. After the offering was made Moses took half the blood in basins and sprinkled this part on the altar he had built. Sprinkling blood on the altar meant that it was sprinkled 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 this blood, which again was an act of reaching out for God's acceptance, Moses read to the people the entire book of the covenant which he had recorded. Following this, Moses sprinkled the blood upon the people and the book.
 - b. The act of sprinkling the blood toward God and toward man was symbolic in showing that the blood was to change the lives of the people. Hebrews 9:18-20 - ¹⁸Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. ¹⁹For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people

according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, ²⁰*Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.* Christ used similar words at the last supper. Luke 22:20 - *Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.*

God's covenants are solemn, sealed with blood! Blood speaks of sin, of death and of life.

- c. Note that the people had promised to obey all that God had spoken. God's covenants **MUST** be accepted voluntarily by His people. Sadly, Israel did not keep its promise. Twice Moses declared the law to Israel, once extemporaneously and once by reading from the written word. Israel's promise to obey in verse 7 was their third open promise of obedience (19:8; 24:3).
 - d. Remember that the law of Moses was never given as a means for justifying man from sin (see Gal 3:21). It only pointed out sins, with the goal of curbing the practice of sin (Gal 3:19; 1 Tim 1:9,10; Rom 3:20). The law was (and is) an essential guide to all those who would live Godly. The attainment of righteousness in God's sight has always been possible only because God graciously accepts those who believe in and seek Him through the sacrificial system He has provided, namely through the death of Jesus Christ (Gal 3:8,9,22).
8. *And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.*
- a. At this point one question needs to be answered...why was blood used to ratify the covenant? While no explanation is given in Exodus, several reasons are suggested in other passages:
 - (1) The blood was a means of enactment. Hebrews 9:15-17 tells us that for a will (or covenant or testament) to be of 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. Hebrews 9:18 - *Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.*
 - (2) Blood has always been connected with the forgiveness of sins (see Lev 17:11; Heb 9:15,22). The passage in Hebrews 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) 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 (Gen 15:9, 10,17; Jer 34:18-20). The blood sacrifices also were a reminder to the people of the seriousness of sin.
- (4) The blood functioned as a means of bringing unity between God and Israel. Blood was sprinkled upon the altar (symbolizing God) and the people. The two contracting parties were by this means united by a solemn bond.

9-11. ⁹*Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: ¹⁰And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. ¹¹And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.*

- a. Moses, along with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and 70 elders of Israel went up on the mountain and actually saw God . . . at least in some form. They were able to eat and drink without fear in God's presence. It would seem that only Moses was allowed to come near to God (vs. 2).
- b. Only a few days previously, death was imminent for any Israelite who would have broken through the barrier at the base of the mountain to gaze upon God (19:21,24). The difference, it appears, is the blood. Sacrifice has been made, the blood has been sprinkled, the covenant accepted and the men are able to safely convene in the presence of God, in fellowship. For the Christian today, it is the blood of Jesus Christ that gives us access to the Father.
- c. To what extent God revealed Himself is difficult to say. The scripture here is very brief. Let's consider some other verses that may shed some light on this passage: Exodus 33:20 - *And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.* John 1:18 - *No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.* 1 Timothy 6:16 - *Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.* Isaiah 6:5 - *Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.* Judges 13:22 - *And Manoah*

said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. It would seem then that God revealed Himself to the extent that there would be NO doubt as to who He was, yet did not reveal His full glory.

- d. 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” (Jn. 1:14).
 - e. In this particular account, the description of God’s appearance is so brief that no image could possibly be made from the information given. Actually, what is described is only that which “was under his feet,” a work made of brilliant, clear sapphire. The term “body” as used in the KJV usually means bone, body or frame; but it also has a meaning of essence, self or self-same. This seems to be the meaning in verse 10. What Moses and the elders saw had in every way the appearance of heaven itself.
 - f. 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 - *And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.* Revelation 4:6 - *And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.* Quite possibly the sea of glass like unto crystal was the same as seen on Mt. Sinai.
 - g. It would seem that the elders eating and drinking signified fellowship with God, although the exact reason is not stated. It is interesting to note that Jesus also instituted the new covenant with a meal, the last supper (Lk 22:19).
12. *And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.*
- a. Moses was called up to receive tablets of stone, the law (Torah) and commandments, which God had written. The giving of the tablets written by God would be further and final confirmation of the covenant. When Moses was told to come into the mount and “be there” he probably never imagined that it would be for 40 days (24:18).
 - b. The “tables of stone” and the “law” spoken of are one and the same, namely the ten commandments written on stone.

- c. Jewish interpreters believe that the “law” spoken of in verse 12 was an oral law (or tradition) given to Moses in addition to the written law. This oral law is supposedly preserved in written form in the Jewish Talmud. The Talmud has volumes of material telling how the laws of Moses are to be interpreted and how they are to be applied in all of life’s activities. To many Jews, every interpretation of the law given by a universally recognized authority (rabbi) is regarded as having been given on Mt. Sinai.
- d. Jesus rejected these traditions which were added to the law as being without authority from God (Mk 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).

13,14. ¹³*And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God. ¹⁴And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them.*

- a. Moses went up into the mountain, taking only Joshua, his servant. Not even Aaron went along. 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.
- b. The last phrase of verse 13 seems out of order with the information that follows in verses 14 and 15. That doesn’t mean that the text is jumbled or full of contradictory statements copied from several sources. It merely reflects the Hebrew style of writing, which is not concerned with strict chronological order as are modern writers. Another example of this is Exodus 10:28 through 11:4.

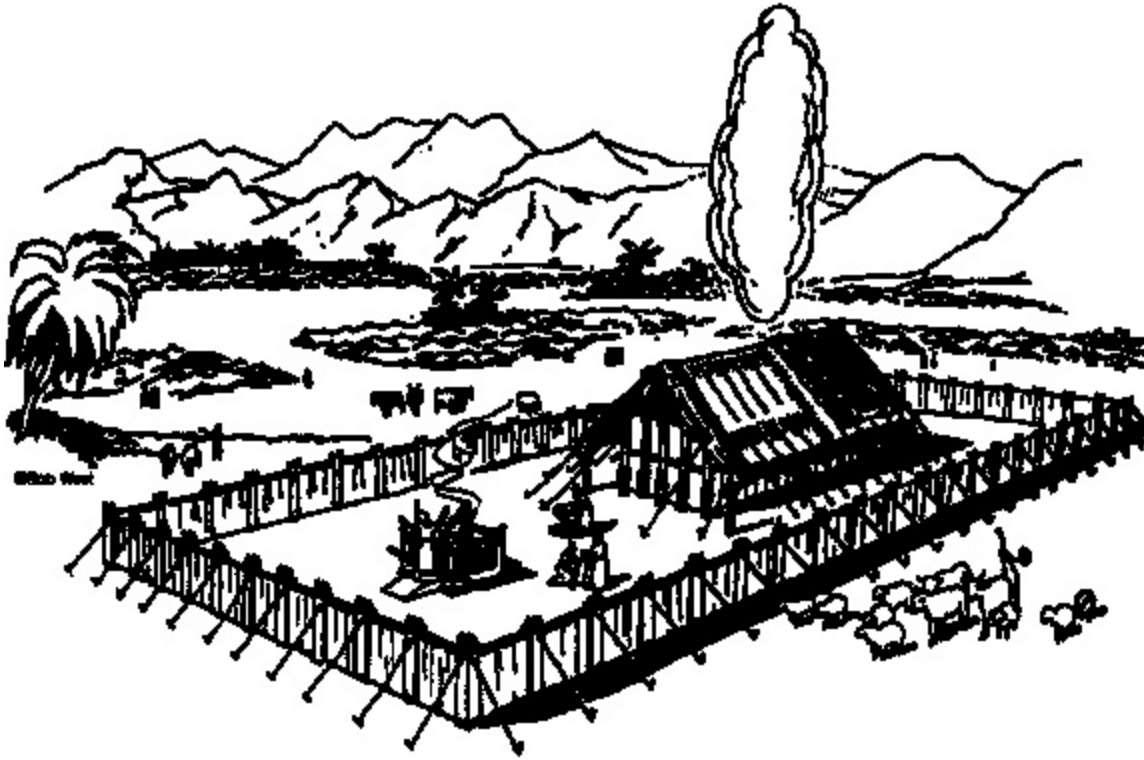
15-17. ¹⁵*And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. ¹⁶And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. ¹⁷And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.*

- a. When Moses ascended the mount a cloud covered it. The original text suggests that the cloud returned, a cloud similar to the one that covered the mount previously when the Decalogue was proclaimed (19:16).
- b. The “glory of the LORD” was seen there with the cloud. The appearance was like a fire devouring the top of the mount and was visible to the people below (see 16:10).

- c. The glory of the LORD “abode” upon Mt. Sinai. The word “abode” is a translation of the verb *Shakan*, from which later developed the non-biblical term *shekinah* (meaning dwelling or presence, of God), that referred to the glory cloud within and above the tabernacle.
 - d. Moses was on the mount for six days, then on the seventh day God called him from the midst of the cloud. Possibly these six days were days of spiritual preparation. There are a number of instances in the Bible where the events of six days culminated on the seventh day. These would include creation, the weekly sabbath, the manna and others. Patience is required in order to be a man of God. Moses waited alone for six days before God’s voice called to him.
18. *And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.*
- a. Moses was in the mount 40 days and 40 nights. He did not come down until the making of the golden calf (32:15). During these 40 days he received all the information found in chapters 25-31 concerning the tabernacle, the priesthood, etc. He was gone so long that the Israelites thought he had perished or left (32:1).
 - b. It is interesting to note that the whereabouts of Joshua during this time is not stated. Verse 13 clearly states that Joshua ascended the mount with Moses, but he is not mentioned further in this context.
 - c. During his forty days in the mount, Moses neither ate nor drank (Deut 9:9). He also fasted during his second stay on Mt. Sinai (Deut 9:18; Ex 34:28). The prophet Elijah fasted for forty days at this same place (1 Kgs 19:8). Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness (Mt 4:2). Obviously, Moses could not have survived for forty days without miraculous sustainment.
 - d. The visual aspect of these events must have been awesome! Deuteronomy 4:36 - *Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire.* Hebrews 12:18 - *For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, for ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest.*



CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE



Chapter 25 contains (1) God's instructions to Moses about taking an offering from the people to obtain building materials in order to build a tabernacle (1-9); (2) instructions on how to make the ark (10-15); and the mercy seat (16-22); (3) instructions for the table of showbread (23-30); and instructions for the lampstand (31-39).

1,2. ¹And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ²Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.

- a. Not everyone was to give. Offerings were to be accepted ONLY if they were from the heart. Giving should always be voluntary, not forced (2 Cor 8:4,5; 9:6,7). The Israelites gave more than was needed. This was similar to the way they gave many years later for the temple (1 Chron 29:1-5).
- b. The word translated *offering* (Heb. - *terumah*) means a heave-offering, one that is lifted up or separated unto God. This same word is used in other places to refer to various types of sacrifices (Ex 29:27; Lev 7:14; Num 15:19). The use of this word indicates a type of sacredness associated with all things given to the LORD.

3-7. ³And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass,
⁴And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, ⁵And rams'
skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood, ⁶Oil for the light, spices for
anointing oil, and for sweet incense, ⁷Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the
ephod, and in the breastplate.

- a. BLUE. Wool cloth dyed a dark violet with dye made from the glands of the murex shell-fish found in the sea by Phoenicia and Palestine.
- b. PURPLE. Wool dyed dark reddish-purple or red by the same dye.
- c. SCARLET. Literally translated "worm of scarlet." Cloth colored brilliant red with dye from the cochineal worm. In Arabic the word translated *scarlet* is *kirmiz*, from which we get our word *crimson*.
- d. GOLD. All items in the Holy of Holies were of pure gold or gold plated. This probably was obtained in Egypt (12:35). Gold was also used to overlay the boards of the tabernacle (38:24).
- e. SILVER. This was used for casting bases (pedestals or sockets) for the boards and pillars (36:24-26).
- f. BRASS. Should be translated "copper" or "bronze," the alloy of copper and tin. It certainly was not brass (alloy of copper and zinc). Copper was mined long before Moses' time in the area north of the Red Sea Gulf of Akabah, and still is.
- g. FINE LINEN. Egypt was famous for this material (see Ezek 27:7). The Hebrew word for linen (*shesh*) is borrowed from the Egyptian. Joseph in Egypt was arrayed in linen (Gen 41:42). It was used for the innermost tabernacle coverings (26:1), for the veil (26:31), the screen (26:36) and the priests garments (28:6,8,42).
- h. GOATS' HAIR. The goats usually had black hair (SofS 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).
- i. RAMS' SKIN DYED RED. These were used for the third covering over the tabernacle(26:14).
- j. BADGER SKINS. The ASV gives "seal skins" and the NIV gives "sea cows." Badger skins is a faulty translation. The Hebrew word *tahash* possibly refers to the sea cow (dugong or manatee), which is found in the Red Sea. Adults average 10-12 feet in length. Its tough hide is excellent for making sandals (Ezek 16:10). An Arabic word that is similar to *tahash*

refers to several kinds of sea animals - seals, dolphins, sharks, dogfish, etc. These skins were used for the outermost covering of the tabernacle (26:14). They were also used for covering the ark and other items of furniture in the tabernacle (Num 4).

- k. SHITTIM WOOD. *Acacia*. The acacia trees are the only trees in the Sinai peninsula from which planks might be cut. They are a flat-topped tree, thorny and tough. Today, they do not grow over about twenty feet high. The wood is nearly impervious to insects and the many thorns grow up to two inches. Almost none of the trees surviving today could be cut into planks one and a half cubits wide.
 - l. OIL FOR THE LIGHT. Most likely this was pure, clear olive oil beaten from the olives.
 - m. SPICES. For anointing oil (30:20-23) and for sweet incense (30:34-38; 35:28).
 - n. ONYX STONES and other GEMSTONES. Probably a banded agate with straight bands. Some think it to be a beryl (*Zondervan Pictorial Dictionary*). These stones were used in the garments of the high priest. These stones were presented by the rulers of the congregation (35:27).
8. *And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.*
- a. The purpose of the sanctuary was that God may dwell among His people. While it is true that God inhabits eternity (Isa 57:15), and fills the heaven and earth (Jer 23:24), heaven is His throne and earth is His footstool (Isa 66:1), He still desired to be among his people.
 - b. The word “sanctuary” means a holy place, one set apart for God (see Jer 17:12).
9. *According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.*
- a. The guide used in constructing the tabernacle was a “pattern” revealed by God to Moses in the mount. Making the tabernacle exactly like the pattern was an absolute requirement. Hebrews 8:5 - *Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*
 - b. It almost seems as if God had shown Moses a model or a form of the tabernacle made just the way He wanted Moses to make it. Since the

pattern would be the shadow of the church to come, any deviation from the pattern would have produced a faulty type/anti-type situation.

- c. Please note that the pattern of the tabernacle shown to Moses extended to the pattern of all the vessels (furniture, etc.) of the tabernacle. There is a widespread opinion that God has given man no definite pattern by which to worship Him. While God does indeed allow for a freedom of expression in worship, the command to conform exactly to the tabernacle pattern shows us that the pattern is a very real thing we must recognize and accept.

10,11. ¹⁰And they shall make an ark of shittim 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. ¹¹And 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.



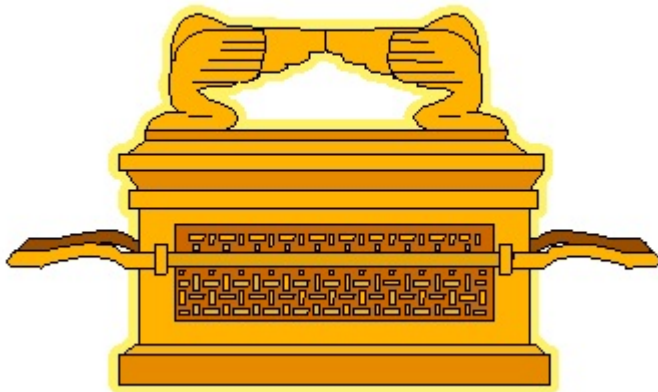
**Ark of the Covenant
(Ex. 25:10-22)**

The ark was most sacred of all the furniture in the tabernacle. Here the Hebrews kept a copy of the Ten Commandments, which summarized the whole covenant.

- a. The first item of tabernacle furniture to be described was the ark of the testimony (or covenant). This was a wooden chest overlaid inside and out with gold. Its measurements were 1½ by 1½ by 2½ cubits (27x 27x45 inches). The ark (Heb. - 'aron) of the covenant should not be confused with the ark (Heb. - *tebah*) of Noah or the basket of baby Moses.

- b. The ark is called by several names: (1) the ark of God (1 Sam 3:3); (2) the ark of the covenant (Num 10:33; Deut 10:8); (3) the holy ark (2 Chron 35:3); (4) the ark of the LORD (Josh 6:7,13; 1 Kgs 2:26); (5) the ark of the testimony (Ex 25:22; 39:35); and (6) the ark of thy strength (Psa 132:8). Throughout Exodus, it is uniformly referred to as the ark of the testimony.

- c. The ark and all articles of furniture within the tabernacle building were made of gold or overlaid with gold. Anything closely associated with God's presence was made of gold (see Rev 21:10).



- d. The ark and its covering (the mercy seat) were the only items in the innermost room called the holy of holies. The ark was the central focus of the sanctuary and the instructions concerning it were given first. Interestingly, it seems that the ark was not constructed until after the tabernacle building (37:1-9).

- e. Verse 10 uses two pronouns, *they* and *thou*. *They* refers to the workmen or craftsmen doing the physical building and *thou* refers to Moses in his leadership role.
- f. The top edge had a “crown” or molding round about it. This crown served to keep the mercy seat upon the top of the ark. It was designed to be a decorative crown and was similar to the one found on the table of show-bread and the golden altar of incense.

12-15. ¹²And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four corners thereof; and two rings shall be in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it. ¹³And thou shalt make staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. ¹⁴And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them. ¹⁵The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it.

- a. The ark would be transported about with staves made of acacia wood overlaid with gold and inserted into rings made of solid gold attached to the four feet of the ark. The staves were used to carry the ark on the shoulders of the Levites (Num 4:15). The “feet” of the ark seemed 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 the feet on the bottom, when the staves were placed on the Levites’ shoulders, the ark would have extended well above the heads of the Levites and been highly visible.
- b. The staves were not to be taken from the ark at any time (see 1 Kgs 8:8).

16. And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee.

- a. The ark was to contain the “testimony.” This was the two tablets of the ten commandments. The word testimony means a precept of law. The Hebrew word translated testimony comes from a verb meaning “to turn, return, repeat, say repeatedly, testify, affirm.” One could conclude then that the testimony was a constantly repeated communication to the people. Think about that. Although the original stone tablets were concealed inside, copies of their text were certainly available for people to see and read.
- b. There were two other items with the ark: Aaron’s staff which budded (Num 17:10) and a pot of manna (Ex 16:3; Heb 9:4,5). 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 (1 Kgs 8:9). It would appear that the rod and pot of manna had disappeared.
- c. The Bible does not make any direct statements as to what the ark actually represented or what it may have been a type of. Statements made in other places may help us to understand at least the symbolic meaning of the ark. It would seem that the ark was a sort of “footstool” of God’s throne and the mercy seat was a representation of the throne itself (Psa 99:1; Psa 80:1; 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; Isa 37:16; 25:22). King David stated in 1 Chronicles 28:2, *Hear me, my brethren, and my people: As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building.*

The “and” could be translated “even for the footstool . . .” Psalm 132:7,8 - *⁷We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool. ⁸Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength.* All 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 foot stool of God’s throne.

- d. Much significance and symbolism can be drawn from a close look of the ark. It 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 authority in choosing who shall minister unto Him and how men shall approach Him (see Heb 4:16; Psa 85:10; 89:14).
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.*

- a. A mercy seat made of pure gold covered the ark. The mercy seat had no wood in its construction. 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. The mercy seat was so significant that in 1 Chronicles 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).
- b. The term ‘mercy seat’ was first used by William Tyndale. It is an accurate 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 sin. The Latin *propitiatorium* is a good rendering, meaning “a place of propitiation.” 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 Hebrews 9:5 to refer to the mercy seat itself. A related word, *hilasmos*, is used in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 to refer to Christ as our propitiation. The usage of these words show that Christ has for us the same functions as the mercy seat had for Israel. Christ is our mercy seat!
- c. The word *kapporeth* (mercy seat) is not used in the Old Testament with the limited meaning of lid or cover as in over a box. It is derived from the verb *kaphar* (found 113 times in the Old Testament) which by far most frequently (70 times) means “to make atonement.” What is covered by the functions of the mercy seat? Your souls are covered (Ex 30:16). You are covered (Lev 23:28). Your sins are covered (Ex 32:30). So we see that the atonement provided by the mercy seat was a very comprehensive covering. The word atonement is a manufactured word in English, from *at-one-ment*, suggesting harmony.
- d. When the Israelites in the days of the judges looked into the ark of the covenant (1 Sam 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 judgement, 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 will be safe IF we have accepted Christ as our savior. He is our mercy seat, our propitiation.

18-20. ¹⁸And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. ¹⁹And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. ²⁰And the cherubims shall stretch forth their

wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be.

- a. On each end of the mercy seat was a cherubim projecting upward, wings outstretched and facing each other. This was to be made of one piece of solid gold beaten (hammered out). The cherubim were not added to the mercy-seat, but an integral part of it. The word *cherubim* is the plural of the Hebrew *cherub*.
- b. Cherubim are one type of angelic creature. They are frequently mentioned in connection with God's throne (Ezek 1:22,26,28; 10:20,21). It is quite possible that the "living creatures" or "beasts" of Revelation 4:6ff are cherubim. While the cherubim are sometimes depicted as being part human and part beast, most commentators agree that those of the mercy-seat were of human form. The ones placed in Solomon's temple were also of human form and the Jewish Talmud says they resembled "youths." We can easily visualize the cherubim on the mercy seat as kneeling, but those in Solomon's temple were standing (2 Chron 3:13).
- c. Cherubim were embroidered on the veil in the tabernacle (Ex 26:31) and on the linen curtains of the inner walls (26:1). They would not be deemed as "graven images" since they were not objects of worship.

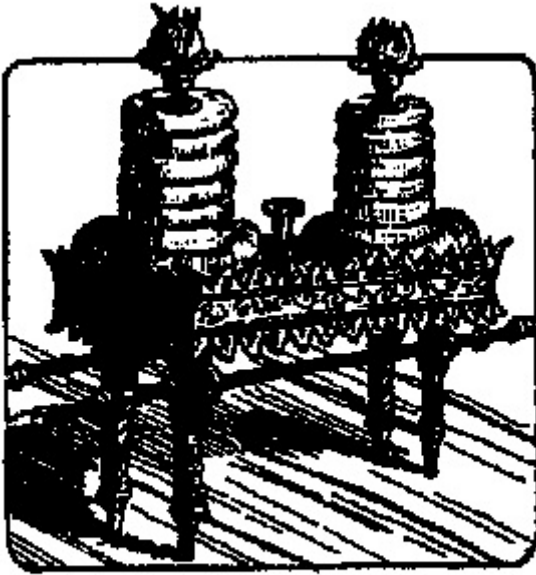
21,22. ²¹*And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee.* ²²*And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.*

- a. The mercy seat was to be placed on the top of the ark and the testimony was to be placed inside.
- b. God promises to meet with Moses (he alone is mentioned) and speak (commune) with him from the area above the mercy seat and between the cherubim. God would speak all the words He wished for Moses to command the children of Israel.
- c. Notice that God was NOT in the box (ark). His presence was indicated by the glory-cloud above the mercy seat (Lev 16:2).
- d. Here it is made very clear Moses' position as mediator between God and Israel.

23-25. ²³*Thou shalt also make a table of shittim wood: two cubits shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof.*

²⁴And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold round about. ²⁵And thou shalt make unto it a border of an hand breadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about.

- a. The table of shewbread is the second piece of furniture to be listed. One may be surprised by its priority in the listing, but this only reflects on our lack of ability to see things from God's point of view.
- b. The table was one cubit (18 in.) broad, one and a half cubits (27 in.) high and two cubits (3 ft.) long . . . not a large table at all. It was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Like the ark and the altar of incense, it had a crown or rim of gold around its top edge. This was probably to prevent items from falling off.



**Table of Showbread
(Ex. 25:23-30)**

- c. The table also had a border around it that was "an handbreadth" or about three inches wide. "Border" can be translated margin, molding or ledge. The placement of this border is not stated in the text. The Arch of Titus in Rome has a carved representation showing a border around the legs about half way down. If this were the case, the border would certainly have given strength to the legs.

26-28 ²⁶And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof. ²⁷Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves to bear the table.

²⁸And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them.

- a. The table was to be carried about by gold covered wood staves that were fitted into rings of solid gold attached to the four "feet" or legs. The four rings were "over against" the border, or joined to it. If the border were half way down the legs, then so would be the rings. This would make it easier to transport the table than if the rings were nearer the top. The staves were removed except when the table was being moved (Num 4:7,8).

29. *And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover withal: of pure gold shalt thou make them.*

- a. Here four items are mentioned: (1) dishes, (2) spoons, (3) covers and (4) bowls. Each item on the table served a purpose.
- b. The “dishes” may have been flat tray-like utensils for carrying the bread or for stacking the bread on.
- c. The spoons were most likely small cups used for holding and pouring incense. We find the same word used in Numbers 7:14,20 describing small containers for incense.
- d. The “covers” seem to have been small beakers or drinking cups used for pouring drink-offerings (Num 28:7,8).
- e. The “bowls,” like the covers, were vessels for pouring out. See Exodus 37:16 where the bowls and covers are mentioned again, but in reverse order from that in verse 29. 37:16 says that these vessels were made to pour from. Most likely, these bowls were actually more like goblets or chalices, having cup-like tops with slim stems for easy handling. These type vessels were well known in Moses’ time.

30. *And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me alway.*

- a. Leviticus 24:5-9 - ⁵*And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake. ⁶And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the LORD. ⁷And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the LORD. ⁸Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. ⁹And it shall be Aaron’s and his sons’; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the LORD made by fire by a perpetual statute.*
- b. Twelve loaves were made of fine flour, each having “two tenths” parts of flour in it. If the “tenth parts” were tenths of an ephah (about 3/5 of a bushel), then each loaf would have had about a gallon of flour in it. The loaves would have been enormous in size! Leviticus 24:7 says that the loaves were placed on the table in two rows or piles. Josephus (*Ant. III, vi, 6*) says that the twelve loaves were placed six upon each heap, one above the other.
- c. The text in Leviticus 24:5,6 speaks as if ONE man (we presume the high priest) set up the table each weekly sabbath day. Then all the priests

(Aaron and his sons) ate the bread in the holy place. The new loaves were set in place and pure frankincense placed on each row.

d. The significance of the bread in the tabernacle is not set forth clearly in this context. Further study of the bread reveals that it has several facets of meaning.

(1) It symbolized God's people in God's presence. The name "showbread" literally means "bread of the face(s)" or "presence-bread." The bread did not represent God's presence, rather the presence of someone or something else in the presence of God. The fact that there were 12 loaves seems to suggest that the bread symbolized the twelve tribes . . . the people.

Certainly, it would remind them that they were always in God's presence. In Numbers 4:7 it is called "continual bread" and in 1 Samuel 21:4 it is called "holy bread." In light of these passages, one could conclude that the bread represented holy people continually in God's presence.

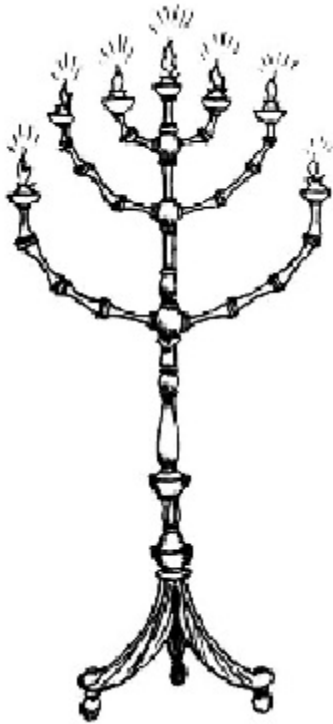
(2) The showbread was an "offering made by FIRE unto the LORD" (Lev 24:7). In this way it was a type of Christ, who is man's ONLY effective offering unto God (Eph 5:2). The term "fire offering" in Leviticus 24:7 is applied to several types of offerings - the burnt offering in Exodus 29:18,41,42, and Leviticus 1:9; the meal offering in Leviticus 2:3; the peace offering in Leviticus 3:11; and the sin offering in Leviticus 5:12. From these we may be reminded that all these offerings are summed up in Christ's ONE offering. 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 realities of sin.

(3) The showbread was to be a "memorial" (Lev 24:7). The term "memorial" is a sacrificial term which refers to that which brings the worshiper into favorable remembrance before God. It is used in Leviticus 2:2; 5:12; 6:15; Acts 10:4. The showbread became a memorial when the frankincense was applied to it (Lev 24:7). Frankincense appears to be a symbol of prayer (Psa 141:2; Rev 5:8).

(4) The placement of 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 (*Bel and the Dragon*,

verse 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.

31-35. ³¹And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same. ³²And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side: ³³Three bowls made like unto almonds, with a knop and a flower in one branch; and three bowls made like almonds in the other branch, with a knop and a flower: so in the six branches that come out of the candlestick. ³⁴And in the candlestick shall be four bowls made like unto almonds, with their knops and their flowers. ³⁵And there shall be a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches that proceed out of the candlestick.



- a. To provide light in the holy place, God commanded Moses to build a lampstand of pure gold, and oil-burning lamps were placed on the branches of the lampstand. The Hebrew word for lampstand is *menorah* (derived from the verb *nor* (to shine) and the noun 'or (light). The seven branch lampstand has become the major 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 the carving is not the same one that was in the tabernacle, but probably resembled it in many ways. It must have been very heavy because a number of men are pictured as carrying it.

- b. The lampstand was made of "beaten" work, like the cherubim of the mercy-seat. It had a base the shape 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.

- c. The lampstand had a central shaft projecting upward from the base. Its height is unknown. The word translated "shaft" is *kaneh*, meaning reed, stem or cane. Three branches went out of the central shaft on one side, and three from the opposite side, making a total of seven lamp supports. The light given from these seven lamps was enough to light the holy place.
- d. There were three types of decorations on the central shaft and branches: (1) cups (bowls, KJV). These were probably like the cup of a flower consisting of the green false petals directly under the true flower; (2) knops. These were probably spherical designs, perhaps resembling the ovaries of flowers; and (3) the flowers. These were like the blossoms of flowers, perhaps like the almond tree blooms. The whole menorah had the general shape of a natural plant, with a stalk and paired branches turned upwards. The ornamentation was also of floral design (Cassuto, pp. 342-343).
- e. The center support had four cups and the branches had three cups, the uppermost of each which held the lamp.

36-38. ³⁶*Their knops and their branches shall be of the same: all it shall be one beaten work of pure gold.* ³⁷*And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it.* ³⁸*And the tongs thereof, and the snuffdishes thereof, shall be of pure gold.*

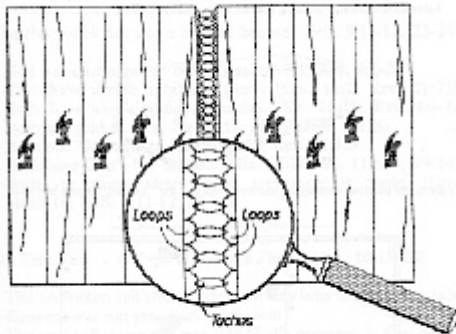
- a. The entire lampstand, including all the branches and details, were to be constructed of one solid piece of gold. Nothing was made separately and attached with connectors. Verses 31, 35 and 36 stress that the lampstand be made of ONE piece of gold. Whatever it may have symbolized, unity was definitely foremost.
- b. On the top of each branch of the lampstand, was to be placed a lamp. This was made separately from the lampstand. The material used is not stated. It may have been gold as in Solomon's temple (1 Kgs 7:49). Most likely, they were made from common clay into bowls with a spout on one side to hold the wick and a center hole for filling with oil. The lamps were to be positioned so that they would give light "over against it," that is, in front of it, toward the area across the room from the lamps. 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.
- c. Two implements were used in conjunction with the lampstand: (1) the tongs were a type of tweezer to remove the old wicks and install new ones; and (2) the snuffdishes which were small trays or bowls which held old wicks and soot to be thrown out. Both items were to be made of solid gold.

39. *Of a talent of pure gold shall he make it, with all these vessels.*
- a. Total amount of gold used in making the lampstand and its accompanying vessels was a talent, about 75 pounds. At a conservative price of \$150 per ounce, the lampstand would be worth about \$180,000.
40. *And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.*
- a. God again emphasizes to Moses that the lampstand and its implements were to be made in accordance with the pattern which was shown to him on the mount (cf Ex 25:9).
 - b. In connection with the use of the lampstand, pure or clear olive oil was obtained by beating olives to extract their oil. In the mornings, the high priest came into the holy place to dress the lamps with new oil and wicks. He was to keep it from “evening to morning” before the LORD continually (Ex 27:20,21).

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

In this chapter we read about the instructions to Moses by God on how to make the ENCLOSINGS of the tabernacle - the curtains and coverings over it (1-14), the boards of the walls (15-25), the bars (26-30), the veil that separated the two rooms (31-35) and the screen that closed the entrance (36,37).

- 1-3. *¹Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them. ²The length of one curtain shall be eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and every one of the curtains shall have one measure. ³The five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and other five curtains shall be coupled one to another.*
- a. The curtains were to be 28 cubits long (42 ft.) and each was to be 4 cubits (6 ft.) in width. There were to be 10 curtains total, all the same size. The material to be used was fine linen in three rich colors: blue, purple and scarlet . . . the most expensive dyes of those times. Cherubims “of cunning work” (hand detail) were embroidered on these curtains making them beautiful, expensive, and appropriate interlinings.
- b. Five curtains were to be coupled together, making two sections of curtains, each measuring 42 feet in length and 30 feet in width. Probably, these two sections were attached to the inside of the tabernacle’s framework, running from end to end, with one section covering from the center of the structure to the bottom of the side and the other doing the same on the opposite half.
- 4-6. *⁴And 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 uttermost edge of another curtain, in the coupling of the second. ⁵Fifty loops shalt thou make in the one curtain, and fifty loops shalt thou make in the edge of the curtain that is in the coupling of the second; that the loops may take hold one of another. ⁶And thou shalt make fifty taches of gold, and couple the curtains together with the taches: and it shall be one tabernacle.*



The innermost (third) curtains of the Tabernacle. Note that it was formed of two groups of five curtains decorated with cherubim, and joined by loops and taches (clasps).

- a. Fifty loops of blue were to be made for each of the two sections so that they could be joined. “Selvedge” means “end or extremity.”
- b. Fifty taches (clasps) of gold were to be made as the means of connecting the two sections of curtains.

7-9. ⁷*And thou shalt make curtains of goats' hair to be a covering upon the tabernacle: eleven curtains shalt thou make. ⁸The length of one curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and the eleven curtains shall be all of one measure. ⁹And thou shalt couple five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and shalt double the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tabernacle.*

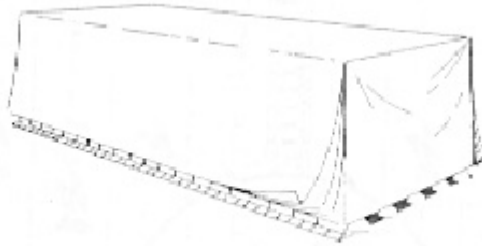
- a. Eleven curtains were to be made of goats' hair, each measuring 30 cubits (45 ft.) in length and four cubits (six ft.) in width. Goats' hair was typical material of nomad tents, and still is. It is black or very near black, strong and gives good protection from the weather.
- b. Five curtains were to be connected together to form one section, and the remaining six were to be connected as the second section. The sixth curtain "was to be made double, i.e., folded together, toward the front of the tent, so as to form a kind of gable, as Josephus has also explained the passage" (*Ant. iii.6,4*) (Keil, p. 177).

10-13. ¹⁰*And thou shalt make fifty loops on the edge of the one curtain that is outmost in the coupling, and fifty loops in the edge of the curtain which coupleth the second. ¹¹And thou shalt make fifty taches of brass, and put the taches into the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may be one. ¹²And the remnant that remaineth of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remaineth, shall hang over the backside of the tabernacle. ¹³And a cubit on the one side, and a cubit on the other side of that which remaineth in the length of the curtains of the tent, it shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle on this side and on that side, to cover it.*

- a. Fifty loops were to be made on the edges of each section of curtain. Taches of brass were to be made for each of these loops so that the two sections could be joined together.
- b. "This tent-cloth was two cubits longer than the inner one, as each piece was 30 cubits long instead of 28; it was also two cubits broader, as it was composed of 11 pieces, the eleventh only reckoned as two cubits, as it was to be laid double" (Keil, p. 177). On the back side of the tabernacle, the extra one-half cubit was to be placed; and the extra two cubits in length were to be put one cubit on each side.
- c. 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.

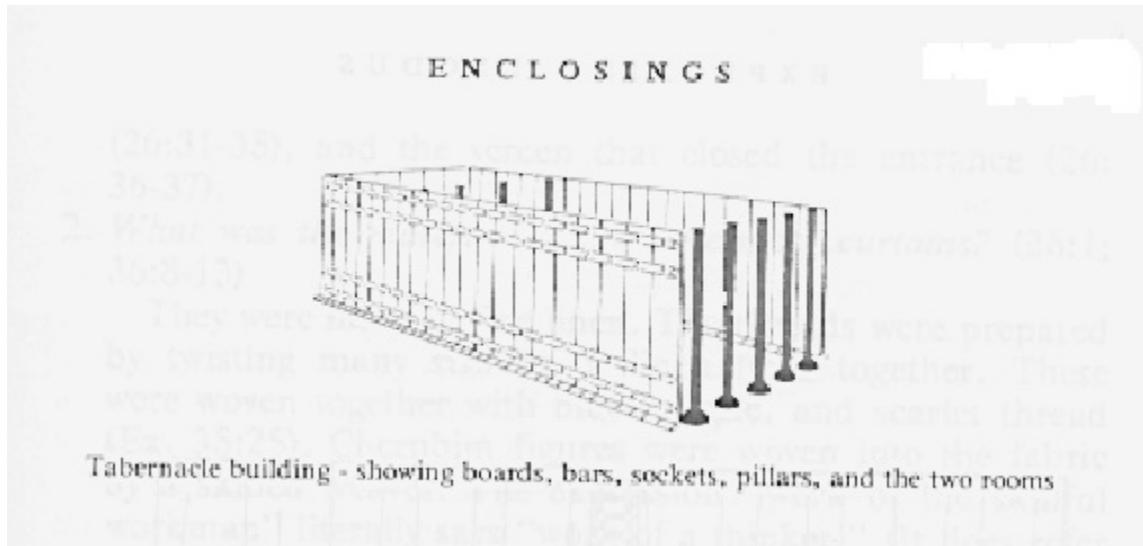
14. *And thou shalt make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering above of badgers' skins.*

- a. Two additional coverings were to be made, one of rams' skins dyed red and the other of seals' skins. Apparently, these coverings were to be outer layers which were exposed to the elements. The effect of these four coverings was that the outside light would be completely shut out; also, the wind, dust and rain would be excluded.

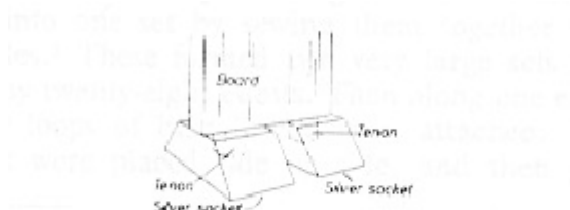


Tabernacle building showing its four coverings and the "hanging" across the front

- b. Since the tabernacle was to be used even after entering Canaan, the materials were durable. There is much debate as to whether the roof was flat or sloped, but the scripture is not specific. No mention is made of roof poles or other supports for a pitched roof. Possibly, the boards mentioned later in the chapter served also as a roof support.
- 15-21. ¹⁵And thou shalt make boards for the tabernacle of shittim wood standing up. ¹⁶Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and a cubit and a half shall be the breadth of one board. ¹⁷Two tenons shall there be in one board, set in order one against another: thus shalt thou make for all the boards of the tabernacle. ¹⁸And thou shalt make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards on the south side southward. ¹⁹And thou shalt make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two sockets under another board for his two tenons. ²⁰And for the second side of the tabernacle on the north side there shall be twenty boards: ²¹And their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board.



- a. Boards were to be made of acacia wood measuring ten cubits (15 ft.) long and one and one-half cubits in width (27 in.). The thickness of the boards is not stated. Josephus (*Ant. III, vi, 3*) says that they were four fingers thick, or about three inches. Some Jewish commentators have said that the walls were one cubit thick. It would seem that this would made the boards into impossibly heavy beams. Two “tenons” were to be in each of these boards. These were likely pegs such as are used to connect and support the extensions in our dining tables. The boards were to be placed upright, side by side. Each board was to be overlaid with gold.
- b. Twenty boards, each measuring one and one-half cubits in width, standing side by side, gives us the length of the tabernacle - 45 feet. These upright boards would have the two tenons at the bottom fitted into special sockets made of silver. Each socket was of one talent (about 75 pounds) of silver (38:27). The shape of the sockets is not given but they were probably wider at the bottom than at the top and mortised to receive the tenons. All together, 100 sockets supported the tabernacle boards and the pillars holding up the veil (38:27). Wagons were used to transport these heavy silver sockets (Num 4:31; 7:3,6-8).



A tabernacle board with its tenons and sockets.

22-25. ²²*And for the sides of the tabernacle westward thou shalt make six boards.* ²³*And two boards shalt thou make for the corners of the tabernacle in the two sides.*

²⁴*And they shall be coupled together beneath, and they shall be coupled together above the head of it unto one ring: thus shall it be for them both; they shall be for the two corners.* ²⁵*And they shall be eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board.*

- a. The western end of the tabernacle was to have six boards (the same dimensions as the other boards), plus, two boards were to be placed at the corners. Some commentators feel that these two boards were of different dimensions and construction, possibly only a half cubit wide. Two of these would add one cubit to the nine cubit width of the other six boards making a total of ten cubits . . . the width of the western wall.
- b. Verse 24 says that these two boards were to be “doubled” or “coupled” together. The technical meaning of the Hebrew word for “coupled” is not known. “. . . the two corner beams at the back were to consist of two pieces joined together at a right angle, so as to form as double boards one single whole from the bottom to the top” (Kiel, p. 180).
- c. These boards extended up to “one ring.” This suggests that maybe the boards were somehow attached to the adjoining sides by some sort of clamp or ring.

26-30. ²⁶*And thou shalt make bars of shittim 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 two sides westward.* ²⁸*And the middle bar in the midst of the boards shall reach 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 was shewed thee in the mount.*

- a. Five bars were made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. These were thrust through gold rings attached to the boards forming the walls. This procedure was used on the north, south and west walls. This design made the walls easy to assemble and disassemble as the Israelites moved from place to place.
- b. It would seem that the positioning of the bars was as follows: one bar (the middle bar) extended from one end of the wall to the other. Two rows (one above the middle bar and one below) of half-length bars made three rows total. The scripture is not clear as to whether the bars were on the outside

of the walls or the inside. Most commentators feel that they were on the outside.

- c. The obscurity of the scripture concerning the boards and the bars was made clear for Moses since God had shown him the PATTERN in the mount (vs. 30). Please take note that even the manner of setting up the tabernacle was not left to human judgment. God has carefully given instructions to His people where exact obedience is required. Hebrews 8:5 - *Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*

31,32. ³¹*And thou shalt make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made:* ³²*And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver.*

- a. 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.” The dimensions of the veil seem to have been 10 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 material, decorations and colors are almost identical to that of the linen curtains over the tabernacle.
- b. The veil was hung on four pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold. These pillars were supported on four sockets (pedestals) of silver. The pillars had hooks of gold at their tops and the veil was hung on these hooks, hanging directly below the clasps (taches) that joined the two large sets of linen curtains.

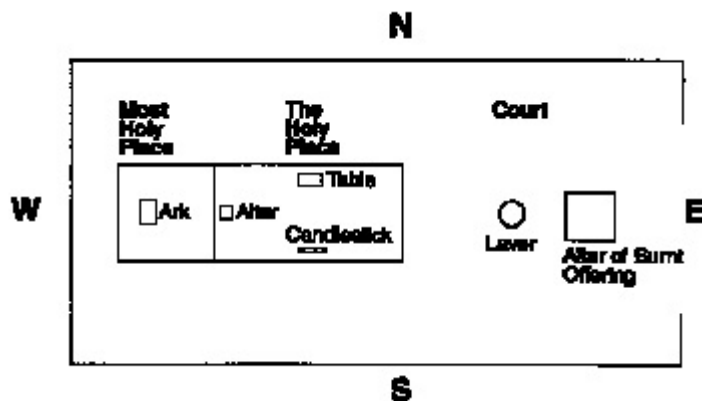
33-35. ³³*And thou shalt hang up the veil under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the veil the ark of the testimony: and the veil shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy.* ³⁴*And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place.* 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.*

- a. On the inside of the Holy of Holies, there was only the ark and its mercy seat covering. On the outside of the veil, in the Holy Place, was the lampstand on the south side, the table showbread on the north and the altar of incense up near the veil at the west end of the Holy Place (30:6; 40:23-26).

- b. Exodus 40:20,21 seems to indicate that when the tabernacle was erected, the ark was put in its position in the tabernacle first and then after that, the pillars and veil were set up. In 26:33 this sequence is not set forth.
- c. The altar of incense is not mentioned here but Exodus 30:1-9 places it before the veil.
- d. The tabernacle building was surprisingly small, only 10x10x30 cubits (15x45 ft. floor size). It did not need to be large since no one entered it but the priests. The congregation worshipped at the door of each man's tent (33:8). Most likely, only a small number of the people ever even entered the courtyard since it was 75 x 100 feet. On feast days, they could view the sacrifices from outside the court area.

36,37. ³⁶And thou shalt make an hanging for the door of the tent, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework. ³⁷And thou shalt make for the hanging five pillars of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, and their hooks shall be of gold: and thou shalt cast five sockets of brass for them.

- a. The closure for the east end is described as being made of more of the fine linen, beautifully dyed and embroidered with fine needlework. It was supported by five pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold, with golden hooks to receive the brass sockets.
- b. In chapter 36, verses 37-38 speak of the pillars having capitals and fillets of gold. In this context, these are not mentioned. The word *capital* is simply the word meaning "top or head." It may or may 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 could refer to some sort of 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 indicated.



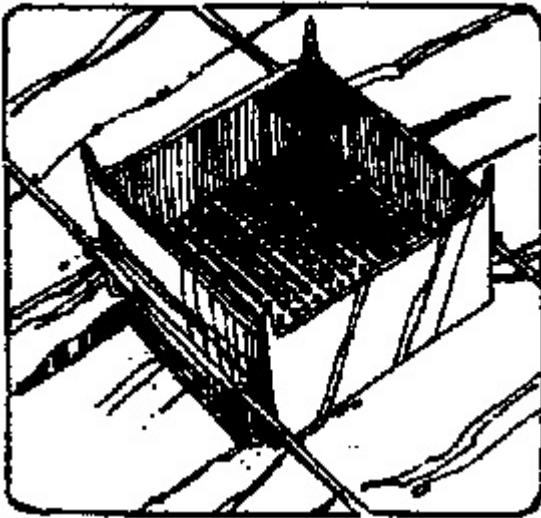
- c. Gold was reserved for the things inside the tabernacle, except for the outside of the boards, and even they were covered by the curtains. However, the fact that the pillars had brass sockets show that they were regarded as near or part of the items

in the court, which were of brass.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

In this chapter we read the instructions for making the altar of burnt-offering, and for making the pillars and hangings around the courtyard of the tabernacle. The chapter closes with instructions about oil for the lampstand in the holy place.

- 1,2. ¹And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits.
²And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: his horns shall be of the same: and thou shalt overlay it with brass.



Altar of Burnt Offering (Ex. 27:1-8)

Animal sacrifices were offered on this altar, located in the court in front of the tabernacle. The blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on the four horns of the altar.

- a. The size of the altar was to be five cubits long, five cubits wide and three cubits high. This would make it about 7½ feet in length and width, and 4½ feet high. It was to be made of acacia wood, and overlaid with brass (bronze? copper?). For whatever reason, at a later time (about a year later), the bronze 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).
- b. The use of bronze for the altar stands in contrast to the use of gold for the furniture in the tabernacle building. It is interesting to note that the value and beauty of the materials used decreased as they were located further out from the Holy of Holies. We also note 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.

- c. It has been proposed that the hollow altar was filled with natural uncut stones or earth when it was in use (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 stone. Still, there is no definite statement pertaining to this.
- d. Horns were to be made on the corners. These horns would serve several possible purposes: as ornamental adornments; to be used to tie the victims to the altar to prevent their falling off the altar. Psalm 118:27 - *God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.* Sacrificial blood was smeared on the horns (Lev 4:7), and those who fled to the altar to save their lives laid hold on the horns (Ex 21:14; 1 Kgs 1:50-53).
- e. The purpose of the altar was because a blood atonement has always been required before men can obtain fellowship with God. Hebrews 9:22 - *And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.*

Sin requires payment of life. A life is required as a substitute for a life forfeited by sin (see Lev 17:11). 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.

- 3. *And thou shalt make his pans to receive his ashes, and his shovels, and his basons, and his fleshhooks, and his firepans: all the vessels thereof thou shalt make of brass.*
 - a. The utensils pertaining to the altar were to be made of brass. Gold and silver would not be as durable as brass in the heavy work of offering animal sacrifices. Pans and shovels would be needed in taking away the ashes. Basins would be required in catching the blood of the victims. Fleshhooks would be needed in moving the victim. Firepans were likely to hold the fire.
 - b. Some scholars suggest that the fire which fell upon the altar from heaven (Lev 9:24) was retained in the firepans, and when the camp moved or when the altar was being cleaned, the fire was replenished from the fire kept alive in the firepans.
- 4,5. ⁴*And thou shalt make for it a grate of network of brass; and upon the net shalt thou make four brasen rings in the four corners thereof.* ⁵*And thou shalt put it*

under the compass of the altar beneath, that the net may be even to the midst of the altar.

- a. A grating of brass was to be constructed for the altar. Keil thought that this was a narrow walkway placed on the sides of the altar and extending completely around it. The priest could stand on it while performing the various activities pertaining to the sacrifice. Others think it was a grating upon which the victim was laid while being offered. In this case, the wood would be underneath the grating. Some suggest that the grating was built into the sides of the altar to allow air to be drawn for the fire. The most natural view seems to be that this was a grating upon which the victim was laid and underneath which the fire was built. This is suggested by the wording of verse 5.
- b. Four brazen rings were to be put on the four corners of the altar for the purpose of carrying it from place to place.

6-8. *⁶And thou shalt make staves for the altar, staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with brass. ⁷And the staves shall be put into the rings, and the staves shall be upon the two sides of the altar, to bear it. ⁸Hollow with boards shalt thou make it: as it was shewed thee in the mount, so shall they make it.*

- a. Staves of acacia wood overlaid with brass were to be made and used in transporting the altar. These staves were inserted through the rings described above.
- b. The altar was to be made hollow on the inside. The KJV and RSV use the word *boards*. The Hebrew word is *luach* and is not the same word used for the boards of the tabernacle building. *Luach* is the word used to refer to the stone tablets of the ten commandments (24:12; 31:18). It may mean table, tablet, plate of stone or metal, wooden plate, board or plank (Harkavy's Lexicon).

9,10. *⁹And thou shalt make the court of the tabernacle: for the south side southward there shall be hangings for the court of fine twined linen of an hundred cubits long for one side: ¹⁰And the twenty pillars thereof and their twenty sockets shall be of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets shall be of silver.*

- a. The enclosure around the tabernacle building was called the court of the tabernacle. This simply means yard or enclosure. 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 (1 Kgs 7:12).

- b. The court shows a principle of exclusion. The nation of Israel was unholy in its deeds and thus could not go into the immediate presence of God in the Holy of Holies. The veil before the Holy of Holies and the screen before the Holy Place excluded all but certain people. The people at large and even Gentiles could enter into the court (Lev 17:8; 22:18; Num 15:14-16). There are barriers between a Holy God and unholy men.
- c. The court was to be made of pillars, each five cubits tall (7½ ft.), which held up a hanging of fine twisted linen cloth (38:16,18). The court wall was too tall to gaze over; people had to come inside to see what was going on. The material of the pillars is not specifically stated, but probably was acacia wood. The pillars were not made of brass, a fact indicated by the lack of their mention in 38:29-31 where the uses of the brass are itemized.
- d. The pillars had sockets of brass, but hooks and fillets of silver at their tops. The capitals 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. No where does the scripture mention this.

11-15. ¹¹*And likewise for the north side in length there shall be hangings of an hundred cubits long, and his twenty pillars and their twenty sockets 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 of one side of the gate shall be fifteen cubits: their pillars three, and their sockets three.* ¹⁵*And on the other side shall be hangings fifteen cubits: their pillars three, and their sockets three.*

- a. Altogether there were 60 pillars. There were twenty on the north and south sides and ten on the east and west ends. The most probable layout is that the pillars were exactly five cubits apart. The pillars at each corner were probably counted as belonging to only one side, even though each corner pillar supported an end of the hanging on two adjacent sides.
- b. The actual dimensions of the court was about 75 feet on the east and west, and 150 feet on the north and south. The entrance was on the east side. The entrance was 20 cubits wide and located in the center of the east side.

16-19. ¹⁶*And for the gate of the court shall be an hanging of twenty cubits, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework: and their pillars shall be four, and their sockets four.* ¹⁷*All the pillars round about the court shall be filleted with silver; their hooks shall be of silver, and their sockets of brass.* ¹⁸*The length of the court shall be an hundred cubits, and the breadth fifty every where, and the height five cubits of fine twined linen, and their sockets of*

brass. ¹⁹All the vessels of the tabernacle in all the service thereof, and all the pins thereof, and all the pins of the court, shall be of brass.

- a. The entrance to the court was made of the same colored linen material as that used at the doorway of the tent. The hanging at the entrance of the court was embroidered with needlework. It was held up on four pillars, which rested on four sockets (pedestals). On either side of the entrance, linen curtains 15 cubits (22½ ft.) in length were hung. Exodus 38:18 speaks of “the height in the breadth” in reference to the size of the entrance. This simply means that the height was the same as the rest of the court.
- b. All the vessels used in the service of the tabernacle were to be made of brass. This probably refers to the tools used at the altar (27:3), and possibly others also. The “pins” are probably tent pins which provided anchors to ropes that held the pillars of the court upright.

20,21. ²⁰*And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always. ²¹In the tabernacle of the congregation without the veil, which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the LORD: it shall be a statute for ever unto their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel.*

- a. Pure olive oil obtained by beating olives was to be brought by the children of Israel to the priests. The Jewish mishna indicates that the very best oil was produced by beating the olives lightly with rods. This oil was clear and burned with little smoke. Lower grades of oil were obtained by crushing the olives completely in a press or mortar.
- b. The lamp was to burn “always.” The word itself could mean either continuously, without interruption; or regularly, that is, every night. It is used with the second meaning in Psalm 34:1. The lamp was to burn “from evening to morning” (Ex 27:21; Lev 24:3; Ex 30:7,8; 1 Sam 3:3). The verse in 1 Samuel 3 says “the lamp had not yet gone out.”
- c. The lamp was to burn in the “tabernacle of the congregation.” This was the Holy Place, the room just outside of the veil, which was before the testimony.
- d. Aaron, the high priest, and his sons who were also priests were responsible for caring for the light. Keeping the light burning was important to God. It said something about Him and about His people also. It was to be a statute (or law) forever.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

This chapter deals with the garments of the high priest and the other priests. We could entitle it the “Holy Garment” chapter. The next chapter continues the instructions about the priesthood, but deals with the topic of their consecration ritual. The material in this chapter is very similar to that found in 39:1-31 where we read of the actual making of the garments.

1. *And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons.*
 - a. God instructs Moses to take Aaron and his four sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar and set aside these men as the first priests. As it turns out, Aaron is appointed as the high priest, the first in a long line of high priests extending down to the end of the Jewish system. Note that God chooses whom He will have to serve. Nadab and Abihu are 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).
 - b. As a lawgiver, Moses was a type of Christ. This may be partly why Aaron was selected as high priest. Christ was to be a high priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb 7). Eleazar followed Aaron as high priest (Num 3:4); later the descendants of Ithamar became high priests from Eli through Abiathar (1 Sam 2:27f; 1 Kgs 2:26f). 1 Chronicles 6:8-15 shows that the descendants of Eleazar served in this capacity from Zadok onward (1 Chron 24).
- 2,3. ²*And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron 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 may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.*
 - a. God now begins the instructions concerning Aaron's priestly garments. They are to serve the purpose of presenting glory and beauty. The Lord even refers to them as holy garments. These garments would be impressive in their design, beauty and glory; they would give Israel something more to appreciate and respect. These garments were to be worn when Aaron was discharging his priestly functions, and would impress upon him and the people the need for holiness and preparedness in approaching the Almighty. The richness of the privilege of serving God would also be impressed upon their minds.
 - b. Verse 3 shows that there were certain men who had been given special skills which were to be utilized in the making of these garments. Exodus

31:1-6 names them as Bezalel and Oholiab. God is able to raise up certain people who have the inborn talents to do things needed for the time. Consider Samson, Saul, David, Solomon, Paul.

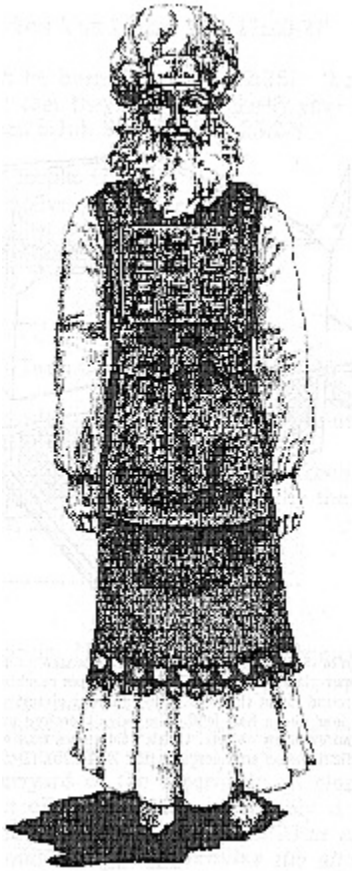
4,5. *⁴And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broidered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. ⁵And they shall take gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen.*

a. Six items comprising the garments for the priest are as listed: breastplate, ephod, robe, coat, mitre (turban) and girdle (belt or sash). Aaron's sons had only coats, girdles and head covering. In addition, linen breeches (underpants) were provided (28:42). The design of the garments would allow them to be used by a variety of different men of varying sizes over many years. As it appears in later descriptions, there were two pieces to the ephod which could be adjusted to fit different sizes.

b. Gold, expensive and beautiful dyes and fine linen were to be used in making these garments.

6-14. *⁶And they shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, and of purple, of scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cunning work. ⁷It shall have the two shoulder pieces thereof joined at the two edges thereof; and so it shall be joined together. ⁸And the curious girdle of the ephod, which is upon it, shall be of the same, according to the work thereof; even of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen. ⁹And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel: ¹⁰Six of their names on one stone, and the other six names of the rest on the other stone, according to their birth. ¹¹With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, shalt thou engrave the two stones with the names of the children of Israel: thou shalt make them to be set in ouches of gold. ¹²And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD upon his two shoulders for a memorial. ¹³And thou shalt make ouches of gold; ¹⁴And two chains of pure gold at the ends; of wreathen work shalt thou make them, and fasten the wreathen chains to the ouches.*

a. The ephod was the principle element in the high priest's costume, bearing not only the memorial stones on the shoulders, but also the breastplate with its four rows of memorial stones. The mention of the "two edges" indicates that it was long enough to come down about to the knees both front and back, connected with straps, to which there were affixed the onyx stone memorials at the shoulder level. This arrangement permitted the adjustment of the straps to fit any size person.



- b. Two onyx stones were to be set on the shoulders of the ephod. Upon each of these two stones were to be engraved the names of six sons of Israel, according to their birth. This could mean according to the chronological order of the birth of Jacob's sons or by some division of the sons according to their mothers. To Leah were born Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun; to Rachel, Joseph and Benjamin were born; to Leah's handmaid, Zilpah, were born Gad and Asher; to Rachel's handmaid, Bilhah, were born Dan and Naphtali. How they were divided on the stones is not listed and is not important for us to know.
- c. The precise work of the engravers is to be greatly admired. The engravings would be on the order of a signet ring. The KJV has "ouches" whereas the ASV describes the place where the stones were placed as "settings" of gold.
- d. The stones were to serve as memorials. Since God did not need to be reminded of the names of Jacob's sons, the memorial was intended for others. It would be a reminder to Israel that the high priest was acting in their behalf, and a reminder to the high priest of the nature of his work: in the behalf of the whole nation.
- e. Many men want to have a special priesthood after the fashion of the Aaronic priests. The Lord made use of these priests to perform a service in that long ago age; He never intended for such to be in use in His church today. Every Christian is a priest and, as such, can approach God directly through Christ (1 Pet 2:5,9). To set up a separate priesthood as the Catholics and others have done is to revert back to the Old Testament way, and is to miss the blessings of Christ (Gal 5:4; 3:10; 2 Cor 3). The New Testament is built upon a better covenant with a better system in every way (Heb 7:18-22). One would be foolish to attempt to grasp the shadow when the substance is before him.
- f. The ouches (settings) for the stones were to be made of gold. Two chains of pure gold were to be made to be fastened to the settings.
- g. This ephod was a garment but the same word is later used in reference to some kind of image (Jdgs 8:24-37; 17:5; 18:14; Hos 3:4). The Hebrew language had to make more than one use for many of its words. We do the same in English, but to a lesser degree.

15-21. ¹⁵And thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning work; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; of gold, of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine twined linen, shalt thou make it. ¹⁶Foursquare it shall be being doubled; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span shall be the breadth thereof. ¹⁷And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, even four rows of stones: the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this shall be the first row. ¹⁸And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. ¹⁹And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst. ²⁰And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be set in gold in their inclosings. ²¹And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes.

- a. The breastplate was a folded cloth forming a sort of pouch and decorated with 12 inscribed gemstones and worn on Aaron's chest. It was made of the same fabric as the ephod. It was square and doubled. Its dimensions were a span each way - about nine inches square.
- b. It would seem that the fold was at the bottom, forming a pouch to hold the Urim and Thummin (28:30). The translation "breastplate" is only an interpretation since the original Hebrew meaning is not known.
- c. There was a setting (Heb. - singular) for 12 gems arranged in four rows and having the names of the 12 sons of Israel engraved on them, much like those on the shoulders of the ephod.
- d. The Hebrew names of the precious stones are difficult to link to modern names. One of particular note is the diamond. There is no historical record that the ancients were familiar with this stone nor that they possessed the ability to engrave on it.

22-28. ²²And thou shalt make upon the breastplate chains at the ends of wreathen work of pure gold. ²³And thou shalt make upon the breastplate two rings of gold, and shalt put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate. ²⁴And thou shalt put the two wreathen chains of gold in the two rings which are on the ends of the breastplate. ²⁵And the other two ends of the two wreathen chains thou shalt fasten in the two ouches, and put them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod before it. ²⁶And thou shalt make two rings of gold, and thou shalt put them upon the two ends of the breastplate in the border thereof, which is in the side of the ephod inward. ²⁷And two other rings of gold thou shalt make, and shalt put them on the two sides of the ephod underneath, toward the forepart thereof, over against the other coupling thereof, above the curious girdle of the ephod. ²⁸And they shall bind the breastplate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it may be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breastplate be not loosed from the ephod.

- a. The breastplate was bound to the settings of the onyx stones on the shoulders by gold chains. It was tied at the bottom to the girdle of the ephod. The twisted gold chains 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.
 - b. Keil and Delitzsch maintain that the chains mentioned in 28:14 are the same as those in verse 22. The chains are mentioned only *once* in the account of the actual making of the items of the tabernacle as found in 39:15. The chains in both verses are said to be attached to the gold settings on the shoulders. If they are not the same, then no function is ascribed to those of verse 14.
 - c. The lower corners of the breastplate had gold rings on the inner side. This allowed the breastplate to be attached to the straps of the ephod (gold rings on the shoulder straps) with a lace (thread, line, cord) of blue.
29. *And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the LORD continually.*
- a. 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 high priest represented ALL Israel, as indicated by the 12 stones.
 - b. This symbolically pictures how Christ, our High Priest, bears us about upon His heart. Isaiah 49:16 - *Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.* God's people are His jewels (or possessions or treasures). Malachi 3:17 - *And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.*
 - c. According to verse 15 the breastplate was for judgement. The Hebrew (*mishpat*) was used in 21:1 to refer to God's ordinances. Its use in connection with the breastplate suggests that the high priest is the communicator of divine truths (judgements ordinances). Christ is the High Priest who revealed God's judgements to us and will ultimately be the judge of all (Jn 8:26; Lk 2:35; Acts 10:42).
30. *And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummin; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the LORD: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the LORD continually.*

- a. "What the Urim and Thummin really were cannot be determined with certainty either from the name themselves, or from any other circumstances connected with them. If the Urim and Thummin had been intended to represent any really existing thing, their nature, or the mode or preparing them, would certainly have been described" (Keil, pp. 198f).
- b. "We do not know what these were. They appear to have been two objects already widely known and apparently having been used to determine in some manner God's will regarding certain questions that could have been answered by some system of inquiry suggesting, to some at least, the casting of lots, or dice . . . The function of the Urim and Thummin 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 Thummin. (This does not indicate that the Urim and Thummin had magical powers in themselves, but only that God used these items as a vehicle of his truth) . . . Their use in Israel declined; and there is no instance of their use after the times of David" (Coffman, pp. 396f).
- c. The existence of the Urim and Thummin 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. Deuteronomy 29:29 - *The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

31,32. ³¹*And thou shalt make the robe of the ephod all of blue.* ³²*And there shall be an hole in the top of it, in the midst thereof: it shall have a binding of woven work round about the hole of it, as it were the hole of an habergeon, that it be not rent.*

- a. The robe was to be made of all blue, with a hole in the middle of it so that it could be slipped over the head. The edge of this hole was to have a binding so as to prevent its being torn.
- b. Only in this sense was it like habergeon (a short jacket of mail; a coat of mail).

33-35. ³³*And beneath upon the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about:* ³⁴*A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about.* ³⁵*And it shall be upon Aaron to minister: and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the LORD, and when he cometh out, that he die not.*

- a. On the lower hem of the garment, pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet were to be fashioned. Alternating with the pomegranates, little golden bells

were to be hung. The number of these items is not specified in the text. There were two purposes for the bells. One would be for decoration. They would add to the aura of beauty, glory and holiness in the eyes of the people. While Aaron was busy in the tabernacle performing the various duties assigned to him, the sound of the bells could be heard. The second would be to comply with God's command. "Aaron was not to appear before the LORD without the sound of the bells upon his robe being heard, in order that he might not die..." (Keil, p. 202).

- b. "In Mark 14:61, where is recorded the question of Caiaphas: 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? Jesus answered, I AM, and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven!' It is then recorded that, 'the high priest rent his clothes!' (Mk 14:63). This was an unlawful and capital offense on the part of Caiaphas. God had specifically commanded even the sons of Aaron, 'uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes, lest you die, and lest wrath come upon all the people' (Lev 10:6). This rending of his high priestly garment by Caiaphas has been understood as typifying 'the rending of the priesthood from himself and from the Jewish nation'" (Coffman, p. 398).

36-39. ³⁶*And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. ³⁷And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. ³⁸And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD. ³⁹And thou shalt embroider the coat of fine linen, and thou shalt make the mitre of fine linen, and thou shalt make the girdle of needlework.*

- a. A plate of pure gold was to be made upon which the words, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" were to be engraved. This plate was to be put on blue lace and mounted on a mitre. Scholars say the word "plate" means "petal of a flower," indicating that the item was in the shape of a flower. The mitre was to be worn on the forehead of the priest.
- b. "Aaron's bearing the iniquity of the holy things given by the people is a manner of saying that Aaron would bear the iniquity of Israel; and this is a symbol of Him who bore out sins in his own body on the tree!" (Coffman, p. 400).
- c. A coat of fine linen was to be embroidered; the mitre was to be of fine linen; and the girdle was to be of needlework. "The shape of the mitre is not given here; but Josephus' description of the headdress of the ordinary priests states that, 'they were not conical of form, nor did they cover the

whole head.' The girdle was a sash-like garment and was made of fine embroidered needlework. The Talmud describes the girdle as being wrapped around the coat and was being 48 feet long" (Coffman, p. 400).

- d. The coat is described by Josephus as being "an inner garment worn close to the body, with sleeves tied close to the arms, and covering practically all the body. It was embroidered with flowers of scarlet, purple and blue and hung loosely down to the ankles and was tied about the waist" (Coffman, p. 400).

40,41. ⁴⁰*And for Aaron's sons thou shalt make coats, and thou shalt make for them girdles, and bonnets shalt thou make for them, for glory and for beauty. ⁴¹And thou shalt put them upon Aaron thy brother, and 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.*

- a. The garments for Aaron's sons included coats, girdles and bonnets (headdress). These were also to be for beauty and glory. Few details are given here; more are added later.
- b. These garments were to be put on the priest (excluding the high priest). They are to be anointed, consecrated and sanctified; the purpose of all this was that they might be properly prepared to minister to the Lord. This was not merely for the purpose of show; there were underlying reasons of meaning. The glory and beauty of the high priest's appearance was typical of the beauty of our High Priest; the glory and the beauty of the other priests was a shadow of the beauty that pertains to Christians (Col 3:10-17).

42,43. ⁴²*And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach: ⁴³And they shall be upon Aaron, and upon his sons, when they come in unto the tabernacle of the congregation, 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 his seed after him.*

- a. The priests were also to be provided with linen breeches to cover their nakedness. Pagan priests and priestesses were noted for their nakedness and obscene behavior as they carried out their evil activities. "The religion authorized by God was designed in such a manner that no essential element of it in any way manifested any similarity to the pagan religions of antiquity; and another distinguishing feature of the priesthood here initiated by Almighty God was the clothing of its priests in white, contrasting magnificently with the black-robed priests of paganism. This is not always apparent in the scriptures, because the word *linen* as used here means white linen" (Coffman, p. 401).

- b. Catholicism adopted black robes to distinguish between the “clergy” and “laity.” Black robes were symbolic of pagan priests. For example, “chemarims” in Zephaniah 1:4 - *I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims with the priests.*
- c. The priests were only to enter the tabernacle entering their priestly garments. This chapter gives a record of the establishment of the Aaronic priesthood which was later expanded to include others in the tribe of Levi. It was intended to exist only as long as Judaism lasted; it ended with the death of Christ (Heb 8:9).
 - (1) Colossians 2:12-14 - ¹²*Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. ¹³And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; ¹⁴Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.*
 - (2) Ephesians 2:14,15 - ¹⁴*For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; ¹⁵Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace.*

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

This chapter deals with the consecration of Aaron as high priest and his sons as ordinary priests. It closes with instructions about the everyday, continual burnt offerings (38-46). The chapter is of great value to us because it illustrates how Christ received His high-priesthood and how He functions as a priest. It also 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 chapter 29 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 29 is very similar to Leviticus 8. This chapter 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. This chapter gives purpose to the instructions about material things in the adjoining chapters.

Although chapter 29 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 29 to the sin offering (14,36), the burnt offering (18,25,42), wave offering (41), drink offering (40), etc., can only be understood after a study of Leviticus 1-7.

- 1,2. *¹And 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, ²And unleavened bread, and cakes unleavened tempered with oil, and wafers unleavened anointed with oil: of wheaten flour shalt thou make them.*
- a. Moses is given directions by which Aaron and his sons were to be installed into the priestly office. Moses was not selected as high priest, as noted earlier, but in keeping with his appointment as Israel's official leader, he was charged with the duty of consecrating these men into the priesthood and possessed the authority to do so.
 - b. "It should be noted that what we have here is God's instructions for their consecration, a commission to be discharged by Moses, and not the actual consecration, which is recorded in Leviticus 1-7. At this point of time in Exodus, the tabernacle had not yet been completed; there has been no mention, as yet, of a laver; and, for that matter, not all of the instructions given by God to Moses have been enumerated, some of which will not appear till the more thorough account in Leviticus" (Coffman, p. 403). It is

interesting that it was Moses, not Aaron, who appeared with the Lord and Elijah in the transfiguration scene.

- c. The items to be used in the consecration included: one young bullock, two rams without blemish, unleavened bread, cakes unleavened (with oil mixed in) and unleavened wafers anointed with oil (made from wheatened flour: flour made from wheat). Three kinds of bread were to be used.
- d. The purpose of the forthcoming consecration ceremony was that Aaron and his sons might minister to God in the priesthood.

3,4. ³And thou shalt put them into one basket, and bring them in the basket, with the bullock and the two rams. ⁴And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water.



- a. The wafers and bread were to be placed in one basket and brought with the rams and bullock, along with Aaron and his sons, to the door of the tabernacle. There, those men to be installed as priests were to be washed. As mentioned by Coffman, the actual ceremony took place as recorded in Leviticus 1-7; this was the initial instructions for that occasion. Their being washed is a shadow of New Testament baptism.

- b. Before these men were fit to offer sacrifices in the worship of God, and act in be-

half of Israel, they first must be made ceremonially clean. Before one can offer spiritual sacrifices to God in the church today, he must first be cleansed by the blood of Christ in baptism. 1 Peter 2:5,9 - ⁵Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. ⁹But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (Also see Titus 3:5; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Heb 10:22; Eph 5:26,27).

5-7. ⁵And thou shalt take the garments, and put upon Aaron the coat, and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird him with the curious girdle of the ephod: ⁶And thou shalt put the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre. ⁷Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him.

- a. The garments designed for the high priest were to be put on Aaron. He was then to be anointed with oil. This anointing oil was used in three different cases in Old Testament times: in the appointment of prophets, priests and kings. The word "Messiah" means the "anointed one." Christ is prophet, high priest and king (Psa 45:7; Heb 1:9).
 - b. "This is a remarkable description of the Christ arrayed in the regal splendor of his heavenly garments in Revelation 1st chapter, resembling in a superficial way the splendid attire of Aaron; and due to this, some have mistakenly assumed that our Lord is there depicted as our great High Priest. However, it is not as High Priest, but as Judge of All the Earth, that Jesus appears there. The dominate feature that proves this is the sharp, two-edged sword that went out of the mouth of Jesus" (Coffman, p. 406).
- 8,9. *⁸And thou shalt bring his sons, and put coats upon them. ⁹And thou shalt gird them with girdles, Aaron and his sons, and put the bonnets on them: and the priest's office shall be theirs for a perpetual statute: and thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons.*
- a. Aaron's sons are to be girded with the priestly garments prepared for them, including the girdles and bonnets.
 - b. The priestly office was to be theirs (through their descendants) throughout the Mosaic age.
- 10-14. *¹⁰And thou shalt cause a bullock to be brought before the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the bullock. ¹¹And thou shalt kill the bullock before the LORD, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. ¹²And thou shalt take of the blood of the bullock, and put it upon the horns of the altar with thy finger, and pour all the blood beside the bottom of the altar. ¹³And thou shalt take all the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul that is above the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, and burn them upon the altar. ¹⁴But the flesh of the bullock, and his skin, and his dung, shalt thou burn with fire without the camp: it is a sin offering.*
- a. This gives details concerning the disposition of the bullock. Aaron and his sons were to lay their hands upon its head (thus identifying it as the sin offering). "This was a symbolical acknowledgment upon their part of their sinfulness and their confession before God that they deserved death because of sin" (Coffman, p. 408).
 - b. The bullock was to be killed at the door of the tabernacle; some of its blood was to be smeared on the horns of the altar and the rest of it was to be poured beside the bottom of the altar. 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 bullock was like our act of confessing. Isaiah 53:5 - *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

Note that Moses himself killed the sin offering. Priests did not usually have to kill the sacrifices themselves (Lev 1:5).

- c. The fat of the inner parts of the bullock, the caul of the liver (appendages of the liver) and the kidneys and their fat were to be burned (lit. smoked) upon the altar. The remaining parts were to be burned without the camp. The reason: it is a sin offering. The reference to the offering being concluded outside the camp is a reference to the death of Christ outside the gates of Jerusalem (Heb 13:12ff).

15-18. ¹⁵*Thou shalt also take one ram; and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the ram. ¹⁶And thou shalt slay the ram, and thou shalt take his blood, and sprinkle it round about upon the altar. ¹⁷And thou shalt cut the ram in pieces, and wash the inwards of him, and his legs, and put them unto his pieces, and unto his head. ¹⁸And thou shalt burn the whole ram upon the altar: it is a burnt offering unto the LORD: it is a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the LORD.*

- a. One of the rams was to be taken to Aaron and his sons; they were to lay hands on him and kill him. His blood was to be sprinkled around the altar (on the sides). The carcass was to be cut into pieces and the inward parts washed. The animal was to be placed in an orderly manner upon the altar and burned. This offering would be accepted by God as a sweet savor (a pleasing smell); this is an ancient expression referring to an action of which God approves.
- b. “Despite the fact of the bullock’s having been called a sin-offering, and this a burnt-offering, there are elements of the same figure in both...One animal alone could not suffice to typify the Christ, because the type required that the animal be consumed wholly upon the altar, and at the same time, be burned without the camp. Therefore, two beasts were required. Also, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world could not be adequately represented by a ‘bull.’ Yet, the enormity of humanity’s load of guilt could hardly be represented by anything else!” (ibid. p. 409).
- c. Sprinkling the blood about the altar (29:16) reminds us that God’s offerings must be made where God designates. It is the altar that makes a gift holy (Mt 23:19). 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.”

19-25. ¹⁹And thou shalt take the other ram; and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the ram. ²⁰Then shalt thou kill the ram, and take of his blood, and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, 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. ²¹And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, 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. ²²Also thou shalt take of the ram the fat and the rump, and the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul above the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, and the right shoulder; for it is a ram of consecration: ²³And one loaf of bread, and one cake of oiled bread, and one wafer out of the basket of the unleavened bread that is before the LORD: ²⁴And thou shalt put all in the hands of Aaron, and in the hands of his sons; and shalt wave them for a wave offering before the LORD. ²⁵And thou shalt receive them of their hands, and burn them upon the altar for a burnt offering, for a sweet savour before the LORD: it is an offering made by fire unto the LORD.

- a. Moses was to place the other ram before Aaron and his sons, who were to put their hands upon its head. Moses was then to kill the ram and put some of its blood upon the tip of the right ears of Aaron and his sons, upon the thumb of their right hands and the great toe of their right feet; the rams blood was also to be put on the altar round about. The significance of the blood on the *ear*, *hand* and *foot* of each of these men was that they would ever be ready to *hear* God's word, to *do* His will and always *walk* in His way. This was the crowning act of the consecration ceremony and represented their commitment to discharging their duties as loyal men of God.
- b. More of the blood was to be sprinkled by Moses upon Aaron and his sons, and upon the priestly garments of each of these men. This would be a ceremonial sanctifying of the men and their holy garments. In Leviticus 8:30 Aaron and his sons were sprinkled with blood after the wave offering; in the present case, they were sprinkled beforehand. There is no contradiction, they were sprinkled before and after.
- c. Moses was to take various specified parts of this ram, together with one loaf of bread, one cake of oiled bread, one wafer and put these into the hands of Aaron and his sons; these new priests were to wave them for a wave offering before the Lord. The difference between a heave offering and a wave offering is said to be that in the case of the former, the offering was lifted upward once, while in the case of the latter, the offering was waved more than once.

- d. Moses was to take these wave offerings back from the priests and burn them upon the altar. Again, it would be an acceptable sacrifice unto God.

26-28. ²⁶*And thou shalt take the breast of the ram of Aaron's consecration, and wave it for a wave offering before the LORD: and it shall be thy part.* ²⁷*And thou shalt sanctify the breast of the wave offering, and the shoulder of the heave offering, which is waved, and which is heaved up, of the ram of the consecration, even of that which is for Aaron, and of that which is for his sons:* ²⁸*And it shall be Aaron's and his sons' by a statute for ever from the children of Israel: for it is an heave offering: and it shall be an heave offering from the children of Israel of the sacrifice of their peace offerings, even their heave offering unto the LORD.*

- a. The breast of the ram was to be waved before the Lord; this part of the offering would be for Moses (to be eaten).
- b. "In most cases, the wave-offerings, having been moved first toward the altar, symbolizing their having been given to God, and then moved toward the worshiper, showing that God was giving it back to him for food, constituted the food of the priests 'for ever'" (ibid. p. 412).

29,30. ²⁹*And the holy garments of Aaron shall be his sons' after him, to be anointed therein, and to be consecrated in them.* ³⁰*And that son that is priest in his stead shall put them on seven days, when he cometh into the tabernacle of the congregation to minister in the holy place.*

- a. The priestly garments were intended to be passed down from father to son, in the priestly office.
- b. "The priest in his consecration was to abide seven days and nights at the door of the tabernacle...(see Lev 8:33)" (Clarke, p. 454).

31-34. ³¹*And thou shalt take the ram of the consecration, and seethe his flesh in the holy place.* ³²*And Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that is in the basket, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.* ³³*And they shall eat those things wherewith the atonement was made, to consecrate and to sanctify them: but a stranger shall not eat thereof, because they are holy.* ³⁴*And if ought of the flesh of the consecrations, 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.*

- a. Aaron and his sons were to eat the flesh of the ram (their part) and the bread at the door of the tabernacle. Only the priests were to eat it.

- b. If anything was left over until the next morning, it was to be burned. Remember similar instructions given to the Israelites concerning the passover feast? (see Ex 12:6-10).

35-37. ³⁵*And thus shalt thou do unto Aaron, and to his sons, according to all things which I have commanded thee: seven days shalt thou consecrate them.* ³⁶*And thou shalt offer every day a bullock for a sin offering for atonement: and thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou hast made an atonement for it, and thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it.* ³⁷*Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy.*

- a. The procedures outlined by the Lord here were to require seven days for the completion of the consecration ceremonies. From verse 30, therefore, it appears that the same pattern was to be followed in the consecration of future priests.
- b. A bullock was to be offered each of the seven days; the altar was to be cleaned and anointed to sanctify it. The altar could thereby make holy that which touched it.

38,39. ³⁸*Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually.* ³⁹*The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even:*

- a. Each day two lambs of the first year were to be offered; one in the morning and the other in the evening.
- b. “Here is the institution of one of the most distinctive features of the Judaic faith, that of the Daily Sacrifice, an institution that was observed by Israel throughout their history unto the destruction of Jerusalem by Vespasian and Titus in A.D. 70. It ceased, as God prophesied it would, ‘upon the wings of abomination’ when God made a full end of the Old Israel (Dan 9:27)” (Coffman, p. 415). Acts 3:1 shows that the evening sacrifice was at the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.).

40-46. ⁴⁰*And with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering.* ⁴¹*And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto according to the meat offering of the morning, and according to the drink offering thereof, for a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the LORD.* ⁴²*This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee.* ⁴³*And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory.* ⁴⁴*And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation,*

and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office. ⁴⁵And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. ⁴⁶And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God.

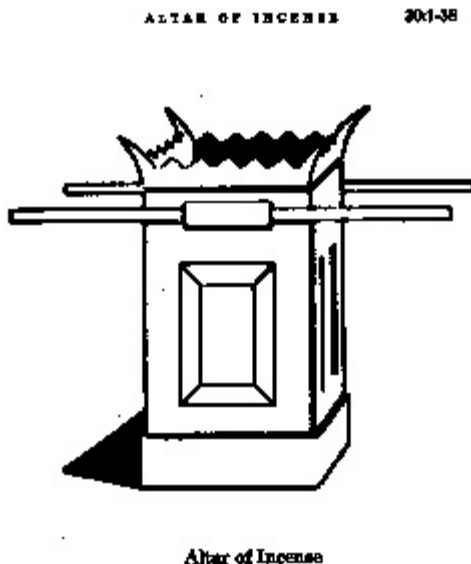
- a. God would meet with Israel in the daily sacrifices; He meets with us in our regular gatherings. God would sanctify the people, the altar and Aaron and his sons. God would thus dwell among His people.
- b. Note that God met with all Israel and not just with the priests alone. God's presence was for all. God had promised to commune 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 the tent and the altar. God describes His presence as "my glory." This refers to the cloud described in 40:34ff.

CHAPTER THIRTY

This chapter contains a mixture of subjects including (1) the incense altar, (2) atonement money, (3) the laver, (4) anointing oil and (5) the incense formula. Although mixed, *all* the material is essential for an accurate understanding of the tabernacle.

The material in chapters 30 and 31 are so closely related that there should not be a division between the two. Why this material is so mixed is not known except that God led Moses to write it this way. This is not finding fault, simply stating fact. The material about the altar of incense seems to belong back in chapter 25 with the lampstand and table (they are together in chapter 37). The material about the laver would seem more natural if placed in chapter 27 with the altar (they are in chapter 38).

- 1,2. *¹And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: of shittim wood shalt thou make it. ²A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; foursquare shall it be: and two cubits shall be the height thereof: the horns thereof shall be of the same.*



- a. The altar was for the purpose of burning incense, a sweet, pleasant smelling mixture which would go a long way toward expelling the offensive smells caused by the burnt sacrifices and blood. But the primary purpose was for its spiritual significance. Revelation 5:8 shows that incense represented the prayers of the saints: *And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having everyone of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.*
- b. The altar was to be one cubit square in its lateral measurements, and two cubits tall. Horns were to be made on it, meaning one on each corner as on the altar of burnt offerings. Acacia wood was to be used in its construction.
- 3-6. *³And 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. ⁴And two golden rings shalt thou make to it under the crown of it, by the two corners thereof, upon the two sides of it shalt thou make it; and they shall be for places for the staves to bear it withal. ⁵And thou shalt make the staves of*

shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. ⁶And 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.

- a. The acacia wood was to be overlaid with pure gold; a crown (a wreath-like ornamentation) was to be made into the gold overlay; two golden rings and staves made of acacia wood overlaid with gold were to be made for transportation purposes.
- b. The altar was to be placed in the Holy Place, near the veil shielding the Most Holy Place. Hebrews 9:3f seems to show this item in the Most Holy Place, but God put it in the Holy Place. Although in the Holy Place, it was placed nearest to the Most Holy Place and was used in connection with the great Atonement Day services “within the veil” (Lev 16:11-14). Although situated in the Holy Place, it was so closely connected with the Most Holy Place that Paul could speak of it as pertaining to the latter. It was an “appendage of the Holy of Holies, though not actually inside of it, in the same way (to use a homely illustration by Delitzsch) as the signboard of a shop belongs to the shop and not to the street” (see Coffman, p. 421).

7,8. *⁷And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. ⁸And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations.*

- a. Aaron was to burn incense on this altar every morning when he dressed the lamps. Dressing the lamps would involve trimming or replacing the wicks and refilling them with oil. When he lit the lamp at evening he was to burn incense again. Thus, twice each day, incense was burned. The offering of this incense was to be a “perpetual” decree - “throughout your generations” (for as long as the law of Moses was in effect). Since Revelation 5:8 describes incense as representative of the prayers of the saints, this indicates our prayer life should be a daily practice.
- b. Those who try to bind sabbath-keeping on people today use a similar expression to try to prove their view (Ex 31:16). But see Leviticus 24:9; Jonah 2:6. “Perpetual” is limited by the phrase, “throughout your generations.” The fact that incense was to be burned upon this altar daily shows that it was located in the Holy Place, for the Most Holy Place could be entered only one day each year, and that by the high priest in performing his yearly duties on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16).

9,10. *⁹Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon. ¹⁰And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of*

atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the Lord.

- a. No strange (unauthorized) incense was to be burned on this altar. No drink offering was to be poured upon it, no burnt sacrifice was to be offered here and no meat offering was permitted to be given upon it. Only the incense God authorized was to be used here. But, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest was to place blood from the sin offering upon the horns of this altar. Being so closely connected with the most holy place, God can say that this altar of incense was “most holy.”
- b. Nabab and Abihu offered strange fire upon it and were slain because of their error (Lev 10:1f; 16:12). The last reference is to what the high priest was to do on the Day of Atonement, but we may infer that the altar was to be the source of the fire on which the incense was burned twice daily. In any case, Nabab and Abihu offered “strange” fire, fire that did not meet God’s specifications.

11,12. ¹¹*And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, ¹²When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls.*

- a. Instructions about numbering Israel and levying a tax on them are given in this section. The tax here levied is for the “service of the tabernacle.” Everyone 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 4/10ths of an ounce. At that time, the shekel was not a coin but a unit of weight, a piece of metal weighing that amount (Gen 24:22). Anyone could have afforded this small payment. The very smallness of the offering should have made obvious that the people were NOT purchasing their atonement, but only acknowledging that they had a debt which God alone could pay for them (cf 1 Pet 1:18,19).
- b. The word “plague” generally means Divine judgement. In this context, all those who comply would escape judgement (punishment) because they complied with God’s law.

13,14. ¹³*This they shall give, every one that among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the Lord. ¹⁴Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the Lord.*

- a. The ancient method of counting a large group was simply: have them pass over from one place to another (perhaps over a line), and count them as they move.
- b. Those counted were assessed the tax; those counted and taxed were males of 20 years of age or older. The shekel was equivalent to 20 gerahs (180 grams or .4 oz.).

15,16. ¹⁵*The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel. When they give an offering unto the Lord to make an atonement for your souls.*

¹⁶*And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls.*

- a. The rich and the poor were given the same tax, showing that the Lord does not recognize any difference in the worth of a rich man and a poor man. A half shekel was assessed to each. This indicates the great truth that all men are lost. To be saved, the same conditions apply to the rich and the poor. The gospel is intended for all lost men and women, regarding of their outward circumstances.
- b. It is not known for sure if this census is the same as the numbering as listed in Numbers chapter 1. There could be as much as nine months difference from the time the command was given until carried out as listed in Numbers chapter 1. If these are separate numberings, then the first as listed in Exodus could have been for the purpose of atonement money (and used for the service of the tabernacle) and the second a more detailed accounting by tribes.

17,18. ¹⁷*And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,* ¹⁸*Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein.*

- a. Note that verse 17 begins by stating that the things spoken were from the Lord to Moses - an affirmation that they were from God. God spoke in times past to the fathers "at sundry times and in diverse manners" (Heb 1:1). He did not always use the exact same words when giving the same instructions.
- b. The laver was to be made of brass (bronze); the foot (the stand upon which it was constructed or placed) was also to be made of brass. Exodus 38:8 shows that the source of this metal would have been the mirrors that the women brought with them from Egypt. Mirrors of that day were made of

highly polished metal. These items of vanity were eagerly given by the women.

- c. "The mirrors of the women had been used for the purpose of earthly adorning. But now, the pious Israelites renounced this earthly adorning, and offered it to the Lord as a heave-offering to make the purifying laver in front of the sanctuary, in order that what had hitherto served as a means of procuring applause in the world might henceforth be the means of procuring the approbation of God" (Keil, p. 214).
- d. The dimensions and shape of the laver are not given. If it were used only by Aaron and his sons, it would not have needed to be very large. It is doubtful that it was any shorter than the lowest item of tabernacle furniture, which was a cubit and one-half high, 27 inches.
- e. A base or foot is always mentioned with the laver. That fact would suggest that they were separate and probably could be detached from one another. The base was anointed separately from the laver (40:11). This would also make it easier to transport the laver as the tabernacle was moved from place to place.
- f. Was there water in the base of the laver as well as in the laver itself? Josephus says that there was (*Ant. III, vi, 2*). Except for the difficulty of washing the feet in a laver probably more than two feet high, there would be no other reason for the base to be designed to hold water.

19-21. ¹⁹For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: ²⁰When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the Lord: ²¹So 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.

- a. Aaron and his sons (and later all priests and high priests) were to wash their hands and feet before entering the tabernacle or before doing services before the altar of burnt offerings. The penalty for not washing was death. One has to wonder why, with all the warnings, Nadab and Abihu later transgressed as they did. The washings required of these men before doing service to God is the shadow of the washing people receive today in being baptized (Titus 3:5; Eph 5:26; Heb 10:22). Acts 22:16 shows that the inner cleansing from the guilt of sin occurs in the same operation as the outer washing of baptism. Our bodies are washed in the immersion, and our souls are cleansed by the blood of Christ.

- b. The hands and feet of the priests were to be cleansed before touching anything that pertained to the holy tabernacle; before we can enter the true tabernacle (Heb. 8:1ff), we must be cleansed from sin (Isa 59:1ff; Rev 21:27).

22-24. ²²Moreover the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, ²³Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty shekels, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty shekels, ²⁴And of cassia five hundred shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, and of oil olive an hin:

- a. God specified the ingredients to be used in making the anointing oil. They would have equaled about 40 pounds of spices and about a gallon and one-half of olive oil.
- b. "These proportions preclude the supposition, that the spices were pulverized and mixed with the oil and myrrh in their natural condition, for the result in that case would have been a thick mess: they rather favor the statement of the Rabbins, that the dry spices were softened in water and boiled to extract their essence, which was then mixed with oil and myrrh and boiled again until all the watery part had evaporated" (Keil, p. 215).
- c. Verse 25 shows that this is the correct interpretation for the process and it was accomplished after the "art of the apothecary" ("perfumer"). The four spices are as follows:
 - (1) Myrrh - "The text designates that this was to be "freely flowing myrrh" as contrasted with the myrrh produced by making incisions into the myrrh trees. The kind that appeared by itself was considered best. The ancient used it (a) as a perfume, (b) for embalming the dead and (c) for incense. This gum is produced from a low, thorny, ragged tree, that grows in Arabia Felix and eastern Africa, called by botanists *balsamodendron myrrha*" (Coffman, p. 427).
 - (2) Cinnamon - "This is a rare spice derived from a species of the laurel tree (*Laurus cinnamomum*) which grows only on the Malabar coast of India, Ceylon, Borneo, Sumatra, China, and Cochin, China. The mention of it here shows that there was commerce between the far east and near east at this early period" (Ibid).
 - (3) Sweet Calamus - "Several aromatic reeds of this kind are known and it is impossible to know exactly which one was meant here" (Ibid, pp. 227).

- (4) Cassia - “This spice bears a strong resemblance to cinnamon, in fact, having the botanical name *cinnamomum cassia*. It is more pungent than the cinnamon which we know today and of a courser texture” (Ibid, p. 428).

25-29. ²⁵*And thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be an holy anointing oil.* ²⁶*And thou shalt anoint the tabernacle of the congregation therewith, and the ark of the testimony,* ²⁷*And the table and all his vessels, and the candlestick and his vessels, and the altar of incense,* ²⁸*And the altar of burnt offering with all his vessels, and the laver and his foot.* ²⁹*And thou shalt sanctify them, that they may be most holy: whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy.*

- a. This anointing oil that was produced after the art of the perfumer was to be used to anoint the tabernacle, the ark, the table and all its vessels, the candlestick and all its vessels, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering with all its vessels and the laver and its foot.
- b. The purpose of this anointing was that each of these items might be sanctified as pure, and that they might commune holiness to the things they touched. Jesus pointed out in Matthew 23:15-22 that the altar sanctified the gift placed upon it, not the other way around (as the Pharisees thought).

30-33. ³⁰*And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office.* ³¹*And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, This shall be an holy anointing oil unto me throughout your generations.* ³²*Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured, neither shall ye make any other like it, after the composition of it: 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, shall even be cut off from his people.*

- a. Aaron and his sons were to also be anointed with this holy oil, and for the same basic reason - that they might be consecrated to God and thus authorized to minister to Him as priests.
- b. The instructions and warning were to be issued to the people of Israel. The oil was for special religious purposes only throughout their generations. The oil was not to be used for an ordinary purpose of anointing the human body (as with perfume). This distinction is made in verses 30 and 32. The Israelites *could not* make the oil for any private use. Anyone who did was to be cut off from among the people. The “stranger” is likely a reference to anyone who was not a priest. To be cut off from among the people was a very grievous penalty, which could involve losing one's rights and privileges of citizenship, his relationship with God, or even the loss of his life. Acts

3:22,23 - ²²*For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. ²³And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.*

34,35. ³⁴*And the Lord said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a like weight: ³⁵And thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy.*

- a. The ingredients specified for the incense were as follows (quotations taken from Coffman, pp. 428f): (1) stacte "There are two kinds of stacte, one of myrrh and one of storax and a fat mixed. The kind mentioned here is supposed to be myrrh." (2) onycha "This is a mollusk which emits a highly aromatic odor when burned. Gathered in the Near East until recently, it is used as an ingredient in perfume and as a principle component of incense in India. (3) galbanum "This is a gum resin with a pleasant odor and a bitter taste. It is imported from Persia. It is derived from certain umbelliferous plants." (4) frankincense "The common frankincense is a gum derived from the ordinary fir tree; but the frankincense of the Jews is a substance now called Olibanum, a product of certain trees of the genus Boswellia. It grows in Arabia and Somaliland."
- b. These spices were to be combined together "after the art of the apothecary." They were to be "tempered" (salted, margin), and were to be pure and holy. It would burn quickly and cleanly, giving off a pleasant smell.

36-38. ³⁶*And thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy. ³⁷And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the Lord. ³⁸Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people.*

- a. A portion of this incense was to be placed (stored) near the most holy place (beside or near the altar itself). This was to be beaten small (pulverized).
- b. Another warning is given forbidding the people from making any of this incense for their own personal use. The same penalty named in verse 33 is prescribed for this offense. These warnings have their counterparts under the law of Christ: we are to refrain from inventing religious beliefs and practices; we are to abide by what the Lord gave, under penalty of losing our souls; we are forbidden to use that which is holy in any profane

way. Colossians 3:17 - *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.* 2 John 1:9-11 - *⁹Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: ¹¹For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.* 2 Corinthians 2:17 - *For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.* Revelation 22:18,19 - *¹⁸For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: ¹⁹And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.* Hebrews 12:28,29 - *²⁸Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: ²⁹For our God is a consuming fire.*

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Now that the plans for building the tabernacle have been given, this chapter deals with God's calling of the skilled workers to build it. It also relates the command to observe the SABBATH as a sign between God and Israel. It closes with a statement about God giving to Moses the tablets of the Ten Commandments.

1-5. *¹And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, ²See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: ³And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, ⁴To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, ⁵And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.*

- a. God tells Moses that He has called the one that He has prepared for the job at hand. Bezaleel was the son of Uri and the grandson of Hur. Hur was one of the men who held up Moses' hands during the battle with the Amalekites (17:8-13). He was of the tribe of Judah, the tribe which Christ sprang from (Heb 7:14).
- b. Bezaleel had received special gifts from God that he might perform the job at hand. When God calls someone for a job, He makes sure that they have the abilities to succeed.
- c. Notice that God called Bezaleel by name . . . God knows us individually and uses us individually.

6-11. *⁶And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, 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; ⁷The tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle, ⁸And the table and his furniture, and the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and the altar of incense, ⁹And the altar of burnt offering with all his furniture, and the laver and his foot, ¹⁰And the cloths of service, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office, ¹¹And the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the holy place: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do.*

- a. God named Aholiab as assistant to Bezaleel. Aholiab was from the tribe of Dan, as was Hiram, the chief artist employed by Solomon for the ornamental work of the temple (2 Chron 2:14). It is interesting to note that Ahloiab was appointed to make the curtains and have charge of all the fabric work since his name means "Father's Tent."

- b. To these men and their workmen was given the task of constructing the tabernacle in its entirety. The special skills given to these men did not preclude natural ability or skills. Instead, they are presupposed. Note that in verse 6, it is stated: . . . “and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom.”

12,13. ¹²*And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, ¹³Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.*

- a. The law of the sabbath was given only to the Israelites.

- (1) Deuteronomy 5:3 - *The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.*
- (2) Deuteronomy 5:15 - *And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.*

No one before the time of Moses ever observed the sabbath day.
No Gentile ever observed it except those who embraced the Jewish system . . . it was *never* commanded of the Gentiles.

- b. The term “sabbaths” makes reference to the weekly observance of the sabbath. Each one was to be observed faithfully.
- c. The observance of the law of the sabbaths was to continue “throughout their generations.” That meant for as long as their separate status was continued. It was never God’s intention that the law of Moses would continue for all time. It was His divine plan from the foundations of the world that the gospel system would be instituted (Gen 3:15; Gen 12:1-3; Jer 31:31-34; Isa 2:2-4; Dan 2:44; Gal 3:4). Under the law of Christ we meet on the first day of the week.

14,15. ¹⁴*Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. ¹⁵Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.*

- a. The sabbath is the seventh day of the week, NOT the first day of the week. Anyone who seeks to observe and bind sabbath-keeping must also accept

the penalties that come with the sabbath. Anyone who defiled it would surely be put to death.

- b. Sabbatarians are unwilling to accept this premise of the law; they only want to take the parts that appeal to them. The text is clear...the penalty was to be “cut off,” meaning put to death (see Num 15:32).

16,17. ¹⁶*Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. ¹⁷It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.*

- a. Again, it is stressed that this law was between God and Israel only; it was not between God and the Gentiles; it is not between God and Christians. It was observed by Israel throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. The Sabbatarians claim that “perpetual” means it was intended for all time, and for all people. Leviticus 24:9 says that the showbread was to be eaten “by a perpetual statute.” Does that mean that we must have showbread today?
- b. Just as God rested on the seventh day of the creation week, so He ordained that Israel should rest during each seventh day, and that day was to be devoted to God.

18. *And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.*

- a. God gave Moses the two tables of stone written on both sides. Exodus 24:12 - *And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.* Exodus 32:15,16 - ¹⁵*And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. ¹⁶And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.*
- b. The giving of the tables was at the close of God’s communing (speaking) with Moses. At this point in time, Moses had been up on the mount for 40 days (Ex 24:18; Deut 9:11).
- c. Did God literally and personally record these words with His finger? Or, were these done by the power of God with the details omitted? Psalm 8:3 - *When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the*

stars, which thou hast ordained. Psalm 33:6 - By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. Luke 11:20 - But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

In my opinion, verse 18 is clear - God gave the two tables of stone to Moses already written. Were they engraved by the finger of God? I believe this miracle as strongly as any other that is detailed in the book of Exodus.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

This chapter contains the very familiar story of the making of the golden calf, God's anger, Moses' breaking of the tablets and Moses' prayer. The chapter makes it 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). Some have aptly stated that "Israel was out of Egypt, but Egypt wasn't out of Israel." This chapter reveals the power of idolatry, of which we all need to be reminded because we tend to think idolatry is a temptation known only to primitive peoples. We do not always recognize our own idolatries. John wrote, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols" (1 Jn 5:21). Paul cautions us, "Neither be ye idolaters, as some of them were" (1 Cor 10:7).

1. *And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.*
 - a. Moses was on Mount Sinai for 40 days. During this long absence, the people grew restless and impatient. It is not stated how long this was before Moses appeared, but several days would be needed to collect the gold and make the golden calf. The people assembled themselves before Aaron and demanded that gods be made for them to follow. It seems that they wanted to go back into Egypt. The length of time Moses was on the mountain was a test for Israel...a test which they failed miserably. Their lack of patience led to this great departure from God which, in turn, was one of the reasons that they perished in the wilderness without entering Canaan (see Num 14:22-38).
 - b. "This is one pretense that the Roman Catholics have for idolatry in their image worship. Their high priest, the pope, collects the ornaments of the people, and makes an image, a crucifix, a madonna, etc. The people worship it; but the pope says it is only to keep God in remembrance. But of the whole, God says, 'The people have corrupted themselves; and thus as they continue in their idolatry, they have forfeited the blessings of the Lord's covenant. They are not God's people, they are the pope's people, and he is called 'our holy father the pope'" (Clarke, p. 464).
2. *And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.*
 - a. Aaron told them to break off their earrings and bring them to him. "Both men and women wore these ornaments and we may suppose that these were a part of the spoils which they brought out of Egypt. How strange, that the very things which were granted to them by an especial influence and providence of God, should now be abused to the basest idolatrous

purposes! But it is frequently the case that the gifts of God become desecrated by being employed in the service of sin: 'I will curse your blessings, saith the Lord' - Mal 2:2" (Clarke, p. 463).

- b. Instead of bravely and faithfully opposing the folly of the people, Aaron quickly gave in to their demands.
3. *And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.*
- a. It may be that Aaron, knowing of their desire for the outward ornaments that appealed to their vain glory, thought that they would be unwilling to part with their cherished jewelry. If so, he was wrong. Without any indicated delay, they broke off their earrings and brought them to Aaron.
 - b. "There were at least two million people in the exodus; gold rings in four million ears, had they weighed only 1/4th ounce each, would have been one million ounces, or 83,333 pounds Troy..." (Coffman, p. 441). There was far more gold available than was needed for this evil work.



4. *And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*
- a. After receiving their gold, he made a molten calf and fashioned it with a graving tool. Apparently, he melted the gold and poured it into a mold; after it cooled, he carved out the image desired. This suggests that the image was made of solid gold.
 - b. It appears that Aaron presented the idol to the people with much gusto and pride. He claimed what was patently false, that this was the power that brought them from Egypt. How quickly people lose

sight of God's goodness! And, how foolish it is for men to give praise to images which they have fashioned with their own hands! (see Isa 44:9-20).

5,6. *⁵And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the Lord. ⁶And 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.*

- a. Aaron built an altar before the golden calf and proclaimed that tomorrow they would hold a feast “to the Lord.” Just because one asserts that a “religious” act or service is dedicated to the Lord does not mean that it will be acceptable to Him. In this case, although they were very zealous in what they did, their actions were sinful.
- b. There are many in today’s religious world who do everything imaginable and still assert that these are done to the glory of God. God derives no glory from any false doctrine or practice; Satan gets the glory, God gets the shame, and the participants gain the sin. Just as they gladly gave up their valuable earrings in order to have an idol, people today will gladly and generously give in support of the grossest of errors in doctrine.
- c. They rose up early the next morning. Many people will very quickly and energetically accept false doctrines, but they are usually very slow to accept and support the truth.
- d. These people offered burnt offerings and peace offerings in keeping with some of the instructions God gave to Moses. After eating the food thus provided, they rose up to play. That innocent sounding word “play” was anything but innocent. Verse 19 suggests that the “playing” involved dancing and was of such a nature that Moses was extremely angry (see also 1 Cor 10:5-8). Nakedness was involved in their “playing” (32:25). Their activities placed them against God. In the very shadow of the mountain where God gave them the law, they immediately broke the first, second, third and seventh laws of the Decalogue.

7-10. *⁷And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: ⁸They 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 thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. ⁹And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: ¹⁰Now 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.*

- a. God reported to Moses what was going on in the camp below. They had corrupted themselves. God describes them as a stiffnecked people, that is, they were too stubborn to obey God. He therefore announced to Moses

that He was going to destroy them and would make a great nation out of Moses (through his descendants). Up to a point, God could have done that and still been true to His earlier promises. But Genesis 49:10 promised that “Shiloh” would come through the tribe of Judah and Moses was of the tribe of Levi. However, it appears that God’s threat here was as much a test of Moses as it was a demonstration of His anger against Israel.

- b. “God puts the fate of the nation into the hand of Moses, that he may remember his mediatorial office, and show himself worthy of his calling. This condescension on the part of God, which placed the preservation or the destruction of Israel in the hands of Moses, coupled with a promise which left the fullest freedom to his decision, viz. that after the destruction of the people he should himself be made a great nation, constituted a great test for Moses, whether he would be willing to give up his own people, laden as they were with guilt, as the price of his own exaltation...The preservation of Israel was dearer to him than the honor of becoming the head and founder of a new kingdom of God” (Keil, p. 224).

11-14. ¹¹*And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? ¹²Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, 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. ¹³Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swearest 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. ¹⁴And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.*

- a. Moses presented three arguments to persuade the Lord to change His mind: (1) he appealed for Him to remember what He had already done for Israel; (2) he pointed out that the Egyptians would accuse God of leading them out into the wilderness merely to destroy them; and (3) he pleaded with God to remember the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob regarding their posterity being multiplied and their possessing the land of Canaan. Of course, God already knew all of these facts.
- b. God “repented” of the evil He had intended to do Israel. Moses had succeeded in influencing the God of heaven! “God never repents of anything in the usual meaning of the word; but when the actions of men justify a change in God’s purpose, he does not hesitate to change it; and that phenomenon is called ‘repentance’ of God in the scriptures” (Coffman, p. 444).

- c. Numbers 23:19 - *God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?* Jonah 3:10 - *And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.*

15-18. ¹⁵*And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables 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 Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, 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.*

- a. Taking the two tables of the law, Moses descended the mountain. The tables were written on both sides and were the writing of God. The inscriptions were the result of some miraculous act described as being written by God's finger.
- b. It may be that Joshua had waited for Moses at some point lower on the mountain and then descended with Moses. As they neared the camp, Joshua interpreted the sounds that they heard as the noise of battle. But Moses disagreed, saying that it was the sound of singing. Of course, he had the advantage of having been told by God what was going on in the camp. This suggests that Joshua was not present with Moses when God was revealing the details of the law.
19. *And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.*
- a. When they came closer, they could see the calf and the dancing. Moses' anger was kindled and he cast the tables down and broke them. It seems that this act of breaking the tables must have been wrong, but nowhere are we told of any censure placed on him by the Lord.



- b. The breaking of the tables is symbolic of the fact that Israel was not worthy to receive this great privilege of being guided by God's word. They had heard the voice of God when the ten commandments were announced (20:18-20). While they were

impressed at the time, their fear and respect soon faded.

20-24. ²⁰And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it. ²¹And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? ²²And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. ²³For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. ²⁴And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.



- a. Moses burned the idol (melted it down), ground it to powder, mixed it in the water and made the people drink it (Deut 9:21).
- b. Moses then demanded that Aaron tell what the people did to him to make him bring so great a sin on them. If he had stood firm in the truth, he might have kept the people from such a foolish experience. To a degree, we are our brother's keeper.
- c. Aaron pleaded with Moses that he ought not be angry toward him because what happened was the

people's fault... "you know them, they are set on mischief." He goes on to say that they came to him with the demand that he make gods "to go before us; for as for this Moses,...we wot not what has become of him." Aaron said that he then told them to bring gold to him which he claimed to have cast into the fire and "there came out this calf." We are not told of Moses' reply to this quote! According to Deuteronomy 9:20 God was ready to destroy Aaron for his sin but Moses interceded.

25,26. ²⁵*And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)* ²⁶*Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.*

- a. Moses saw that the people were naked. It was obvious that some sort of sexual orgy was taking place in connection with the idol worship. Such sinful things were the norm in idol worship among the heathens. The account lays the blame for their nakedness on Aaron; it was he who fashioned the image and announced the festivities. Moses stood at the gate of the camp and invited all who were on the Lord's side to join him.
- b. The implication is that those who did not come over to where Moses was were not on the Lord's side. It is significant that the tribe of Levi gathered themselves with their fellow tribesmen. They did this partially for respect to Moses as their leader but also because he, too, was of the tribe of Levi.

27-29. ²⁷*And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.* ²⁸*And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.* ²⁹*For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.*

- a. The Levites were subject to a very severe test: they were told to circulate throughout the entire camp and slay certain ones. Those to be slain were fellow members of the children of Israel, hence they were brothers and neighbors. A great deal of trust in Moses and God was required to fulfill this demand.
- b. "There is very much about this incident that we cannot know. How is it that the sons of Levi encountered no resistance? Since only 3,000 men were slain out of all the host of Israel, how was the selection made? Did they cast lots to find the guilty? Were those slain actually slain in the sinful act of violating the Law? None of these are we able to answer. Yet, the hand

of God was clearly in this episode, else it could never have been resolved at all” (Coffman, pp. 447f).

- c. “God, in these stern examples, was giving a glimpse of what always happens when men disobey their Creator. True, today God does not physically destroy the disobedient, but their eternal destruction, which is a far worse thing, is the certain and irrevocable penalty of any human’s rebellion against his God. Note that this entire scene is related to Pentacost and the coming of the Gospel of Christ. Here 3,000 men perished on the very first day that the Law of God became effective; whereas, on the other hand, 3,000 souls were saved on Pentacost (Acts 2:38ff)” (Ibid., pp. 448f).
- d. Keil gives the following paraphrase of the verse: “Provide yourselves to-day with a gift for the Lord, consecrate yourselves today for the service of the Lord, by preserving the obedience you have just shown toward Him, by not knowing either son or brother in His service and thus gain for yourselves a blessing. In the fulfillment of the command of God with the denial of their own flesh and blood, Moses discerns such a disposition and act as would fit them for the service of God” (p. 230).

30-32. ³⁰*And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin. ³¹And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. ³²Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.*

- a. Moses announced to the people that without any doubt they had committed a great sin; but he said he would intercede for them with the Lord. It might be that some atonement could be made for their sin. He had punished the people, but now he sought for their restoration with God.
- b. “We are amazed at the scholars who make an ellipsis (an incomplete sentence) out of this. All it needs is proper punctuation...Punctuation is altogether a human thing anyway; and we have as much right to punctuate it accurately, as others do to make an ellipsis out of it by leaving out a comma!” (Coffman, p. 449). Moses simply asks God to forgive the people; if not, Moses asks God to blot him out of the Book of Life in place of the people.

(1) Romans 9:1-3 - ¹*I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, ²That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. ³For I could wish that*

myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

- (2) *Romans 10:1-3 - ¹Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. ²For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. ³For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*
- (3) *Philippians 4:3 - And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.*
- (4) *Revelation 20:12 - And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*
- (5) *Luke 10:20 - Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*

33-35. ³³*And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. ³⁴Therefore 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. ³⁵And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.*

- a. *God replied that those who would be blotted from the Book of Life were those who had committed sin. The way a man lives determines his eternal fate: Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sowth, that shall he also reap. For he that sowth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sowth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Gal 6:7,8).*
- b. *God punished the people (see Num 14:22-38; 1 Cor 10:1-11; Heb 3).*
- c. *Moses is to continue to lead the people; he would be guided by the angel. 1 Cor 10:4 - And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

This 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?

- 1-3. *¹And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it: ²And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: ³Unto 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.*
- a. God directs Moses to proceed with the people from Sinai to Canaan. God would be true to the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Lord promises to send an angel to accompany Israel as they enter the land and that this angel would drive from the land of promise the various ungodly people inhabiting it.
 - b. This "angel" may be the same as the one described in chapter 23, verses 20-23, with indications that the "angel" was Christ. What we do know is stated in verses 1-3 that God withdrew His presence from among the people because they were stiff-necked, and He may consume them. The angel, as promised, would lead the way into the promised land.
 - c. Exodus 19:1 says that Israel came in the third month after departing from Egypt to Sinai. Numbers 10:11-13 - *¹¹And it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony. ¹²And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran. ¹³And they first took their journey according to the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses.* They had been out of Egypt for more than a year at this point.
- 4-6. *⁴And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments. ⁵For the Lord had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. ⁶And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb.*

- a. When the people learned of what the Lord had told Moses they mourned. By removing all their ornaments, they gave an outward sign of their inward sorrow over the previous events.
 - b. Verse 4 shows that they did not adorn themselves with their ornaments; verses five and following show that God forbade their wearing them. Keil translates the command of verse 5 as, "Throw thine ornament away from thee, and I shall know by that what to do to thee" (Kiel, p. 233). The idea seems to be that they were to remove them and refrain from wearing them in the future.
 - c. "The sorrow of Israel was profound when the full import of their shameful apostasy began to be fully realized by them. Indeed, God had spared the nation upon the intercession of Moses; but he here proposed that he would not accompany them to Canaan...instead of being with them personally and actually talking with the elders of the people, as in their ratification of the covenant, God proposed that henceforth an angel would accompany the people, something of far less desirability" (Coffman, p. 456).
 - d. But in verse 5 God indicated that he had not made a final decision concerning his future relationship with Israel. He had given them his covenant which they agreed to follow (24:3,7) but, in their sin of the previous chapter, they had failed to abide by the agreement and thus nullified God's provisions. Since they had broken their bargain God was under no obligation to uphold his part. "Construction of the Tabernacle so elaborately planned and shown to Moses was cancelled for the time then being. No priests would be consecrated until the matter was resolved. Furthermore, God would not be in the midst of the people at all, but would appear only to Moses, and even that was not to be while Moses was in the midst of the people; but it would happen outside the camp, in a place especially prepared as a provisional means of communication during the period when the covenant was abrogated" (Coffman, *ibid*).
- 7-11. ⁷And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp. ⁸And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, that all the people rose up, and stood every man at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle. ⁹And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. ¹⁰And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door. ¹¹And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he

turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.

- a. The tabernacle described in Exodus 26 was not constructed until chapter 36. This tabernacle under consideration here is not the same tabernacle that required the priests to offer their services . . . it had not yet been built.
- b. It would appear that there were two tents that were directly connected to the children of Israel during their long wanderings in the wilderness. One was called “the tent of meeting” (Ex 33:7) and the other one was the “tabernacle of the testimony” or simply the “tent” or “tabernacle” (Num 9:15-18). The first one was used by Moses as a meeting place with Jehovah while the other became a place of worship.
- c. This tent was taken from the midst of the camp and erected at some distance from the people. The removal of the tent from camp was very significant and the Israelites took notice. Anyone who wanted to call upon God must leave the camp and go out to this tent. This is symbolic of God not willing to meet with people who are in sin (Isa 59:1ff; 2 Cor 6:14-18; Prov 28:9). When the tabernacle was later constructed it was erected in the midst of the camp (Num 2:1ff - see also Num 11:26; 12:4).
- d. It would seem that a feeling of distress had overtaken the entire camp once they realized what was lost in God withdrawing His presence from them. They watched very anxiously as Moses entered into the tent, possibly hoping that Moses could once again bring God’s blessings on the camp.
- e. That the cloudy pillar descended to stand at the door of the tabernacle was clearly a demonstration of God’s presence and signifying that He was pleased with Moses. The children of Israel showed their grief and desire for a reconciliation with God by worshipping “every man in his tent door.”
- f. “There were two reasons for this: in the first place, Moses desired thereby to lead the people to a fuller recognition of their separation from their God, that their penitence might be deepened in consequence; and in the second place, he wished to provide such means of intercourse with Jehovah as would not only awaken in the minds of the people a longing for the renewal of the covenant, but render the restoration of the covenant possible. And this end was answered. Not only did everyone who sought Jehovah go out to the tent, but the whole nation looked with the deepest reverence when Moses went out to the tent, and bowed in adoration before the Lord, everyone in front of his tent, when they saw the pillar of cloud come down upon the tent and stand before the door” (Keil, p. 234).

- g. “This whole paragraph deals with the period of rebellion of Israel’s part before the Tabernacle was constructed, as indicated by the totally different situation. (1) No sacrifices were offered. (2) There was no high priest, nor even any lesser priests. (3) The Tent was “without” the polluted camp of Israel, not in the midst of it. (4) When Moses needed someone to watch the Tent, he gave the commission to Joshua, not to Aaron, perhaps because Joshua was the only one in Israel who had not danced around the golden calf” (Coffman, p. 458).
- h. Verse 11 does not mean that Moses saw the face of God, but that God spoke with him directly, not through some other medium (see Num 12:7ff; Gen 32:30; 1 Tim 6:16; Jn 1:18; 1 Jn 4:12). Moses had a relationship with God that no one else had.
- i. When Moses returned to the camp Joshua remained in the tent. This is further evidence that the tent was not the tabernacle since Joshua, as a man of Ephraim, was not permitted to enter it (Num 8:14-21; Josh 19:49ff; Num 13:8,16). Although Joshua is called a young man, he was probably of the 40-50 year range. “And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old” (Josh 24:29).

12,13. ¹²*And Moses said unto the Lord, 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 grace in my sight.* ¹³*Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.*

- a. In verse 12 Moses reminds the Lord that He had directed Moses to take Israel on toward the promised land, but that He had not yet identified to him who would guide them there. Moses knew that God had promised an angel but, as yet, God had not identified that angel.
- b. “Moreover, though it has not been mentioned before, Jehovah had said to Moses, ‘I have known thee by name,’ - i.e., I have recognized thee as Mine, and chosen and called thee to execute My will (cf. Isa 43:1; 44:1)...” (Keil, p. 235).
- c. “The term ‘know’ in the latter part of verse 12 is used in the sense of approve or endorse (cf. Ps 1:6; Mt 7:23; 2 Tim 2:19). Moses had been deliberately chosen for the work he was doing, and Jehovah had demonstrated His confidence in him by His frequent communion with him. There was no doubt about how God felt toward Moses; but he was anxious to have some assurance regarding the success of his endeavor. He fully

realized that he could not succeed without divine help. As Moses saw the matter God's confidence in him made it essential that he have the additional information regarding the leader...This was a plea that God would show him something of his intended procedure toward his people, that is, how he intended for Moses, in subservience to his divine purpose, to accomplish the great task which he had assigned to him. As further reason for making this request, he reverently called on God to consider the fact that the nation which he had been commissioned to lead was his people; and as such they should be guided by God's wisdom in his own way. A failure to do this would be equivalent to abandoning them" (Gospel Advocate, *Annual Lesson Commentary*, 1960, Gospel Advocate Company, Nashville, 1960, pp. 177f).

14-17. ¹⁴And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. ¹⁵And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. ¹⁶For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. ¹⁷And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.

- a. While God had plainly agreed to accompany them, the issue still hanging in the balance was what God would do with Israel due to their sinful ways. Through the fervent intercession by Moses on behalf of Israel, God accepted his request. "The term 'presence' is used in the sense of face, and the meaning is that his personal presence would go with them. The reconciliation between Jehovah and the people had been completed, through their repentance and the intercession of Moses. God is always righteous, and when his people rebel against them, he will not bless them, until they repent and turn to him. When a reconciliation between God and man is necessary, it is always essential for man to return to God; for God will never leave man as long as he will walk in the way of righteousness" (Ibid., p. 178) (see also 2 Cor 5:18-20). It is clear that God would be with Moses and thus with Israel, and that God would provide rest.
- b. In verse 15 Moses states that if God would not accompany them to the promised land, then they would remain in the wilderness with Him. Canaan held no desire without God's presence.
- c. It would seem that God's promise to Moses in verse 14 was all the evidence he needed to assure him that God would be with them. Israel was to be separate and distinct from all other nations, a special nation chosen by God, and this was the source of their strength and hope. It seems as though Moses is asking God to keep them separate and, in verse 17, God agrees.

18-20. ¹⁸*And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.* ¹⁹*And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.* ²⁰*And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.*

- a. Moses is forward enough to ask God to show him His glory. Surprisingly, God proceeds to unveil a plan to do so, but clearly stating that no man can see Him in His true essence and live (1 Jn 4:12; 1 Tim 6:16). Paul quotes God's words (of verse 19) in Romans 9:15 speaking of God's mercy.
- b. God did not owe this to Moses, but He would reveal a manifestation of His glory to him.

21-23. ²¹*And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a 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 while I pass by:* ²³*And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.*

- a. God would put Moses in a cleft of the rock, covering him with His hand and after His glory passed by, Moses would be able to see His back parts.
- b. Since "no man has seen God at any time" it follows that what Moses was to see was a manifestation of God. No man could see God in His true essence and live.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

1-3. *¹And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest. ²And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount. ³And 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.*

- a. Since God had accepted Moses' intercession on behalf of the people, He now instructs him to once again ascend Sinai, bringing with him two tablets he had hewn of stone. God promises to once again inscribe the stone tablets with the ten commandments. It is important to note that this is not a new law, but rather a renewal of the original. Moses was to ascend the mountain alone. *No one* was allowed to accompany him nor could the flocks and herds be allowed on the mountain.
- b. "It is true that we have not yet been specifically told what these words were; but it has been left to our natural intelligence to understand that they must have been the 'ten words' uttered in the ears of the people among the thunders of Sinai, as recorded in 22:1-19, which are the evident basis of all subsequent legislation. But in verse 28, and still more plainly in Deuteronomy 10:4 and v. 22, we have the desired statement. The fiction of a double decalogue, invented by Goethe is absolutely without foundation in fact" (Rawlinson, as quoted by Coffman, p. 466).
- c. It is important to note that scripture shows no direct condemnation of Moses for breaking the original tablets. It could be a case of being angry without sin but, nonetheless, God did require that Moses hew out the new tablets, something God had provided previously.

4-7. *⁴And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone. ⁵And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. ⁶And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, ⁷Keeping mercy 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, unto the third and to the fourth generation.*

- a. Moses did exactly as God commanded and presented himself on the mountain the next day, bringing with him the tablets he had hewn from stone.

- b. God descended on Mount Sinai in a cloud and there He stood with Moses and proclaimed the name of the Lord. Many terms are used to describe characteristics of the Lord. These descriptions are also found in Nehemiah 9:17; Psalms 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:15; Jonah 4:2; Numbers 14:18. This statement is one that shows both the love and justice of God: He is merciful, but will not overlook the guilty. Mercy is extended to thousands and yet the consequences of the sins of just one generation are suffered by others of succeeding generations, but only an individual's sins are accounted to Him.
- 8,9. ⁸*And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.*
⁹*And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.*
 - a. Apparently overwhelmed by the glory of God's presence, Moses quickly bows himself down and worships. He prayed that if he had found grace in God's sight that the people's sins and iniquities might be pardoned.
 - b. It is interesting that Moses includes himself in the confession of sin. He desired that God forgive Israel and accept them as His own people, even though they did not deserve God's good pleasure.
- 10. *And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee.*
 - a. God did not mean that He was going to make a NEW covenant, rather, He was going to restore the original covenant to which Israel had bound themselves. In spite of their vows of obedience, they quickly fell into sin. Note that God promises to do marvels which were unheard of on the earth. These would include the various miracles involved in driving out the sinful population from the land of Canaan as well as the miracles of crossing the Jordan River and the fall of Jericho's walls.
 - b. There would be many miraculous demonstrations of God's power in connection with Israel's travels through the wilderness and the conquering of Canaan. Among these would be some "terrible" things...to the enemies of Israel.
- 11,12. ¹¹*Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.* 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.

- a. God imposed certain requirements on the part of Israel, including the way they would deal with the current inhabitants of the promised land. God would cause the idolaters to be driven from the land, but Israel was NOT to make any covenants with them.
- b. “The subsequent history of Israel revealed how necessary and absolutely vital such a prohibition actually was. It was precisely through their transgression of this divine commandment that the eventual destruction of their ‘sinful kingdom’ came about. Solomon himself was the notorious example of the violation of this command” (Coffman, p. 469). By making covenants with these heathens, Israel set the stage for the later adoption of pagan sins. The generation that followed the one that took possession of Canaan sank deep into sin (Jdgs 2:7,10).

13-17. ¹³*But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves:*
¹⁴*For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:* ¹⁵*Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do 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 go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.* ¹⁷*Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.*

- a. God commanded that when Israel entered into the land they were to destroy all the heathen altars and images, and cut down the groves in which much of their idolatry was practiced. The reason was to prevent the people of Israel from worshipping false gods and by doing so, receiving the wrath of a jealous God. It is the nature of God that He will not and cannot share allegiance with another. If these idols, altars, etc. were allowed to remain, then it would only be a matter of time before Israel would fall into idolatry.
- b. To “go a whoring after their gods” is a vivid and graphic picture of a extremely sinful act. God often compares His relationship with His people to that of the relationship between a husband and wife. With the wife being the figure, unfaithfulness on the part of the people becomes spiritual adultery (Hos 1:2). The idolatry of these ancient times was such that it included all kinds of fornication so that God’s words were very literal in that they COULD “go a whoring after their gods.”
- c. God makes a very plain statement about “molten gods.” In Exodus 20:4 He had forbidden graven images. Here He expressly forbids the very type of image made by Aaron, who may have thought that a molten image

would not get him in trouble. Regardless of reasons, God is very explicit in this commandment.

18-22. ¹⁸*The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, in the time of the month Abib: for in the month Abib thou camest out from Egypt.* ¹⁹*All that openeth the matrix is mine; and every firstling among thy cattle, whether ox or sheep, that is male.* ²⁰*But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem him not, then shalt thou break his neck. All the firstborn 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 earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest.* ²²*And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end.*

- a. God again gives details regarding certain feast days. Included here are the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), Tabernacles and the Passover. At the end of the year they were to observe the feast of ingatherings (Tabernacles). Another rendering for the term "year's end" is "revolution of the year," ("a scientific reference to the circling of the earth around the sun in its annual orbit, producing the years" - Coffman, p. 473).
- b. Israel was to keep the sabbath day "in seed-time and harvest." While these were the busiest times of the year, it did not excuse them from their worship obligations to God. Regulations are again given concerning the redeeming of the firstborn.

23,24. ²³*Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel.* ²⁴*For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year.*

- a. God commanded that all males would appear before Him three times per year at the appointed place (wherever the tabernacle was erected). These three times were the feast days named above. In anticipation of their doubt, God states that He will prevent the enemy from taking their land while they are appearing before Him. Joshua 2:8-11 - ⁸*And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof;* ⁹*And she said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.* ¹⁰*For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.* ¹¹*And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because*

of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

25,26. ²⁵*Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left unto the morning.* ²⁶*The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring unto the house of the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.*

- a. Please note that the passover is specifically named along with instructions that any uneaten food was NOT to remain until morning. Some would say that this is a shadow of the death of Christ who is our Passover. His body was not allowed to remain on the cross until the beginning of the sabbath. We see also a repetition of laws concerning firstfruits and not seething a kid in its mother's milk.

27,28. ²⁷*And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.* ²⁸*And he was there with the Lord 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.*

- a. God commands Moses to write the "words." The word "tenor" implies that God may have previously given only a summary of the laws. This is the second 40-day stay on Mt. Sinai. As with the first, Moses fasted for the duration (Ex 24:18; Deut 9:9-12).
- b. The latter part of verse 28 seems to say that Moses wrote upon the tablets, but verse 1 said that God would do the writing. Additionally, Deuteronomy 10:2 clearly states that it was God who did it. ONLY the Ten Commandments were written on the tablets, so Moses must have written everything else in a book (Ex 17:14; 24:4,12; 31:18; 34:1).
- c. Deuteronomy 10:1-5 tells that Moses made an ark for the tables before he ascended Mt. Sinai. This was probably a simple box that was the predecessor of the Ark of the Covenant.

29-35. ²⁹*And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.* ³⁰*And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him.* ³¹*And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them.* ³²*And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in mount Sinai.* ³³*And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.* ³⁴*But*

when Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded. ³⁵And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

- a. When Moses descended the mount his face “shone” to such an extent that Aaron and the Israelites were afraid to come near him. Moses was totally unaware of his countenance. No doubt this “glow” was a direct result of his relationship, spiritual and physical, with God. Moses was very close to God spiritually and he had just been in His presence physically.
- b. The Hebrew verb translated “shone” (shot forth beams) has a related verb that often means “horns.” The Vulgate (Latin translation) uses the latter. This mistranslation caused many of the medieval works of art to wrongly represent Moses. The famous statue at Rome by Michaelangelo depicts Moses with a pair of horns on his head.
- c. While appearing and speaking to Aaron and the leaders, and telling them all the LORD had commanded, Moses veiled his face. He removed the veil when he went in to talk with God. He came out unveiled to speak to the people so they saw the glow. He then put back on the veil until going back in to talk with God.
- d. 1 Corinthians 3:7-18 references this account. Paul declares it to be symbolic of the blindness of heart of the unbelieving Israelites of his day in not being willing to SEE and ACCEPT the Gospel. 1 John 3:2 - *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

CHAPTERS 35-40

Since the material covered in the following chapters has been dealt with in much detail in chapters 25-30 where God gives Moses the pattern for constructing the tabernacle, only some general notes will be listed in these chapters. For more detail please refer to notes on chapters 25-30.

1-3. *¹And Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together, and said unto them, These are the words which the Lord hath commanded, that ye should do them. ²Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the Lord: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. ³Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day.*

a. After gathering together the children of Israel, Moses begins to recount all that the Lord had told him. He also reminds them of the law concerning the keeping of the sabbath.

b. Violation of this ordinance could mean death.

4-19. *⁴And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the Lord commanded, saying, ⁵Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord; gold, and silver, and brass, ⁶And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, ⁷And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood, ⁸And oil for the light, and spices for anointing oil, and for the sweet incense, ⁹And onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod, and for the breastplate. ¹⁰And every wise hearted among you shall come, and make all that the Lord hath commanded; ¹¹The tabernacle, his tent, and his covering, his taches, and his boards, his bars, his pillars, and his sockets, ¹²The ark, and the staves thereof, with the mercy seat, and the veil of the covering, ¹³The table, and his staves, and all his vessels, and the shewbread, ¹⁴The candlestick also for the light, and his furniture, and his lamps, with the oil for the light, ¹⁵And the incense altar, and his staves, and the anointing oil, and the sweet incense, and the hanging for the door at the entering in of the tabernacle, ¹⁶The altar of burnt offering, with his brasen grate, his staves, and all his vessels, the laver and his foot, ¹⁷The hangings of the court, his pillars, and their sockets, and the hanging for the door of the court, ¹⁸The pins of the tabernacle, and the pins of the court, and their cords, ¹⁹The cloths of service, to do service in the holy place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office.*

- a. Moses calls upon the people to provide certain of the items needed to construct the tabernacle. In verse 5 he stresses that this “offering” is to be made by those “of a willing heart.” All good things inherently have a cost, just as our calling through the gospel carries with it a “cost” (see Lk 9:23; 13:24).
- b. In general, the items and supplies which they were to bring would be used to construct the tabernacle, make the anointing oil and sweet incense and make clothing for the priests.

20-29. ²⁰And all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. ²¹And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments. ²²And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered offered an offering of gold unto the Lord. ²³And every man, with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and red skins of rams, and badgers' skins, brought them. ²⁴Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought the Lord's offering: and every man, with whom was found shittim wood for any work of the service, brought it. ²⁵And all the women that were wise hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. ²⁶And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' hair. ²⁷And the rulers brought onyx stones, and stones to be set, for the ephod, and for the breastplate; ²⁸And spice, and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense. ²⁹The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses.

- a. After Moses spoke to them the people departed and began to assemble the necessary materials. The gifts and amounts were dependent upon their willingness of heart. Note that the women who “were wise hearted did spin with their hands” to fashion the various colors of fine linen.
- b. The children of Israel set an example that would be followed in Acts 4:36,37 - ³⁶And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, ³⁷Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

30-35. ³⁰And Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, the Lord hath called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; ³¹And he hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in

all manner of workmanship; ³²And to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, ³³And in the cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work. ³⁴And he hath put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. ³⁵Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning 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 work, and of those that devise cunning work.

- a. In addition to any talents already possessed, God had given Bezeleel and Aholiab the ability to perform fine workmanship and crafts necessary in the construction of the tabernacle. Without this ability construction would not have been possible. They were also to train others.
- b. Please note that God did not do for man what he was capable of doing for himself. While God did give the original pattern, it was to be passed on by diligent teaching and practicing.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

- 1-7. ¹Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whom the Lord put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the Lord had commanded. ²And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it: ³And they received of Moses all the offering, which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to make it withal. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning. ⁴And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they made; ⁵And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make. ⁶And Moses 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. ⁷For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.
- a. Because of the people's willingness to obey God, even completion of this great task was possible. When man obeys God, no obstacle is too great.
 - b. The people would bring their offerings each morning until the collection was greater than the need. At this point Moses proclaimed that the people were to cease bringing offerings. Note verse 7.
- 8-38. ⁸And every wise hearted man among them that wrought the work of the tabernacle made ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work made he them. ⁹The length of one curtain was twenty and eight cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: the curtains were all of one size. ¹⁰And he coupled the five curtains one unto another: and the other five curtains he coupled one unto another. ¹¹And he made loops of blue on the edge of one curtain from the selvedge in the coupling: likewise he made in the uttermost side of another curtain, in the coupling of the second. ¹²Fifty loops made he in one curtain, and fifty loops made he in the edge of the curtain which was in the coupling of the second: the loops held one curtain to another. ¹³And he made fifty taches of gold, and coupled the curtains one unto another with the taches: so it became one tabernacle. ¹⁴And he made curtains of goats' hair for the tent over the tabernacle: eleven curtains he made them. ¹⁵The length of one curtain was thirty cubits, and four cubits was the breadth of one curtain: the eleven curtains were of one size. ¹⁶And he coupled five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves. ¹⁷And he made fifty loops upon the uttermost edge of the curtain in the coupling, and fifty loops made he upon the edge of the curtain which coupleth the second. ¹⁸And he made fifty taches of brass to couple the tent together, that it might be one. ¹⁹And he made a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of badgers' skins above that.

²⁰And he made boards for the tabernacle of shittim wood, standing up. ²¹The length of a board was ten cubits, and the breadth of a board one cubit and a half. ²²One board had two tenons, equally distant one from another: thus did he make for all the boards of the tabernacle. ²³And he made boards for the tabernacle; twenty boards for the south side southward: ²⁴And forty sockets of silver he made under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two sockets under another board for his two tenons. ²⁵And for the other side of the tabernacle, which is toward the north corner, he made twenty boards, ²⁶And their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. ²⁷And for the sides of the tabernacle westward he made six boards. ²⁸And two boards made he for the corners of the tabernacle in the two sides. ²⁹And they were coupled beneath, and coupled together at the head thereof, to one ring: thus he did to both of them in both the corners. ³⁰And there were eight boards; and their sockets were sixteen sockets of silver, under every board two sockets. ³¹And he made bars of shittim wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle, ³²And five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the tabernacle for the sides westward. ³³And he made the middle bar to shoot through the boards from the one end to the other. ³⁴And he overlaid the boards with gold, and made their rings of gold to be places for the bars, and overlaid the bars with gold. ³⁵And he made a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen: with cherubims made he it of cunning work. ³⁶And he made thereunto four pillars of shittim wood, and overlaid them with gold: their hooks were of gold; and he cast for them four sockets of silver. ³⁷And he made an hanging for the tabernacle door of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, of needlework; ³⁸And the five pillars of it with their hooks: and he overlaid their chapters and their fillets with gold: but their five sockets were of brass.

- a. This is the account of the construction of the tabernacle according to the pattern given to Moses by God. He did not fail to follow the pattern in any detail.
- b. Hebrews 8:5 - *Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

1-5. ¹And Bezaleel made the ark of shittim 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: ²And he overlaid it with pure gold within and without, and made a crown of gold to it round about. ³And he cast for it four rings of gold, to be set by the four corners of it; even two rings upon the one side of it, and two rings upon the other side of it. ⁴And he made staves of shittim wood, and overlaid them with gold. ⁵And he put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, to bear the ark.

a. The ark of the covenant, or testimony, is constructed according to the pattern God gave. The ark was a chest-like container, both expensive and beautiful.

b. Please see supplemental handout.

6-9. ⁶And he made the mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half was the length thereof, and one cubit and a half the breadth thereof. ⁷And he made two cherubims of gold, beaten out of one piece made he them, on the two ends of the mercy seat; ⁸One cherub on the end on this side, and another cherub on the other end on that side: out of the mercy seat made he the cherubims on the two ends thereof. ⁹And the cherubims spread out their wings on high, and covered with their wings over the mercy seat, with their faces one to another; even to the mercy seatward were the faces of the cherubims.

a. The mercy seat served as a lid for the ark of the covenant. It was also the place where God's presence was made manifest.

b. Holman's Dictionary gives the following information: MERCY SEAT - A slab of pure gold measuring about 45 inches by 27 inches which sat atop the ark of the covenant which was the same size. It was the base for the golden cherubim (Ex 25:17-19,21) and symbolized the throne from which God ruled Israel (Lev 16:2; Num 7:89). On the Day of Atonement the high priest sprinkled the blood of a sacrificial lamb on the mercy seat as a plea for forgiveness for the sins of the nation (Lev 16:15). The Hebrew word means literally "to wipe out" or "cover over."

10-16. ¹⁰And he made the table of shittim wood: two cubits was the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof: ¹¹And he overlaid it with pure gold, and made thereunto a crown of gold round about. ¹²Also he made thereunto a border of an handbreadth round about; and made a crown of gold for the border thereof round about. ¹³And he cast for it four rings of gold, and put the rings upon the four corners that were in the four feet thereof. ¹⁴Over against the border were the rings, the places for the staves to bear the table. ¹⁵And he made the staves of shittim wood, and overlaid them with gold, to bear

the table. ¹⁶And he made the vessels which were upon the table, his dishes, and his spoons, and his bowls, and his covers to cover withal, of pure gold.

- a. The table of show bread was one of the items of furniture placed in the holy place. It held the bread which was eaten by the priests according to the schedule given in the law and was a memorial to God to remind Him of the covenant with the people.
- b. Holman's Dictionary gives this information: A table for the bread of the presence formed part of the furnishings for both the tabernacle (Ex 25:23-30; 26:35; Lev 24:5-7) and the temple (1 Kgs 7:48). Other tables were used in the sacrificial cult (1 Chron 28:14-16; 2 Chron 4:7-8; Ezek 40:38-43). Malachi 1:7,12 describes the altar itself as a table. To share in a God's table was an act of worship. Isaiah 65:11 and 1 Corinthians 10:21 refer to idolatrous worship. The "Lord's table" (1 Cor 10:21) refers to the observance of the Lord's supper.

17-24. *¹⁷And he made the candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work made he the candlestick; his shaft, and his branch, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, were of the same: ¹⁸And 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: ¹⁹Three bowls made after the fashion of almonds in one branch, a knop and a flower; and three bowls made like almonds in another branch, a knop and a flower: so throughout the six branches going out of the candlestick. ²⁰And in the candlestick were four bowls made like almonds, his knops, and his flowers: ²¹And a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches going out of it. ²²Their knops and their branches were of the same: all of it was one beaten work of pure gold. ²³And he made his seven lamps, and his snuffers, and his snuffdishes, of pure gold. ²⁴Of a talent of pure gold made he it, and all the vessels thereof.*

- a. Only one candlestick (or lampstand) was found in the tabernacle and it was the only source of light.
- b. Holman's says: A golden lampstand with three branches extending from either side of the central tier was placed in the tabernacle. (Ex 25:31-40). Each branch may have had a seven-spouted lamp (Zech 4:2), as do some individual lamps found in Palestine. This seven-branched candelabra (menorah), supporting seven lamps continued in prominence through the first and second Temple periods, and later became symbolic of the nation Israel. Surrounding nations also employed multi-tiered and multi-legged lamps and lamp stands. Lamps (lights) were used symbolically in the old and new testaments. Light depicted life in abundance, divine presence or life's direction versus death in darkness (cf Psa 119:105; 1 Jn 1:5 with Job

18:5; Prov 13:9). Jesus is depicted often in John as the light of the world (Jn 1:4-5,7-9; 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9,10; 12:35,36,46). Jesus' disciples are also described as the light of the world (Mt 5:14-16).

25-28. ²⁵*And he made the incense altar of shittim wood: the length of it was a cubit, and the breadth of it a cubit; it was foursquare; and two cubits was the height of it; the horns thereof were of the same. ²⁶And he overlaid it with pure gold, both the top of it, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns of it: also he made unto it a crown of gold round about. ²⁷And he made two rings of gold for it under the crown thereof, by the two corners of it, upon the two sides thereof, to be places for the staves to bear it withal. ²⁸And he made the staves of shittim wood, and overlaid them with gold.*

- a. The altar of incense was to be constructed and placed in the holy place. A schedule was given by God as to when the priests were to burn incense upon it.
 - b. Holman's says: CENSER - In Leviticus 10:1, a vessel used for offering incense before the Lord. Nadab and Abihu used it improperly to bring God's destruction. It probably was also used for carrying live coals employed in connection with worship in the tabernacle or the temple, each priest having one (cf Num 16:17,18)). Use of the censer in Temple worship was restricted to members of the Aaronic priesthood, as King Uzziah discovered in shocking fashion (2 Chron 26:16-21). The heavenly worship also involved censers and incense, according to John's vision (Rev 8:3-5).
 - c. Holman's further states: A fourth type of altar mentioned in the Bible is the gold altar or the altar of incense. It was located in the inner room of the sanctuary, just outside the Holy of Holies (1 Kgs 7:48-50). The incense altar is described in Exodus as constructed of acacia wood, overlaid with gold, with dimensions one cubit square and two cubits high (Ex 30:1-6). Like the altar of burnt offerings, the altar of incense had horns on the four corners. As its name implies, incense was burned on this altar. The incense served as a means of purification after slaughtering animals, a costly sacrifice and also as a sweet smelling offering that would be pleasing to God.
29. *And he made the holy anointing oil, and the pure incense of sweet spices, according to the work of the apothecary.*
- a. Holman's Dictionary says, concerning oil: Oil was extensively used in religious ceremonies. The morning and evening sacrifices required, in addition to the lambs, a tenth of a measure of fine flour and a fourth of a hin of beaten oil. Other cereal offerings also required oil. Oil was used during the offering of purification from leprosy. In the new testament, oil was used

to anoint a body in preparation for burial (Mt 26:12; Mk 14:8). Several persons in the Old Testament were anointed with oil: kings (1 Sam 10:1; 16:13), priests (Lev 8:30) and possibly prophets (1 Kgs 19:16; Isa 61:1). Some objects were also anointed in dedication to God: the tabernacle and all its furniture (Ex 40:9-11), the shields of soldiers (2 Sam 1:21; Isa 21:5), altars (Lev 8:10,11) and pillars (Gen 35:13).

- b. Concerning incense, Holman's states: A mixture of aromatic spices prepared to be burned in connection with the offering of sacrifices (Ex 25:6). The word is also used to refer to the smoke produced by the burning. In the KJV of the bible, two Hebrew words are translated "incense;" however, the two words are practically synonymous. The incense used in worship was to be prepared according to exacting specifications and was to be offered only by the high priest. According to Luke 1:8-20, Zacharias was burning incense in the Temple when he was visited by the angel Gabriel.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

1-7. ¹And he made the altar of burnt offering of shittim wood: five cubits was the length thereof, and five cubits the breadth thereof; it was foursquare; and three cubits the height thereof. ²And he made the horns thereof on the four corners of it; the horns thereof were of the same: and he overlaid it with brass. ³And he made all the vessels of the altar, the pots, and the shovels, and the basons, and the fleshhooks, and the firepans: all the vessels thereof made he of brass. ⁴And he made for the altar a brasen grate of network under the compass thereof beneath unto the midst of it. ⁵And he cast four rings for the four ends of the grate of brass, to be places for the staves. ⁶And he made the staves of shittim wood, and overlaid them with brass. ⁷And he put the staves into the rings on the sides of the altar, to bear it withal; he made the altar hollow with boards.

- a. Again Moses describes the building of the altar of burnt offering.
- b. “The third type altar mentioned in the Old Testament is the bronze altar. The central altar in the court of Solomon’s Temple was a bronze altar. Its dimensions are given as 20 cubits by 20 cubits by 10 cubits high (about 30 ft. square, 15 ft. high) (2 Chron 4:1). Yet is unclear whether the entire altar was made of bronze, or if it had a bronze overlay on a stone altar. It is also possible that the bronze portion was a grate set on top of the otherwise stone altar (Ex 27:4). This altar is regularly known as the altar of burnt offering. The earlier tabernacle had a similar altar made of acacia (or shittim, KJV) wood overlaid with bronze (Ex 27:1,2). The tabernacle altar was smaller, only five cubits square, three cubits high. The location of the altar of burnt offering of the tabernacle and Solomon’s Temple is not given specifically. It is located “at” or “before” the door of the Tent of Meeting, which is also the place sacrificial animals are slaughtered. Generally, reconstructions of the tabernacle and Temple locate the altar in the center of the courtyard, but the text seems to favor a location near the entrance of the tabernacle/Temple structure. The rationale was probably to locate the altar as close as possible to the focal point of God’s presence, near the ark itself....Both the altar of the tabernacle and that of Ezekiel are described as having horns. It is likely that the altar of burnt offering in Solomon’s Temple also had horns. The stone altar found at Beersheba has such horns preserved. Apparently grasping the horns of the altar was a way of seeking sanctuary or protection when one was charged with a serious offense (1 Kgs 1:50,51; 2:28-34; cf Ex 21:12-14). More importantly, the horns of the altar were the place where the blood from a sacrificial animal was applied for atonement from sins (for example Ex 29:12; Lev 4:7). Jeremiah graphically described the people’s sin as being so severe that they were engraved on the horns of the altar (Jer 17:1). During certain festivals a sacred procession led into the Temple and up to the horns of the altar (Psa 118:27). Probably this procession carried the chosen animal

sacrifice to atone for the people's sin and ended at the place of sacrifice. During the reign of Ahaz, the bronze altar or altar of burnt offering in Solomon's Temple was displaced by an altar that Ahaz had built on a Syrian model (2 Kgs 16:10-16). This altar was apparently larger than the bronze altar of Solomon and was placed in the central position in the courtyard to be the main altar of sacrifice. No biblical description exists for the altar of burnt offering from the second temple. However, such an altar was constructed even before the Temple was rebuilt (Ezra 3:2). Josephus described the altar in the rebuilt Temple of Herod. He wrote that the altar was 50 cubits square and 15 cubits high with a ramp leading to the top. This altar would have been much larger than the earlier ones" (Holman's *Pictorial Bible Dictionary*).

8-20. ⁸And he made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the lookingglasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. ⁹And he made the court: on the south side southward the hangings of the court were of fine twined linen, an hundred cubits: ¹⁰Their pillars were twenty, and their brasen sockets twenty; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets were of silver. ¹¹And for the north side the hangings were an hundred cubits, their pillars were twenty, and their sockets of brass twenty; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets of silver. ¹²And 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. ¹³And for the east side eastward fifty cubits. ¹⁴The hangings of the one side of the gate were fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three. ¹⁵And for the other side of the court gate, on this hand and that hand, were hangings of fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three. ¹⁶All the hangings of the court round about were of fine twined linen. ¹⁷And the sockets for the pillars were of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets of silver; and the overlaying of their chapiters of silver; and all the pillars of the court were filleted with silver. ¹⁸And the hanging for the gate of the court was needlework, 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. ¹⁹And their pillars were four, and their sockets of brass four; their hooks of silver, and the overlaying of their chapiters and their fillets of silver. ²⁰And all the pins of the tabernacle, and of the court round about, were of brass.

- a. The laver was a basin containing water at which the priests were to wash. "LAVENDER--a large basin or bowl used in purification rites. The Old Testament describes the lavers used in the tabernacle and in Solomon's Temple. The bronze laver of the tabernacle was constructed from metal mirrors provided by the women who ministered at the tabernacle entrance (Ex 38:8). The priests used the laver for washing their hands and feet before priestly service (Ex 30:18; 40:30,31). Levites also used water from this laver to purify themselves (Num 8:7). Solomon's Temple employed a large laver, the molten sea (1 Kgs 7:23-26; 2 Chron 4:2-5) and ten smaller

lavers (1 Kgs 7:38,39; 2 Chron 4:6). The priests washed in the molten sea. The ten lavers were used for washing sacrifices (1 Chron 4:6) (Holman's).

- b. Any of the Israelites could enter the court area but, since the average Hebrew was not a priest, he could not enter the tabernacle proper. One had to have certain definite qualifications before he was permitted to enter the Holy Place. All who would enter the true tabernacle of God today (the church), must be converted from the world and redeemed from their sins (Rom 3:23; Eph 2:12; Acts 22:16). No one was allowed to enter the Holy Place without meeting the strict qualifications and receiving purification of priestly appointment. So it is today that no one can enter the true tabernacle without meeting the qualifications of the gospel of Christ (our High Priest) and receiving the purification provided by the blood of Christ.

21-31. ²¹*This is the sum of the tabernacle, even of the tabernacle of testimony, as it was counted, according to the commandment of Moses, for the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar, son to Aaron the priest. ²²And Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that the Lord commanded Moses. ²³And with him was Aholiab, son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver, and a cunning workman, and an embroiderer in blue, and in purple, and in scarlet, and fine linen. ²⁴All the gold that was occupied for the work in all the work of the holy place, even the gold of the offering, was twenty and nine talents, and seven hundred and thirty shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary. ²⁵And the silver of them that were numbered of the congregation was an hundred talents, and a thousand seven hundred and threescore and fifteen shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary: ²⁶A bekah for every man, that is, half a shekel, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for every one that went to be numbered, from twenty years old and upward, for six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty men. ²⁷And of the hundred talents of silver were cast the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the veil; an hundred sockets of the hundred talents, a talent for a socket. ²⁸And of the thousand seven hundred seventy and five shekels he made hooks for the pillars, and overlaid their chapiters, and filleted them. ²⁹And the brass of the offering was seventy talents, and two thousand and four hundred shekels. ³⁰And therewith he made the sockets to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the brasen altar, and the brasen grate for it, and all the vessels of the altar, ³¹And the sockets of the court round about, and the sockets of the court gate, and all the pins of the tabernacle, and all the pins of the court round about.*

- a. This is an accounting for all the gold and silver given for the work of the tabernacle.
- b. Gold: 29 talents, 730 shekels. The amount of gold indicated is estimated to be about 2400 pounds, which, if valued at \$400 per ounce, would amount to more than \$15 million.

- c. Silver: 100 talents, 1,775 shekels. This is estimated to have been about 8,400 pounds. At \$15 per ounce, the value would be more than \$2 million.
- d. The number of men 20 years old and upward were counted at 603,550.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

1-31. ¹And of the blue, and purple, and scarlet, they made cloths of service, to do service in the holy place, and made the holy garments for Aaron; as the Lord commanded Moses. ²And he made the ephod of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen. ³And 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, with cunning work. ⁴They made shoulderpieces for it, to couple it together: by the two edges was it coupled together. ⁵And the curious girdle of his ephod, that was upon it, was of the same, according to the work thereof; of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen; as the Lord commanded Moses. ⁶And they wrought onyx stones inclosed in ouches of gold, graven, as signets are graven, with the names of the children of Israel. ⁷And he put them on the shoulders of the ephod, that they should be stones for a memorial to the children of Israel; as the Lord commanded Moses. ⁸And he made the breastplate of cunning work, like the work of the ephod; of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen. ⁹It was foursquare; they made the breastplate double: a span was the length thereof, and a span the breadth thereof, being doubled. ¹⁰And they set in it four rows of stones: the first row was a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this was the first row. ¹¹And the second row, an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. ¹²And the third row, a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst. ¹³And the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper: they were inclosed in ouches of gold in their inclosings. ¹⁴And the stones were according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, every one with his name, according to the twelve tribes. ¹⁵And they made upon the breastplate chains at the ends, of wreathen work of pure gold. ¹⁶And they made two ouches of gold, and two gold rings; and put the two rings in the two ends of the breastplate. ¹⁷And they put the two wreathen chains of gold in the two rings on the ends of the breastplate. ¹⁸And the two ends of the two wreathen chains they fastened in the two ouches, and put them on the shoulderpieces of the ephod, before it. ¹⁹And they made two rings of gold, and put them on the two ends of the breastplate, upon the border of it, which was on the side of the ephod inward. ²⁰And they made two other golden rings, and put them on the two sides of the ephod underneath, toward the forepart of it, over against the other coupling thereof, above the curious girdle of the ephod. ²¹And they did bind the breastplate by his rings unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it might be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breastplate might not be loosed from the ephod; as the Lord commanded Moses. ²²And he made the robe of the ephod of woven work, all of blue. ²³And there was an hole in the midst of the robe, as the hole of an habergeon, with a band round about the hole, that it should not rend. ²⁴And they made upon the hems of the robe pomegranates of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and twined linen. ²⁵And they made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates upon the hem of the robe, round about between the pomegranates; ²⁶A bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate, round about the hem of the robe to minister in; as the Lord

commanded Moses. ²⁷And they made coats of fine linen of woven work for Aaron, and for his sons, ²⁸And a mitre of fine linen, and goodly bonnets of fine linen, and linen breeches of fine twined linen, ²⁹And a girdle of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, of needlework; as the Lord commanded Moses. ³⁰And they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote upon it a writing, like to the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. ³¹And they tied unto it a lace of blue, to fasten it on high upon the mitre; as the Lord commanded Moses.

- a. All the garments are made according to the pattern given by the LORD. On Mount Sinai God gave Moses instructions to build the tabernacle. On the Mount, God told Moses to appoint Aaron and his four sons to serve as priests (Ex 28:1 and 41). Their holy garments are described in detail and the consecration ritual is given in chapters 28 and 29.
- b. The work of the priests is given in detail in the most of Leviticus and some of Numbers and Deuteronomy. Aaron and his descendents from the tribe of Levi served in the tabernacle and temple as priests. Those from the tribe of Levi that were not related to Aaron assisted the priests but could not offer sacrifices. The priests were supported by offerings and the Levites by tithes (Num 18:20-24).

32-43. ³²Thus was all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation finished: and the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so did they. ³³And they brought the tabernacle unto Moses, the tent, and all his furniture, his taches, his boards, his bars, and his pillars, and his sockets, ³⁴And the covering of rams' skins dyed red, and the covering of badgers' skins, and the veil of the covering, ³⁵The ark of the testimony, and the staves thereof, and the mercy seat, ³⁶The table, and all the vessels thereof, and the shewbread, ³⁷The pure candlestick, with the lamps thereof, even with the lamps to be set in order, and all the vessels thereof, and the oil for light, ³⁸And the golden altar, and the anointing oil, and the sweet incense, and the hanging for the tabernacle door, ³⁹The brasen altar, and his grate of brass, his staves, and all his vessels, the laver and his foot, ⁴⁰The hangings of the court, his pillars, and his sockets, and the hanging for the court gate, his cords, and his pins, and all the vessels of the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of the congregation, ⁴¹The cloths of service to do service in the holy place, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and his sons' garments, to minister in the priest's office. ⁴²According to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel made all the work. ⁴³And Moses did look upon all the work, and, behold, they have done it as the Lord had commanded, even so had they done it: and Moses blessed them.

- a. All the work was completed and then presented before Moses.

- b. Everything was done just as Moses (and God) had commanded so Moses blessed the people.

CHAPTER FORTY

1-16. ¹And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, ²On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation. ³And thou shalt put therein the ark of the testimony, and cover the ark with the veil. ⁴And thou shalt bring in the table, and set in order the things that are to be set in order upon it; and thou shalt bring in the candlestick, and light the lamps thereof. ⁵And thou shalt set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the testimony, and put the hanging of the door to the tabernacle. ⁶And thou shalt set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation. ⁷And thou shalt set the laver between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and shalt put water therein. ⁸And thou shalt set up the court round about, and hang up the hanging at the court gate. ⁹And thou shalt take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is therein, and shalt hallow it, and all the vessels thereof: and it shall be holy. ¹⁰And thou shalt anoint the altar of the burnt offering, and all his vessels, and sanctify the altar: and it shall be an altar most holy. ¹¹And thou shalt anoint the laver and his foot, and sanctify it. ¹²And thou shalt bring Aaron and his sons unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and wash them with water. ¹³And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. ¹⁴And thou shalt bring his sons, and clothe them with coats: ¹⁵And thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office: for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations. ¹⁶Thus did Moses: according to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he.

- a. The tabernacle is set up, the priests are washed and clothed in their priestly garments. ALL things were done as God had ordained.
- b. Had the children of Israel retained the attitude and dedication they displayed on this occasion, their future would have been much different.

17-33. ¹⁷And 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. ¹⁸And Moses reared up the tabernacle, and fastened his sockets, and set up the boards thereof, and put in the bars thereof, and reared up his pillars. ¹⁹And he spread abroad the tent over the tabernacle, and put the covering of the tent above upon it; as the Lord commanded Moses. ²⁰And 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: ²¹And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the veil of the covering, and covered the ark of the testimony; as the Lord commanded Moses. ²²And he put the table in the tent of the congregation, upon the side of the tabernacle northward, without the veil. ²³And he set the bread in order upon it before the Lord; as the Lord had commanded Moses. ²⁴And he put the candlestick in the tent of the congregation, over against the table, on the side of the tabernacle southward. ²⁵And he lighted

the lamps before the Lord; as the Lord commanded Moses. ²⁶And he put the golden altar in the tent of the congregation before the veil: ²⁷And he burnt sweet incense thereon; as the Lord commanded Moses. ²⁸And he set up the hanging at the door of the tabernacle. ²⁹And he put the altar of burnt offering by the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation, and offered upon it the burnt offering and the meat offering; as the Lord commanded Moses. ³⁰And he set the laver between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and put water there, to wash withal. ³¹And Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet thereat: ³²When they went into the tent of the congregation, and when they came near unto the altar, they washed; as the Lord commanded Moses. ³³And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work.

- a. On the appointed day (first day of the first month of the second year) Moses set up the tabernacle.
- b. The first burnt offering is made on this day and the work was finished.
- c. At least nine times in the preceding verses we find it stressed that “the LORD commanded” and Moses obeyed. The pattern was followed.

34-38. *³⁴Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁵And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁶And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: ³⁷But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. ³⁸For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.*

- a. After the tabernacle was completely set up and dedicated, the cloud covered the tent and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.
- b. This cloud directed the movements of the children of Israel. It was cloud by day and fire by night.

MOSES — A TYPE OF CHRIST

A *type* is some person, thing or event in the Old Testament age which resembled and/or shadowed 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 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 (Mt 13:57; Deut 34:10).
2. Christ, like Moses, was a lawgiver (Jn 1:17; Gal 6:2).
3. Christ, like Moses, was saved as a babe.
4. Christ, like Moses, came as a peacemaker (Lk 19:42; Ex 2:13).
5. Christ, like Moses, was commissioned by God (Jn 5:30; Ex 3:10).
6. Christ, like Moses, came working miracles (Jn 12:37).
7. Christ, like Moses, came preaching deliverance (Lk 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).

WOULD GOD REALLY HARDEN PHARAOH'S HEART, AND THEN PUNISH HIM FOR HIS HARD-HEARTED DEEDS?

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; and sometimes that (3) God hardened his heart. The following chart shows how these three different statements occur in the scripture.

There are three different Hebrew words used to describe the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. They are listed in the order of the intensity of their meaning.

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.

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 2 nd)	He hardened (<i>kabad</i>) his heart		
8:19 (after 3 rd)		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 9 th)			the LORD hard- ened (<i>hazaq</i>)
11:10 (summary)			the LORD hard- ened (<i>hazaq</i>)
13:15 (before passover)	P. was stubborn (<i>qushah</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
(*hazaq*) 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 that Pharaoh hardened his own heart or the scripture is indefinite about who hardened it. Pharaoh made the first choices and started his own troubles.
4. After the sixth plague God hardened his heart. Pharaoh may have 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 (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. With Pharaoh having chosen to go the way of disobedient hardness, God pushed him down his self-chosen route to the bitterest end of his folly. Hebrews 3:13 - *But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin* (KJV).
7. Without a doubt God hardened Pharaoh's heart. The scripture says so and we must believe it. The question is "*How* did God harden Pharaoh's heart?" Is this an instance of God interfering with man's prerogative to decide for himself, his free moral agency? Further study will show that this is not the case. One might even ask, "Why would God harden Pharaoh's heart rather than soften it?" Sometimes we blame ourselves for what other persons do on the grounds that we did not take steps to prevent what was done. Example: An indulgent father neglects to give his son the guidance and discipline he needs. In time, the boy commits some crime. The father laments: "I am to blame; it is all my fault. I could have kept this from happening." Now we know the misdeeds were done because of the boy's decisions, yet we lay a measure of blame upon the father. *What he failed to prevent, he is charged with causing.*

Pharaoh appears as a proud, overbearing and cruel man. Like many hardened sinners, he must often have been at variance with his own conscience. He wanted his own sinful way, even after numerous plagues had brought suffering upon him and his people. Perhaps God could have softened his heart in some way, maybe through some bodily affliction like those which came upon Job, but even the affliction of the loss of his first-born son and all the plagues only brought about a temporary repentance and then Pharaoh again hardened his heart. Any change of behavior brought on by affliction is too short lived to betoken genuine repentance. Simply put, God did not do some things which He could have done. He may have looked upon Pharaoh much as Jesus looked upon the unbelieving Pharisees, as beyond moral persuasion (Mk 3:28-30).

Knowing Pharaoh's heart, as He knows the heart of every man, perhaps God saw fit to go no further in trying to turn him from his course of self-destruction. Therefore, God employed him in a chain of events aimed at the display of His divine power and making Pharaoh a vessel "fitted to destruction" (Rom 9:22).

Pharaoh's heart had been hardened by himself, his magicians and by God Almighty, but at any time Pharaoh still had the ability to decide to turn from his evil ways. He was prevented from such by his own pride, position and power.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Exodus 20:3-17:

- 3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
- 4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or 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: ⁵Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; ⁶And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.
- 7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.
- 8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: ¹⁰But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates: ¹¹For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.
- 12 Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD 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 neighbour.
- 17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbour's.

Deuteronomy 5: 6-21:

- 6 I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.
- 7 Thou shalt have none other gods before me.
- 8 Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth.
- 9 Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.
- 10 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.
- 11 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.
- 12 Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee. ¹³Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: ¹⁴But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. ¹⁵And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.
- 16 Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.
- 17 Thou shalt not kill.
- 18 Neither shalt thou commit adultery.
- 19 Neither shalt thou steal.
- 20 Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour.

- 21 Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour's. (KJV)

SPECIAL STUDY: THE TEN PLAGUES

I. Facts about the plagues:

A. 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 |

B. 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; Psa 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 Exodus 9:14 and Numbers 14:37 is from *maggephah*, meaning a slaughter (as in 1 Sam 4:17), or pestilential and fatal disorder. *Plague* in Exodus 11:1 is from *nega'*, meaning a blow or stroke. *Plague* in Exodus 12:13 is from *negeph*, meaning a stumbling, a smiting or plague. A verb form of this word is in Joshua 24:5.

II. Purposes of the plague:

- A. To force Pharaoh to let Israel go. Exodus 3:20 - *And I will stretch out 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).
- B. 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).
- C. To show God's power (see Ex 9:16). The Egyptians would learn that the LORD was high above all their false gods (Ex 9:14).

- D. To punish Pharaoh and the Egyptians for their treatment of Israel. The word *judgments* in Exodus 6:6 carries the idea of punishment (God cast upon them the fierceness of his anger) (Psa 78:49,50). God made sport of the Egyptians and mocked them (Ex 10:12).
- E. To execute judgment upon the gods of Egypt (Ex 12:12; Num 33:4). Several of the gods of Egypt seemed to have been specific targets of various plagues.
- F. 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. In fact, the Hebrews may have been exempt from all the plagues.
- G. 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.
- H. To produce fear in the surrounding nations that God would defeat them (Josh 2:9,10; 9:9; 1 Sam 4:8). The nations would learn that God would curse those that cursed the Israelites (Gen 12:3).
- I. 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; Psa 78:42,43). Sadly, Israel did not understand the wonders in Egypt (Psa 106:6,7,21,22) and they soon forgot God's acts in Egypt.
- J. To cause Israel (and us!) to keep the statutes of God (Deut 6:20-24).
- K. To serve as tests 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 in other times when God did not choose to show His power so immediately and dramatically?

III. Moral significance of the plagues :

- A. The plagues show that God means business. We better do what He says.
- B. The plagues show that God is certainly going to win in His conflict with Satan and with Satan's followers. Those who oppose God will utterly lose.
- C. The plagues show that God will surely PUNISH those who defy Him and refuse to receive His truth.

- D. The plagues show that God will harden those who set themselves to defy Him and then punish them. See previous notes on the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.
- E. The plagues show God's determination to keep His covenant with Abraham and his descendants and give them the land of Canaan (Gen 15:14; Psa 105:8,9, 27-36).
- F. 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 "spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col 2:15).
- G. Since the experiences of the Israelites are examples, or types, of our spiritual experiences as Christians (1 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 last seven plagues of Revelation 15:5 through 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:

- A. 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.
- B. 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). This is simply a man-made analysis and is not really of great significance. 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 firstborn) both involved death. Still, these groupings seem accidental and unintentional. Certainly, they were not obvious during the course of the plagues. Nevertheless, here are some of the reasons why many interpreters feel the first nine plagues are arranged into three groups of three.

1. Plagues one and two in each group (1-2, 4-5, 7-8) are announced to Pharaoh in advance, while the third plague is inflicted without prior warning.
2. 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).
3. 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).

V. Views held about the plagues:

- A. 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 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.

- B. 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." Of course, to hold such a view, we must deny that Moses wrote down the record of events to which he was an eye witness. 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 of them, Professor Mahler, thought that the plague of darkness was a total eclipse of the sun in 1335 B.C. Of course, 1335 is not the date of the exodus; and a solar eclipse lasts only 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. This explanation also is set forth as the 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 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 inundations have 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"

The inadequacy of such an explanation may be perceived by suggestions by Greta Hort. She argues that the first nine plagues began with an unusually high inundation, which may have brought microcosms known as flagellates, which would redden the river and kill the fish. Decomposing fish drove the frogs to shore, having also infected them with *Bacillus Anthracis*..... The cattle disease of the fifth plague anthrax, contracted from the dead frogs, etc.

A true Christian will place their faith in the record given in the Bible and not in the contradictory guesswork of those without deep faith in God.

THE PASSOVER - A TYPE

The Passover in Egypt

1. The start of a new year.
Ex 12:2.
2. Each family, led by the father, kept the feast.
Ex 12:3.
3. Unblemished lamb.
Ex 12:5.
4. Lamb pre-selected.
Ex 12:3.
5. Lamb slain! Ex 12:6,21.
6. Not a bone broken.
Ex 12:46; Num 9:12.
7. Blood applied to doors.
Ex 12:7,22.
8. Lamb eaten. Ex 12:8-10.
9. Be ready to march.
Ex 12:11.
10. All firstborn died, except those under the blood.
Ex 12:12-13,29.
11. An eternal observance.
Ex 12:14,24,25.
12. Leaven removed.
Ex 12:15; 19,20; 13:6,7.

Christ, Our Passover

1. The start of new life for the believer. 2 Cor 5:17.
2. Each person and family keeps "the feast."
2 Cor 5:8.
3. Christ, the lamb of God (Jn 1:29), without sin. (Heb 4:14,15).
4. Christ foreknown.
1 Pet 1:19,20.
5. Christ slain! Rev 5:6; 13:8.
6. Not a bone broken.
Jn 19:33,36.
7. Blood sprinkled upon our hearts. 1 Pet 1:2; Heb 12:24.
8. Must eat of Christ.
Jn 6:53.
9. Be ready to obey.
Titus 3:1.
10. All to perish except those under the blood.
Heb 9:22; Rom 5:9.
11. Jesus the same forever.
Heb 13:8.
12. Purge out old leaven (malice, wickedness).
1 Cor 5:8.

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| 13. | Holy convocations to be kept. Ex 12:16. | 13. | Need to assemble together. Heb 10:25. |
| 14. | Brought deliverance. Ex 12:30-33. | 14. | Brings deliverance. Heb 2:14,15. |
| 15. | Available to all those circumcised. Ex 12:43-48. | 15. | Available to all those circumcised in baptism. Col 2:11-13. |
| 16. | To speak of it always. Ex 12:24-27;13:8,9. | 16. | Speak always of our hope. 1 Pet 3:15. |